

Experience with God

Psalm 1: 1, 2; Matthew 27: 46; Luke. 24: 25-27; Romans 3: 10-12; Romans 4: 6-8; Ephesians 5: 18-20; Colossians 3: 16.

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It will be noticed that each of the Scriptures read is either a quotation from, or a reference to, the Psalms. A Psalm indicates the thought of experience with God, and I have in mind to show the moral way in which we may gain such experience.

In Psalm 1 we have features of the godly man, and it must be evident to each of us that if we take account of the blessed Man who obviously is in mind in the Psalm, we must admit how very far short we come. The Psalm commences on a negative note, telling us where the godly man does not walk, or stand, or sit, but in the Gospels we see the wonderful way in which the Lord Jesus, the truly godly Man, *did* walk, and stand, and sit. It is delightful to our hearts to contemplate His every movement in this world until the moment He took His seat at the right hand of God on high — blessed answer to the perfection of His holy walk here.

But when we consider ourselves we have to confess that such features are foreign to us naturally, and we have to admit the truth of the words we read in the epistle to the Romans, that left to ourselves we have become entirely unprofitable to God. We may, in the mercy of God, have been preserved from the overt sins and degradation recorded in these early chapters of Romans, but which of us can say that in ourselves, apart from the work of God, there has been anything that approximates in any way to the features of the godly Man?

Now I would like to speak of the wonderful way the blessed God has taken in order that those features so perfectly seen in Jesus, might in their measure be seen in you and in me, and having referred to the quotations from the Psalms recorded in Romans 3, which indicate the condition in which we were found as away from God, I turn now to that wonderful verse, (and one scarcely knows how to speak about it at all) found in Psalm 22 containing words which fell from the holy lips of that precious Victim on Calvary's cross.

We have said to one another more than once in private conversation that there are portions of Scripture in relation to which we do well to hold our tongues, and one would seek in the anointing of the Spirit to speak but a word as to this holy exclamation from the lips of our Lord. That precious holy Victim, that blessed Man, who never in one single thought, or movement, or word, was found in any way contrary to the holy will of God, went to Calvary's cross for you and for me. There is one thing that should touch our hearts more than all else, the fact that our sins, our guilt, in love divine were confessed and borne by Him. Let us listen with subdued spirits to that cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Beloved brethren, if those holy features which were seen in perfection in Christ were to be formed in you and in me, it was necessary that the blessed God should maintain inviolate the holiness of His character. Hence it is Christ Himself who prophetically gives us the answer to that most solemn question, "Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel," (Psalm 22: 3). As a result of the death of Christ God lives in the praises of His people without having surrendered one iota of His holiness. This cry of abandonment was wrung from the very depths of His holy soul, as He, the holy One of God, "suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," (1 Peter 3: 18). The only One who had a right to be in the sunshine of the favour of God was

abandoned that we might be brought into a pathway in which we could have the knowledge of God and enjoy nearness to Himself.

In Romans 4 we have a quotation from Psalm 32, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven." If we think again of Christ, He was ever the "blessed Man," there was never the slightest distance between His heart and God, in His pathway here there never was a moment of interrupted communion with His God. But with you and with me there was that which prevented our enjoyment of the presence of God and what is so blessedly causative in relation to our happiness is that *our sins have been forgiven*. We need not apologize for introducing this simple note; we need to see how God has acted in grace in order that we might be brought into the enjoyment of uninterrupted experience with Himself, which is normal Christianity. It was our sins which separated us from God, and before we could be brought into communion with God, before we could really know what experience with God is, the question of our sins had to be dealt with. Thank God they have been dealt with in the cross of Christ. It is not wealth, it is not ecclesiastical status, it is not the ability to quote Scripture, not the ability to enunciate doctrine that gives true Christian happiness, but that through the precious work of Christ we have been brought right home to God, and have the privilege of growing in our knowledge of God, and in experience with Him.

In Luke 24 we find the Lord Jesus conversing with those who had some experience of the ways of God, and some knowledge of the Scriptures. The circumstances in which they found themselves were entirely different from what they had expected. As He spoke with them the Lord Jesus opened up the Scriptures in a way they had not known before, showing that their theme was not primarily the "restoration of Israel," wonderful as that will be, but the things written in "Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms," were things *concerning Himself*. How do we read the Scriptures? Is it to feed a little more upon Him? His preciousness, His majesty, His glory, His moral worth, His official dignity, the charm, the exquisite preciousness that shines in every word, in every act, and every movement of that holy blessed Man? *They are they which concern Him*. And as having been brought to God, if we are to gain experience with God, if we are to enjoy nearness to God, the only food that will sustain us in such a pathway is Christ Himself. Do we not see — indeed we do — how precious He is to God! And if I am to share God's thoughts, if I am to have in common with God that which delights His own heart, instinctively my affections must be drawn to Christ. That beautiful hymn expresses it most sweetly,

"And to know the blessed secret
Of His preciousness to Thee."

Let us trace in the word the blessedness of what Christ is to His Father and His God; let us feed upon the preciousness of Christ to God, opening the Scriptures wherever we may to find in them the features of a blessed man who was ever delightful to the heart of His God. the innermost motives of our moral beings would thus be affected by the fact that the Scriptures bring before us the delight of God in the Person of His Son. That is what we are to feed on, and that, beloved, I suggest without any fear of contradiction, is the only kind of food suitable to those who wish to move in experience with God.

In the epistle to the Ephesians we have the unfolding of the counsel of God. There is that in relation to God which is beyond us, but there is one feature of God the whole of which has been declared, and that is His precious love. It has been declared in all its fulness in the Person of Christ. Behind the purpose and counsel of God is his eternal love. Behind all that has been brought into revelation is the blessed fact that God is love. God being love He desires that we should respond to that love, and in the epistle to the Ephesians, after speaking of that which God unfolds to us in relation to the mystery, the apostle refers to our walk. Many references to our walk are brought before us in this

epistle, but one thing is said that is perhaps outstanding, we are to walk *in love*. That which is to characterize our walk is the very nature of God Himself. If we are to walk in love, we need to be in the enjoyment inwardly of that which will sustain us in such a pathway. So amongst other things, the Psalms, the heart of the Scriptures, are to have a place in our affections, producing a spirit of joy and thanksgiving as they bring before us the feelings of Christ as in Manhood. The precious features of that blessed Man, manifested in His life and in His death, are to be the delight of our souls; bringing our hearts constantly into fresh experience with the blessed God who has made Himself known to us through the Man Christ Jesus. There is nothing, dear brethren, and I want to suggest this in all soberness and with affection, which can contribute to our joys more than personal intimate experience with God. We do not boast only in hope of the glory of God, which according to Romans chapter 5 is our portion as justified persons, but as reconciled, as brought right home to God for God's own pleasure, we boast in *God Himself*, we joy in *God*. God has in mind, in bringing us right home to Himself, that we should not only boast in what He is doing, and what He will eventually display in glory, but that we might boast in *God Himself*. It is written of Christ that He joyed in God. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father" (Luke 10: 21). At that time of crisis His inward affections were as always, rejoicing in God. This, beloved, is God's mind for us, that we might know what it is to be brought right home to God, enjoying day by day experiences with God, and every fresh experience with God will increase our appreciation of all that has been made known to us of God in Christ, and our joy will be full.

We see in the epistle to the Colossians that the experience with God which we enjoy inwardly and which is to affect our walk and give to us an increased sense of what it is to joy in God, is to help us in our relations one with another. Unless we know the value of these Psalms as promoting our own experience with God, we shall be deficient in helping our brethren. In the verse we have read in Colossians, where the apostle speaks of "admonishing one another," the first thing mentioned is "in Psalms." What does it mean? Let us consider it carefully. The only way in which we can admonish one another in relation to the truth, is as having *experience with God*. The word "admonishing" implies a loving caution, a gentle rebuke, and such features are formed in us through communion with God. In Romans 15 we read that the saints were "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge," and were thus "able to admonish one another." We can never truly admonish one another unless we are ourselves in the enjoyment of *personal experience with God*. If there is one thing above all else that one would desire for oneself and for the brethren in this day, it is *personal history with God*. The measure of our experience with God is the measure of our usefulness to our brethren in relation to the things of God. May we all seek the Lord's help as to this.

In closing I refer to a verse in Romans 10, "How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach the gospel of peace." Isaiah 52: 7 reads, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of *Him* that bringeth good tidings," a prophetic reference to the precious feet of Christ. The woman in the 7th chapter of Luke; Mary who sat at those blessed feet in Luke 10; the leper who fell on his face at His feet and worshipped (Luke 17), were amongst those who appreciated the beauty of the feet of Christ as He moved on to the cross, coming from Godhead's fullest glory to Calvary's depth of woe, in order that He might bring to your heart and to mine the good tidings of the infinite eternal love of the heart of God. How blessedly He did it! "No man hath seen God at any time; The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," (John 1: 18). The pathway of Jesus in this world ended at the cross, and so John in his epistle writes "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us," (1 John 4: 12). What a testimony there can be from each one of us! But how can we set forth one whom we do not know? Let us seek grace to speak of a God whom we *know*, whose love we are in the conscious enjoyment of, One with whom we

are daily walking, gaining fresh and increased experience of Himself as we pass along our pilgrim pathway. What a moral revolution is presented to us in the epistle to the Romans! Feet which are no longer "swift to shed blood," but so affected by the compassions of God made known in the gospel that their movements are now so absolutely in accord with God, that when He crushes Satan He will do it under the feet of the saints, feet that have been made beautiful and triumphant through the love of God made known in Christ. Thus experience with God is that which will give us power in our testimony to men, and power over the enemy.

These beautiful feet are essential if we are to walk with God. Feet that are self-willed, independent, proud, cannot keep step with God. And as walking in step with God, we shall have power in our relations with our brethren, and in our testimony to men.