

# Psalms 63:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

## Analysis

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**My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.** This verse captures the dynamic of divine-human relationship—human pursuit met with divine support. "My soul followeth hard after thee" (davekah nafshi acharekha, דַּבֵּקָה נַפְשִׁי אַחֲרֶיךָ) uses the verb dabaq (דָּבַק), meaning to cling, cleave, stick close, pursue closely. This is an intense, energetic verb—not passive waiting but active, determined pursuit.

Dabaq appears in Genesis 2:24 describing marriage: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife." It indicates covenant bonding, inseparable attachment, wholehearted commitment. The same word describes Ruth cleaving to Naomi (Ruth 1:14) and Israel commanded to cling to God (Deuteronomy 10:20, 11:22, 30:20). David's use here portrays his relationship with God in covenantal terms—permanent, passionate, exclusive attachment of soul to God.

"Hard after thee" emphasizes intensity and urgency. David doesn't casually follow at a distance but presses close, pursuing vigorously. The phrase suggests effort, determination, refusing to let go. This recalls Jacob wrestling with God and declaring, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Genesis 32:26). It's the pursuit Jesus described: "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)—not physical violence but spiritual intensity and determination.

"Thy right hand upholdeth me" (tamkhah bi yeminekha, תַּמְכֶּהּ בִּי יְמִינֶךָ) reveals the other side of relationship—while David pursues, God sustains. The verb tamakh (תַּמַּךְ) means to grasp, hold, support, sustain. God's right hand (symbol of power and favor) actively holds David up, preventing his fall. The perfect tense indicates completed, established action—God's support is sure, reliable, accomplished fact.

This creates beautiful paradox: David pursues God, yet God sustains David. It's not one or the other but both simultaneously. Human effort doesn't earn divine support; rather, divine support enables human pursuit. We pursue God because He first empowers our pursuit. We cling to Him because His hand holds us. The Christian life is neither pure passivity ("let go and let God") nor self-sufficient striving ("try harder"), but empowered response to sustaining grace. We work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in us both to will and to do (Philippians 2:12-13).

## Historical Context

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The imagery of clinging to God appears throughout Israel's covenant theology. Deuteronomy repeatedly commands Israel to "cleave unto the LORD your God" (10:20, 11:22, 13:4, 30:20), using the same verb dabaq. This covenant language emphasized exclusive loyalty—Israel was to cling to Yahweh alone, not dividing allegiance between Yahweh and pagan deities (the constant temptation throughout their history). The marriage metaphor runs throughout prophetic literature (Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) portraying Israel as bride and God as faithful husband—Israel's idolatry depicted as adultery, betraying the intimate covenant bond.

God's right hand as symbol of power and deliverance appears frequently in Israel's salvation history. The exodus song declares: "Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Exodus 15:6). Psalm 98:1 celebrates: "his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory." When David wrote of God's right hand upholding him, he drew on Israel's corporate memory of divine deliverance—the same powerful hand that defeated Egypt, divided the Red Sea, and gave Israel victory over enemies now sustained him personally.

For David fleeing enemies, the image of being upheld by God's hand was not metaphorical comfort but urgent necessity. Pursued through mountainous terrain, crossing ravines, climbing cliffs, traversing desert—every step required physical and spiritual strength beyond his natural capacity. God's upholding wasn't passive permission but active empowerment, enabling David to endure hardships that would have destroyed him otherwise.

The New Testament develops this theme through union with Christ. Believers are held by God's power through faith unto salvation (1 Peter 1:5). Jesus promises that none can pluck His sheep from His hand or the Father's hand (John 10:28-29). Paul testifies: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20)—the paradox of active faith sustained by divine life.

## **Related Passages**

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

## **Study Questions**

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1. What does it mean for your soul to 'follow hard after' God rather than casually or occasionally seeking Him?
2. How does understanding that God's right hand upholds you affect your striving and effort in spiritual pursuit?
3. In what ways does God's sustaining grace enable rather than replace human effort and pursuit?
4. How do you experience the tension between actively pursuing God and resting in His sustaining power?
5. What obstacles or distractions make it difficult to cleave to God with the intensity David describes?

## Interlinear Text

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דָּבָקָה	נַפְשִׁי	אַחֲרַי	בְּ	תִמְכֶּה	יְמִינְךָ:
followeth hard	My soul	after	H0	upholdeth	thee thy right hand
H1692	H5315	H310		H8551	H3225

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 18:35** (Parallel theme): Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

**Isaiah 41:10** (Parallel theme): Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

**Psalms 73:23** (Parallel theme): Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

**Song of Solomon 2:6**: His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.

**Isaiah 42:1** (Parallel theme): Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

**Psalms 73:25** (Parallel theme): Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

**Psalms 37:24** (Parallel theme): Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

**Psalms 94:18** (Parallel theme): When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.

**Psalms 41:12** (Parallel theme): And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.

**Isaiah 26:9** (Parallel theme): With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

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