

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

AN ASSUREDLY GOOD THING.

A Sermon

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“It is good for me to draw near to God.”—Psalm lxxiii. 28.

WHEN a man is sick, everybody knows what is good for him. They recommend specifics by the score; salts from the earth, herbs of the field, drugs from the east, minerals from the rock, extracts, compounds, simples, cordials, decoctions, quintessences, and I know not what besides—as many nostrums as there are men—all these are cried up as good for our complaint. Amid such a Babel, it is well for a man if he knows on his own account what is good for himself. Certainly in spiritual things, whatever others may recommend, it is of the first importance in all our trials to know by personal experience for ourselves, what is in the highest sense good for us. One of your friends may commend a course of vigorous action, and another may bid you sit still; one may persuade you to contemplate your trial from its darkest side, and another may call your attention solely to the brighter lights; but if you know through having passed through the trial before, what is truly good in such a case, it will be best to take your stand upon it, and not be led away by every “lo! here,” and “lo! there.” The psalmist, although he might have been surrounded by a thousand counsellors, puts them all aside, and strong in the confidence which his experience gave him, he declares, “It is good for me to draw near to God.” It may seem good in the worldling’s eyes to go his way to his wine cups, and to make merry in the dance; it may seem good to yonder truster in an arm of flesh, to seek out his friends and his kinsmen, and entrust his case to their discretion; it may seem good to the desponding to retire in melancholy to brood over his sorrows, and to the dissipated, to endeavour to drown all care in vanity, but to me, says the psalmist, it is good, pre-eminently good, that I should draw near unto God.

I. Now, in this statement, the psalmist, first of all, **TACITLY CONDEMNNS OTHER COURSES OF ACTION.**

Take the text in connection with the Psalm of which it is the conclusion, and you will see at once that he repents of a certain course of thought to which he had given way, and the recoil from his error is the exclamation, “It is good for me to draw near to God;” as if he meant to say, “It is not good for me to do what I have done, it is infinitely

better for me to draw near to God." From which we learn that *it is not a good thing for us to try and fathom the mysteries of Providence.* What have we to do with measuring the great deep of Providence? Is not this meddling with things too high for us? It should be enough for us to commit our bark to the great Pilot, trusting all to him who ruleth all; being well assured that he will bring his own beloved to their desired haven. We need not be curious to know the exact depth of all the deep places of the earth, it is enough that they are in his hands: nor need the strength of the hills provoke our anxiety, for it is his also. Yet such is the tendency of the human heart, that we crave to comprehend all things in the little hollow of our hand; we aspire to calculate the infinite, and sum the total of the immeasurable. It is with us as though foolish children should determine to measure the great and wide sea, and therefore should push off from the shore in a little boat to drift away they know not whither, in imminent hazard of their lives. Theories upon predestination, followed up by speculations upon the facts of Providence, these are enough to drive men mad, and are certain to drive them into wicked thoughts, unjust towards God and depressing towards themselves. Gotthold in his "Emblems" tells us of the freaks of his child. The father was one day sitting in his study, and when he lifted his eye from the book which had engrossed his attention, he saw standing upon the window-ledge his little son. He was troubled and affrighted to the last degree, for the child stood there in the utmost peril of falling to the ground and being dashed to pieces. The little one had always been anxious to know what his father was doing so many hours in the day in his study, and he had at last, by a ladder, managed to climb with boyish daring till there he stood outside the window, gazing at his father with all his eyes. "So," said the father, as he took the child into his chamber, and rebuked him for his folly, "So have I often tried to climb into the council-chamber of God, to see why and wherefore he did this and that; and thus have I exposed myself to peril of falling to my destruction." My God, it is not good for me to pry into thy secrets with curiosity, but it is good for me to draw near unto thee in sincerity.

In connection with this Psalm, we may also learn that *it is not good for us, under any circumstances, to go to a distance from God.* The verse that precedes the text runs thus: "They that are far from thee shall perish." Now, the tendency of repeated affliction is in the carnal mind to drive us away from God. "Surely he dealeth harshly with me," saith the sufferer. "No good has come to me since I began to attend a place of worship, and to become religious. Evil after evil hath happened to me in connection with my profession of godliness." Because of this, the ungodly man, who was a formalist in his religion, throws it all up. "It were better," saith he, "that I should find what pleasure I can in sin since I can find none in godliness." If God treats his hypocritical servants roughly, they soon turn against him. When the loaves and fishes fail, the admiring multitudes are away. Two or three tossings upon the waves make bad sailors hate the sea, and a trial or two will soon drive empty professors into an utter dislike of godliness. This is often the sieve in which God trieth his people, and discerneth between the chaff and the wheat. A dog

may follow you as you pass by, if you offer it a bone, but if you give it a stroke from your staff, see if it will then follow you; yet, to its own master, the faithful creature will cling with even greater tenderness if it be beaten. If thou be God's own child, affliction will not make thee fly from him but to him, saying, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me;" but if thou dost, in mere formality, follow at God's heel, as the dog pursues the stranger for a bone, then wilt thou readily enough turn against the Lord if he chastens thee. By this may we judge ourselves whether we be God's servants or not. Beloved, it can never be a good thing to take umbrage at the dealings of the Lord. His ways are the best for us; to forsake them is always evil. Whatever temporary comfort we may gain by following the paths of evil, it will be shallow and shortlived, and soon a consequent and terrible darkness will cover our spirits. To depart from God's law is always hazardous travelling. By-path Meadow is never good for pilgrims. You may seem to gain in this world by walking apart from God in the indulgence of a dishonest practice, but the gain will be loss in the long run. You may find a temporary deliverance from your pressing sorrow by a sinful step, but you will purchase the deliverance at an awful price, since sorrow will return to you multiplied sevenfold, and will find you naked, because your clear conscience, which was once your shield, has been vilely cast away. He that, amidst a thousand troubles, keeps his heart whole by standing firm in his integrity, may battle against all the world and all the hosts of hell and not be afraid; but he who giveth way for the sake of policy, shall find that a wounded spirit none can bear, and the weakness that shall come upon him, through having turned aside to crooked ways, shall be such as shall cost him a far more dolorous lamentation than all his afflictions could have wrung from him.

Thus, at the outset of this sermon, we are warned that to peer into God's secrets is not good, and to depart from God on account of his dealing severely with us, is the very worst policy that we can follow.

II. Coming more closely to the text, we observe WHAT IS IN THE TEXT PLAINLY COMMENDED.

To draw near unto God, what does this mean? To draw near to God, brethren and sisters, implies first that we are *reconciled to him* by the death of his Son. For a man to attempt to draw near to God while God is angry with him, would be a species of insanity. As well might the moth draw near to the candle, or the stubble approach the flame. God is "a consuming fire," and while our hearts are evil there can nothing come of an approach to God but destruction. Before any one of us can draw near to God in acceptable prayer and praise, we must wash in the fountain that Christ has filled from his dying veins. Dost thou believe in the atonement, my hearer? Believing in it hast thou also received it? Dost thou rest thy soul's salvation upon the accomplished mediatorial work of Jesus Christ? If not, thou art such an enemy to God that thou mayst by no means even think thyself capable of drawing near to him. Thy back is towards him, and the faster thou dost walk the further from God wilt thou journey, and thine end will assuredly be to hear from him the word "Depart." Thou hast been departing all thy life, thou shalt go on departing

throughout eternity; departing from the God whom thou hast hated and despised, and forgotten. Before, then, we can draw near to God, we must have come with repentance and faith to the cross, and have looked up to him who bled thereon, and we must have accepted him as our salvation. I ask you whether you can accompany me in the first step? Have you laid hold on eternal life in Christ Jesus?

Next; in order to draw near to God, the soul *must grasp the thought that God is near to it, and the soul must have a clear sense of who and what God is.* Ignorance is an effectual barrier to any approach to God, seeing that our drawing near is not physical, since God is always equally near to our bodies; but it is mental and spiritual, and therefore, to such an approach there must be an intelligent knowledge and apprehension of the Lord. We must know him as good, as great, as just, as holy, as merciful, as true, as faithful; and, knowing him—understanding something of his character—we must then grasp the thought that he is even now here, close at hand, nearer to us than any earthly friend could be, for he possesses our heart and our reins, and compasses us on every side. As nothing can be nearer to the fish than the water in which it lives, so nothing can be nearer to us than God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. The Lord is not round about us merely, but he is in our souls, filling their every corner and chamber, entering into the core and centre of our physical and mental nature. Now, when our mind is filled with these two thoughts—God near us and reconciled to us—we have become capable of spiritually drawing near to him.

As yet I have not succeeded in my description. How shall I tell you what to draw near to God is? *It is prayer,* but it is more than prayer. I bow my knee, and I begin to ask the Lord to help me in my time of trouble. I tell him what my trial is. I put up my requests, uttering them with such words as his Holy Spirit giveth me on the occasion; but this alone is not drawing near to God. Prayer is the *modus operandi*, it is the outward form of drawing near to God; but there is an inner spiritual approach which is scarcely to be described by language. Shall I tell you how I have sometimes drawn near to him? I have been worn and wearied with a heavy burden, and have resorted to prayer. I have tried to pour out my soul's anguish in words, but there was not vent enough by way of speech, and therefore my soul has broken out into sighs, and sobs, and tears. Feeling that God was hearing my heart-talk, I have said to him, "Lord, behold my affliction; thou knowest all about it, deliver me. If I cannot exactly tell thee, there is no need of my words, for thou dost see for thyself. Thou searcher of hearts, thou readest me as I read in a book; wilt thou be pleased to help thy poor servant! I scarce know what help it is I want, but thou dost know it. I cannot tell thee what I desire, but teach me to desire what thou wilt be sure to give. Conform my will to thine." Perhaps at such a time there may be a peculiar bitterness about your trouble, a secret with which no stranger may intermeddle, but you tell it all out to your God. With broken words, sighs, groans, and tears, you lay bare the inmost secret of your soul. Taking off the doors of your heart from their hinges, you bid the Lord come in, and walk through every chamber,

and see the whole. I do not know how to tell you what drawing near to God is better than by this rambling talk. It is getting to feel that the Lord is close to you, and that you have no secret which you wish to keep back from him, but have unveiled your most private and sacred desires to him. The getting right up to Jesus, our Lord, the leaning of the head, when it aches with trouble, upon the heart that always beats with pity, the casting of all care upon him, believing that he cares for you, pities you, and sympathises with you—this is drawing near unto God. It is good for me to draw near unto God, if this be what drawing near to God is.

Let us make a further attempt at definition. Drawing near to God *may assume the form of praise*. It were a sad proof of selfishness if we never approached our God except to ask for something. Brethren, I hope we often feel that our heavenly Father has been so bountiful, and kind, and tender to us, that our cup runs over, and our heart pours itself out in the language of some grand old Psalm, or we sing like the Virgin, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Thus to draw near to God in song is something, but there is a still further approach. The soul will sometimes climb so near her God in thankfulness that words fail her, and she sits down like David in the Lord's presence, wondering, "Whence is this to me? What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? O Lord, thy mercy overwhelms me. Come, then, expressive silence, speak the divine praise." You have seen a little child when it is greatly pleased with a gift from its mother's hand; it says but little by way of gratitude, but it falls to kissing its mother at a vehement rate, as though it never could be done. Such drawing near in love exists between a regenerate soul and its God. True saints fall to close embraces of gratitude; exhibiting thankfulness inexpressible, real and deep, and, therefore, not to be worded; weights of love too heavy to be carried on the backs of such poor staggering bearers as our words. This is drawing near to God, and it is good for us. As when on a sultry day the traveller strips off his garments and plunges into the cool refreshing brook, and rises from it invigorated to pursue his way, so when a spirit has learned either in prayer or in praise really to draw near to God, it bathes itself in the brooks of heaven (streamlets branching from the river of the water of life), and goes on its way refreshed with heavenly strength.

Still I have not fully described drawing near to God. To draw near unto God has in it the element of *looking at the matter in the divine light*. Our light here below is nothing better than candle-light at its best. Now, by candle-light, there are many things of which we cannot judge. Colours are not truly seen by candle-light; only by sun-light is the brightness of the tints apparent. We too often judge our afflictions and the providential dispensations of God by the candle-light of human reason. Oh, if we could draw near to God and get into his light, and begin to look at things in their eternal bearings, how good it would be! To take the sacred picture of providence, and, with our eye-glass, look at the canvas inch by inch, is practically to see nothing; but to view the work of the Divine Artist as a whole, with all its lights and shades, and all the fair proportions which manifest the matchless skill—this is to see indeed. The fault of us all is this: that we judge

Providence by the moment, instead of regarding it in its true magnitude, stretched upon the framework of that eternal love which knows neither beginning nor end. Your dear child dies; yes, and what calamity could be heavier? But if the death of one shall be the salvation of others, and if the child's death be but the child's admission into Paradise, the matter wears another aspect; it is no longer such a subject for tears as it otherwise might have been. Poverty scowls in your house—yes, and a sore ill is poverty; but if this poverty of pounds, shillings, and pence, should mean the reclaiming of a lost soul; if this trouble should be really needed to get us out of an ill position, and to bring us into a holier and happier state preparatory for heaven, what would the loss of all earthly pelf be compared with the winning of heaven? Brethren, *we* do not know how to judge, but if we must needs indulge our propensity to sit upon the bench, it would be good for us to get so near to God that we should weigh events in his scale, and consider matters according to his measurement.

Further than this, a man may be enabled not merely to draw so near to God as to see things in God's light, but he may even rise so high as *to be pleased with anything and everything that pleases God*. This is a high attainment when a soul can honestly say, "If I could have my will, it should be my will that God's will should be done. Let him do wholly as seemeth good in his sight. If it be for his glory that I pine in sickness, neither would I wish for health; and if it be for his honour that I should be poor and despised, neither would I wish for comforts or for esteem." The heart has need to pass through many a furnace before it attains to this; yet, my brethren, we very soon reach this point with regard to those we love on earth, for we would very cheerfully give up our own wishes to please some dear one; in fact, it is with very many their highest happiness if there be anything that is wanted by the object of their affection, to deny themselves anything and everything, if but their dear one's wish may be fulfilled. And shall we thus yield up ourselves at the shrine of a wife, or a husband, or a darling child, and shall we not rejoice to surrender self for our gracious Lord? Shall we put our idols higher than our God? Shame upon us if aught in heaven or earth be hard to do or suffer for our Lord. Let us ask to be able to say, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. If it pleases thee, my God, it pleases me." Nay, let the Lord have his way. If we could stand in his stead, if we could have our way in opposition to him, yet should it not be, but we would petition for the privilege of denying ourselves in order that his eternal purpose might be fulfilled. Brethren, may we learn to draw near to God in such a sense as this: may the secret of the Lord be with us; may the Spirit of the Lord overshadow our spirits; may his will be our joy, his light our delight, and himself our all in all.

We must now leave this point. We can go no further. Words are scarcely the proper medium by which to instruct you in the art of drawing near to God; we must show you our fruit ripened under so divine a sun. You must know the sweetness of communion for yourselves, and knowing it for yourselves, you will subscribe with heart and soul to Asaph's commendation, "It is good for me to draw near unto God."

III. Thirdly, we shall occupy a little time in enquiring THE GROUNDS FOR SUCH AN UNQUALIFIED COMMENDATION: "It is good for me to draw near to God."

First, it is *good in itself*. How can it be otherwise than good to have access to him who is the highest good? The courtier counts it a high honour and satisfaction to sun himself in the presence of his monarch. He basks in the royal smile. Shall not the courtiers of heaven count it an equal good to stand in the favour of the King of kings, and to delight themselves with the glory of his majesty? It is a pleasure to draw near to God. As the enlivening breath of summer awakens the joyous emotions of creation, filling the gardens with beauty, and the groves with song, even so the countenance of the Lord is the source of the highest pleasure to the renewed soul, enlightening it with celestial happiness. Out of heaven there are no such joys as those discovered in living near to God. Albeit, everything that is pleasant is not, therefore, good; yet for once here is a good thing which is sound as well as sweet, as holy as it is happy, as divinely excellent as it is humanly desirable. Besides, to draw near to God is elevating. He that draweth near to the earth grovels, and becomes earthy; he that draweth near to the heavenly One is changed from glory to glory into the image of the heavenly. You shall know a man by his company, for we are all much shaped by our acquaintances; and he that hath an acquaintance with God shall be discerned of all men, for his face shall shine, and all his life and character shall be transfigured with holiness. Let but Jehovah dwell in a bush in the desert, and lowliness is forgotten in glowing glories; and even thus let the Holy Spirit rest upon the earnest of his servants, and the fishermen of Galilee shall become royal wonder-workers, whose names shall be as the names of the great ones that are in the earth. Approaching to God is, therefore, good in itself; for a chosen creature there is nothing better than to draw near to the Creator. It is so elevating, so honourable, so delightful.

Brethren, it is good to draw near to God if you consider for a moment *our relations to God*. Remember gratefully that we are his children which have been born into his family; and who shall deny but what it is a good thing for the child to come near to its parents? Where is the babe happier than in its mother's breast? There its cares are at an end, its sorrows cease; it sobs itself to sleep upon the

warm breast of love, when elsewhere it had been disturbed with rude alarms. It is good for me, my God, like a babe to come nestling into thy bosom. It is always good for the chickens to shelter beneath the wings of the hen; the hawk may be in the air, but they are perfectly safe from his cruelty: and when the child of God cowers down beneath the everlasting wings, and learns the meaning of David's words, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust," oh! then it is good indeed. We are the sheep of his pasture, and none shall doubt but what it is good for the sheep to draw near to the shepherd. In his presence is fulness of joy, and nowhere else but there. He maketh his sheep to lie down in green pastures; because he is near them; it is his transporting presence that leadeth them beside the still waters. It must be good for those who are of the family of Christ to live very near to their Elder Brother, through whom all the inheritance comes to them. We are the disciples of our blessed Teacher and Master, but where should a disciple be but near his Lord. He wishes to be taught, let him sit at the Teacher's feet. The believer is an imitator of Christ. He that would imitate his copy must keep his copy near him, and before his eye. We are "imitators of God as dear children," and therefore shall find it most helpful in our labour after the heavenly image, to draw very near, study very closely, and habitually dwell nigh to the Lord.

Brethren, it is good for us to draw near to God again, because *of our pitiable character and condition*. We are weakest of the weak, and where should weakness lean but upon him who delights to put forth his power for the upholding of the feeble? We are exceedingly foolish—even the wisest saints are foolish, apt to be deceived, and prone to err; where, then, can our folly be safer but under the careful guidance of infallible wisdom? It must be good for us when we get into dilemmas, to enquire at the divine oracle, and ask which is the way that we may walk therein. Besides, we are many of us so prone to despond, that if others of more elastic step could afford to live without their God, certainly we could not. Timorous spirits will find it especially good to cultivate intimate communion with God, for unless they do this, depression of spirit may grow upon them, and despondency may degenerate into despair. It is good for such to plume their wings and mount above the clouds, if the clouds have such deadly effect upon their joys. I cannot imagine a single quality in the child of God which does not argue for the necessity and benefit of drawing near to God. Search yourselves through and through, and what will you find in your original nature that you can depend upon? O you who live nearest to God, take care to examine the secrets of your heart, and see if there be not within much to disgust and little to content you! See if there be anything in you by nature that you can rejoice in, or that you can lean

upon! Now by your weakness, by your folly, by your sinfulness, by your unbelief, by every evil quality that must ruin you, unless divine grace prevent, I urge you to draw near to God; and as each of these evils shall be overcome, you shall find increasingly that it is good to draw near to God.

Dear friends, the correctness of the commendation in our text might be proven to you in many ways. We must trouble you with a few more arguments. It is good for you to draw near to God, because of *the removal of many evils* with which you are constantly surrounded. You business people, have to be busy in the world from Monday morning till Saturday night, and a man who is called to business ought to be diligent in it. There is no sin in diligence, in fact, it is a virtue. But the tendency of business is, in many cases, to make a man covetous; in others fretfulness is the great failing, and all worldliness is a strong besetment. You are unmindful of your Lord very frequently, and too greedy of gain; in fact, unnumbered evils rise from our daily avocations, like dust from our dry roads as we make our pilgrimage along them. In what way can a Christian shake the dust from his garments, how can he wash his face from the grime of his daily labour? Why, only by drawing near to God. Maintain with earnest regularity your morning and evening prayer. Do more than that: demand from time that it shall yield a little space for eternity. Force yourself to be alone. Pray God that your heart may be with him while your hands are in your daily work; see to it that while you are in the world you are not of it, because your aspirations, your thoughts, and desires, are going upward, and your communion is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. You will find that business becomes less dangerous, you shall find that the cares of it are less bitter, and the joys of it are less intoxicating, if you draw near unto God. I do not know what may be the peculiar position which your affairs are in this morning, but I venture upon the remark that from the evil which springeth out of your present condition, there is no cure like drawing near to God. Are you solitary and alone, have you much leisure? Great temptations lurk in leisure; draw near to God and they vanish, and leisure becomes space in which to serve your God. Are you suffering to-day under very severe trials? Ah, it will be sweetly good to you to draw near to God, for then you will not become impatient, nor will you be permitted to think hard things of your gracious God and Father.

Beyond the evils which drawing near to God will remove, there are many good things which drawing near to God will confer. These I cannot instance particularly, for they comprehend everything. There is no blessing in the covenant of grace which prayer cannot obtain, which close approaches to God will not ensure. Let me gather them up

under these short heads: Are you a worker for God, and do you lack strength? Draw near to God and get it. Are you struggling and wrestling against a mighty inward sin or outward error? Then draw near to God, and you will learn the way to victory. Like the old fable of the giant whom Hercules would fain destroy, who rose every time he fell to the ground stronger than before, because he touched his mother earth; so the Christian, every time he is overcome, if he falls upon his God, rises stronger than before. Take care, O tried believer, that thou get near thy God, and thou shalt be strong. Are you a minister? Have you to preach the gospel? It is always good for an ambassador to receive his orders fresh from court; and good for us it is when we come into the pulpit with a message all glowing from the Master's mouth. Oh, I can say, if no one else can, it is good for me to draw near to God! Nothing else could keep my soul standing in the midst of responsibilities so overwhelming, and trials that are neither few nor small. I had long since been utterly confounded were it not that I have been taught by experience to draw near to God, and breathe the bracing air of heaven, before I come among you to talk of the things of God.

Perhaps, my dear friend, you are conscious of having fallen into sin, and you say, "Do not talk about drawing near to God to me, I am so unworthy." Well, if there is one to whom it is good to draw near to God above another, you are the man. You who have the most sin have most need of divine grace. Where will you obtain pardon but by drawing near to God through Jesus Christ? You who are the foulest with inbred corruption, how will you win the victory over your natural depravity but by drawing near to the strong for strength through the blood of the atonement, and seeking the power of the Holy Spirit? I say to you, brethren and sisters, whether it be sin or sorrow, whether it be temptation or depression, whatever may be the evil which assails you this day, it must be in the highest degree good for you to draw near unto God.

We have said enough, I think, to prove our point, but this much more must be added. This drawing near to God is a remedy for evil open to every child of God by the assistance of the Holy Spirit. You are poor; yes, but you can draw near to God without a golden bridge. You are ignorant, you can draw near to God without Latin or Greek. You are not gifted with rhetorical powers; you tell me you cannot put six sentences together; remember our gracious God does not require of you to be a Demosthenes or a Cicero. You can draw near to God even though you cannot say a word. A prayer may be crystallised in a tear. A tear is enough water to float a desire to God. Ay, and if thou canst not even weep, the very bitterest tears are those that drop *inside* the head, and these the Lord

will put into his bottle. When parching grief will not let the eye relieve the heart with tears, the Lord can and will deliver. When no other balm will avail, it will be good for thee to draw near to God; and thou hast the Lord's permission to do so. Yes, in the long hours of the watchful night, in the sick chamber, thou canst draw near to God, and in the sultry hours of the busy day thou hast no need to seek thine oratory or thy closet, thou canst draw near to God in the field and the shop. Here in this pew, or there in the street; yonder in thy lonely garret, or in thy miserable cellar, or in the midst of the ribald talk and the coarse society of wicked workmen with whom thou art toiling; anywhere, even though it were at the gates of hell, thou canst draw near to God. There is never a possibility for Satan to block up this road, nor rob thee of this privilege. Thus thou bearest about with thee, O believer, a charm against every ill, a weapon that will stand thee in good stead against every foe. And when the waters of the last black river shall roar in thine ears, and thy blood shall be made to freeze, and thy heart and thy flesh shall fail thee—then as thou drawest near to God by committing thy spirit unto him, thou shalt find that he is the strength of thy life and thy portion for ever. It shall always be good to thee to draw near to God.

There is no need that I should say more in conclusion, except to finish by a word of practical advice. If it be indeed so good to draw near to God, let us do it at once. Children of God, have you been living at a distance from your Father? The silver bell rings this morning, and invites you to return. An angel voice cries, "Come back! come back! come back!" Will you not answer, "I will arise and go to my Father"? Have you had a little prosperity, a thriving time in business, and have you ungratefully forgotten the God who gave you this? Oh! now that the prosperity is for awhile removed, out of the darkness let the voice of longsuffering mercy be heard, for it calls to thee, "Return unto me, backsliding child, return." It shall be good for thee to acquaint thyself with God now; though thou hast lost the privilege of communion for awhile, the privilege has not lost its sweetness; it will bring thee countless blessings to approach thy God.

Do I address any dear friend here who is very happy and rejoicing? I hope his joy will abide with him, and that he will rejoice in the Lord always; but it will be good for him, at this bright hour, to draw near to God. Communion with God will give a deeper and healthier tone to your joy, so that it shall not intoxicate you. You shall have all the true mirth that lies in earthly comfort, but the evil element shall be neutralised; your feet shall stand on your high places, but your soul shall not be puffed up with pride. Fellowship with God is good for you, O seek it now; draw near to God at once! I would suggest to each believer the propriety of trying to get between now and the next

Sabbath, a special season alone. Strain after a devotional vacation. Surely if you can spare time for holidays and recreations, you can clear a space for special drawing near to God. I believe this church would be visited with a very great ingathering if all the members of it made it a solemn matter of duty to draw near to God especially and particularly; I feel persuaded the ministry would revive in freshness, converts would be more numerous, and the people of God more rejoicing, if we did this. We might expect to see a general revival of religion if all the faithful in Christ's church drew near to him with greater vehemence of supplication, a higher expectation, and a greater boldness of faith. May God give us grace to *attempt* this!

Alas! I have been very conscious while preaching this morning, that my subject has small attractions for a great many present, because they never did draw near to God, and what I have spoken will seem to them to be an idle tale. Ah, my dear friend, if you live and die a stranger to God, as you have hitherto lived, God whom you do not know to-day will not know you in another world. No love-knowledge will he have of you. You will ask of his Son for mercy, but he will reply, "I never knew you. Depart from me, ye cursed." You will need an interest in Jesus' blood in the next world, you will want to have a part in the love of Christ when he comes in his kingdom; but as you do not know him here, he will not know you there. Woe is me that I should have to tell you this. Do you know what becomes of those that forget God? The Scripture is very plain, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Shall that be your portion? Will you always be forgotten of God? Oh, it would be good for you to draw near to God; and you may do so, for Jesus welcomes those who desire forgiveness. You have but to ask him to accept you, and he will. In your pew this morning, the prayer may successfully assault his ear—send it up: "Thou Son of David, I desire to draw near to God. Introduce me to thy Father's presence by the merit of thy sacrifice." Thou shalt not seek in vain, dear heart. Christ will have pity upon thee, and thou shalt be saved. O that to-day, to-day, to-day thou mightst learn, for the first time, that it is good to draw near to God!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxiii.