

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:24

On Worship
with Pastor Steve

Run Don't Walk

When I played football in high school, my dad and I would frequently talk about my games. To my knowledge he never missed a game and usually had an observation or two to share with me. Occasionally he would share with me some of the highlights of his football playing days in high school. My dad played tackle on his high school football team. Though he was strong, he wasn't a large man like the tackles you see playing high school football today. They didn't grow'em as big in the 1950s.

He told me that one Friday night they were playing an in-county rival that had an exceptionally fast tail back. On one particular play the tail back broke into the open field and was quickly making his way toward the end zone. My dad gave pursuit and oddly enough was able to gain some ground on him. Dad caught up to him, but the tail back was able to stay just out of the reach of my dad's outstretched arm. When they got into the end zone both players were so tired that they sat down and leaned against one another.

Pursuit; you hear that word used a lot in football. It is especially used by defensive coaches as they train their players to find the football and get to it as soon as possible, any way possible. They must move whatever obstacles are in the way in an effort stop the other team from gaining ground.

King David of Israel knew something about pursuit. Many times during his crusades for King Saul and later as king himself, he was the pursuer. He not only pursued but subdued his enemies. Maybe he had some of those instances in mind when he wrote, *My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.* (Psalm 63:8 NKJV) The King James Version reads like this; *My soul **followeth hard** after thee; Thy right hand upholdeth me* (emphasis mine). There were instances in David's life when he was the one being pursued by his enemies. In fact, when he wrote the words to Psalm 63 he was being pursued in the wilderness of Judah.

Pursuit is the act of chasing in an effort to overtake or capture. The Hebrew word David used in Psalm 63:8 for "followeth hard" means to impinge (collide, strike, dash, encroach, trespass), cling, adhere, and to catch by pursuit. The same word is used in the Old Testament when speaking of armies pursuing their enemies. For example:

*Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, they also **followed hard** after them in the battle.*

1 Samuel 14:22

*Then the Philistines **followed hard** after Saul and his sons. And the Philistines killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons.*

1 Samuel 31:2

*Then the young man who told him said, As I happened by chance to be on Mount Gilboa, there was Saul, leaning on his spear; and indeed the chariots and horsemen **followed hard** after him.*

2 Samuel 1:6

David was just as determined to pursue God as he was to pursue his enemies. In essence he was saying in Psalm 63:8, "God, I am going to pursue you until I catch you." The determination and the desperation of catching God can be heard in David's words in the previous verses of Psalm 63.

O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. 2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory. 3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You. 4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. 6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. 7 Because You have been my help, Therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice.

Psalm 63:1-7

King David's prime motivation for pursuing God was thirst; his soul was thirsty. He had a longing to see the power and glory of God. He realized that the loving kindness and favor of God was more precious than life itself. And that if he could catch God in the midst of his praise that his soul would be sustained and satisfied; for God was his only source of satisfaction. David also realized that if he could catch God that God would be his help and protection.

An important part of David's pursuit was the manner in which he expressed his feelings toward God. David's pursuit of God in his worship is evidenced in such phrases as, *My lips shall praise you, I will bless you, I will lift up my hands, My mouth shall praise with joyful lips, and I will rejoice.*

David used the Hebrew word shabach for praise in his phrase *My lips shall praise you*. Shabach means to address in a loud tone, a loud adoration, a shout, proclaiming with a loud voice unashamed. For bless he used the word barak which means to kneel or bow, to give reverence to God as an act of adoration. In the phrase *lift up my hands*, David used a word meaning to exalt, extol or to hold up. In essence David was saying, "I am going to proclaim unashamedly with a loud voice that your mercy and favor is better than life. As long as I am alive I will bow and give reverence to you because I adore you. I will exalt your name with uplifted hands."

He continues to express his worship by saying, *My mouth shall praise with joyful lips*. The Hebrew word praise in this phrase is hallal. Hallal means to make a show or rave about, to glory in or boast upon, and to be clamorously foolish about your adoration of God. If you combine the meanings of the words rave, clamorously and foolish you might come up with something like this; to continuously speak wildly or incoherently (lacking logic) with extravagant enthusiasm, showing a lack of good sense.

The next Hebrew word used is found in the phrase *with joyful lips*. The word joyful comes from the Hebrew word alats which means to jump for joy. Finally, David says, *In the shadow of your wings I will rejoice*. The word rejoice is the Hebrew word ranan. Ranan means to creak or emit a stridulous sound, to shout usually for joy.

For us to catch God we must have the same heart as David and the sons of Korah. The sons of Korah wrote, *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?* (Psalm 42:2) In other words, "I am suffering of thirst for the God who gives me life. When are you going to let me catch you?" We must pursue God with the intent purpose of catching him. We must be thirsty for God alone and realize that his right hand (power) is the only thing which sustains and satisfies our soul. And we must be willing to express or display our passion for his person and presence.

Unlike the tail back which my dad pursued, God desires to be caught. In fact he has already given us more than one invitation. Jesus said, *If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.* (John 7:37) The one whom John saw sitting on the throne said, *It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.* (Revelation 21:6) The Spirit and the bride say, *Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.* (Revelation 22:17)

Not only has God invited us to pursue him, he made our pursuit possible by first pursuing us. John 3:17 says that God sent his son into the world. He came looking for us. John 15:16 says that we did not choose God he chose us. John 4:23 says that God is seeking those who would worship him in spirit and truth. The only way we can pursue God is because he pursued and is pursuing us. Paul wrote, *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.*

So, God is pursuing us and waiting to be caught by us. And if we pursue him with all our heart and pure motives he will let us catch him. When we catch him we will have all we need.