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Sermon preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton on Wednesday evening,  
5/3/19. by Mr. J. K. Popham.

Psalm 73. last verse. 28.

"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."

This is a wonderful experience for a man who had been rebellious, who had felt as Asaph declares he had felt; for him to come into God's presence, to feel it good to do so; for him to put his trust in the Lord, in the Lord against whom he had fretted, whose ways he had charged in his heart with iniquity; for him to put his trust in the Lord God, for him even to think of declaring God's works after he had quarrelled with them. It was a wonderful change, a wonderful experience. Do not some of you know the same? Dead often, cold, querulous, disposed to dispute with God as to some things He has done with you. For you to have looked with envious eyes on the prosperity of the wicked and with self-pity on yourself, for you to get so wonderful a change as to feel it was good to go out of yourself to God, to leave rebellious self, jealous self, miserable self, bonded self, hard self, and self-pitying self, and go to God, humbly, submissively and put your trust in Him, in His wisdom, in His mercy and in His power, and to feel a desire to unsay all you have said against Him and to say from your heart, "He hath done all things well." To say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that God in afflicting was wise and kind." What a change! Some such change the Lord's people must experience; for when they experience the badness of their hearts, when they feel the utter corruption of their nature, when they feel as if they are bound in the chains of their sins and with the cords of their iniquity and have very solemn fears as to the issue, for them to get a change, to feel completely turned round, to sincerely repent, to be like the prodigal son, resolving to arise and go to your father, to confess the foolishness and wickedness of your life, that you have been a spend-thrift and everything that is bad, and to entreat His favour, and then to get the kiss, the best robe, the beautiful ring, the blessed shoes, the fatted calf, the heavenly merry-making. O, what a change! I say, some such change God's people must experience, for they are no better than others. What Paul said is very true of all the saints, "Who maketh thee to differ from another and what hast thou that thou did'st not receive?". Everyone subject, (sweet blessed feeling of being subject,) to the grace of God, must say, what a change has been wrought!

Here the Psalmist sweetly expresses then the experience of some, some here. I am very sorry for one thing in myself among many, but one especial sin, and that is the dreadful aversion that is in me to prayer. I do hope you are not like me in this. God forbid you should be, but it is a dreadful sin, that we should not wish to go to Him in whom we live and move and have our being, that we should wish to be independent of Him who is the God of all grace and mercy and Who alone can justify and sanctify and save us. Is not this of all sins the most dreadful? It is, as I judge, made up of infidelity and pride. Infidelity and pride are enormous sins and when they unite, they produce that horrible, that guilty feeling of aversion to the throne of God's heavenly grace. Sometimes it seems as if the providence of God furthers this, because things occur which are such a stumbling-block to reason, to corrupted reason and flesh and blood, that you cannot understand and cannot imagine how God can be good and just and be glorified in such providences. O, but we are too meddling; we are too interfering; We are too ready to ask the Lord to give us an account of His matters, which He will not do. Dear friends, may the Lord help you if you do this wickedness, and help me who often have done it, to leave it off; to say with Job, "I have uttered that I understood not. I will say no more. I will put my hand on my mouth. I will be dumb." But bless God, there is a change. Let me use the word again - there is a change wrought from time to time, and we can say thankfully sometimes, humbly, fervently say "It is good for me to draw near to God." Drawing near to God, means the exercise of faith, the pouring out of the heart before the Lord, making known to Him our requests. And it means that Jesus Christ is in some degree apprehended, for He is the way to God. There is no way to the Father now, since we are fallen, but Jesus Christ, who declares that He is the Way. "I am the Way." To draw near to God also means that we are under the gracious influence of the Holy Ghost, and so, in every true prayer, the Trinity is concerned. The Father draws. Jesus is the Way, the Spirit prompts, guides and helps. What a wonderful thing, that the least change for the better, of a gracious character in a sinner's heart, is wrought in him by the Trinity. And to draw near to God means also that your heart is engaged in it, that your whole mind is set on God for the time, that you are different from what you were when you were that unstable double-minded man with a profession in your mouth and a wandering in your mind. A double-minded man, and no worship but the form, no entrance, but a profession. But now a

change is wrought. The Lord knows how often some of us need converting. Conversion takes place often in the church of Christ. Every time you get a sweet change there is a conversion. You are turned round, turned from some wrong thing to God, and feel this to be so. "It is good for me to draw near to God."

Now for a little time I shall speak, as the Lord may help me, of some of the things that are in this great matter, for one of the greatest of matters is prayer in the life of a child of God, and some of the things in it I will speak of, as helped. The first thing we will speak of is confession of a bad case, true confession. You will be like Peter, who went out and wept bitterly; like Manasseh caught in the thorns; like every good man of whom the scripture speaks as getting given to Him a change by the Holy Ghost. There will be confession. Daniel confessed, Ezekiel confessed, John confessed; corruption, death; each one, when the Lord came, felt his corruption. Abraham, when the Lord wrought in him, fell on his face and said he was dust and ashes, and we, when we get a change have something of the same feeling; we are dust and ashes, we are corrupt, we are corruption itself. You see true religion is not like a pool that simply catches surface water, gets a little fall when there is rain, and dries up when there is draught because there is no spring under it. True religion is like this, "The Spirit", says Christ, "shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life". When this blessed, spiritual life rises afresh and prevails in you, one of the things that you begin to do afresh is to confess your sins. O, said Asaph, "When I went into the Sanctuary of God I got a change, my view of things was changed, my feelings about myself were changed, my views of God were changed". And then he begins to confess, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before Thee". Not a beautiful professor in his own eyes, not an absolutely consistent man in his own eyes, but just a mass of inconsistencies that made him, to his own view and feeling, nothing more than a beast. Did you ever feel you had no more religion than a beast, that you were no better in God's sight than a beast, nothing at all? And here you have to come in that naked state, that deformed, uncomely condition before your God and confess your sins. Now I will tell you one thing on this point that you may be acquainted with as you have had the mercy, namely, there is a peculiar sweetness in a free spirit of confession of sin. It is not a hard thing. It is very hard for proud nature to say, I have done wrong"; but when grace prevails,

there is a peculiar sweetness in confession of sin. You cannot describe it. It is a relief. There is a feeling that you are near God, that that heart-searching One who has searched your heart and tried your reins and brought to light evil things and set your sins before you in the light of his countenance, that as you are before Him in confession, you are not rejected. He does not put you away. He does not say- "O you must not come to Me." Rather, on the contrary, you are drawn, attracted, so to speak. Your hand that was over sins to cover them, is taken from them, and they are there, and you expose them, fully, freely, sincerely, before the Lord. Your sin is not only before you, but also you spread it out before the Lord. Said David to the Prophet Nathan, who brought news to him of his sin, "I have sinned, I have sinned against the Lord". Well now, it is very good to do this; it is good for more reasons than one. It is good because it is a gospel obedience. Says the Lord, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity", Ah, you may lack this for a time and find that the lack is a bar. A man who goes, or thinks he goes, to God and has no spirit of confession of his sins does not really go to God. I do not think a child of God ever gets real access to God without some confession attending him in his spirit. I won't attempt to say what the measure shall be, but it does seem to me according to the Spirit of the gospel, according to the condition of nature, according to the ordinary operations of the Holy Ghost, that every person who gets near to God in Jesus Christ has something of a spirit of confession of his sinfulness and of his inconsistencies. When that takes place in a sinner or in the church that is promised in the prophecy of Ezekiel, see what follows. "I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplications and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as for an only son and be in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born"; And when a little lower in the chapter it comes to that, "and the whole land shall mourn apart, the family of the house of David apart and their wives apart." And if you mourn over Christ, you will mourn over the sins that broke His heart, that pierced His side, that put Him to death. Ah, it is good my friends, it is good, it is sweet, when your heart opens, when you have no reservations, when the Adamic spirit that moved Adam to say in excuse, partially at least, of his sin, "The woman Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me and I did eat." That is killed for the time, and it is just this, "I have sinned and I am not worthy to be called Thy son." My rags and my shame and my fallings and my hunger, they

all testify against me. I have no business to have these rags. Lord, I have sinned against Thee."

And the second thing in this drawing nigh unto God is a spirit of sweet entreaty, fervent prayer that God would show the light of His countenance, reconcile you to Himself again in the body of the flesh of Jesus through death, that He would give you liberty again, speak peace to your heart once more. And in this there is, there is such a looking to Christ. And here is a very good and sweet part of the liberty of the sons of God. O, my brethren, are not some of your sweetest moments spent in pleading the blood of Christ, in making mention before the Father, of the Person and the death of Christ, in urging on the Lord's notice His precious blood, while your own black sins cover you with shame? "Pardon mine iniquity, O Lord, for it is great." "Hide Thy face from my sins and blot out all my transgressions". O these transgressions of ours, our vile transgressions! We transgress the scriptures. We break through hedges. We turn aside. We spend our substance with riotous living. We get rags and shame and hunger, and become hunger-bitten creatures. And can we draw near to God and not pray that He would put these things from us? It is good to pray for forgiveness. It is good to urge on God that, for the sake of which He forgives sins, namely the death of His only begotten Son. Jesus is exalted at the right-hand of God, because He humbled Himself, and it is good to plead His blood. You won't get turned away when you do this. Ah, if Asaph had tried to speak to God in a form of prayer, when all that rebellion was prevailing, do you think he would have got an audience? He would have got a sharp rebuke, and doubtless he did get one in his conscience, but Oh, when he came into the Sanctuary of God, when he looked on God, dwelling between the Cherubims, when he saw the shining **glory** of the gospel by precious faith in a promised Christ who was to come, then it was different. My friends, you will get a welcome when you go by the blood of Christ. Ask for that to be applied, you will get a welcome. God is pleased with it. God is satisfied with it. This pleases Him, and when your eyes are where His eyes are, and when your faith fixes where His delight is, then, I say, you will get a welcome." It is good to draw near to God.

It is good to draw near to God with regard to your doubts and fears. Some people tell us we should not have any of them, but we have not to do with oughts and ought nots. Ought nots may be very well for people who are dead in sin. We have to do with things as

they are, and some or you may say, "Now we never have been brought to a real point of satisfaction. Often clouds hide the Lord from us, and we do not see our signs, do not read our evidences, do not know that the Lord belongs to us, or that we belong to Him." You tell your friends these things, and they say to you perhaps that you ought not to be so, they may remind you of the blessings you have told them about; still, there the doubts are. Now James in his epistle gives a beautiful dfection, "Is any among you afflicted with doubts and fears, doubts about the reality of your religion, fears as to whether it will last as long as you live, as to how you will stand in the hour of trial? Says James, "Let him pray. Let him pray, <sup>let</sup> him draw near to God". That is the remedy. Hart says,

The remedy's before thee, pray.

"Hear my voice in my prayer," says the psalmist, "I make a noise in my complaint", he says. The remedy was there: pray. Says Paul, "We know not what to pray for as we ought". What then? The Spirit helpeth our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered". Therefore, this is a great thing to have the matter put straight that is crooked, the doubts removed that distress you, the clouds dispersed which darken you and bring you to an uncertainty, to have these things taken away by the testimony of the Holy Ghost. You will find it is good to draw near to God. It is good for me to do so, said the Psalmist, and it is good for every living soul to do it. It is good to be at the market, my friends, especially when the market asks this and only this:- real poverty and want, and says, "Come without any money". It is good to be where God is, to be looking to that place where He dwells between the Cherubims; to be looking to Him whose name is Jesus Christ, it is good. He can save, and He only can say, "I am thy salvation. I am thy Lord, thy Saviour, thy Redeemer." So when you cannot banish your own doubts, when you are unable to overcome your fears, may you find an attraction to the throne of God's heavenly grace. There He waits to be gracious. He says "He will be very gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry, when He hears it, He will be gracious." He declares that He delights in mercy, and when an afflicted soul comes for deliverance, then the promise of Jesus Christ is this, - "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also and him that hath no helper".

It is good for me to draw near to God for light on my path. It may be a dark path you have to walk in. It may be that you get sharply tried at every step and about every step. It may be the

enemy says you are wrong; wrong here, wrong there, he may tell you that you got a wrong start in all things, that you took the step yourself, that nothing but disaster and guilt and confusion and ruin will attend you. Now who can clear this matter up for you? Only God, and He can do it. He is full of mercy, He can do it. "Draw near to Him," says James, "Draw nigh unto God and He will draw nigh unto you". He will answer you, He won't reject the plea of a poor confused creature.

"Christ has blessings to impart,  
Grace to save thee from thy fears.  
O the love that fills His heart,  
Sinner, wipe away thy tears."

Go to Him with that perplexed case. It is good to draw near. The Sanctuary is open. He invites His poor troubled people to come to Him, and therefore may He give us faith to obey. In this the obedience of faith is very sweet.

"Thou callest burdened souls to Thee,  
And such O Lord am I."

There is relief in prayer, real relief, sweet relief, relief that is, if I may say the word, so tangible to faith, to your own soul, as that for the time you cannot doubt that you have had the relief. You may have it questioned later, but at the time there is no doubt about it, you have had a change. It has been wrought in you.

It is good to draw near about perplexities and uncertainties and troubles and questions in your own cases. God can answer them. We may, as the Lord helps us, speak as Moses did when he spoke to the judges about trying the different cases that were to be brought to them. He said, "The matter that is too hard for you, bring to me;" and we may say - "the matter that is too hard for us may we take to God. He can clear things. He can shine. He has shined on some of us so as to make us know the way we were in was a right way cast up by Himself. The things we undertook we were led to undertake by Himself; so, go thou poor perplexed sinner to Him and thou shalt find His mercy the same. He can shine on the way that leads you to the Lamb and leads you to heaven.

It is good to draw near to God for supplies, supplies of the spirit of Christ. Paul speaks of a good supply of the spirit of Christ. A supply of the spirit of Christ means an outpouring, the giving of the Spirit. "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." I wish I were more favoured with that - the gift of the Holy Ghost. To be under His teaching, His influence, to be softened, enlightened, enlivened, drawn, moved, permitted to have His inward intercession with

groaning which cannot be uttered; to have His light on the truth, and the application of the truth to your own heart by the Spirit. These things are the very life of living religion, the soul of a living religion. Faith stands in the power of God. He works it, He maintains it, He must increase it.

It is good to draw near and beg for a supply of the spirit of Christ, for if we get that we shall get knowledge of Jesus Christ from Him. You may gather knowledge in some ways of Jesus Christ without the Holy Ghost, an intellectual notional knowledge of Christ, but O, one gleam of the Spirit's light in your heart, manifesting that dear Person, that blessed cross, that wondrous resurrection, that wondrous ascension, that prevailing intercession of Jesus, will do more for you in a minute than years and years of hard thinking about Christ and nothing else. A moment's inshining by the Holy Ghost gives a saving acquaintance with Jesus Christ. What an amazing thing it is to have such an inshining! It is good to draw near, to ask that the Holy Ghost may be given in yet greater measure than He has been hitherto.

It is good for me to draw near to God to ask that He would guide me in His providence and that He would make crooked things straight before me and rough places plain, and go before me in such a way of inward teaching and outward working as that I may know I am in that way ordained for me. Sometimes you may be obliged to take a certain course because there is no other open for you. Sometimes you may be sorely perplexed because several ways may seem open to you and which is the right way you are not able properly to decide. It is good to draw near. "Show me the way wherein I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee." How pleasing to God that is. "Show me, Lord, which way I am to go." Perhaps you can say sometimes - "I feel willing to go anywhere if only I am in what is the right way for me." Perhaps the Lord may say to you, "Ye are not your own". That word sometimes is one of the greatest in the Bible to me, for God at one part of my life made it a most especial word and wrought such submission to His divine will by it in my heart that whatever He had shown me to be right for me to do, whatever way He had opened for me to go in, so far as I knew myself, I was then made perfectly willing to do, and go. He can do it for us again and again. O, it is good to draw near to God that He would show to us the way wherein He would have us to walk. "Show me the way wherein I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee."



It is good for me to draw near unto God to ask Him to repair the waste and desolate places of my soul. Sin is like a boar out of the forest and the wild beast out of the wood. Sin treads down the vineyard, tramples the vine under the feet, little foxes - vain and foolish thoughts and affections spoil the vine which has tender grapes. Poor Asaph got a good deal of wasting and desolation. Sin is never cheap, my friends, sin is never cheap. If it is cheap to us, it is because we have little or no grace. O, who could repair all that waste that had taken place in the soul of the psalmist? The envy and the jealousy, the bitterness, the quarrelling with God which you can see, if you have faith, in his confessions, and what he felt when God's providence perplexed him; but he came to One who could repair all that waste. He came to one who could make his wilderness like Eden, and his desert like the garden of the Lord; and so we, when we go to the Lord in the same way of faith, by the Spirit, go to One who can repair our wastes, our desolate places and make our wilderness like Eden and our desert like the garden of the Lord. We get into poor cases, bad places, often, at least some of us do, and the only remedy is in God. It is good to draw near to Him to ask Him to repair these waste places of our souls. Our souls are like a waste howling wilderness and a barren desert when the Lord is not present.

It is good for me to draw near to God and ask Him to preserve me and keep me from falling. Our past falls, if they have a good effect upon us by divine grace, will make us cautious. We say commonly- "The burnt child dreads the fire", and if we were wise and gracious, we should say we dread falling again as we have fallen, dread getting into the same bad states and places; but who can keep us? Said the psalmist, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. Hold Thou me up and I shall be safe." I am very weak", one says. God acknowledges a little strength: "Thou hast a little strength". Well, how kind of Him to acknowledge that in a person, a little strength". O, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Be it then given to us to go and pray to the Lord that whatever temptations befall us and persecutions, if we have to go into them, He would mercifully preserve us from denying His name. May He keep us from falling into Peter's sin of self-confidence. He said, "Though all men should deny Thee, I will not. I will go to prison with Thee. I will die with Thee." He did not know how proud he was. He did not know what a foolish self-confidence he was walking in. He got cured by that fall and then was restored by mercy.

Then afterwards, you know, he spoke thus, "Kept by the power of God." Our falls should make us careful. May the Lord give us wisdom and help us to go to Him that He would preserve us.

It is good for me to draw near to God and ask Him, when the end of my mortality comes, to take me to Him, to take me to heaven. Oh, what a song we shall sing if we get to heaven. What praises will be in our mouths. What harps will be in our hands to harp with if we get to heaven. Does the thought of heaven ever attract you, ever seem sweet to you? Does it ever appear to you to overcome the thought of abhorrence that must fill the mind naturally as it thinks of an end to mortality and of the grave of the dissolution of our mortal state? Well, it is a wonder to find one single thought in our heart of a welcome that you could give to death. When Christ is the foundation of your hope, when His blood is the ground of your plea, when His precious blood is the sweet source of your peace, it is good to draw near to God for these things.

I might mention many others, but now I must go on for two or three minutes.

"I have put my trust in the Lord God". He had lost his wisdom, his goodness. He had been a very foolish man. He now was as a beast before the Lord. He found the Lord very kind to him. His confidence in his God was sweet. Now he said, in a faith that was very exclusive, that excluded every creature in heaven and earth, he said, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." God filled his heart. God filled his thoughts. God was his confidence. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel." "I have put my trust in Thee."

"Lord, I have put my case into Thy hand, I have put my soul into Thy keeping", as in another psalm you read, "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God", so here, "I have put my trust in the Lord God". Do you feel you can do it sometimes, that nothing in self, no creature, no circumstances can now claim your confidence, but God is your confidence, and He alone is your confidence? 'Tis a very sweet feeling, as when one is old and weak and trembling and his steps are faltering, if an arm is given on which he can lean, how pleased he is to lean on that arm; so when a poor sinner is weakened, when in himself he finds nothing but sin and evil, when the Lord Jesus appears to him and gives him faith to lean on the Beloved, then he says, "I have put my trust in the Lord God I believe He will help me through, I believe He will be with me to the end, I believe He will bring me honourably to my grave and therefore I will declare all His works. I have declared my folly, and now I will declare God's works", "I will say, He is very good." I will

say, "It is wonderful that I should be continually with Him when I was so far from Him. When my sins took me a long way from Him, even then to hold me by my right-hand, and now I will declare how good He was to restore me, how good He is to help me, how full He is to supply me, how willing He is to bless me. I will declare His works. May the Lord help us. May this spirit of the psalmist be our spirit by the Holy Ghost.

Amen..

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