

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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God's Presence Comforts and Assures

Psalm 63

Key verse: “O God, you are my God, 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” (Psalm 63:1).

“Do you remember when your mother used to say, ‘Don’t eat candy before meals?’ Why did she say that? Because she knew it would ruin your next meal. The trouble with eating candy is that it gives you a sugar buzz, and then you don’t feel hungry. Candy masks the fact that your body needs proteins and vitamins. The sugar buzz from candy masks your hunger for the real nutrients that you don’t have.

“Things like sex, power, money, and success—as well as favorable circumstances—act like spiritual sugar. Christians who have these spiritual candies may say, ‘Sure, I believe in God and I know I’m going to heaven,’ but they’re actually basing their day-to-day joy on favorable circumstances. When the circumstances change, it drives us to God, because when the sugar disappears, when the candy gets taken away, we’re forced to pursue the feast that our souls really crave. We’ll hunger for the spiritual nutrients we really need” (from a sermon by Tim Keller).

This illustration describes one of the major themes of Psalm 63. Early tradition attributes this psalm to King David and to a time when David was hiding in the desert from his enemies. The psalmist’s heartfelt prayer offers some tremendous insights for us in *how to get in touch with God in times of great need*.

The psalmist begins his prayer by recognizing his deep need for God. His “favorable circumstances” have vanished. He is in a place of great need, and his desperate circumstances drive him to God. In verse 1, the psalmist’s physical surroundings in the desert reflect a deeper spiritual condition: “O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is not water.”

To the psalmist’s credit, he realizes that relief from his difficult external circumstances is not his greatest need. His greatest need is to seek and find the presence and power of God. But how do you discover the presence and power of God in desperate times?

For the psalmist, it involved remembering those “God moments” in his life, those times when he had been most in touch with God’s presence and power. For the

psalmist, that included some memorable worship experiences with God's people: "So, I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory" (v. 2). For you and me, remembering the "God moments" will include those times when we felt closest to God and saw God working in our lives.

When we reflect on God's faithfulness to us in the past, we find new faith and hope to walk with God in the present. I am reminded of a quote whose source I am unable to find: "Never doubt in the darkness what God has shown you in the light!" Remember those bright God moments in your faith journey and, in doing so, find faith and hope to trust God in the present, no matter how dark it may be right now.

Having meditated on God's past faithfulness, next the psalmist moved into praise and worship: "Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you, So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name" (vv. 3-4).

When times are tough, when our "enemies" threaten, one of the most powerful things we can do is to focus our praying on the heartfelt praise and worship of God. This often involves an act of faith, praising God when we don't feel like it. But in those dark seasons of the soul, if we will offer "the sacrifice of praise" (Hebrews 13:15), often our hearts will be filled with the light of God's presence.

So it was for the psalmist. Having meditated on God's past faithfulness, the psalmist then offered God a sacrifice of praise. The next words of the psalmist's prayer move from spiritual dryness and thirst to an experience of God's soul-satisfying presence: "My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips" (v. 5).

Notice another thing about the psalmist's prayer. He has recognized his deep need for God. He has sought God's presence and power. He has meditated on those times in his faith journey when he had experienced God's presence and power. As a result he has been renewed in faith and hope. He has offered to God the "sacrifice of praise." God has brought him into a present experience of soul satisfaction, of knowing God's presence with him.

Now the challenge is to *keep walking* in this experience of faith and trust. Here is the psalmist's description of that spiritual dynamic: "...I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me" (vv. 6-9).

Psalm 63 is a beautiful prayer and a powerful spiritual prescription for *how to get in touch with God in times of great need*:

- In times of great need, recognize that your *greatest* need is to seek and find the presence and power of God.
- Meditate on those "God moments" in your life, those times when you have been most in touch with God's presence and power. Let God use this time

of remembering to help you find new faith and hope to walk with God in the present.

- Offer God your praise and worship, even when your circumstances make you feel like you can't or don't want to praise Him. God responds to our "sacrifice of praise."
- Open your heart to an experience of God and to God's soul-satisfying presence.
- Having moved to a place of new faith and hope, *keep walking* in this experience of grace until your "enemies" are defeated!

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