



## O God, You are My God

Psalm 63

October 9, 2011

Pastor Nick Shaffer

---

It has been a truly awesome and humbling thing to see the way that God has been working repentance and a fresh desire and pursuit of Him into our hearts over the last few weeks. It has been a painful reminder of how easily we can be drawn away from our first love but also of how faithful the Lord is to pursue us and to draw us back and to renew our hearts and to refresh our affections for Him. This heart work that God is doing in us just feels right, doesn't it?

Last week, after the service, Scott Carroll came up to me and said really what I had already been thinking. He said, and I am paraphrasing, "Don't take this the wrong way, but both examples of deep affection for the Lord that we have seen so far have been women. Are there any men that we can point to?" I had already been thinking about this because I know how we men think. "Women are naturally emotional. Of course they are going to be more expressive in their affections and desire for the Lord. That is just the way they are wired, right?" But there is no shortage of evidence of the same kind of deep, passionate love for Christ in men in the Scriptures. We could point to Peter who confessed his love for Christ, though he knew his own weakness and frailty, when Jesus restored Him on the shore of the Sea of Tiberius, also known as Galilee – a love that he proved by faithfulness even unto death, being crucified upside down because he did not deserve to be crucified as His Lord. We could point to Paul whose desperate longing was to know Christ personally and experientially, a man who suffered severely for His devotion to Christ before finally being beheaded. We could point to John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who was exiled to Patmos for His love and faithfulness to Christ. There are many examples of faithful love and intimate fellowship with the Lord throughout Scripture, but there is nearly an entire book that is filled with insight into the nature of what it means to have an intimate relationship to the Lord, the book of Psalms — the majority of which are an insight into the heart and the mind of King David, the man after God's own heart.

I want us to look today at what is my favorite Psalm for many reasons, but most of all because it describes the character of a pursuing, passionate, desperate heart for God, the only One who fully and completely satisfies our souls. I want us to look at this Psalm, written by a warrior, written by a man's man, a man of power, a King who had a heart of deep affection for his Lord. Look at Psalm 63 with me...

---

(Psalms 63:1) A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

The background of Psalm 63 is very important to understanding the Psalm. David was in the midst of severe persecution from Absalom, his son. Persecution which was a resulting consequence of his sin with Bathsheba. Absalom desired to be king. He determined to steal away the throne from David by conspiracy, by turning the hearts of the men of Israel away from him and he was successful. In 2 Sam 15:13, we learn that "The hearts of the men of Israel have gone after Absalom." And therefore, David flees into the Judean wilderness. And it is here in the wilderness, where David writes this Psalm. It is a dry, desolate land. In this desert he suffers thirst, hunger, loneliness and weariness. There in the desert David had many needs, but only one longing of His heart and the words of this first verse make that so clear.

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Right away we see that David is not first of all seeking food, water, comfort, or rest – even though he is in the desert and badly needs all of these things. What David hungers and thirsts for above anything else is God. David deeply longs for the God's presence, for fellowship with God, and for that satisfaction and joy that comes with being with Him. He must have God.

Now let's be honest for a second. To hear David speak like this is a little off-putting isn't it? It's a little uncomfortable, isn't it? I mean, imagine if we knew David as a real guy, not a man in Scripture because Scripture-people are all supposed to talk like this. Imagine we know him as a

regular guy. Our fleshly response to this would be to be slightly irritated or think David is just a little fake. Some of us would be like, “David, look man, you need to snap into reality here. Stop with the God-talk. Bear Grylls says you need shelter, water and food – let’s get on it. God can wait. He’ll understand.” Some of us would be like, “David, come on bro, you can be real with me. You take off the mask. Come on be real.” We would just beat him down. We wouldn’t be satisfied until he changed his tune to the old spiritual – “Nobody knows the trouble I seen...” Because in these days of wishy-washy faith, that is what is considered to be “being real”. Still others of us would be struck by the presumptuousness of David. We would have been thinking to ourselves – because we would never say it, except behind his back – “Where was all this God talk when you were sleeping with Bathsheba? You’re here in the wilderness as a consequence for your sin. Don’t go talking about God, you are my God. Who are you kidding?” Others of us would be uncomfortable because the only time we hear people talk like this is just before some theological heresy drops from their lips – “Well, my God would never...” Or we think of the people who give the impression that God belongs to them alone and no-one else. If our flesh got the best of us that is exactly how we would respond. What makes David speak like this? What makes him say “O God, you are my God”?

Let’s think about this for a moment. The only way that David can call God his God is to know and believe that he belongs to Him, to know and believe that God loves him, to know and believe beyond the shadow of a doubt that he has been fully forgiven by God and to know that God is for him, to do him good, even in the midst of – yes – discipline that was a result of his sin with Bathsheba. Look, David talks like this, because David knows that He is God’s. He knows that he is God’s special possession, one of his children that God has called into a relationship with Him, through whom the promised Messiah would come. God had set His special love on David; He had set him apart from all of his brothers; He had poured His mercy and grace out upon David. David is God’s salvifically. The reason David is longing for the presence of God Himself, is because David is God’s himself. He belongs to God and he knows it. That is true of David and it must be true of us.

David talks like this because he knows that he has been fully and completely forgiven of his sin and that no judgment hangs between he and God. He knows that whatever he is enduring is from the loving and disciplining hand of God and not a judgment upon his sin, because his sin has been fully forgiven. He knows he is forgiven. Now I am not talking about the presumption that just sees God as obligated to forgive or forgiveness that is absent repentance – David’s repentance is recorded for all of eternity in Psalm 51. David knew that God’s forgiveness was by His mercy and grace – just read that Psalm. But David knew himself to be forgiven. And he

knew that God was for him. He trusted God and his purposes in his life. He trusted the heart and faithfulness of God, and so must we.

Listen, before we will ever seek God like this and long for God's presence like this, we have to know beyond the shadow of any doubt that we belong to God, that we are His chosen possession through Jesus Christ our Lord. We have to know that we have had our sins and guilt washed away in the blood of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. We have to know that we are at peace with God through Jesus. We have to know that we have been accepted by God in Christ and received by Him through Jesus as His sons and daughters, adopted into the family of God. We have to believe that His grace in Christ is enough for us to be fully forgiven and fully received as His people. We have to be certain of that. One of the things that wars and fights against a deep long for God and for God's presence is a gnawing fear that we are never quite sure where we stand with God. What does God really think about us? Am I really forgiven? Is He really for me? Oh beloved, we need to be convinced of all that God has done for us, that Christ has done all that is necessary in His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead to make us fully and completely accepted by God the Father. We need to be convinced of God's love toward us in that "he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10, ESV) We need to be convinced that God is for us, that God loves us and delights to do good to us -- (Romans 8:31-39, ESV) This has got to be more than theology on a page. It must be truth in our souls. If you are a Christian, you are God's special possession just as David was God's chosen one.

And because David knew himself to be the chosen one of God, because he knew himself to be fully forgiven of God, because he believed that God was for him, he could say with confidence and with certainty, and to the pleasure of God, "You are MY God!"

David says, you are my God, but he doesn't stop there. Earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Do you hear David's heart here? These are such picturesque words. I seek you; I thirst for You, I faint for You...I want you. He is desperate for God. Because God is for Him, because God is his God, David will seek for Him with all of heart. Why such passion? Isn't David already saved? What's all this seeking stuff? David was not snared by our modern ideas about salvation and discipleship. He understood that following God and being a child of God was not reduced to a moment in time transaction where you confess faith in Christ with no further desire to follow Him and know Him, no desire to seek Him or desire for your life and your obedience to be

pleasing to Him. Being gripped by God's grace, truly being made a child of God by the mercy of God, truly knowing Christ as our Savior to the glory of God should not cause us to say, "Well, enough of that, let's move on." On the contrary, it ought to make us say – "I want more of Christ, I want to know Him better. I want to seek Him more and see Him more and know Him more."

David understood that and that is why he describes his desire for God in such striking and picturesque language. My soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Have you ever been thirsty? I mean, really thirsty. The kind of thirst where nothing can satisfy you except water...I have. Soda, sweet tea, kool aid, nothing else can satisfy but pure water. That is the desire in David for God. That is how badly he desires God. Here's the truth, we live in a spiritually dry land – that's the world we live in. And just like you must seek water in a physical desert, we must desperately seek God in this spiritual desert like our survival depends on it, because it does.

It does us no good to claim to have God, but then quench our souls on the short-lived, inadequate pleasures of this world. Through the prophet Jeremiah God said, "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:13, ESV) This was God's indictment of Israel who had forgotten how to love Him and long for Him. How often have we heard people say, "I just have to have \_\_\_\_\_ or if I just had \_\_\_\_\_..." No. What you need is Christ.

Our only hope comes if we like David "thirst" and "faint" for the Living God. (John 7:37–38, ESV) Are you thirsty for God, beloved? Come and drink? Grace does not make us less thirsty, it makes us thirsty for more of Christ. It generates a new and greater thirst for Christ that only he can satisfy. That is all God's plan – to create in us a greater thirst for Christ that only he satisfy.

When we come thirsting to Christ and drink, our thirst is quenched...but not forever. If that were the case, we would never sense any need for Christ again, would we? God does not desire to create self-sufficient saints who have no need for Christ any longer, who sense no need for Christ any longer. No, that is not it. When we drink of the water of Christ, a fountain, a spring of living water is opened up for us which satisfies our thirst. How? How does a

fountain or a spring satisfy our thirst? Not by removing the need we have for water. No, by being there to give you water whenever you get thirsty. All the time, over and over. Beloved, Christ is the fountain for which we must thirst, but we must seek Him.

Knowing God well, knowing Christ well is so spiritually thirst quenching because no person, possession, or experience can produce the spiritual contentment we can find in Him. Communion with Christ is incomparably rewarding because there is no disappointment in what you find in Him. Christ is an infinite source of satisfaction and joy because He is infinitely wonderful and infinitely beyond finding out. We can seek and seek and seek some more because in seeking we will find more and more and more and we will be satisfied in Him. God has not designed us so that one experience with Christ quenches all future desire for Him. No, we must continue, like David to seek and thirst and faint after Him. David goes on to say

(Psalms 63:2-4) So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. That is the language of a worshipper. Do you see it? David is driven to seek for God by the fact that he had seen the Lord in His temple. David had beheld God's might and awesomeness. He had known His manifest presence and, beloved, he delighted in it.

"Because your steadfast is better than life my lips will praise you." What is David saying here? What is it that motivates His praise? It is that David had experienced his steadfast, immovable, unfailing love – His love poured out on him and God's unfailing faithfulness to him. For that reason, David is determined to bless God the rest of His life - to honor and serve and obey God the rest of his life. He is all in. Do you see the progression in this Psalm? David is thirsty for God. David is thirsty for God; only God himself can satisfy the craving of his soul. The steadfast love of God, to David, was better than life itself. And because of God's faithful love, David's lips would praise God, openly so that God's glory would be made known. While he lived, he would continue to bless and praise and glorify God. He would lift up his hands in joy and thanksgiving, in labor for God's glory and in confidence of His steadfast love. All of this would come forth from His seeking after God, from His thirsting and fainting for God that drove Him to pursue God and lay hold of Him as His surpassing treasure.

Do you see? This is what our lives in Christ are all about. Have we beheld His glory and His power – there is power in saving a soul, power in sanctifying a soul. Have we known the wonder of steadfast love that lays down His life for sinners? Do we know that God’s favor is praiseworthy beyond compare? Are we determined to bless Him as long as we live?

The result of all of this was satisfaction in the Lord. (Psalms 63:5) My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food. You know that feeling of perfect contentedness. That feeling when the one food you have desired more than anything else you finally get to eat. I remember that feeling now years later after I had wrestled my last wrestling match and I went to Vinnie’s – a pizza place that we used to have in our hometown and I got 2 Strombolis – I hadn’t had one all wrestling season and I hogged them both down and it felt so good. Now, take this imagery and translate it into finding pleasure in God. David writes, "My soul is satisfied as with fat and rich food." There is in Christ a richness, a satisfaction, a fullness of soul filling joy, comparable to the richest food with which the body can be nourished. There is in seeking and laying hold of Jesus Christ with our hearts and souls, a satisfaction that cannot come anywhere else. Christ has given Himself to us for this – so that we would be satisfied in Him.

Beloved, we have to remember something very important, fundamental really, that I think we often forget -- that God has given Himself to us to be known in Jesus Christ. He wants to be known by us. Think of the invitations that Jesus gives to us. We have already seen one: (John 7:37, ESV) In John 6 He invites us to feast upon Him, to eat His flesh and drink His blood -- (John 6:54–55, ESV) In speaking to Peter, He speaks to us saying: (John 13:8, ESV) Listen to His invitation to be yoked to Him in Matthew 11: (Matthew 11:28–29, ESV) Listen to the way He invites us to make our lives in Him in John 15: (John 15:4, ESV) And in chapter 17: (John 17:3,21 ESV) Consider the way that he speaks to Thomas – (John 20:27, ESV) Touch me, handle me, and know me. What an invitation. Christ wants to be known by us. He has given Himself for that purpose.

Do you remember when the disciples tried to prevent the children from coming to Jesus? It is over in Matthew 19. Let me read it to you. (Matthew 19:13–15, ESV) What did Jesus mean when He said: for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven? Commentators will talk about childlike faith or humility and the like. That may be true, but I think part of what Jesus is talking about is the natural lack of inhibitions in healthy normal kids -- you know what I mean. Little kids get in your space, don’t they? They are inquisitive, wanting to know every detail. They are never satisfied with a little, they always want to know why. Why are you bald? Why do you have such a big nose? Why do you have that mole? Why do you eat that? We have to teach kids boundaries that we think are appropriate, don’t we? Don’t stare. Don’t get in their personal space. Don’t ask that. Don’t speak unless you are spoken to. There is a natural inquisitiveness about normal healthy kids. They have never met a stranger. And that is how

Christ wants us to be with Him. He tells us, “Know me, explore me, know my heart, know my thoughts, search me out, and be satisfied in me. He has given Himself to us to be known. He has given Himself and so to be satisfied with reducing Him to precepts and statutes, or to His blessings is as foolish as a man who can be satisfied with a framed photograph of his bride. Jesus desires to give Himself to us and for us to give ourselves to Him. This is the source of the great satisfaction that the Lord offers to us. If we are not satisfied in Him, it is because we are not seeking Him...we are stopping short. The truth is that seeking after Christ like this sounds kind of foreign because we do not know and invest in people like that anymore. David did not stop short. He was consumed with God. He continues saying:

(Psalms 63:5b-6) and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; David turned his bedroom into a sanctuary. As the day wound to a close David was still celebrating and seeking after his God. He used even that time to remind Him of God’s goodness to him. In the down times, as His mind was free to roam, his thoughts went to God. Look at what he says next:

(Psalms 63:7) For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. David did not waste his capacity for memories, but instead made them his servant to provide Him with reminders of God’s faithfulness, and to lead him to a growing confidence in Him and to lead Him to joyful singing and worship. Then this declaration:

(Psalms 63:8) My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. Literally David was saying, “I am stuck on you. I am glued to you Lord. I am never letting go.” This is the heart of David here. God is his portion and his security and he is not letting go but will continue to seek him with all earnestness of heart. Interestingly enough, that word clings is the very same word that is used in Genesis 2:24 to speak of the first marriage: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast (cling) to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24, ESV) It is that word “cleave” that we talked about not too long ago when we looked at the sanctity of marriage. The Hebrew word for cleave is the idea of being permanently glued or joined together, to stick with someone. It describes the idea of exclusivity and permanence. Holding nothing back, I am exclusively, loyally, faithfully, utterly, entirely and permanently yours. That is the idea of cleaving. That is how David sees his relationship to God. He was cemented to God and because he was, he had stability and steadiness – look at these last few verses.

(Psalms 63:9-11) But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth; they shall be given over to the power of the sword; they shall be a portion for jackals. But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by him shall exult, for the mouths of liars will be

stopped. What does David mean by all of this? Well, a person who seeks after God is not some mystic or some kind of spiritual fruitcake. The one who seeks after Christ is one who has balance and perspective even in the crises of life. In David's case, as he looked at his circumstances, the rebellion of his son, his fleeing in the wilderness – as he looked at those things, he trusted in God. He trusted that God is just, that he would judge justly, that he could commit himself to God's care without reservation and know that all would ultimately be well. He knew that God had called Him to be king and that God would not fail to accomplish His purposes toward Him. What we see, then, is that the person who seeks after God will be a person of strength, stability and confidence in God. His satisfaction in Christ will be complete because of centrality of the Lord in His life.

Beloved, this mighty longing after God that David had should not be foreign to us but should be the experience of our souls too. We need to be reminded of the very centrality of the Jesus Christ to our lives. There is this tendency to treat Jesus like an app, as an accessory, as an add-on, a facet or slice of well rounded life. But that kind of thinking is like treating the beating of our hearts as a peripheral part of physical life. That couldn't be further from the truth. No heartbeat, no life. It is the same with Jesus Christ. He is more essential than even the beating of our hearts to true life. David understood this, so must we especially in a church culture in which Jesus is becoming increasingly reduced and obscured.

The question this morning is really very simple – can you say with confidence and with certainty, “God, you are my God!” The more we know Him, the more we will love Him, the more we will praise Him, the more we will be like Him -- to love the things that He loves, to hate the things that He hates, to bear witness of Him in word and life? All of that is wrapped up in knowing Him. All of that is wrapped up in being able to say with certainty, “God, you are my God!” Know Him. Seek Him. Pursue Him. Meditate on His goodness. Worship Him for His person. Satisfy yourself in Him.

---

© West Salem Baptist Church, 2011

Permissions: You are free to reproduce and distribute this material but you may not alter its contents in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. If you are posting online, a link back to this original document is preferred. Anything beyond these guidelines will require prior approval by West Salem Baptist Church.