



Near to the Heart of God



**"There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God,
a place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God.**

**"There is a place of comfort sweet, near to the heart of God,
a place where we our Savior meet, near to the heart of God.**

**"There is a place of full release, near to the heart of God,
a place where all is joy and peace, near to the heart of God.**

**"O Jesus, blest Redeemer, sent from the heart of God,
hold us who wait before Thee near to the heart of God."**

**"O Thou who dry'st the mourner's tears!
How dark this world would be,
if when deceived and wounded here,
we could not fly to Thee."
- Thomas Moore**

**"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all ...
The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who take refuge in Him
will be condemned." - Psalm 34:18,19,22**

**"If I should say, 'My foot has slipped,' Your lovingkindness, O Lord, will hold me up.
When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your consolations delight my soul." -
Psalm 94:18,19**

**I like the way my hymn devotional expresses the truths behind this comforting hymn,
written by a pastor named Cleland McAfee out of his own broken heart:**

**"Life is often filled with unexpected problems or crises. Unrest and despair will darken
the way of even the strongest saint. Yet the Christian - because of the refuge he has in
God - should strive to maintain composure and stability in spite of stress and
difficulties. We cannot escape the pressures and dark shadows in our lives; but they
can be faced with a spiritual strength that our Lord provides. As we are held securely
'near to the heart of God,' we find the rest, the comfort, the joy and peace that only
Jesus our Redeemer can give. Because of this, we can live every day with an inner
calm and courage."**

This is the message that Dr. McAfee wanted to share with his grieving family after the sudden death of his two nieces from diphtheria. Turning to God and the Scriptures, he soon felt the lines and the tune of this hymn flow from God's heart to his own. It soon became widely known and has since spoken words of comfort and spiritual healing to many of God's people.

We move today from the assurance that God is always able to do something new - in our new birth, to make us a new creation in Him, and on our behalf to give help and hope in times of despair. An important reason for that hope is the fact that He is near whenever we draw near to Him, which must be our natural response as we face the trials of life, or when the burdens of our past experiences weigh heavily upon us. As we read in James 4:8, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you."

The Psalms provide many verses that draw us closer to God. It has been said that much of Scripture deals with the horizontal aspects of life, but Psalms is all about the vertical - in other words, our relationship with God. Reading and meditating on your favorite psalms will draw you closer to Him as you are reminded of His glorious attributes and His heart for you.

Psalm 73 was written by Asaph, who expresses his grief and depression freely to God over the seeming prosperity of evil men. He heard them mock Him, saying "How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?" Asaph began to feel as though his efforts to keep his heart pure were in vain, because he suffered various trials in his own life. God seemed very distant, and his heart was drifting away from His presence.

But Asaph's thoughts take a turn in the later verses of Psalm 73, as he remembers the security he enjoyed as God's child, and how godless people were set for destruction. The Lord took away his bitterness, and Asaph realized the folly of his envy. He closes his psalm with these powerful words in verses 23-28, and with this we close for today:

"Nevertheless, I am continually with You; You have taken hold of my right hand, with Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For behold, those who are far from You will perish; You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You, but as for me, the nearness of God is my good. I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works."