

The Gospel According to the Psalms

Psalm 63 – A Fountain in the Wilderness

Faith Church of Linden

By Daniel Patz on August 16, 2026

Introduction

Psalm 63 is truly beautiful. It is personal and passionate, and it is deeply relevant to our faith — to the quality of relationship we have with God. That relationship is so important, so vital, and so often lacking in modern Christianity.

We are still in the Alps of the Psalms — some of its most beautiful peaks. Psalms 61, 62, and 63 sit together as three summits for those of us in the valley, showing us God's beauty and grace as a refuge, a fortress, the Rock who lifts the overwhelmed and fainting soul.

Now we come to Psalm 63, and we find David in the wilderness. The title tells us it is the wilderness of Judah, though we are not told exactly which season of David's life this was. He may have been fleeing from Saul, as we read in 1 Samuel, or from his own son Absalom, as we read in 2 Samuel. Verse 11 speaks of "the king," which points us toward the latter — David already reigning when he wrote this. What a heart-troubling time that was. David loved his son. He may well have carried some of the guilt of how he raised him. And now he is leaving the city, leaving the fellowship and worship of God's house, running for his life as his own son seeks to destroy him. We should feel the weight of that as we read — and yet, in the middle of it, David lifts his eyes to the Lover of his soul, the One he has known and trusted for so long.

And Jesus, too, was in the wilderness of Judea — tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). We must never stop looking for Christ when we read these

psalms. We are meant to see Him here, and to pray these psalms as those united to Him.

This is a psalm for a weary soul in the wilderness. This is a psalm for a troubled, even guilt-carrying saint who has tasted God's goodness and loves Him, and yet still feels the pursuit of sin and Satan and the enemy in this world. This is a psalm for those who are in Christ Jesus and have the fountain of life David speaks of in this song.

This is a song about a fountain of Christ's love in the wilderness. We can come to this table and eat this song as though it were a feast. We can drink of it as though it were a fountain flowing in the desert. We can be truly saved and still find ourselves dry, cold, hungry — remembering what it was to be satisfied in God's love, and feeling instead empty, disturbed, needy. This is a love song from a worshiper who has tasted God's goodness and longs for it again.

There are eleven verses in this psalm, and most commentaries disagree on how to organize it. Let me bring it to you as four movements of a single soul — longing, satisfied, fixed, and assured.

1. A Longing Soul (vv. 1–2)

- 1 *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.*
- 2 *So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.*

He longs for a drink — but not of water. Of God.

Here he desires God — to use John Piper's phrase, he is a man who desires God. He has tasted God's goodness and power, verse 2 tells us, and His steadfast love, verse 3 tells us — and he knows it is better than life.

God and His steadfast love — better than life.

This is His hesed: God's goodness to His people, never-ending and perfect. He is perfectly wise, and His timing is impeccable. He is able to work ten thousand things at once in our lives — and in everyone else's — and He is loving, and He works it all perfectly.

What seems to make the wilderness the wilderness for David — and for any hungry soul — is not first the danger around him, or the people who want him dead, though that is truly part of his wilderness here. It is this: he is away from God. And yet, even here, cut off from the sanctuary, he finds God as he fixes his attention on Him.

Are you in the wilderness? Ask yourself honestly: do you feel far from God? Do you hunger for Him and feel starved? Do you desire Him — or, at the very least, do you desire to desire Him? Is this only for David, or only for Jesus — or can we say it too: "O God, you are my God, I long for you"? I don't desire You like I ought, but I do desire You. I desire to desire You.

John Piper puts the diagnosis plainly: "If you do not feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world."

This man is in the wilderness, and yet he rejoices with great joy — not because he hopes to gain something material, but because he has God Himself. He knows his greatest need is to drink from the fountain of Christ's love.

You might be in a wilderness of relationship problems, or financial stress, or the wilderness of wounds caused by others. Maybe you are broken by mental illness or bodily pain — both can be disabling, and both can feel like a wilderness experience, where you are lost and needing nourishment for life.

I want to make this practical: it is not enough to have obtained something called salvation and stop there. A professing Christian who has never tasted, never grown, never been satisfied in Him has not yet begun to live what this psalm describes. Salvation is the door — this longing, this tasting, this satisfaction is the house we are meant to live in.

Our greatest need — whether we are in the desert or in a land flowing with milk and honey — is God, and God alone, and His steadfast love. His steadfast love is never-ending, perfect goodness to us in Christ Jesus.

The **opposite** of this is a soul not longing for God at all — apathetic to the things of God, longing instead for something else. It is distracted, focused on vanity. It is a heart that is cold and dead.

David is not alone in this longing. Listen to the same cry throughout the Psalms: “As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1). “My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD” (Psalm 84:2). “I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land” (Psalm 143:6). “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD” (Psalm 27:4). This longing is not unique to David — it is the native language of every soul that has truly tasted God.

David has found God, and still he pursues Him. As Tozer said it, “To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul’s paradox of love.” That paradox carries us into the next movement of the psalm.

2. A Satisfied Soul (vv. 3–5)

3 *Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.*

4 *So I will bless you as long as I live;
in your name I will lift up my hands.*

*5 My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,*

A praising soul runs through this whole psalm, and especially through this section. A satisfied soul — an enjoying soul — is a praising soul. We praise what we enjoy. David has tasted God's goodness and power and love, and he knows that experiencing it is more satisfying than the richest feast we could ever sit down to: "My soul will be satisfied as with rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips."

And satisfaction like this does not stay quiet. Verse 4 — "So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands" — this is satisfaction turning into zeal. Not a fleeting feeling but a whole-life commitment: as long as I live, hands lifted, praise given. A soul that has truly tasted does not merely feel something; it resolves something.

He knows that God, and His love, are better than life itself. It is better to die enjoying His lovingkindness than to live without it. In the middle of the desert, David recalls and meditates — we will see this in the next section — and in doing so, from far away, he feasts even while he is in the desert. The fountain of life is Christ's love.

Christ's love is what satisfies us. We find many temporary, shadow satisfactions in this life — relationships, marriage, food, drink, recreation, good books, leisure, friendship, and so much more. They bring a level of satisfaction, but they are only shadows next to the satisfaction that comes from knowing, experientially, the love of God in Christ Jesus.

This is a **relational satisfaction**, not a satisfaction in what God gives but in God Himself. Psalm 16 says it this way: "I say to the LORD, You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you" (Psalm 16:2). "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). Add to that Psalm 73 — "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire

besides you... God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:25–26) — and Psalm 4:7, “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.” This satisfaction is perfect and lasting, because it is satisfaction in a Person, not merely in what that Person provides.

Jesus knew this. His fellowship with the Father sustained Him on earth, and in John 17 He prays that we would have that same closeness with the Father and the Son. Jesus is the true fountain — He says so Himself: whoever is thirsty may come to Him and drink, and He gives real life (John 7:37–38). He gives us His Spirit, and it changes everything.

I wonder where you are today. Are you finding your satisfaction in Christ and His steadfast love? You may be saved — but are you content just to stay there? He wants you to know Him, personally, His love and care for you. That care is seen uniquely in the desert, in the trials and afflictions of our lives.

A **soul not satisfied in God** and His love is seeking it elsewhere — pursuing counterfeit joys, discontent in God and what He brings, fretting, selfish, insecure, and miserable for it, and discouraged.

3. A Fixed Soul (vv. 6–8)

6 *when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;*

7 *for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.*

8 *My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.*

These divisions are not sharp; they overlap into one another. But here we see a soul fixed on God. In verse 6, he remembers and meditates on God

in the middle of the night. It is continuous — he sought God at the day's first light, and he seeks Him still in the night watches.

His soul clings to God (v. 8). This is the reason he can be in the desert — thirsty, and yet also, somehow, satisfied. He longs to be back in the temple, enjoying God's power and glory and love in the place appointed for it — but he is able to tap into that same power and glory and love now, as he meditates on and clings to and fixes himself on God in Christ.

This is so important for us to understand: we fix our souls on God, knowing that even this is not, finally, how we are kept in His love. What matters more is that His right hand upholds us (v. 8). He holds us, and we are secure. John 10 tells us the Shepherd holds on to us, and no one can pluck us from His hand. Nothing separates us from the love of God in Christ Jesus — why? Because Jesus is holding fast to us. We work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who is at work in us, to will and to do His good pleasure. He who began a good work in us will bring it to completion. We lay hold of Him — because He holds us firmly first.

Oh, that we would fix our meditation, our attention, everything we are, on God in Christ Jesus, today and forever. This happens in prayer. It happens in our promises and vows and commitments and decisions. It is why we gather as a people to worship corporately — because our minds and hearts must be fixed on Him. It is why we discipline ourselves to pray and read the Bible — because in Scripture we see and remember what He has done, and it is from Scripture that our faith is stirred to believe in His love.

Are you fixed on Him and His word? Are you strengthened, knowing that He has been our help, and that under the shadow of His wings we sing for joy? A fixed soul ultimately becomes a satisfied soul — one that rejoices and sings.

Isaiah promises, “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you” (Isaiah 26:3). The psalmist says, “My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast!” (Psalm 57:7), and again, “His heart is firm, trusting in the LORD... his heart is steady; he will not be afraid” (Psalm 112:7–8). Paul tells us to “set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:1–2). A fixed soul is not a passive soul — it is a soul actively set, again and again, on the same unmoving object.

A **soul not fixed on God** is a soul blowing in the wind — lazy, passive, susceptible to moods and feelings and the attacks of Satan, with no enjoyment of God’s personal love and care and answered prayer.

4. An Assured Soul (vv. 9–11)

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

Last, we see a soul that has been changed by drinking from this fountain of life, this steadfast love. A soul fixed on His love, having hungered and gone to Him, is an assured soul.

He is assured that his enemies, who want to destroy him, will instead be destroyed. He is assured that God will keep him and protect him to the end. He is assured that God will fulfill His promises, and that his enemies — not he — will be put to shame. We see Christ pictured here too — those who sought to destroy the Greater David were, in the end, themselves

destroyed. Sin, death, and the accuser were defeated at the cross and the empty tomb.

The king rejoices in God even while still in the wilderness, because he knows God is faithful, and that His steadfast love is better than life. He could be in the cave of affliction and still know that light is breaking in — that his darkness is short, because God never fails. All who swear by Him will not be disappointed but will exult in praise, for the mouths of God's enemies will be stopped — the boasting and taunting of Satan and all his minions silenced.

Our assurance is founded on the love of God in Christ Jesus. Consider Romans 8:31, 38–39: “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?... For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” God being for us means God's steadfast love — His goodness, perfect and everlasting, toward us in Christ Jesus. This is the ground of our assurance over every enemy, and of the crown of life that is coming to us. We are assured because God holds fast to us, and He is good to us. His steadfast love.

Believer, this is our only comfort — in life and in death. “Q. What is your only comfort in life and death? A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with His precious blood, and has set me free from all the power of the devil. He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him.”

The **soul that is not assured** by God's love is given to panic, distraction, and doubt — easily surrendering to the enemy, giving up, and dishonoring the Lord.

John gives us the same ground: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Paul begins the very next chapter after his own steadfast-love passage by declaring, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). And with Paul we can say, "I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Conclusion

If you are here today, and you have a belief in God but cannot say "my God," you need to hear this. No one can say "my God" apart from first realizing how far we are from Him, and how much we need a Savior to bring us near. That Savior is Jesus Christ. He is God, and He is man, and He alone saves. He saves us from our sin and from hell, and He brings us into the family of God. He brings us into relationship — and this, too, is His steadfast love. This love continues, and as we come to know Him, we find ourselves longing for Him, satisfied in Him, fixed on Him, and assured in Him.

I call you to this today. I welcome you, in Jesus's name, to Him who is the fountain of life. He and His love are offered to you in the gospel. You may feel that you are in a wilderness — there is life offered to you here.

Everyone without Christ is in a wilderness; the trouble is, most do not know it. They are blind to it until He opens their eyes and gives them sight of their need. Jesus says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." You need to know that you are thirsty. And He will give you life eternal, and it will change everything.