

LIVING NEAR TO GOD

"But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works." Psalm 73:28.

This verse expresses the conclusion at which this Psalmist arrived as a result of his experiences which are described in the body of the Psalm. This interesting and helpful psalm records the experiences of a man who had suffered a great mental conflict.

After reviewing the past and thinking about the unknown future, the writer resolved that, as far as he was concerned, there was one thing that he was going to do and that was "to draw near to God." He was determined that he would concentrate on that. He here gives us an insight into what had become his whole philosophy of life as he faced the unknown future. That is one of the great values of the Psalms. These men not only passed through certain experiences of life, but the Holy Spirit had them to record them and their reactions to them. As a result of all that happened to them, they laid down certain great and beneficial principles.

Doubtless you are familiar with the experience of this Psalmist. He had been most unhappy. As he looked around him it seemed to him that the ungodly people flourished, and that set him to thinking. It seemed to him that believers had the hard time while the wicked were happy and prosperous. He began to wonder whether, after all, there was any purpose in being godly. He was tempted to ask, Is God just? Is there any point in trying to walk the narrow way? The more he meditated, the more he was tempted to say, "Goodness is vain, the righteous suffer and the ungodly are immune." He remarked, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain." Seen from the worldly point of view, it seemed to him that the unbeliever had the best of it. To him the wicked appeared to be flourishing and triumphant, while the worthy were destitute and oppressed, and much disorder and darkness seemed to prevail in the course of human affairs.

At last he went to the house of God, and there God opened his eyes and gave him a right perspective of life. God revealed to him that He was still ready to bless him. So, he was amazed that he had felt as he did. He regretted the fact that he had been so arrogant.

What had changed his attitude? He had gone to the temple to worship. He had taken his problems there with him. While there he had found their solution and gained peace for himself. Immediately he adopted a loftier view of life and very emphatically made the assertion: "It is good for me to draw near to God." That is as true of us as it was of him. In fact, to draw near to God is the best thing that anyone can do.

His statement could be translated, "Nearness to God is good for me." His ambition for the rest of his life was just that--to keep near to God. We, too, are either far from God or near to Him. What a blessing that the psalmist came to this conclusion and said to himself, "What has really been wrong with me is the fact that I have not kept near to God. I have been given this enlightenment in the sanctuary of God." He came to realize that there was only one thing that mattered, namely, a man's relationship to God.

Most of us tend to think that our happiness depends upon certain things in life. The sight of the ungodly, and their apparent prosperity, had made this man envious; so, he began to grumble and complain. Then, he came to see that all of this was due to one thing only; it was due to the fact that he had not kept near to God. This is the beginning and the end of wisdom in the Christian life. The moment we get away from God everything will go wrong.

It is not the things which the world regards as important that matter; the important thing for the Christian is to live near to God. There we find peace and joy. There we rest confidently, happily and securely in the arms of His love. Therefore, resolve that you will live near to God regardless of whatever else may happen in life. Thank

God time and again for His Word. The Bible never just gives us a great injunction; it always gives us the reason for such an injunction. Resolve to live your life as near to God as it is possible for you to do so.

I. How To Live Near To God.

1. By devoutly reading His Word.

Its prayerful perusal has blessed myriads of souls by bringing them near to God. George Mueller, that mighty man of faith, said while reading the Bible through the sixty-seventh time, "It grows more interesting and helpful all the time." It is our guidebook from earth to heaven. Let us read it for guidance. It will point to the road of Christian peace and joy. "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Psalm 119:11. No soul will go far astray that constantly feeds on the Word of God.

2. By sincerely meditating on God.

The Psalmist said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Psalm 119:59. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." Psalm 39:1. Many a troubled soul has had the mists to clear in the hour of meditation and his soul has felt the truth, "It is good for me to draw near to God." Holy meditations are a glorious privilege. What a pity that we do not take more time for them! Meditation on God, His providences, mercies, goodness and graciousness will set aglow the altar fires of our souls.

3. By earnestly praying to God.

"The prayer of the upright is His delight." Proverbs 15:8. Prayer is the best means of drawing near to God. It is good for every person who knows how to practice this heavenly art. Prayer is the way into the Father's presence and the most blissful of all fellowships. Prayer explains mysteries, brings deliverances and obtains promises. It has a mighty power to sustain the soul of the Christian in every season of its distress and sorrow. There is no joy equal to that due to the presence of God in the soul. It is the occasion of a peace of which the world knows nothing.

It should be the desire of our hearts to live as near to God as possible because of His character. Above all else we should desire to be in His presence. We like to be in the presence of people whom we love. We like to be introduced to people who are considered great in various ways. And yet how hesitant we are about spending our time in the presence of God. But, the Psalmist wanted above everything else to keep in touch with God. We are grateful to some great personage when he says: "I am going to keep in touch with you." We feel it is a privilege and an honor.

4. By heartily praising God.

The best place in which to praise God is in His house of worship. It was in just such a place that the Psalmist was made to cry out, "It is good for me to draw near to God." If you have doubts and misgivings, take them into a spiritual meeting and they will soon leave you.

5. By consistently keeping the right sort of company.

A young man of the underworld was taken to a Christian hospital in a desperate condition. For days he lingered between life and death. Finally, they told him that he might have his friends come to see him. He said, "I have found this place an altogether different world to that in which I have lived. These girls are Christians and my friends are not worthy to come into their presence. The men I run with are criminals and the women strangers to purity. I don't want them to come, and when I get out my habits of life are going to be altogether different." Our associates either lift us up or pull us down. Christian friends and good books will aid us greatly in drawing and living near to God.

II. Why Live Near To God.

1. It is a place of blessing.
In the presence of God you are lifted above your circumstances.
2. It is a place of safety.
Nothing can harm those who are in the safe-keeping of their covenant-keeping God.
3. It will increase your faith.
4. It will increase your joy.
"In thy presence is fulness of joy." There is no joy like the consciousness of the presence of God in the soul.
5. It will alleviate suffering.
It will either remove the suffering or it will sanctify it by the giving of more grace.
6. It will keep you from the wrong places.
Living near to God always keeps one a safe distance from the places where he ought not to be.
7. It provides the best company.
Living near to God puts us in the best company and keeps us out of the worst. One of the outstanding joys of the Christian religion is the fellowship of the best people.
8. It enables us to live victoriously.
Living near to God develops the best and crucifies the worst there is in us. Nearness to God is the one and only safe place from the voice of the tempter and the inroads of sin.
9. It imparts wisdom and strength for duty.
Living near to God makes it possible for one to have adequate wisdom and strength for the duties and difficult tasks of life. Devout souls get a joy out of service that is impossible to the worldly-minded Christian living at a distance from God.
10. It glorifies God.
The Psalmist declared that he had put his trust in the Lord God, that he might declare all of His works; or, in other words, that he might glorify Him. "The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." Yes, says the Psalmist, "I am going to keep near to God in order that I may glorify Him as well as enjoy His presence. And my business in life is to tell others about Him by life and by lip, in word and in action." Living near to God is so honorable, so delightful and so elevating. When a soul thus lives near to God, even death is a wondrous victory, crowned with the conscious presence of His Lord.