



Nearer, Still Nearer



"Nearer, still nearer, close to Thy heart,
draw me, O Savior, so precious Thou art;
fold me, O fold me close to Thy breast;
shelter me safe in that haven of rest.

"Nearer, still nearer, nothing I bring,
naught as an off'ring to Jesus my King;
only my sinful, now contrite heart;
grant me the cleansing Thy blood doth impart.

"Nearer, still nearer, while life shall last,
till safe in glory my anchor is cast;
through endless ages, ever to be,
nearer, my Savior, still nearer to Thee,
nearer, my Savior, still nearer to Thee."

"The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." - Psalm 145:18

"From Your precepts I get understanding; therefore, I hate every false way. Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." - Psalm 119:104-105

"If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." - 1 John 1:8-10

"Nearer, Still Nearer" was written and composed by Lelia Morris, who wrote more than 1,000 gospel hymns, and continued writing even after going blind. The hymn was first published in 1898 and can still be found in our present-day hymnals.

My hymn devotional points out that several groups of people had a relationship with Christ while He was here on earth. There was the multitude who followed from a distance and were only interested in what Jesus could do. As such they were mere spectators of the Savior. The "seed" sown by His messages fell beside the road, as Jesus explains in the Parable of the Soils in Matthew 13, so it bore no fruit in their lives.

Then there were the 12 disciples who were personally taught by Christ over the three years of His earthly ministry, and who moved into a more intimate relationship with Him when Jesus announced that they were no longer servants, but His friends (John

15:15). But within the family of disciples, there was the inner circle - namely, Peter, James, and John - who enjoyed the closest fellowship with the Lord and were the ones Jesus counted on the most.

We find this to be true in our own relationships and circles of friends. There are those with whom we share our deepest thoughts, longings, and secrets, and who we can count on for any need we may have. Other people fall into the wider circles, and there are varying levels of intimacy with them, which is okay. But Christ needs to be in the very center of our inner circle, in order for us to experience the nearness of God.

Our relationship with the Lord can fall short of the closeness He desires when we fail to apply His Word to our lives and have daily communion with Him. Religious activity is no substitute for spending time "close to His breast" and sheltered safely in that "haven of rest." Let us resolve to reflect daily on those attitudes and actions that need to change, so that we can move into a higher level of closeness with Christ.

I will close with some highlights from an article I found online that listed 3 simple steps to deepen our relationship with God, no matter how far away you may feel from Him just now:

First, reach out to Him when you feel overwhelmed by life. Don't be afraid to come to Him, for He knows our deepest thoughts and the desires of our hearts. No matter how long it's been since you've truly felt God's presence, know that calling out to Him is the solution. God does not push us away. He loves us, pursues us, and wants us to grow in our relationship with Him. Admitting that we need God's help is not a sign of weakness: instead, it's expressing a desire to know God better.

The second step is to limit distractions that hinder our walk with God. The heroes of the Bible had temptations and weaknesses of their own, but they walked with God, and the desire to do God's will had a greater hold on them. Sometimes we need to walk away from things that are driving us away from Him. If we have no time for God, something has to move from first place.

Finally, be intentional. Set aside a time where you can be alone with God in a place with few distractions. Perhaps wake up earlier to read the Bible and pray before your day gets going. Or you could listen to an audio Bible or the radio while doing daily chores. God will meet you where you are, and since the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we can spend time with Him in all kinds of places, wherever we may find ourselves each day. So, make Him your first priority today, and you will find that "the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."