

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 4/18/93 PM  
Psalm 63 "The Barren Times of Life"

**Intro:**

Game: "Who Am I?"

I hurt my dad severely. I had no reason to, for my dad loved me dearly. He gave me everything a son could ever desire. He gave me more than enough material possessions. He gave me love. He gave me an excellent example of godliness. But I despised him. In fact, I tried to kill him. I disgraced the family name by committing a gross immoral act. I was a good looking fellow. In fact, that in part led to my downfall. In addition to being proud and self-centered, I was kind of vain. I prided myself in my appearance, especially my full head of hair. It was that head of hair that cost me my life.

Who am I? My name is Absalom.

Tonight we want to study a passage from God's Word that indirectly involved Absalom. His name is not mentioned in the text. Yet quite likely he played a part. The text is Psalm 63. The title, "The Barren Times of Life."

We are continuing our mini-series, "How To Experience the Presence of God in Your Life." We've looked at Psalm 1, Psalm 15, and Psalm 54.

Last week we asked the question, "Where do you turn when you need help?" Psalm 54 showed us where David turned when he faced a predicament early in his life. He had father-in-law problems with King Saul. Saul tried to kill him. And David's own people, the Ziphites from the tribe of Judah, conspired with Saul to trap David. God intervened. And David could say, "God is my helper."

Notice the heading over Ps 63.

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

You might be inclined to think that David wrote this Psalm when he went through his desert encounter with Saul and the Ziphites. I did. But there's one problem. V 11 indicates that David was already king when he penned Ps 63.

Q: When in David's life, after he became king, did he flee to the wilderness of Judah? When did he go through a barren experience that prompted him to write Ps 63?

A: David probably wrote Ps 63 when he fled from his son Absalom.

Talk about a barren time in his life! To have your father-in-law hate you, and try to kill you is one thing. But to have your own son trying to snuff out your life! That's exactly what Absalom did. Absalom was a brash, cocky young man. All he could think of was himself. He actually stirred up his dad's friends against him. He committed treason against his dad so he himself could take over as king. He rallied the troops to kill his dad. He flaunted himself immorally to disgrace his dad.

How David's heart was broken! He left the palace in Jerusalem, and fled for his life. Guess where he went? He hid in a cave in the barren wilderness of Judah (II Sam 15:23; 17:9, 29). David went through a "barren time." One of the most barren times of his life.

Q: What do you do in the barren times of life? What should we do to experience God's presence when we feel like our world is crumbling?

**Proposition: Tonight, we want to see from David's example in Psalm 63 what to do in the barren times of life. I see David exhibiting 3 steps of faith.**

I. Thirst for God (1-4).

Reason: God is my Desire.

1. I will seek Thee early (1).
2. My soul thirsts for Thee (1).
3. My flesh longs for Thee (1).
4. My lips shall praise Thee (3).
5. I will bless Thee (4).
6. I will lift up my hands in Thy Name (4).

II. Think of God (5-8).

Reason: God is my Delight.

III. Trust in God (9-11).

Reason: God is my Defense.

Q: What do you do in the barren times of life?

David certainly was at rock bottom. When he wrote this psalm, he was a man in his 50's or 60's (?). In his life, he'd gone from being an obscure shepherd and 8th son of Jesse, to reigning as the king of Israel. He'd heard the cheers of the crowds when he killed Goliath, and when he routed all the other enemies of Israel. But those memories couldn't erase the pain of this barren time. He was alone. He was forsaken. He was barren.

Listen. David could have had a pity party. He could have moped. But he didn't. Do you know what he did?

Here's his first step of faith. When in a barren time, thirst for God.

**I. Thirst for God (1-4).**

**Reason: God is my Desire.**

Vv 1-4 "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsts..."

Illust: Slides of barren terrain in Palestine

In the barren time, David thirsted for his God. When I say barren time, I mean that literally. David felt the scorching wilderness heat of the parched Judean desert. The arid climate zapped the moisture right out of his skin. He was physically enduring a barren furnace. Not to mention the emotional barrenness he endured as the result of his predicament.

Q: What did David do?

A: He said, "I thirst for God!" Why? Because God is my desire!

Ps 63 will make no sense to us if we miss the first phrase.

V 1 "O God, Thou art my God."

Whether the times are barren or blissful, David could say with confidence, "O God, you are MY God." You are MY God. Not my parent's God. Not my priest's God. Not my friend's God. You are MY God. You see, David had a personal relationship with God. By faith, He had come to grips with his sin, had repented, had trusted his life to God. You are MY God.

Quote: In his classic commentary on the Psalms, "The Treasury of David," Charles Spurgeon gives us some tremendous insights into this Psalm. I'll be quoting him several times tonight. He remarked about this phrase, "How can I seek another man's God? But it is with arden desire that I seek after Him whom I know to be my own."

David thirsted for God. I am intrigued by the language David used to express His thirst.

Q: What does a man who thirsts after God do?

A: Let's look at the words that describe his spiritual aspirations.

1. I will seek Thee early (1). (NIV "earnestly")

Spurgeon suggested that the distinguishing word of this psalm is "early."

Quote: Spurgeon (65), "When the bed is softest we are most tempted to rise at lazy hours; but when comfort is gone, and the couch is hard, if we rise the earlier to seek the Lord, we have much for which to thank the wilderness."

Do you see David's fervor, his eagerness. EARLY will I seek Thee. "Early" has to do not only with the time of day, but with the sense of urgency and priority David placed on his time with God.

Quote: Spurgeon, David "will not wait for noon or the cool eventide; he is up a cockcrowing to meet his God. Communion with God is so sweet that the chill of the morning is forgotten, and the luxury of the couch is despised. The morning is the time for dew and freshness...He who truly longs for God longs for Him now."

This description makes me think of Christ's

2. My soul thirsts for Thee (1).

Thirst is a powerful drive.

Ps 43:1 "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after Thee, O God."

3. My flesh longs for Thee (1).

God was David's food and drink.

4. My lips shall praise Thee (3).

David resolved to praise God. In fact, David displaced his grief with praise. Friends, praise is essential if we are to prosper in our spiritual life.

Q: Do you know how to praise God?

5. I will bless Thee (4).

6. I will lift up my hands in Thy Name (4).

Wow! David had a tremendous passion for God. The barren time illumined his thirst for God.

Application:

Q: Did you ever notice how the "barren times" of life force us to take a hard look at our priorities? When our world caves in, we stop and take inventory. As a pastor, I find that its the crises that bring people to seek spiritual direction.

Illust:

One question a barren time forces us to wrestle with is this...

Q: Is my relationship with God the #1 priority in my life?

David's barren time clarified his passion. He thirsted for God. Do you?

Challenge: One of the great challenges David offers us in Ps 63 is to make personal worship of God a daily priority in our lives. Friends, I know of no exceptions. Strong Christians are those who make the worship of God a daily priority in their lives. Spending time fellowshiping with God through His Word and prayer are not chores, but delights as natural as breakfast, lunch, and supper.

Q: Is personal worship a daily priority in your life?

Illust:

Tran: What should we do in the barren times of life? From David's example, first, thirst for God.

## **II. Think of God (5-8).**

**Reason: God is my Delight.**

Q: What did David think of God? This--God is my delight!

Vv 5-8 "My soul shall be satisfied..."

One of the great by-products of a barren time in life is this. Barren times almost "force" us to stop and reflect. It's in the tough times we stop and think. In David's case, he thought about God.

Q: Did you notice WHEN David said he thought about God?

V 6 "When I remember thee upon my bed...night watches."

I must confess I dislike it when I can't sleep at night. Don't you? Sherry usually kids me because I fall asleep so quickly. But did you ever stop to consider one of the benefits of a sleepless night. We can think about God with no interruptions!

During the day we're inclined to get busy and forget God. At night, in the silence of the darkness, we can reflect on God.

Q: What things about God came to David's mind during the night watches?

1. David remembered previous Times of Worship (2).

V 2 "as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary"

What was the sanctuary? It was the place of public sacrifice and in Jerusalem. It was where David went to worship God in corporate worship.

When David was in the wilderness, he thought back to times of worship in the sanctuary. Those thoughts refreshed him. Those memories reminded him of the power and glory of God.

Key: Do you know why church attendance is important?

A: Here's one great reason. When we participate in public worship in church, we are storing up memories to help us in the barren times.

Illust:

## 2. David remembered the Help of God (6-7).

Vv 6-7 "When I remember Thee...my help."

This wasn't the first jam David had ever faced. God brought to mind other times he'd faced tough times. And in every case, God had been his help.

Memory is a great thing.

Challenge: Keep a journal. Record the times God works in your life. In a way, that's what the psalms were for David. Personal reflections of the presence and help of God in his life.

Notice the effect these memories had on David.

V 7 "...will I rejoice."

David rejoiced. Remember he's still in the cave in the wilderness. The barren time hasn't changed. What has changed? David's perspective. By thinking of God, his frets turned to joy!

In the barren time, David thought about God. God was his delight.

Q: How well do you know God?

Observation: You can tell whether a person really knows God by watching him/her when adversity hits. Adversity reveals whether a person merely knows "about" God, or genuinely knows God.

Illust:

Tran: What should we do in the barren times? Thirst. Think. And...

### III. Trust in God (9-11).

**Reason: God is my Defense.**

Q: Do you know why David trusted?

A: Because he knew that God was his defense.

Vv 9-11 "But those who seek my soul..."

The enemy was still after him, but David was at peace. He could rejoice because God was his defense.

Just stop and think about the attributes of God David mentions in Ps 63:

#### 1. The Power and Glory of God (2)

2. The Loving-kindness of God (3)
3. The Help of God (7)
4. The Protection of God (7)-- "shadow of Thy wings"
5. The Strength of God (8)
6. The Justice of God (9-10)

David trusted in God. He knew God had called him to be king (11). He also knew that God's plan could not fail. He knew God would deliver him. So he resolved to trust God, and leave the problem with God.

See: Rom 2:4-6

Illust:

Q: What should we do in the barren times of life?

Let's follow David's example. Though he was surrounded by a desert, there was no desert in his heart. Why not? He had learned to: Thirst, think, and trust.

Is the Lord real in your life? In the barren times, we are invited to experience the presence of God in a way we'll never know it in the smooth places.

Quote: Spurgeon, "Life is dear, but God's love is dearer. To dwell with God is better than life at its best; Life at ease, in a palace, in health, in honor, in wealth, in pleasure; yea, a thousand lives are not equal to the eternal life which abides in Jehovah's smile." (66)