

PSALM SIXTY-TWO AND SIXTY-THREE

not sought power; through prophetic channels it had sought him (1 Sam. 16) and been confirmed to him (2 Sam. 7). It is especially life-like, as if with a bright gleam of Davidic inspiration, that the thought of *power* bestowed should be coupled with an appreciation of the *kindness* that moved to the gift (cp. 2 Sam. 7:15 w. Isa. 55:3); and, if any little stroke were wanting to make it seem the more natural, it might be found in the irregularity of suddenly passing from speaking of God to the speaking to God; and *thine, Sovereign Lord, is kindness!* It appears to come warm from a heart accustomed to sun itself in "the kindness of God" (Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Kindness") Remarkable, too, it is, that *judgment* should be logically linked with *kindness*—of course it is "vindicatory righteousness" (cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Righteousness") which is chiefly prominent in such cases. Still, it is a precious association of ideas; and it is extremely satisfactory that it is, as clothed with such an association, that the closing words of this psalm meet with such an extended response, as our numerous references reveal, throughout the Bible.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Once again read the historical setting of David's experience in exile—II Sam. 18:1-33. How shall we relate this psalm to this period of time.
2. Who is pictured as a "leaning wall" or a "tottering fence?"
3. David is waiting in silent exile while God works out His will through the rebellion of David's beloved son Absalom. What quality of character would be developed by this experience?
4. Anxiety and worry are the root of many ills—name several. The antidote is found in this psalm—apply it!
5. Men trust in so many false gods—name several as noticed in verses nine and ten.

P S A L M 63

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

A Banished Soul, Athirst for God, Anticipates
Satisfaction and Vindication.

STUDIES IN PSALMS

ANALYSIS

Stanza I., ver. 1, The Psalmist Avows and Describes his Longing for God. Stanza II., vers. 2, 3, He Traces it back to Sanctuary-worship. Stanza III., vers. 4-8, He Promises himself a Life of Glad, Satisfying and Trustful Devotion. Stanza IV., vers. 9, 10, His Enemies, he foresees, are Doomed to Destruction. Stanza V., ver. 11, His Own Joy Anticipates that of Others over the Divine Silencing of Falsehood.

(Lm.) A Psalm—By David—

When he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

- 1 O God! my GOD art thou—I earnestly seek thee:¹
thirsty for thee is my soul faint for thee is my flesh,
in² a land that is dry and weary for want of water.
- 2 Thus in the sanctuary gained I vision of thee
to see thy power and thy glory.
- 3 Because better is thy kindness than life
my lips shall extol³ thee.
- 4 Thus will I bless thee while I live,
in thy name will I uplift mine open hands:
- 5 As with fatness and richness shall my soul be satisfied,
and with lips of jubilation⁴ shall my mouth utter praises.
- 6 If I remember thee on my couch
in the night-watches will I talk to myself of thee.
- 7 Because thou hast become a succour to me
therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I tarry.⁵
- 8 My soul hath come clinging to thee,
on me hath laid hold thy right-hand.
- 9 Since they unto ruin seek for my life⁶
they shall enter into the lowest parts of the earth:⁷
- 10 He shall be given⁸ over to the power of the sword,
the portion of jackals shall they become.
- 11 But the king will rejoice in God:

1. Or: "I long for thee."

2. Some cod. (w. Syr.): "like"—Gn.

3. Or: "laud"—as in 117:1, 145:4.

4. "Uttering ringing cries"—Dr.

5. So *Gt.*, Gn. M.T.: "ring out my joy."

6. U.: "soul."

7. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Hades."

8. *Ml.*: "they will give him"—perh. "they," the unseen agents of providence, as in *Lk.* 12:20.

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every one who sweareth by Him will glory,
for the mouth of such as speak falsehood shall be stopped.

(Lm.) To the Chief Musician.

PARAPHRASE

PSALM 63

(A Psalm of David when he was hiding in the wilderness of Judea.)

O God, my God! How I search for You! How I thirst for You in this parched and weary land where there is no water! How I long to find You!

2 How I wish I could go into Your sanctuary to see Your strength and glory!

3 For Your love and kindness are better to me than life itself. How I praise You!

4 I will bless You as long as I live, lifting up my hands to You in prayer.

5 At last I shall be fully satisfied; I will praise You with great joy!

6 I lie awake at night thinking of You—

7 Of how much You have helped me—and how I rejoice through the night beneath the protecting shadow of Your wings.

8 I follow close behind You, protected by Your strong right arm.

9 But those plotting to destroy me shall go down to the depths of hell.

10 They are doomed to die by the sword, to become the food of jackals.

11 But I¹ will rejoice in God! All who trust in Him exult, while liars shall be silenced.

EXPOSITION

This is a psalm to be experienced rather than expounded. Apart from experience it seems unreal. It has but little framework to sustain it, though what little there is helps us to get to the inner sense. The king is in banishment, passing through a dry and weary land—probably the northern border of the wilderness of Judah, on his way to the Jordan. Had his mind been moving on a lower level than at present, he would naturally

1. Literally, "the king."

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have lamented his absence from the sanctuary, and longed to return. But, for the time, he is borne up to a higher altitude. He has brought with him *a vision* of God, obtained in *sanctuary-worship*, but outliving it. He has brought with him an assurance, that "the God of vision" there, is still with him here; ready, even under these altered circumstances, to verify the foregoing vision, by revealing his *strength* to sustain him here in the wilderness, and his *glory* to bring him home again.

God's *kindness* has been seen in his life, but it is felt to be *better than life*; and therefore shall call forth abiding praise. He has begun a life of praise, and banishment cannot silence his praise: he will keep on praising *as long as he lives*. His *lips* shall make the welkin ring: here, in the open, he will solemnly *lift up his hands* in prayer, and so find a new and larger sanctuary under the spacious dome of heaven.

Such worship will not be barren. *His soul* will be *fed to satisfaction*, and *his lips* in *jubilant* strains will break forth anew. The night may come on, and its shadows close him in as he reclines on his tent-bed; but he will not be alone. Should he awake in the night, and inviting theme of meditation will await him, even the inspiring theme of his ever-present God of kindness—a theme he can never exhaust; it will move him to soliloquy, perchance entice him to song.

A sense of safety will encompass him. He will be *under the shadow* of *Divine wings*, and there will he *tarry*. He thus speaks, not as to an absent God: *My soul hath come clinging to thee*. Not in vain, does he thus come: *On me hath laid hold thy right hand*.

This is the glory of the psalm: that the worshipper brings his sanctuary with him—his thoughts, his feelings, his trust are filled with God. To this extent it is a psalm for all time—for every dispensation—for every place—in assembly or out of it—at home or abroad—in prosperity or adversity. It may be an ecstasy, but it is real, and bears abiding fruit. Such an ecstasy would appear all the more astonishing were we to suppose that it was experienced on occasion of his restoration from his terrible fall; and yet it is in that direction that the time-indication points. The psalmist may soon have to descend to a lower level, but the mountain heights will leave precious memories behind. The valley cannot swallow up the mountain.

In truth, the last two stanzas of this psalm may in a general way serve a useful purpose. As Bp. Perowne well says: "We

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pass all at once into a different atmosphere. We have come down, as it were, from the mount of holy aspirations, into the common everyday world, where human enemies are struggling, and human passions are strong. Yet this very transition, harsh as it is, gives us a wonderful sense of reality. In some respects it brings the psalm nearer to our own level."

Still, we must remember, that "the common everyday world" of the psalmist was not quite the same as ours. Our lives are not in continual danger, as was his life; nor are we warranted to assume that the doom of our enemies will be their consignment to the lowest hades, the finding of their way thither through the terrors of the battlefield. Nevertheless, our own joy is enhanced by *the joy of every righteous king who rejoices in God*; and whether, like our Lord, we accept of an oath-taking which we cannot prevent, and "swear not at all" of our own free will, or like the ancient Hebrews and the Apostle Paul sometimes voluntarily solemnly swear by God,—this at least may furnish us with a prospect to *glory in: that the mouth of such as speak falsehood shall sooner or later be stopped, and truth be triumphant.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The longing of David's heart for God is such an example for all men of all time. Discuss how such a desire is developed.
2. Into what "sanctuary" did David go? How did he there behold the strength and glory of God? What part of the meeting house is the sanctuary?
3. Please discuss in a very practical sense how the steadfast love of God is better than life. Read verse three.
4. Have we ever in our so-called "more enlightened age" found the complete satisfaction in God that David did? Discuss.
5. The ability to meditate is so sadly lacking—or is it? We can meditate on the means of making money, or exercise this capacity in lasciviousness. There is a deeper need than that of meditation. Discuss.
6. Confidence and satisfaction in God—these two qualities were very real to David; they should be even more so to the Christian. How can this psalm help to develop these qualities?