

There is a closeness that we are privileged to possess as Christians. We sometimes don't take advantage of it. In Gal 4:6-7 we read, "*and because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!'. So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.*" This cry 'Abba' is the typical way that a small boy called to his father. It is a very intimate, personal name, showing the closeness that we should feel as God's children. The question that we need to ask ourselves is, are we really striving to be close to God? We sing songs so frequently that deal with this theme, but do we really mean it? Or are we actually playing some sort of spiritual 'tag' game, where we run from him each time he gets close? Some of us are afraid to get close, not just to God, but to other people. We don't like to be touched. We don't like to have our 'personal space' invaded. We want to keep our 'self' secret, so that others don't know what it is really like. We forget that God knows our heart, no matter how we try to hide it. We simply need to humble ourselves before him and seek a closer walk with him.

God should be a powerful attractive force to us; like a magnet, he should draw us closer and closer to him all of the time. Is this true? Are we attracted by his infinite goodness, power and glory? Do we want to go to heaven because we believe in God and want to be near the source of it? Sometimes an animal can give us great lessons in this kind of attraction. Have you ever had a dog will get closer and closer to you as he tries to lick your face? Alan Hayward writes, 'Go into the streets of any of our big cities around 10:00 at night, and you will see two different kinds of dogs. Some are being taken for their ritual evening walk by their devoted owners; others have just been shooed out of the house for a few minutes, to fend for themselves. The difference between them is striking. The loners just mooch around from one sniffing point to another. Obviously bored, they don't see any point in going anywhere, so they hang about within whistling distance of home and wait for the call to come in. They look only half alive by contrast with the other lucky dogs. As every dog knows, having your master with you makes all the difference. You may not know where you are being taken, but you know that you are being taken, and that's enough to fill your doggy heart with a joyous sense of anticipation.' The very presence, or closeness, of our master should make us feel the same kind of joy.

Not everybody wants this. After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid when they heard God walking nearby. Jonah attempted to flee to Tarshish to get away from God and his mission. We all want to hide sometimes so that our guilt will not be known. But in Luke 12.2 we find that there is nothing hidden that will not one day be made known. There is simply no way to hide from God. Getting far away will not help; but getting close to him will. The idea of reconciliation is the idea of bringing close again. In Ephesians 2.12-18 we see that as sinners we became far from God, but through Christ we now can become near.

We may not feel the closeness of God, such as when we pray. He is there, but our own preoccupation with other things keeps us from settling down to recognize it. Many times in the Old Testament we read that we are to 'Be still before the Lord'. It takes a conscious effort to stop everything else for just a minute and be still so that we can concentrate on God. We need to feel that God is right there beside us every minute to help us when we call on him for strength.

God recognizes our attempts to be close. In the story of the woman with the issue of blood there was a tremendous press from the crowd, but in spite of this Jesus knew that he had been specially touched. This kind of power is amazing. This was a different kind of touch, a touch of need, a touch of faith. Trench states that there were others nearby who surely had complaints as bad as hers, but they did not touch with the touch of faith. He says that it is the same thing many times in the church. Many 'throng' Christ; they are his in name. They are near to him outwardly, but they are 'touching' him because they do not draw near in faith.

Are we in a similar situation? Do we just put in our time here at the church services, close to Christ in some physical sort of way, but never allowing ourselves to reach out and touch him? We have to be close enough, we have to approach him and try to make that contact. We sing of him standing at the door, waiting for us to open it and let him in. And that is indeed what must happen. He is not going to force his way in as the police would a trapped criminal. He is going to gently plead for us to get near enough to the door to open it.