

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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1 Blessed Jesus, Lord of all,
Teach us on thy name to call;
Help us to be much in prayer,
And upon thee cast our care.

2 Draw us, Lord, by thy sweet power,
In temptation's darkest hour;
Make us cry to thee our Friend,
And upon thy grace depend.

3 At all times, in every case,
Lead us to thy Throne of Grace;
Let our needs be what they may,
Teach us how and what to pray.

4 Jesus, deign to bless us thus,
And to glory in thy cross;
Then, though men and devils roar,
We will ever thee adore.

William Gadsby (1773-1844)

The Child of God's Imperative

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

James 4:8

Here is, as it were, the picture of a father reaching out his hands to his child asserting that the child come to him. The father's hand is not shortened so that he cannot help. So, the imperative of the father is given for the good of the child and obedience to the father in this situation. This is a physical picture of a spiritual admonition from the Heavenly Father to His earthly children.

When we think of our text, we find the first phrase in the imperative and the second in the indicative. Thus, in the aorist imperative you have what you should do now, and in the indicative future you have what is going to take place when you obey.

So, we consider the aorist imperative which is an immediate requirement. *First*, the need is to draw nigh unto God. This refers to a privilege not common to fallen men, which is

common to a child of God. Why is it not common to man? What is man's state by nature in regard to God? "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God," (Isa. 59:2). Fallen man is cut off from God. So, what must happen to remedy that situation of division?

Second, the act of drawing nigh to God. Those without Christ are aliens, strangers, without hope, and without God in the world. Is there a way of reconciliation? Yes, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). For those in Christ the middle wall of partition is removed making a peaceful reconciliation. Drawing nigh to God is an act of a child toward its father. Where does the believer in Christ come in? Those born again have received the adoption of sons not the spirit of bondage but the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry Abba, Father (Rom. 8:14-17). Drawing near to God is a privilege as well as a requirement.

Our nearness to our Father is essential to our proper daily Christian life. The priestly function in the Old Testament was to come near to God in behalf of the people once the priest had set himself apart unto the Lord (Ex. 19:22). In the New Testament priests in the priesthood of believers are to draw near to God as a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, so we may come boldly unto the throne of grace (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Heb. 4:16). How long should we draw nigh to God? How long do you need to breathe? "Drawing nigh to God is not the duty of an hour; or in season only at first conversion, but the work of our whole lives," [Thomas Manton].

Any attempt to draw near to God without the heart is faulty—"Wherefore the Lord said, forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me," (Isa. 29:13). To whom is God near? "The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth" (Ps. 145:18). Spurgeon noted, "'But may I come to Him?' asks someone. May you do what He bids you do? Of course you may. The text is not merely an invitation; it is a command. Obey it, I beseech you. You must have liberty to obey when God commands. You need not entertain any fear that you will be an intruder when, in the exercise of His gracious sovereignty, he says to you, 'Come, come, come!'"

We have been considering the imperative given to draw nigh to God, next consider the indicative future "and He will draw nigh to you." This is a divinely constituted reciprocal agreement. What a promise given by the God who has all knowledge, all power, and all presence. This is given with sovereign surety. If you have drawn near to God then He will draw near to you—"Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 3:7). "Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 1:3). The nearness of God cannot be comprehended, but His drawing near if we draw near

to Him is a solemn promise you can bank on. Thus says the Psalmist, “It is good for me to draw near to God” (Ps. 73:28). “When he saith *’tis good*, the meaning is *’tis best*. This positive is superlative. It is more than good for us to draw nigh to God at all times, it is best for us to do so, and it is at our utmost peril not to do so; ‘For, lo,’ saith the Psalmist, ‘they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.’ It is dangerous to be far from God, but it is more dangerous to go far from Him” [Joseph Caryl]. Remember what happened when the prodigal son determined to return to his father in repentance for sin, as he drew near to his father his father ran to meet him, fell on his neck and kissed him. The son made a confession of sin, and his father made a celebration of his return alive.

C. H. Spurgeon declared, “Perhaps, my dear brother, you have been reading Rutherford’s letters, and you have said to yourself. ‘Alas! I cannot hope to enjoy such communion with Christ as Rutherford enjoyed.’ But why should you not? Read our text again: ‘Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.’ You, my dear sister, may have read the life of Madame Guyon, and you have said, ‘What an angel in human form that woman must have been!’ But if you draw nigh to God, you may have as much love to Christ, as she had, and you may enjoy as much fellowship with Christ as she had, for ‘He will draw nigh to *you*.’ You have envied Mary because she sat at Jesus’ feet, or you have wished that you had been John, to lean your head upon your Master’s bosom; well, you may do both these things in a spiritual sense, and that is better than the carnal. ‘Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.’ To *you*, even to you, the very feeblest of those who resist the devil, will God draw nigh if you draw nigh to Him.”