

The Heart of Worship

Session 4

February 9, 2025

The Benefits of Worship

Session Passage: Psalm 63:1-11

Psalm 63:1-5

Connection to the Point. David acknowledged that God richly provided for him out of His goodness and love.

Background. For “of David” in the heading, see the commentary on Psalm 25 in session two of this study. According to the superscription, this psalm relates to David’s experience “when he was in the WildernessDesert of Judah.” This wilderness was the area between the Judean hill country and the Dead Sea. Two possible events of David’s life might be the setting for this psalm. This was the area in which David hid when he was fleeing from King Saul (1 Sam. 22–26). However, the contents of this psalm better reflect David’s flight from his son Absalom when he staged a rebellion against David (2 Sam. 15–17). At that time David not only was in this wilderness area but other details match the contents of this psalm. For instance, David sent the ark of God, to which he alluded in verses 2 and 7, back into Jerusalem (15:25-26). In 2 Samuel 16:2, 14 we find David and the men who fled with him weary and in need of refreshing. In Psalm 63:1 David seemed to describe this situation. When David fled from Saul, David was not yet fully the king, whereas here in verse 11 he clearly is the king. Interestingly, given his situation, David’s psalm does not contain any requests and he doesn’t make any petitions.

God, you are my GodYou, God, are my GodO God, thou art my God (v. 1). The words are not as repetitious as they appear in English. Literally it reads, “Elohim, you are my El,” or “God, you are my Strong One.” In David’s weakness he needed the Strong One and His strength (v. 2). The personal reference, *my God*, stresses David’s intimate relationship with God and informs all that follows.

I eagerly seek youEarnestly I seek youEarly will I seek thee (v. 1). *EagerlyEarnestlyEarly* derives from the word for seeking “early” or “at dawn,” and the reason the early church designated this psalm to be read each morning. *Seek* is not the usual term for seeking God in worship. It means “to seek diligently” and the imperfect tense indicates that this does not refer to a one-time event but to David’s constant practice or pattern of life.

I thirst for youMy soul thirsteth for thee (v. 1). *I* literally is “my soul”*My soul* (also vv. 5,8,9), referring to David’s whole being, but especially to his inner spiritual being. David compared his physical need in the wilderness to his spiritual need. The only other use of *thirsteth* in the Psalms in the sense of thirsting for God is in Psalm 42:2.

My body faints for youMy whole being longs for youMy flesh longeth for thee (v. 1). *My bodywhole being* literally is “my flesh” and*My flesh* points to human weakness. *Faints for*, or “longs for”*Longseth for* or “yearns for,” is used only here in the Old Testament. David’s condition was one of more than merely longing for God, he was in desperate need of God.

In a land that is dry, desolate, and without waterIn a dry and parched land where there is no waterIn a dry and thirsty land, where no water is (v. 1). *Dry* indicates more than merely dry, it was parchedarid. Further, it was a *desolateparchedthirsty* or “weary” land, the reason being there was no *water*. David’s literal situation became his language to describe his spiritual situation.

So I gaze on you in the sanctuaryI have seen youthee in the sanctuary (v. 2). This is a recollection as David thought back, but it contrasts with his immediate setting and present longings. So connects verse 1 to verse 2 and can mean “for this reason.” David’s longing in verse 1 was the result of his experience in verse 2. Only those who have spent time with the Lord *in the sanctuary* will feel the desperateness of that void when they experienced the wilderness. *GazeSeen* is “to look intently on,” “to gaze,” meaning David’s past experience had an ongoing impact on him. The Hebrew word also was used for having a vision and to refer to a prophetic oracle (Isa. 1:1; 2:1) and to form the noun “seer.” This seeing cannot be taken literally, for no one can look on the Lord directly and live (Ex. 33:20). David obviously was referring to a spiritual experience. The temple *sanctuary* had not been built at this point, but David had brought the ark into Jerusalem and provided a tent for it (2 Sam. 6:12-18).

To see your strength and your gloryAnd beheld your power and your gloryTo see thy power and thy glory (v. 2). This tells the purpose for David’s past intensive concentration on God. He wanted to see God’s *strengthpower* or “power” and God’s *glory*, which included the powerful and glorious things God had done in the past. Psalm 78:61 refers to the ark of the covenant as God’s strength. First Samuel 4:21 refers to the ark as God’s *glory*. Psalm 96:6-7 also refers to God’s glory and strength in the sanctuary.

My lips will glorify youshall praise thee (v. 3). While David did not give the details of this memory, his perspective about his situation altered, not by a change of his location but by activating this memory. *Lips* were the instrument with which David vocalized his praise, which often is linked to glorifying God in the Psalms. David had gazed on God’s glory (v. 2), so now he wanted to *glorifypraise* God. To *glorifypraise* is to “extol” or “praiseglorify.” Again, David’s past experience with God in the sanctuary enabled him to glorify God in his wilderness experience.

Because your faithful lovethy lovingkindness (v. 3). *Because* gives the reason David glorified the Lord. *Faithful loveLoveLovingkindness*, or “loyal love,” is God’s *hesed*. (On *hesed*, see comments on *Faithful loveLoveLovingkindness* in the commentary on Psalm 25:6 in session two of this study.)

Is better than life (v. 3). *Life* fluctuates. David was now in the wilderness fleeing from a rebellion that had dethroned him. But God’s love never changes; it lasts forever (Ps. 118:1). Most people consider life to be most precious, but David considered God’s *hesed* even more so.

So I will bless youI will praise youThus will I bless thee (v. 4). *SoThus*, as in verse 2, again indicates the reason. *BlessPraise youthee* is a different word from verse 5 and here indicates worship. Not only does God bless His people, His people can—and are to—bless Him (Ps. 103:1-2,20-22).

As long asWhile I live (v. 4). David did not know how long his life would last given his circumstances. But however long it did, David promised his blessing of God would continue that long also.

AtIn yourthy name (v. 4). One’s *name* identifies a person and who he has revealed himself to be—here particularly God had revealed Himself in His strength and glory (v. 2).

I will lift up my hands (v. 4). This gesture often accompanied prayers and praises in worship. It indicates reaching up and out to God with empty hands needing to be filled with His blessings.

You satisfy meI will be fully satisfiedMy soul shall be satisfied (v. 5). To *satisfySatisfied* means to completely fulfill one’s longings, needs, and desires. The verb is in the imperfect tense, meaning God’s response is not a one-time happening. *MeI*, as in verse 1 (“I” thirst), is literally “my soul.” David’s satisfied, well-fed soul contrasts sharply with its condition in verse 1.

As with rich food the richest of foods As with marrow and fatness (v. 5). The Hebrew uses two words for “fat” and literally reads, “with fat and fatness.” According to Leviticus 3:16-17, the fat of animals was reserved for the Lord and forbidden for the people to eat, hence the words heighten the idea of how this is the choicest of food.

My mouth will praise you with joyful lips With singing lips my mouth will praise you My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips (v. 5). This repeats David’s pledge of verses 3 and 4, only here he adds that the *praise* will be *joyful* joyful (*singing* carries the connotation of being joyful). Such praise refers to a loud, vocal, full-throated singing (see Ps. 33:1-3). When God satisfies a person, the natural response is an enthusiastic one. *Will Shall praise* is in the imperfect tense and thus refers to David repeatedly praising the Lord. David’s *lips* that were dry and dusty (v. 1) now were full of blessings and praise.

Psalm 63:6-8

Connection to the Point. David acknowledged that the help he needed came from God.

When I think of you as I lie on my bed On my bed I remember you When I remember thee upon my bed (v. 6). *When* may This verse begins with an untranslated particle or conjunction that means “as often as” or “surely, I think of you.” *Think of you* is the word “remember” (Ps. 6:5, “remembrance”) and *Remember* contains the idea of “pondering” or “meditating on.”

I meditate on you I think of you And meditate on thee (v. 6). *Meditate Think* is most frequently translated “meditate.” It does not refer to mindlessness or emptying of the mind but to filling the mind with thoughts and thinking. David’s thinking was of the Lord, and David’s thinking on the Lord led to his meditating on the Lord. To *meditate think* involves deep reflective rumination. It is the same word as used in Psalm 1:2, “Instead, his delight is in the Lord’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”

During In the night watches Through the watches of the night (v. 6). The Hebrews of the Old Testament divided the night into three watches, the first watch (Lam. 2:19), the middle watch (Judg. 7:19), and the morning watch (Ex. 14:24; 1 Sam. 11:11). *During In the night watches Through the watches of the night* refers to the whole night long. *Night* is a vulnerable time when thoughts, memories, reflections, dreams, temptations, and terrors can oppress a person. But it was during this vulnerable time that David’s thoughts turned to the Lord. The phrase also hints at the slow process of the passing of the night hours. David didn’t only think of the Lord during his waking hours but throughout the night hours as well.

Because you are my helper Because you are my help Because thou hast been my help (v. 7). Scholars and Bible translations differ on whether this phrase concludes the thought about the watches in verse 6 (CSB) or introduces the thought of rejoicing in verse 7b (NIV, KJV). Either way, *because* indicates the reason for David’s action, whether meditating or rejoicing. That God was David’s *helper* meant God did for David what David could not do for himself (Ps. 46:1).

I will rejoice I sing Therefore . . . will I rejoice (v. 7). The meditating of verse 6 was followed closely by rejoicing singing. *Rejoice Sing* renders a word more often translated “sing” but that in most instances contains the concept of joy. Thus David indicated he would sing joyfully.

In the shadow of yourthy wings (v. 7) provides a double image: First, that of a bird that protects its young by gathering them under its wings (compare Matt. 23:37); second, a reference to the ark of the covenant with the winged cherubim over it reflecting God's protective presence. The metaphor also occurs in Psalms 17:8 and 36:7 (see also Deut. 32:11; Ruth 2:12; Pss. 57:1; 91:4).

I follow close to youI cling to youMy soul followeth hard after thee (v. 8). *I* is literally, "my soul," but *My soul* refers to the whole person. *Follow closeClingFolloweth hard* uses the word for being "stuck to" or "glued to" or "adhering to" or "clinging to" and describes what disciples are to be—those who stick close to their master, Jesus in the Christian's case. This was on David's part; God's part follows in the next phrase. In spite of David's situation, or perhaps because of David's situation, he still stuck to the Lord (see Ruth 1:14; 2:8,21,23). The word is used in Deuteronomy 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; and 30:20 to describe Israel's intimate relationship with God and remaining faithful to Him. The psalmist declared in Psalm 119:31, "I cling to your decreesI hold fast to your statutesI have stuck unto thy testimonies." *To you* literally is "after you"*After thee*—as if in hot pursuit. Thus it refers to a commitment that will not let go (see also Gen. 2:24; Josh. 22:5; 2 Kings 18:6).

Your right hand upholds on to meThy right hand upholdeth me (v. 8). *Right hand* is metaphorical and an anthropomorphism but was commonly used to refer to the stronger hand or arm (see Pss. 17:7; 18:35; 89:13; 98:1; 118:15; Isa. 41:10; compare also Deut. 33:27). *Holds on to meUpholds meUpholdeth me* so as to protect and to preserve (see Isa. 42:6; Luke 1:51). This is an expression of strong support and was used especially for kings and warriors (Ps. 18:35; Isa. 45:1).

Psalm 63:9-11

Connection to the Point. David acknowledged that God would exercise His justice, and he would be able to stand and rejoice in God.

But those who intend to destroy my lifeThose who want to kill meBut those that seek my soul, to destroy it (v. 9). *But* *Tthose* is emphatic and indicates a strong contrast. Perhaps this refers to those who had joined Absalom's rebellion (see "Background"). *To destroykill*, or "destruction," refers to a downfall with a crash (see Ps. 35:17, "their ravagesdestructions"). Again *my lifeme* is literally "my soul" (*nephesh*), as in verses 1,5, and 8. They *intend to destroywant to killseek* David's life, but it is theirs that will come to destruction instead. The verb *to destroykill* can refer either to David's life or to that of his enemies. Either they were trying to destroy David, or by seeking David's life—that is, by trying to kill David—they were bringing destruction down upon themselves. David then proceeded to describe in vivid terms their destruction—their death and its aftermath—in the next phrases.

Will go into the depths of the earthThey will go down to the depths of the earthShall go into the lower parts of the earth (v. 9). *DepthsLower parts of the earth* could refer to the grave or to the realm of the departed spirits, *sheol* (Pss. 9:17; 55:15; 71:20; 86:13; Isa. 44:23). David looked up to God; his enemies went down *into the depthslower parts*. This is the end reserved for all of God's enemies.

Given over to the power of the swordFall by the sword (v. 10) refers to dying in battle. *The power of the sword* is the weapon of the warrior (Jer. 18:21; Ezek. 35:5). *Given over toFall by*, or "delivered over to," literally is "will be poured out to." Perhaps this refers to their blood being poured out in battle (2 Sam. 14:14). *The sword* is also an administrator of justice (see Isa. 66:16; Rom. 13:4).

They will become a meal for jackalsAnd become food for jackalsThey shall be a portion for foxes (v. 10). This indicates that those who seek David's life but die instead will not be given a decent burial—a

dreadful insult in that time (2 Sam. 21:10-14; 2 Kings 9:10,35-37). Rather, they would be left above ground where beasts and birds had easy access to their bodies. *JackalsFoxes* (also rendered “foxesjackals”) are scavengers and feed on the carcasses larger scavengers have left behind. They also travel in packs. Being a meal for *jackalsfoxes* contrasts the end of the rebels with the rich food God satisfied David with in verse 5 (see Isa. 18:6; Jer. 19:7).

But the king will shall rejoice in God (v. 11). *But* shows this verse stands in strong contrast to the previous verse. *The king* refers to David as the legitimate ruler, not the usurper Absalom and is a reminder that David’s office was established by God Himself (1 Sam. 16:1,12-13; 2 Sam. 7:16,25-29). David spoke of himself in the third person because he was speaking of his office, not merely of his person. *Will Shall rejoice* is as David said in verse 7. *In God* is the focus of David’s rejoicing—the God whose strength and glory he saw in the sanctuary (v. 2) and the God who was his helper and protector (v. 7) and who upheld him (v. 8).

All who swear by him will boast All who swear by God will glory in him Every one that sweareth by him shall glory (v. 11). *All Every*, or “each one,” without any exception. *Sweareth by him God* refers to those who love and worship the Lord. *Will Shall boast glory* is the same word as used in verse 5 rendered “will shall praise” (*hala*). *By him God* (literally, “by him”) grammatically could refer either to the king or to God. While swearing by the king or God both were practiced, even though God commanded Israel to swear only in the name of the Lord (Deut. 6:13), the latter in this context makes more sense. (For swearing by/to the king, see 1 Sam. 17:55; 2 Samuel 11:11; for swearing by the Lord, see Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 2 Chron. 18:15; for swearing by both, see 1 Sam. 25:26.)

The mouths of liars will be shut silenced The mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped (v. 11). *Shut Silenced Stopped* because they were killed. *Liars Them that speak lies*, or “those who speak falsehood,” were those who maligned David and rejected the true God (see Pss. 4:2; 62:4). *Mouths* contrasts those of the liars that will be *shut silenced stopped* with David’s mouth that praised the Lord (v. 5). *Shut Silenced Stopped* is a strong verb and elsewhere used in this form only of the stopping up of the waters from the deep and the sky in Genesis 8:2 after the flood. The Lord opens the mouths for people to praise Him; He shuts the mouths of those who utter and propagate lies. Paul echoed this imagery and wording in Romans 3:19.