

Draw Near to God (Go To Meeting)

Tom Fannin—April 10, 2021

{transcription begins @ 2 minute in}

Let's just think about what's going on in this world right now! We're living in interesting times, and I don't care where you're at in the world, you're seeing all kinds of things happening. Right now particularly in the United States with the virus—not only here but around the world—all the unrest and all the intensified wickedness and evil, it's interesting times for all of us.

Can we say that some hard times lay ahead of us, the people of God? *Yes!* Harder times do lay ahead for us, and that's why continually we need to be thankful. We need to be thinking about getting close to God, drawing close to God. That's really where God desires us to be, close to Him!

What I really want to cover is two things that we need to continually keep on our mind. It's an action and things we need to be doing. It's a way of life that we need to live and be focused on during this time and for what's coming ahead.

Isaiah 66:1: "Thus says the LORD, 'The heaven *is* My Throne, and the earth *is* My footstool. Where then *is* the house that you build for Me? And where *is* the place of My rest? For all these things My hand has made, and these things came to be,' says the LORD...." (vs 1-2). *Just think about this!*

- Do we take time to think about God?

I know that we're in the Passover season and the days of Unleavened Bread. We look up in the sky and we see that big full moon.

- Do we take time to think about God and just His power, magnificence and what He does?
- Do we take time to think about how all things are sustained by Him and Christ?
- Do we take time to think about that?

Think about ourselves and who we really are in comparison to that! David talks about this a little bit; let's go to Psa. 8.

Psalm 8:3: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him? For You have made him a little lower than God and have crowned him with glory and honor" (vs 3-5).

What is man in God's eyes? *For those of us who have the Truth, that really know Who God and Jesus Christ are*, we know what God thinks of man,

and the plan that God has for man!

Isn't it a privilege for all of us in the Church to know that? How good looks at us? *David considered this and so should we!* If we think about God and He says that the heavens are His Throne and the Earth is His footstool. 'What house will you build for Me?'

God goes on to say in Isaiah 66:2: "But **to this one I will look...**"

Think about all that God has done, all He's created; the being that is.

"...to him who is of a poor and contrite spirit and who trembles at My Word" (v 2).

That's what we want to talk about, being humble before God, having an attitude where we really tremble at His Word.

Being humble is really just make sure we stay small in our own eyes. For man it's hard to do that, with the nature we have to be small in our own eyes, because a lot of time we really think highly of ourselves.

When I think about this I reflect back to what was talked about back there with Saul and Samuel. Saul was corrected by Samuel, and he lost his opportunity to be king. But there was a moment there when Samuel reminded Saul that at one point he was small in his own eyes.

Even Saul himself noted that when he was first anointed that he came from one of the least tribes, the tribe of Benjamin and maybe the family he was a part of there. Benjamin wasn't one of the more well know or established families, so he had a different thinking of himself; a low estimate of himself you could say. That's what we need to be mindful of continually.

- Can we come into God's presence any other way?
- Can we come before God proud, haughty, trying to work things our ourselves, our own way? *No!*

That's not how God wants us to come before Him. That's not what He looks to. We need to be mindful of that.

Honoring God's Word, it says here in Isaiah; those who tremble at God's Word, honor and living by God's Word. Study it and understanding what it is; it's powerful and living! It divides and is sharper than a two-edged sword! God's Word leads us.

That's why He wants us to tremble at it and fear it, and remember His Word. It will lead us to the Kingdom; we know that! It also judges us!

Let's see what James has to say about this relationship we have with God, and our attitude and what it should be.

James 4:6: "But He gives greater grace. This is the reason it says, 'God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble.'"

Yes, we're under grace and we need to remain under grace, and our attitude of humility has got a lot to do with that before God.

Verse 7: "Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, you sinners, and purify *your* hearts, you double-minded!" (vs 7-8).

It's a reminder to us! We need to be paying attention to this right now, especially in the times we live in and what's coming on the people of God.

It's not a time to be double-minded! It's a time to be single-minded! For all of us we know that's building the mind of Christ! ***Now is not a time:***

- to be double-minded
- to make a wrong decision
- to be doing something we shouldn't be doing

Now is the time to be really focused on God and draw near to God!

Verse 9: "Be grieved and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into grieving, and *your* joy into mourning. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you" (vs 9-10). *Peter says something very similar to this!*

When we read God's Word we learn 'line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little.' When we see the consistency in God's Word and no matter who their writers were—as we see here with Peter and James—the same message, the same mind. All inspired by God through these men who wrote.

1-Peter 5:5: "In the same manner, *you* younger men be subject to *the* older men; and all of *you* be subject to one another..."

I hope as brethren that's our attitude. We do strive to be subject to have love for one another.

"...being clothed with humility because God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble. Be humbled, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time" (vs 5-6).

There is order, and being humble before God comes first! In due time, God will exalt us. That will be part of the resurrection and glory that we will receive.

1-Peter 3:12: "Because **the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous...** [tie in Isa. 66—to this one will I look] **...and His ears are open to their supplications.** But *the* face of *the* Lord *is* against those who practice evil."

It's good to remember that God hears our prayers and supplications. He's watching us; He sees us and what's going on here with this meeting we're in. He sees us reading His Word and knows what's on our mind. He hears us; He hears our cries and our prayers.

That's why we need to remain humble before Him.

Psalm 25:12: "What man is he who fears the LORD? He shall teach him in the way that He shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall inherit the earth. The secret of the LORD is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant" (vs 12-14).

Brethren, God has shown us His covenant! We're in His covenant. At the Passover He remembers that covenant and we remember what Christ did for us. But God shows us this covenant and the more we're in this covenant, the more we're converted, the more we understand about God and His plan, what He has in store for us. That's a secret that the world doesn't understand, but we understand and know.

That in itself should make us humble, shouldn't it. Just to know all these things that God has planned has been revealed to us and we have that understanding.

I'm going to talk a little bit about being anxious, and we kind of talked about what's coming. We do think that harder times are coming for the people of God.

- Do you at times be anxious about these thing?
- Worrying about what might be coming our way?

I think it's natural to do that as human beings. But God doesn't really want us to do that. There are things that God does want us to be concerned about, but being anxious and worrying, God really doesn't want us to be doing that.

We know that God wants us to trust in Him no matter what lies ahead. Let's see what Christ said:

Matthew 6:31: “Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we be clothed?’ For the nations seek after all these things. And your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things” (vs 31-32).

In troubling times coming ahead, a lot of ‘Christian’ in the world are right now facing, God takes care of us in all ways, and He knows our needs.

Verse 33: “But *as for* you, **seek**... [continual seeking] ...**first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness**, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow shall take care of the *things* of itself. Sufficient for the day is **the evil of that day**” (vs 33-34).

Isn’t that true? We take things one day at a time, and that’s how we need to do. God and Christ don’t want us to be anxious about these things, are needs, but there are things they do want us to be concerned about. I won’t say anxious, but very concerned about and deliberate and very serious about.

That deals with what Christ mentioned here, not necessarily the physical clothing or food, **but the spiritual clothing and food!** They want us to be very concerned that we have that.

John 6:47: “Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me has eternal life. I AM the Bread of Life. Your fathers ate manna in the desert, **but they died**” (vs 47-49).

A very profound statement, but true! The physical, the manna, yes it sustained them and took care of them physically, but they died.

Verse 50: “This is the Bread, which comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die. I AM the living Bread, which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this Bread, he shall live forever...” (vs 50-51).

That’s what we look forward to, those of us under the covenant. That’s living forever, our inheritance. It’s a forever inheritance, living forever!

“...and the bread that I will give is even My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (v 51).

Verse 52: “Because of this, the Jews were arguing with one another, saying, ‘How is He able to give us *His* flesh to eat?’ Therefore, Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you do not have Life in yourselves’” (vs 52-53).

Remember that, the taking of the bread and the wine, remembering Christ gave us the example in the New Covenant. Remember Him; do it in remembrance of Him!

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We need to be concerned of taking in the blood and body of Christ. Remembering what’s been done for us, but also taking in Christ Himself as the Bread of Life.

The words of God, taking those in daily. That’s something we need to be concerned about, and I hope all the brethren, all of us, really take time each day to do that. We do have the time now, and we have for a long time! We’ve had a lot of good times to be able to read, study and learn having readily available to us information to study and grow from. Yes, we need to be concerned about this food, that we have it and we’re full up.

Christ said that we don’t need to be worried or anxious about the physical clothing, but the spiritual clothing. Do we need to be concerned about having that? *Yes! We definitely need to be concerned being spiritually clothed!*

Ephesians 6:10—*Paul says*: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in *the* Lord, and in the might of His strength.”

There is no other way to be strong, except to be strong in the Lord. We need to remember that! In the might of His strength! A lot of times we can tend to start thinking about ourselves and what we’re going to do and how we’re going to prepare and try and take matters into our own hands.

We can’t do that! We can’t be of that mind! It has to be done through the strength of God and through His mind. That is how we’re going to get through this.

Verse 11: “Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” *We need to be clothed!*

- Why?
- Why do we need to be clothed with this?
- Why do we need to make sure that we’re looking to God to get the power and strength from Him?

Verse 12: “**Because we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities and against powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual power of wickedness in high places.**”

That’s why! We need help! We can’t fight against Satan and all the powers of this world on our own. We need help from God, and we need to count on Him and look to Him! If it wasn’t for that, we would be consumed.

Verse 13: “Therefore, take up the whole armor of God so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having worked out all things, to stand.”

Yes, it takes work! We have to work out these things; it takes effort on our part! God looks to us, and expects us to be doing that!

It is good to be prepared, and have a little bit put back. Just remember that ***we need to be looking to God for the help***; that’s really where it’s going to come from.

Think about Elijah and the widow and son there, and they had the oil and wheat available to them every day. That may come to some of us at some point, too; where those needs like that are met for us.

It’s good for all of us to be prepared. Here we are today on the Internet on a Go To Meeting and we have a lot of electronic devices that we’re able to use to study and learn from. But that day may go away.

I know that local fellowship group in Cincinnati where we’re at, we’re trying to keep a library and keep it stocked with different information and publications to help us learn God’s Word, including God’s Word itself! It’s there for the brethren now, and for those in the future. I may be a good idea if you having thought about that, to get some things and have them put back so you can have for yourselves and maybe to help others, as well, just in case at some point we’re not able to do these things electronically.

To move forward, we need to keep our mind on God’s promises and God will deliver us. ***He will!*** How will God deliver? A lot of times we think about different scenarios—what might be coming—when we read God’s Word and we see what’s happened to people in God’s Word in the past and how they were delivered, and we think sometimes about ourselves that things might happen.

2-Peter 2:7: “And *if* He personally rescued righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the lawless ones *living* in licentious conduct.”

A lot of times I think about Lot and the

situation he was in with his family in Sodom. I think about how he got there to begin with. We know at one point that Lot and Abraham were doing very well. They were doing so well that they needed to go in different directions and take their possessions with them.

But both of them did very well, and I sometimes wonder how Lot got in that situation where he was with his family. Nonetheless, he’s called ‘righteous Lot.’ That’s how God looked upon him.

Sometimes we look at the situation that we get into in this world right now, and sometimes we wonder ourselves—or will in the future—how did we get here? How did this world get into this mess and situation? ***We know!***

Verse 8: “For that righteous man, dwelling among them, through seeing and hearing *their* lawless activities, was tormented day-by-day *in his* righteous soul.”

I think that’s a feeling that a lot of us have today when we see what’s going on in this world; it’s tormenting! Very negative! Depressing!

Verse 9: “**The Lord knows how to rescue the Godly** out of temptation, and to reserve *the* unrighteous to *the* day of judgment to be punished.”

When we think about the future and what may happen, just remember that “**The Lord knows how to rescue the Godly...**”

We don’t know how things may work out, how it’s going to be done in our times of tribulation in the future. But God knows! He knows how to rescue! He will provide a way!

1-Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has come upon you except what is common to mankind. **For God, Who is faithful...** [that’s what we need to keep our mind on] **...will not permit you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear; but with the temptation, He will make a way of escape,** so that you may be able to bear *it*.”

Just like Lot was rescued, God will also be faithful to rescue us! ***God is faithful!*** As we reflect back to what’s been done for us, God was faithful in keeping His Word to Abraham and what He did in becoming a perfect sacrifice for us. God and Christ are both committed to us, and they will be faithful. We just have to remember what they say.

Proverbs 15:33: “The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom, and before honor *is* humility.”

Yes, we need the wisdom of God right now in our lives. That comes through a fear of Him. The

future honor we will have starts with humility.

Proverbs 16:1: “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the LORD. All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirits. **Commit your works unto the LORD, and your thoughts shall be established**” (vs 1-3).

- Do we get anxious and worry?
- Do we worry about what we may face and have to do?
- *Commit your works to God!*

and

- our works will be established
- we will have the right thoughts
- we will have the right answers
- we will know what we need to do
- we will be led by God’s Spirit

Remember this: “...**your thoughts shall be established**” if we commit ourselves to God! He will help us with that, even our thoughts! Again, if you worry about things and have anxiety, remember that ***God establishes our thoughts!***

- we don’t want to worry
- we want to trust in God
- God delivers us
- God takes care of us

Let’s see what Paul wrote:

2-Corinthians 1:8: “For we do not want you to be ignorant of our tribulations, brethren...”

A lot of times Paul and those traveling with him had tribulations and went through hard times. They were in much tribulation, in perils and problems. They were shipwrecked and in the deep. They had problems with false brethren. Paul continually had problems and trials and tests upon him, ***but he was faithful to teach and preach the Word of God to the Gentiles!***

“...*even the trials* that befell us in Asia; **we were exceedingly burdened beyond our own strength, so much so that we even despaired of living**” (v 8).

That was a serious time for Paul there, and the ones with him, that they had reached a point where they “...**despaired of living.**” We don’t have all the details of what happened there, but whatever it was it was a very hard trial for them.

Verse 9: “For **we had the sentence of death within ourselves**, so that we would not trust in ourselves **but in God, Who raises the dead.**”

It looks to me, as I read this, that they were at a point that they thought maybe that was the end.

Their focus got on trusting in God, remembering God’s faithfulness, remembering God’s Word, that He will raise them even from the dead at a resurrection.

Sometimes that might be final deliverance for us. But we have to remember, even in that, that if we die in this physical life we have a spiritual life to look forward to, and He is the final deliverance!

Verse 10: “Who delivered us from so great a death, and continues to deliver; in Whom we have hope that He will even yet deliver.”

Please remember that God delivers us, and there will be some time of final deliverance for us!

Hebrews 13:5: “*Do not allow the love of money to influence your behavior...*”

When I was reading this, it came to my mind that maybe we could say—should say—***but allow the love of God to influence our behavior!*** That’s truly what we want! God’s love within us, and having that mind! That’s what we want to have influence our behavior.

“...*but be satisfied with what you have; for He has said, ‘**In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way**’*” (v 5). *God takes care of the needs, whatever they may be!*

Verse 6: “So then, let us boldly say, **‘The Lord is my Helper, and I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’**”

That needs to be our mind, and hopefully we can boldly say that. It takes conviction where you can have that mind where you can boldly say that. It takes trust, and that only comes from being humble before God, and have the fear and trembling of His Word.

That’s where we can get that attitude, where we can be bold about what we say. God does help us; He will deliver us! What can man do to us?

Now we will read some Scriptures in the Psalms that give us hope and confidence. Let’s us remember Who God is and what He thinks of us. He does look to us: His saints, His children, those who have His Spirit within them, who have received the begettal, the down payment until we’re changed and in the Kingdom.

Psalm 31:19: “Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You... [the Kingdom is laid up for us] ...which You have prepared **for those who take refuge in You** before the sons of men!”

- Do we take refuge in God?
- Do we want to dwell in the shadow under the wings of the Almighty?

- Is that where we want to be?

That's where we need to be now! Hopefully, that's where we want to be! Strive to be!

Verse 20: "You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence from the plottings of man; You shall hide them in a shelter away from the strife of tongues."

God desires, and He does, to hide us, right there in His secret place. He takes care of us!

Psalms 91:7: "A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand; it shall not come near you."

I don't think sometimes that we really think about protection that's given to God's people and what He does for us. But we should reflect on that from time to time.

Psalms 16:1: "Preserve me, O God, for in You do I take refuge. I have said to the LORD, 'You are my LORD; I have no goodness apart from You.'.... [God says]: ...'As for the saints in the earth, they are the excellent ones in whom is all My delight'" (vs 1-3).

That's what we need to remember. We are the saints, the excellent ones. The ones that God is looking to. We are His workmanship! We're the ones whom God is perfecting until we come to be like Him!

Psalms 34:1: "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall always be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear and be glad" (vs 1-2).

We've talked about being humble quite a bit! It's the humble ones who are here. The humble ones who have this attitude where they're glad as we boast in the Lord.

Verse 3: "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together."

We need to do that; we need to exalt God's name together! That's why we really enjoy our fellowship and our time together. When we're together as God's people, our focus shouldn't be on this world and the troubles of this world, ***our mind should be upon God and His work!***

A book of remembrance is made for those who remember God and speak of Him. That's how we should be. We should magnify the Lord and exalt Him together.

Verse 4: "I sought the LORD, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant; and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and

the LORD heard... [think about the 'poor and contrite spirit' that God looks to] ...and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them" (vs 4-7).

We can't forget about the angels. There are all these Holy angels, and God has angels around us, protecting us, taking care of us.

One day I'm looking forward to is when we're resurrected and being introduced to the angels. Particularly the angels that God assigned to us over our life. Whether it was one, multiple or different angels. Don't forget that God has angels that encamp around us. I think all of us can tell stories about protection that we received and we give God and Jesus Christ the thanks and glory, but I'm sure that at times it's angels were who were directly involved in helping us. And they're there for us now and will be.

Verse 8: "O taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him. O fear the LORD, all you saints, for there is nothing lacking to those who fear Him" (vs 8-9).

Verse 17: "The righteous cry, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all" (vs 17-19).

And the Lord will continue to deliver us out of all them, too!

REVIEW:

Draw Near to God

Do we know what's coming? *I'd say that hard times are coming!* There is change going on in this world. Especially the country I live in, the United States—and maybe in some other countries that you may live in—have seen changes already the change is coming.

- ***Draw near to God!***
- ***Take the time!***
- ***We have the time now!***
- ***God is near, draw near to Him!***

Be humble before God!

There's no other way to come before God and be in His presence but to be humble! Be engaged in God's Word while we have the time to take it in.

Trust in God continually to deliver us.

We need to remember this, because God will continue to deliver us, even if it means at the resurrection, our final deliverance.

Remember your covenant!

Remember what Christ has done for us, and God the Father, also! In this world that we live in once we entered into the covenant we became citizens of another ‘country,’ citizens of the Kingdom of God! Our names are written in heaven.

That’s what we need to have our mind on, the future and what we will be doing; knowing that Christ was our personal sacrifice, and He sits there at the right hand of God. They both look at us because we’re precious in Their sight.

Keep your mind on that and look forward to the coming return of Jesus Christ and all of us being a part of the Kingdom!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Isaiah 66:1-2
- 2) Psalm 8:3-5
- 3) Isaiah 66:2
- 4) James 4:6-10
- 5) 1 Peter 5:5-6
- 6) 1 Peter 3:12
- 7) Psalm 25:12-14
- 8) Matthew 6:31-34
- 9) John 6:47-55
- 10) Ephesians 6:10-13
- 11) 2 Peter 2:7-9
- 12) 1 Corinthians 10:13
- 13) Proverbs 15:33
- 14) Proverbs 16:1-3
- 15) 2 Corinthians 1:8-10
- 16) Hebrews 10:5-6
- 17) Psalm 31:19-20
- 18) Psalm 91:7
- 19) Psalm 16:1-3
- 20) Psalm 34:1-9, 17-19

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