

PSALM 63

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 63

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah

This psalm was composed by David, either when he was persecuted by Saul, and obliged to hide himself in desert places, as in the forest of Hareth, the wildernesses of Ziph, Maon, and Engedi, (^{<0215>}1 Samuel 22:5 23:14,24,25 24:1); all which were in the tribe of Judah, (^{<0155>}Joshua 15:55,62); or when his son Absalom rebelled against him, which obliged him to flee from Jerusalem, and go the way of the wilderness, where Ziba and Barzillai sent him food, lest his young men that were with him should faint there, (^{<0153>}2 Samuel 15:23 16:2 17:29). The Septuagint version, and those that follow that, call it the wilderness of Idumea, or Edom, as the Arabic version; and so the Chaldee paraphrase,

“in the wilderness which was on the border of the tribe of Judah;”

as Edom was, (^{<0152>}Joshua 15:21); so the Messiah, David’s son, was in a wilderness, where he was tempted by the devil, and where he was hungry and thirsty in a literal sense, as David was here in a spiritual sense, as the psalm shows, (^{<0001>}Matthew 4:1,2); and the church of God, whom David sometimes represents, is said to be in a wilderness, where she is fed for a time, and times, and half a time, even during the whole reign of the antichristian beast, (^{<0124>}Revelation 12:14); and, indeed, all the saints are, at one time or another, in a desert condition, and while they are here are in the wilderness of the people, (^{<0114>}Hosea 2:14 ^{<0115>}Ezekiel 20:35).

Ver. 1. *O God, thou [art] my God*, etc.] Not by nature only, or by birth; not merely as an Israelite and son of Abraham; but by grace through Christ, and in virtue of an everlasting covenant, the blessings and promises of which were applied unto him; and he, by faith, could now claim his interest in them, and in his God as his covenant God; who is a God at hand and afar off, was his God in the wilderness of Judea, as in his palace at Jerusalem. The Targum is,

“thou art my strength;”

early will I seek thee; or “I will morning thee”^{f834}; I will seek thee as soon as the morning appears; and so the Targum,

“I will arise in the morning before thee;”

it has respect to prayer in the morning, and to seeking God early, and in the first place; (see ^{<90B>}Psalm 5:3 55:17); or “diligently”^{f835}; as a merchant seeks for goodly pearls, or other commodities suitable for him; so Aben Ezra suggests, as if the word was to be derived, not from **rj ç**, “the morning”, but from **rj s**, “merchandise”; and those who seek the Lord both early and diligently shall find him, and not lose their labour, (^{<90B>}Proverbs 2:4,5 8:17 ^{<90B>}Hebrews 11:6);

my soul thirsteth for thee; after his word, worship, and ordinances; after greater knowledge of him, communion with him, and more grace from him; particularly after pardoning grace and justifying righteousness; (see ^{<90B>}Psalm 42:1,2 ^{<90B>}Matthew 5:6); My flesh longeth for thee; which is expressive of the same thing in different words; and denotes, that he most earnestly desired, with his whole self, his heart, soul, and strength, that he might enjoy the presence of God;

in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; such was the wilderness of Judea, where he now was, and where he was destitute of the means of grace, of the ordinances of God’s house, and wanted comfort and refreshment for his soul, which he thirsted and longed after, as a thirsty man after water in a desert place.

Ver. 2. *To see thy power and thy glory*, etc.] Either the ark, as the Jewish writers generally interpret it; the symbol of God’s presence and glory, and which is called his strength and his glory; (see ^{<90B>}Psalm 78:61 132:8); or rather the Lord Christ, who is the power of God, as well as the wisdom of God; by whom he made the world, and upholds it; by whom he has redeemed his people, and keeps and preserves them; and whose power is seen in the efficacy of the word and ordinances: and who is also the glory of God; he is the brightness of his Father’s glory; his glory is the glory as of the only begotten of the Father; he has the same glorious nature, perfections, names, homage, and worship; and the glory of all the divine attributes is displayed in the work of salvation and redemption he has wrought out; and this glory is to be seen, through the glass of the word and ordinances, in the house of God. Hence it follows;

so [as] I have seen thee in the sanctuary; where he comes and blesses his people, and manifests himself unto them, as he does not unto the world; where his goings are seen, and his footsteps traced, (^{398b}Psalm 68:24). The psalmist calls to mind former experiences in the sanctuary; and these stimulate him to an eager desire of fresh tastes of the grace of God, and clearer views of his power and glory. Or, as in a dry and thirsty land my soul longed and thirsted for time, so have I desired to see thee in the sanctuary; or so I see thee there as if in the sanctuary.

Ver. 3. *Because thy lovingkindness [is] better than life*, etc.] For life without the love of God is nothing else than death: a man that has no share in the love of God is dead while he lives; all the enjoyments of life, health, riches, honour, friends, etc. are nothing without the love of God; the meanest temporal blessings with it are preferable to the greatest without it, (³¹⁵⁷Proverbs 15:17); it lasts longer than life, and therefore must be better than that; death cannot separate from it; it continues to all eternity. And that the saints prefer it to this natural life appears by their readiness to lay it down for the sake of Christ and his Gospel, in which the lovingkindness of God is so richly manifested unto them; to which may be added, that it is the love of God which gives to his people spiritual life, and which issues in eternal life, and therefore must be better than a temporal one. The Targum is,

“for better is thy kindness, which thou wilt do for the righteous in the world to come, than the life which thou givest the wicked in this world;”

my lips shall praise thee; that is, for thy lovingkindness, and because it is better than life, and any enjoyment of it.

Ver. 4. *Thus will I bless thee while I live*, etc.] With his whole heart and soul, as he had sought after him, and as under a sense of his lovingkindness; and as he now praised him with his lips, so he determined to do as long as he had life and being; by proclaiming his blessedness, by ascribing blessing and honour to him, and by giving him the glory of all mercies temporal and spiritual;

I will lift up my hands in thy name; not against his enemies, against those that fought against him, as Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it, but unto God in heaven; and that not as a gesture used in swearing, but either in blessing, as Aben Ezra observes; so the high priest lifted up his hands when

he blessed the people; or in prayer, or in both, so Jarchi's note is, to pray and to praise; (see Gill on "^{438P}Psalm 28:2"). The Targum is,

"in the name of thy Word I will spread out my hands in prayer for the world to come;"

that is, in the name of the Messiah, the essential Word, in whose name prayer is to be made, and whereby it becomes prevalent and successful; (see ^{441B}John 14:13,14 16:23,24,26). This is a prayer gesture; (see Gill on "^{438P}Psalm 28:2").

Ver. 5. *My soul shall be satisfied as [with] marrow and fatness*, etc.]

When he should return to the house of the Lord, and partake of the provisions of it, called the fatness of his house, (see Gill on "^{438B}Psalm 36:8"). The phrase denotes the abundance of spiritual refreshment and delight in the word and ordinances, and the great satisfaction had in them; and may have some regard to benefits arising from prayer, as well as other ordinances. Fat was not to be eaten under the legal dispensation, and therefore not to be literally taken; but in the typical and spiritual sense which David understood, and therefore respects that, or otherwise he would speak contrary to the law of God: he refers to those spiritual good things which they typified, and give spiritual pleasure and satisfaction;

and my mouth shall praise [thee] with joyful lips; such a full meal, such a rich entertainment, calls for abundant thankfulness; which is here signified by the mouth praising the Lord, and doing this with lips of shouting, expressions of joy, songs of praise, jubilee songs. The allusion is to the use of music and singing at festivals; (see ^{236D}Isaiah 5:12).

Ver. 6. *When I remember thee upon my bed*, etc.] Or "beds" ^{f836}; seeing he lay in many, as Kimchi observes, being obliged to flee from place to place. The sense is, that when he was on his bed in the night season, when alone, and free from worldly cares and fatigues, and called to mind the love of God to him, the past experience of his kindness, his promises to him, and the fulfilment of them: that he should then be delightfully entertained, abundantly satisfied, slid his mouth be filled with songs of praise;

[and] meditate on thee in the [night] watches; which the Jewish writers on the text say were three, as they were with the Jews, but with the Romans four; (see Gill on "^{404E}Matthew 14:25"); and the night, in the times of Homer ^{f837}, was divided into three parts: the night season is a very proper one for meditation on the perfections, providences, promises, word and

works of God; and which is very delightful and profitable, when attended with the presence, Spirit, and grace of God. The Targum is,

“in the watches I will meditate on thy word.”

Ver. 7. *Because thou hast been my help*, etc.] Or, “that thou hast been my help”^{f838}; and so the words may be considered as the subject of his meditation in the night watches, at least as a part of it; and as what gave him a great deal of pleasure to reflect upon, how the Lord had been in times past a present help to him in time of trouble;

therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice; meaning under the protecting power of God, where he knew he was safe, and therefore had reason to rejoice. The allusion is to the chirping of chickens under the wing of the hen; (see ^{<1950>}Psalm 57:1 61:4). The Targum is,

“in the shadow of thy Shechinah will I rejoice;”

referring it may be to the Shechinah, or presence of God, between the cherubim, whose wings overshadowed the mercy seat.

Ver. 8. *My soul followeth hard after thee*, etc.] In a way of duty, and in the use of means; as prayer, meditation, etc. though at a distance from the house of God, and worship of it; that he might not lose sight of him; that he might know more of him, and have more communion with him; being drawn after him with the cords of love, and strongly affected to him. Or, “my soul cleaveth after thee”, or “to thee”^{f839}; not to the world, and the things of it; not to that which is evil, but to that which is good, even the “summum bonum”; not to the creature, but to the Lord; which is expressive of union to him, even such an one as is between man and wife, who cleave to each other, and are one flesh, (^{<1024>}Genesis 2:24); and as is between head and members, vine and branches; (see ^{<1017>}1 Corinthians 6:17); and of communion in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty. To cleave to the Lord into hold to him, the head; to exercise the graces of faith, hope, and love upon him; and to follow him in his ways and worship; to abide by his truths; to attend his ordinances; to keep close to his people, and to adhere firmly to his cause and interest; (see ^{<1123>}Acts 11:23). The Targum is,

“my soul cleaveth after thy law;”

thy right hand upholdeth me; that he fell not through the snares laid for him, and the stumbling blocks thrown in his way; that he stood and bore up under all his afflictions, temptations, and difficulties; that he was enabled to follow hard after the Lord, and cleave unto him; this supported, supplied, and protected him, even the mighty power and grace of God. In what a happy, comfortable, and safe condition must the psalmist be! his soul following hard after the Lord; and the Lord holding and sustaining him with his right hand! and how vain must be the attempts of his enemies against him! whose destruction is next predicted.

Ver. 9. *But those [that] seek my soul to destroy it*, etc.] Meaning his life; for as for his soul, that was immaterial and immortal, and could never be destroyed by man: but as for his natural life, his enemies laid snares for that, and sought to take it away, and nothing less would satisfy them;

shall go into the lower parts of the earth; not the grave, whither the righteous go as well as the wicked; besides, by their being the portion of foxes, as follows, it seems that they should have no burial; but hell is meant, the bottomless pit. Some take it to be a prayer, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; “may they go”, or “let them go”, etc. (see ^{<6815>}Psalm 55:15). The allusion may be thought to be to the death of Korah and his company.

Ver. 10. *They shall fall by the sword*, etc.] As Saul, his sons, and mighty men, did, (^{<0810>}1 Samuel 31:4-6); or, “they shall make him pour out” ^{f840}; that is, his blood, “by the hands” or “[means] of the sword”; meaning either some principal enemy, as Saul in particular, or everyone of his enemies; who should be thrust with the sword, their blood let out, and they slain: so antichrist, the enemy of David’s son, will be put to death in this manner, (^{<6630>}Revelation 13:10);

they shall be a portion for foxes; falling in desolate places where foxes run, and so become the food of them, and have no other burial. The foxes hunt after dead carcasses, and will find them out where they are, in holes and ditches; as appears from the case of Aristomenes, related by Pausanias ^{f841}: so the followers of antichrist, their flesh will be eaten by the fowls of heaven, (^{<6617>}Revelation 19:17,18).

Ver. 11. *But the king shall rejoice in God*, etc.] Not Saul, as R. Obadiah; as if David wished him well, and that he might have reason to rejoice in God, though he sought his hurt; which sense is rejected by Aben Ezra: but either David, who speaks of himself as king, being anointed by Samuel, and

who, upon the death of Saul, was so in fact; and who rejoiced, not merely at the destruction of his enemies, for he lamented the death of Saul, (^{<3017>}2 Samuel 1:17); but in God, in his grace and goodness to him, and in his power and justice shown in the vengeance taken on them. Or rather, the King Messiah, who rejoiced in God because of the good of his people, their conversion and salvation, and their deliverance from their enemies, (^{<1910>}Psalm 21:1 ^{<2101>}Luke 10:21);

everyone that sweareth by him shall glory; not by David, though such a form of swearing was used; (see ^{<1051>}2 Samuel 15:21); or, “to him”: and so describes his faithful subjects swearing allegiance to him: but rather by the Lord, in whom the king should rejoice; and designs the worshippers of him; swearing by him being sometimes put for the whole worship and service of God, (^{<1613>}Deuteronomy 6:13). The Heathens used to swear by their deities, and their chief was called Jupiter Horcius, because he presided over oaths ^{f842}. Or else that the King Christ should rejoice in God; and intends such as believe in him and confess him; (see ^{<2453>}Isaiah 45:23), compared with (^{<5141>}Romans 14:11). And every such an one will glory, not in themselves, nor in anything of theirs, but in Christ, in his grace and righteousness, and in what he is unto them;

but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped; such as Saul’s courtiers, who invented and spread lies of David; but now upon the death of Saul, and David’s advancement to the throne, would be silent; their mouths being stopped either by death, or through fear: and so all the followers of antichrist, that make and believe a lie, will have their mouths stopped, when cast into the lake of fire, (^{<6108>}Revelation 21:8).