



Dr. Robert A. Cook

Come
Right in!

You are a very special
person, so...
Come right in!



“Come Right In!”

By Dr. Robert A. Cook



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Do you remember having an experience like this? You were sitting in some office, facing a door marked "Private." You knew that beyond that door was the one you wanted to see, the one who ran the place - the boss. But all you could do was wait, hoping he would call for you.

Then there appeared this small child, say six years old. He waved to the receptionist ("Hi, Tillie"), went right past all the people whose chairs lined the outer office, went straight to the door marked "Private," turned the knob and went in.

Nobody objected. Why?

Because he was the boss's son. He had access to the father's presence by family right and because the father had given him that privilege.

As we look at Romans 5, we see God inviting us, too, to COME RIGHT IN, to exercise the privilege of our sonship, to delight ourselves in the secret place of His purpose and His love. *"Through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand..."* (Rom. 5:1,2).

Is God indeed your Heavenly Father, not only by creation but also by redemption? Have you exercised your will to receive Him? "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). If so, you have been adopted into the family of God, with all the rights and privileges thereof. You now can come to the door, so to speak, of the President of the Universe, to the throne of Almighty God, and you can walk right in and call Him "Father"! *"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father"* (Gal. 4:6).

Have you discovered the meaning of that word "Abba"? It is a pet name for one's father, used by little children in the days when the Bible was written. Its equivalent might be our word "Papa." There is that tender love relationship between you and the Heavenly Father - it escapes description. You cannot begin to describe how sweet it is - this access into the very presence of God.

Paul says in Philippians 4: *"Be care-filled about nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God."*

ARE you a child of God Behaving as God's child?

That is, share everything with your Father.

How do you feel when you first get up in the morning? Tell God about it.
How do you react when you're tested and discouraged and everything goes wrong?
He's waiting to hear.

Share the moment of irritation with your blessed Lord and you will find Him applying His grace to the abrasive and rough and hard experiences of everyday living - the ones that leave you scratched and bruised and bleeding.

Oh, see His presence! It is not "private" to you if Christ is your Savior and you are thus a child of God.

There are many aspects of our coming, each essential to the others. We shall look at some of them as we move through these pages:

...trusting ...rejoicing
...sometimes hurting ...appropriating delighting
...appreciating ...enjoying.

Do you need to "find grace to help in [your] time of need"? Then hear and respond to the Father's loving word: COME RIGHT IN.

Come Trusting

We have access by faith...

How did you become a child of God, if you are one?

By faith, of course! You did not see with your physical eyes our dear Lord Jesus coming to you, His nail-scarred hands extended, the light of love in His eyes - love for you. But your spiritual eyes perceived Him! You saw in Him the embodiment of the written Word (though you probably could not explain this), and you reached out to take the gift of salvation

He proffered you ... all by faith.
Just so ... by faith ... He invites you to come to Him now, with every interest of your life, every problem.

“Faith” introduces us to “grace.”

We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.

There is an old song whose chorus concludes with these words:

*This is my story
To God be the glory,
I'm only a sinner - saved by grace.*

Grace - unmerited favor - is not simply something that gets us into heaven. It does do that, praise God: *“For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”* (Eph. 2:8). But this is also true: *“We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Eph.2:10). *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him”* (Col. 2:6).

That means we are to live every minute of every day appropriating the grace of God. Note that we are directed to “this grace wherein we stand.” Now standing requires moment - by - moment effort, albeit subconsciously exerted. It involves a certain set of the mind to hold that position. Likewise, the minute you exercise faith in God about any given matter, that minute God’s grace begins to operate in the specific area of your life that needs it, and you find yourself - blessedly - able to stand.

Oh, He does not always change your circumstances!
Many a time have I prayed, concerning some thorny situation, “Lord, get me out of this!”
Instead, He has whispered to my heart, “Come, dear child. I’ll go with you through it.”
...If there were never any tears shed, you wouldn’t know that the grace of God can dry them.
...If there were never any situations in which you were “scared to death,” you would never know that God can impart courage sufficient for the need.
...If there were never any experiences that bruise and lacerate and break your heart, you would never know that Jesus Christ is Himself the Healing Balm to make you whole again.

Oh, the grace of God comes into our “stress situations” with all their testings and trials and hurts. God’s rescue often means going through the Red Sea, n’ot around it. But with Him you will get to the other side.

You will go through the “rivers” and the “valleys” - even the valley of the shadow of death - by grace, through faith.

Don't try to go it alone. Cast your burden upon the Lord, He will not only carry the load, but He will carry you as well.

When I was a lad of five or six, I would sometimes be sent on an errand to Birnbaum's little grocery store, located a long block from our home in downtown Cleveland . We were very poor, so we never bought large quantities of anything: three eggs (because there were three of us, my father, my sister and me), half a pound of hamburger - things like that.

The trip to the store was downhill, and easy. But coming back, with even a small bag of groceries, was a hard pull for a little fellow. I remember that on more than one occasion my father, pausing in his work, would see his boy toiling up the hill, and with his great outdoorsman stride would reach me in a moment. He'd pick up the boy and the bag together and carry both into the kitchen. So many emotions merged in that moment: pride in my father's strength, rest from my heavy load, joy in belonging.

God is like that. When you let Him, He carries both you and the burden. Oh, apply God's grace today to the place in your life where you are hurting . . . where you are defeated ... where you are discouraged. Know for yourself the sheer joy there is in letting God take over - of lifting both the burden and you.

Dear fellow believer in Christ, the door into the Father's presence is open to you. COME RIGHT IN!

Come Rejoicing

There is ultimate rejoicing

“We have access ... and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”(v.2).

What does it mean to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God”? Two things, really: Paul says that when Christ appears we shall appear with Him, in glory. This is the finale, you might say, of the redemptive program. God's plan is to take a poor sinner, pardon and cleanse and justify him, fill him with the Spirit of God, and then one glorious day make him like the Lord Jesus Christ!

If you have come by that route, you know what is ahead for you: a body that is sin-proof, death-proof, pain-proof. You will be “changed,” that is, transformed, in the twinkling of an eye. *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

Paul says “we shall all be changed.” Changed how? Into His (Christ’s) image. Isn’t that great!

What, my friend, is your real hope for tomorrow?

The further we go in life the more we realize that if the Lord delays His coming, you and I are going to slip away just as our ancestors did. We’ll be mourned briefly by those who knew and loved us and our bodies laid to rest, awaiting the resurrection. When you think of finishing your earthly course does it scare you, does it upset you? I think you don’t need to do that, for the miracle of the Christian life is that it goes beyond the limitations of mortal flesh. Up ahead there is a day of indescribable glory. We ought to rejoice in anticipation of that day.

You may say, “It’s all well and good to exclaim over the good things ahead in eternity, but I have to live today. How can I know the glory of God when the dark clouds of trouble are gathering around my head? ... when my heart is aching? ... when I’ve lost a loved one? ... when I’m shut in by pain and weariness and weakness? How can I know the glory of God when I’m misunderstood ... or forgotten?”

Those are good, honest questions.

Paul says our afflictions (he calls them “light,” but they do not seem like that to us as we’re bearing them) really work for our good.

We faint not ... {for} though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:16-18) A steady gaze upon the Eternal Christ will, my friend, make the glory of God show up on your life even while you’re going through deep troubles.

Let's take an Old Testament illustration of this fact. When God called Moses to Mount Sinai to give the law to him, we read that "the Lord spake to Moses face to face, as a man speaking to a friend." What happened?

When Moses came down from those heights of holy privilege, he himself was changed. *"He wist not [that is, he didn't know] that the skin of his face shined"* (Ex. 33:11; 34:29).

He had an important message to share with the people, but they were afraid to come near him. So while he talked with them he put a veil over his face.

Moses must have known - and certainly we know from this occurrence - that if a child of God will tarry in the divine presence, will talk to and listen to God on a face - to - face basis, some of the glory that is God's will rub off on him. What a mind-boggling possibility!

There is present-day rejoicing

Consider another illustration, this one from the New Testament. Matthew 17 tells us that the Lord Jesus took Peter, James and John to a high mountain and was transfigured before them. *"His face [Christ's] did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light"* (v. 2).

What was the significance of that bright shining? Dr. Champion, a seminary professor of mine, used to explain it like this: "Think of an old-fashioned kerosene lamp," he would say. "You light it, but the wick is low. The flame is there, but the light is dim. Then you turn up the wick, and the whole room is full of light. In much the same way in the Incarnation the wick of deity was turned low. The flame was present, for the Lord Jesus Christ always was and always will be GOD. But at the moment of the Transfiguration, God turned up the wick, so to speak, to let that blessed human body glow with divine light."

The glory of God was there, and the disciples saw it. You and I also have the blessed privilege of seeing and reflecting, now, by faith, some of that glory. "Ye shine as lights in the world," Paul told the Philippians. "Ye are the light of the world," the Lord told (and tells) His disciples. So I have to tell you the glory of God is part of your present possession in Christ., Lay claim to it, by faith.

You will not have to do the shining. God will do that, through you, when you let Him take control in any given situation of your life.

Remember, none of these truths is behind any "Private" door. The invitation is to you today: Come rejoicing. COME RIGHT IN! *"... we glory in tribulations ..."* (v. 3).

In modern speech, "We [Christians] sing the Doxology over our troubles." Oh, that we did more of this!

The word "glory" in verse 3 is the same verb translated "rejoice" in the preceding verse.

We "glory," we "rejoice" - in what?

In tribulation! The word embraces every distressful condition that comes to us from outside sources, whether of nature or of our fellow men. It includes earthquakes, fires, floods; disease and pestilences; personal affliction, slights, affrontery, rejection. We are not asked to give thanks for these things per se, but to rejoice that in them God will show His power and grace. Some one who reads these words may say, "How can you expect me to do that? When I hurt, I hurt. When I'm stuck, I bleed. You can't talk me out of genuine feelings."

Well, my dear friend, I don't think Paul is trying to do that. He himself spoke about being greatly distressed.

"... pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much that we despaired even of life" (2 Cor. 1:8).

It was as though he was saying (and you are saying sometimes), "I can't stand any more. If anything else happens, it's going to kill me. I'll have a heart attack or a stroke or something."

Then he remembered:

"...We trust not in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered... and DOTH DELIVER."

Knowing this, he says that trouble, accepted and rejoiced in, brings a special kind of knowledge. We come to a place of knowing something, not just hoping or supposing: "knowing that tribulation worketh ..." it's doing something good in our lives.

Come - Though Hurting

We KNOW something about our trouble

Take a simple, though not altogether adequate, illustration. Can you conceive of anyone's saying, "Goody, goody, I have to go to the dentist"? These good, dedicated, hard-working men and women are trained to help us in this particular part of our anatomy, but we don't yearn for an hour or so under their skill.

Then why do we go? We go because we know that when the dentist is finished with his

work, we are going to be better off than we were before. We know that he will fill the cavity that causes pain, or cap the tooth that has lost its glamour, or construct a bridge to replace some of the missing molars, and when he has finished his work we will be glad. We know that.

It is the reason we put up with the pain and inconvenience until the work is done.

We recognize the good end product

“Trouble,” Paul says, “worketh patience.”

Loosely translated that word means “stay down.” Don’t pop up, or blow up. Why? Because God is doing something in your life. Hold steady and let Him do it. “Patience” in you is the good end product He is working for.

I heard of a strange happening a number of years ago. A man was in an accident, hurt, but not seriously. He was taken to a hospital emergency room and a doctor prepared to suture a wound that he had. While he was getting ready, the victim swung himself off the operating table, picked up his clothes on his way out, and was not seen again. This was a case where the patient lacked patience.

We are often like that, We are not ready to “wait around” while our dear Lord gets ready His heavenly sutures to mend some of the flaws in our lives. We say, in effect, “Come on, Lord, hurry up. Or else I’m getting out of here.”

God uses troubles to teach us that His skill calls for our quiet waiting. He is doing something good for us. He is developing patience in us.

Martha, in John 11, failed to see the good end result of the trouble in their home. Lazarus was sick, and the sisters sent for Jesus who was some distance away. But Lazarus died before the Master reached them. How natural it was for them to react this way: “Lord, you’re too late. Why didn’t you come sooner? You could have come. Why didn’t you? Jesus said gently, “Thy brother shall rise again.” Then Martha put it right on the line. She said in effect, “I know he will rise in the last day. But that doesn’t help me now. I keep setting three places at the table instead of two ... I keep going in to straighten up his room, but nothing has been moved . . . I keep listening for his whistle as he comes up the street at suppertime, and I never hear it ... My life is empty ... You were too late, Lord.”

No, Jesus wasn’t too late. He was planning a resurrection. God’s timing is perfect. His plan is always good.

Paul says that in the midst of our troubles we can rejoice. Who can claim to be happy when he's going through severe testing? The word doesn't say we are happy; it says we have joy. There's a great difference between these two expressions. There is an old chorus that goes like this:

*I'm happy when everything happens to please, But happiness comes and goes.
While the heart that is stayed on Jesus the Savior
Ever with joy o'reflows.*

Happiness happens, but joy abides in the heart that is stayed on Jesus. While you may not always be particularly glad in any given situation, you can "rejoice in the Lord." The Declaration of Independence to the contrary, happiness is not the chief objective of the Christian life. Right relation to God comes first, and from it there issue joy and peace, which every one wants.

Jesus said, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad." When did He say that? It was when He was talking about persecution ("trouble" if you will).

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. REJOICE, and be exceedingly glad, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." (Matt. 5:11, 12)

The kind of joy mentioned here is closely related to our text: "...tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." Most of us want the joy right now, without the waiting time that patience calls for.

Let us suppose you have this little three - year - old with you, both of you waiting for the traffic light to change so that you can cross the street. He is full of vigor and bounce. He wants to get going, *now*. He pulls at your hand, "Come on, come on, let's go!" he shouts.

We receive God's gift of JOY

You tell him he might be struck by a truck or meet some other disaster. But he can't understand the reason for delay. Years later, as he grows older, he comes to realize what a wise thing it is to wait for the light to change, and the green "Go" to come on.

Just so do you and I learn the reasonableness - and the joy - of waiting for God's time. His lessons are taught in a special place - in His presence. COME RIGHT IN.

Come - Appropriating

“ ... tribulation worketh patience ... and experience.” God uses trouble to prove to you and me that it pays to wait upon Him. One of the by-products of trouble is patience.

My good friend Norman Grubb has given us a powerful little book, *The Law of Faith*.

As I remember it, this is one of his valuable observations:

The Christian soldier has a right to wait daily at Headquarters until he gets his marching orders. Then, when he goes out into the field, he can take for granted that the orders his Commander gave were the right ones and can go forward trusting God to see him through.

That is very good advice. I try to follow it every day of my life. It involves listening, appropriating - patiently. Not only does trouble work patience, but patience produces experience. What is experience? It is something that you personally have proved - therefore you can prove it to others. There is no greater or more effective testimony than to be able to say concerning any teaching of the Word of God, “I know this is true. I’ve proved it in my own life.”

Dr. J. C. Masee used to tell of a fruit farmer to whom the idea of tithing was new (A tithe, as you know, is an ancient rule, going back to Abraham’s time, whereby one-tenth of one’s income is to be given to God.)

This farmer with his many orchards decided he would prove for himself the promises in Malachi 3:10, 11:

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, ...and Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground ... saith the Lord of hosts.”

This farmer said to the Lord, “I’m going to do my part. Then I’ll trust You to pour out Your blessing.”

Well, God did bless him and his orchards produced beautifully. Then there came a blight that attacked apples particularly. It was called the San Jose scale. It did its ruinous work through an immense area of that state.

At this point our farmer friend got down on his knees.

“Your Bible says,” he told the Lord, “that You will rebuke the devourer for Your children’s sake.

I'm Your child. I'm tithing as You instructed. I'm trusting You to prove Your word true."

Do you know what happened?

The San Jose scale came right up to the line fence that separated this man's property from his neighbor, and stopped there. The trees of the trusting farmer never were attacked. You see, he had appropriated God's promise. He had proved for himself (and others) that God means what He says.

You say, "That was a coincidence." "Oh, no, it isn't!"

Allover the world you can find people who have proved that God will protect, will supply, will guide - in answer to prayer and faith. The answers range all the way from such a simple thing as finding a parking place to moving a family to a distant job or location, or to a thousand other needs.

You and I gain experience through going through hard things with God. There is no other way.

...If the children of Israel had never had to cross the Red Sea, they never would have known that God could part the waters.

..If they had never been thirsty, they never would have known that God could provide water from the smitten rock.

...If they had never gotten hungry, they would never have known that God could provide manna from heaven.

...If there had never been enemies to face in the Promised Land, they would not have known that God could subdue their enemies before them, as He did.

Experience - How do I get in

You see, it's the pressure situations that prove that God is who He says He is and He can do what He says He will do. Don't fight your troubles. Let God be God in the midst of them, dear friend. What He chooses to send your way or mine is never a happenstance. It is meant for the express purpose of making us able to say to others: "This is what God did for me. I've proved His word true. This is what He will do for you."

This thought is borne out in 2 Corinthians 1 where Paul speaks of *"...The God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God" (vs. 3, 4).*

God is allowing the tears so that He can dry them and so that you, my precious brother or sister in Christ, can help to dry somebody else's tears for His sake. Oh, appropriate this truth. Make it your own.

Visualize our Lord as the great Teacher. And into His presence, COME RIGHT IN!

Come Delighting

[Because] *"we have access ... we rejoice in hope ... and hope maketh not ashamed" (vs. 2, 5).*
Stated positively, hope produces holy boldness.

Why? Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And love always expresses itself. If you base your faith on a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, then one of the concomitants of that relationship is that you are going to love Him.

You see this principle at work when a young person falls in love. He or she is quite willing to talk about the object of his or her affection. Now and again one of our young women students will come into my office and instead of offering to shake hands with her right hand she will extend her left hand, and I know what has happened. The evening before her Sir Galahad placed a diamond on her finger; these two are engaged. She doesn't have to be urged to talk about the young man, about their plans, about their ambitions. All I have to do is listen and she'll tell all about it, bless her heart! Why? Because love gives a happy boldness to speak of the one who is loved.

Now the same thing is true of our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. *"The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (v. 5).*

I think that right here the doctrine of the Holy Spirit needs to come into sharper focus for many of us.

There may be some reading these lines who are well taught concerning the person of the Holy Spirit and His ministry, but who never have allowed Him full control of their lives:

The Spirit of God comes to dwell in your life when you're saved, but He wants to FILL your whole life - every part of it. Dr. O. J. Smith said, in my hearing many years ago, something that

has stayed with me through the years. What he said was something like this:

Think about everything that concerns your life: your habits, your desires, your hopes, your fears, your loved ones, your house and/or your car (if you have these), your clothes, your job, your friendships, your money - everything that you have and that you know about yourself. Then, said he, get for yourself a pack of three - by - five cards and write a separate item on each card. Then take them, one at a time, hold each one before you and, say, "Lord Jesus, I trusted You as Savior. Now I trust You with this" (and name, aloud, whatever is on that card). By faith you invite the Holy Spirit into that specific area of your life.

"When you have finished the list," said Dr. Smith, "and when you have invited Him into every room, so to speak, of your heart-house, you can say with joy and confidence, "I thank Thee that Thou hast filled me with the Holy Spirit."

It matters not what designation you use: victorious life, Spirit-filled life, second blessing, baptism of the Holy Spirit, or whatever. (You've noticed that I've used the terminology of four different great denominations.) Whatever you call that step of faith - take it! When you do, I can guarantee that you will have a new delight in speaking about your blessed Lord. Yes, you will. You will do this in a gracious manner that isn't offensive and isn't aggressive. It will not be forced. Neither will it be based on a canned sales talk. It will be the result of a big heart of love for God, that you have opened fully to Him.

Specific commitment increases delight

Remember, everything you need to enable you to live the Christian life is yours if you have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Don't pray for more faith - use what you have. Don't pray for more strength - use what God has given you. You don't have to wish for anything. All the enablement you need is available to you in Christ. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

The Holy Spirit has already been given to you, my friend. Open your life to Him. The grace of God is already poured out for you. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." You "taste" the grace of God at the point of your utmost need.

Lay hold, by faith, upon what is yours, and let the Spirit of God fill your heart with His divine love. You will then be able to speak easily and enthusiastically and with authority about your Savior.

Does all this wealth of spiritual blessings seem too good to be true? It is yours to claim. If you are a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ, COME RIGHT IN!

Come Appreciating

We were without strength

“When we were without strength ... while we were sinners ... when we were enemies ... Christ died for the ungodly” (vs. 6-10).

Here we have a three-fold description of what our condition was before the Lord redeemed us. We were:

.. *without strength.*

.. *sinners*

.. *enemies (at war with God)*

Let us look at these points separately.

The tragedy of the human race is that we struggle toward God, and we never make it. All the time we do not realize that we never will make it by our own efforts. So we keep on struggling. All over the world I have seen people trying to convince the particular deity in whom they believed that they were worthy of some consideration.

I was in Canton, China, years ago in that gigantic and beautiful structure called The Temple of Five Hundred Gods. A little woman was bowing before a brazen, flaming altar, presenting her paltry gift of vegetables and “holy” sticks. I asked a missionary friend who knew this woman’s language what she was praying for.

He listened a moment.

“Oh,” he told me, “she has a sick child at home ... very sick ... may die. She’s hoping to be worthy of her god’s attention, that her luck will change and her child will recover.”

We try so hard - each in his own way!

We don’t have anything of value to bring to God.

He tells us sadly in Isaiah 64:6 that even the good things we do - all our “righteousnesses” - are so soiled by sin that they are in His sight only filthy rags.

So here we are: with no strength to do the things we should ... no strength to resist what we ought to resist ... utterly bankrupt and faulty and failing. We need a mighty Savior, and we have One who is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

Not only are we too weak to save ourselves, but we are sinners as well.

In the Word of God there are various words for “sin”: lawlessness ... trespassing ... absence of faith, to name a few. In this fifth chapter of Romans “sin” means “missing the mark.” On the face of it, that does not seem to be a heinous crime. But there are significant involvements.

You have heard me use this illustration before.

Suppose two people are running for a train: myself and some one else. The other person is ahead of me, because he can run a little faster than I. He gets to the train just as it is pulling out. I come up a few seconds later and we look sheepishly at each other. Now I ask you: “Which one of us missed the train?”

We both did.

Thus it is with you and me. We have come short of God’s righteousness. We don’t measure up to His standards. By how large a margin we have failed is not the point. Every one of us is left standing on the platform; the train has passed us by.

But listen to this good news: while we were not measuring up, while God realized that we’d never make it - not by a stretch of the imagination, not by any convulsive effort which we might summon up to do something on our own - while we were yet sinners, missing the mark, Christ died for us! Hallelujah!

We are sinners

We are enemies of God

God’s response to human need

“If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (v. 10).

The sad fact is that the human heart is at enmity (at war) with God. What an awful thought that the creature should fight his Creator!

Adam said of the One who formed him, “I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid and hid myself.”

Why did he run from God? Because sin produces enmity. The prophet Isaiah put it this way: *“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his*

face from you.” (Isa. 59: 1, 2).

Sin makes me resentful of the very God who created me. Sin puts a veil over my mind so that I cannot realize how much God loves me.
What did God do for us sinners?

He willingly came to our aid by paying the ultimate in sacrifice. “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us ... Reconciled by the death of his Son . . . we shall be saved by his life.” His death redeems us. His life sustains us.

His mercy reaches us in our extremity. We could not help ourselves, we behaved as ungrateful sinners, we actually fought against Him. We deserved only punishment, alienation from a holy God.

Instead He gave us, of His overflowing mercy, “much more than we could ask or think.”

A story from my past illustrates this point, for me, very clearly.

When I was a little fellow of six or seven years of age I had a spell of getting into various kinds of trouble. For example, I couldn’t walk down the street without falling and tearing my pants and skinning my knee. I couldn’t carry a basket of groceries without dropping it. I couldn’t throw a ball without it’s curving and going straight through a window.

To top matters off, I did some things that were downright wrong. On one occasion I saw some candies that some one had given our family. There were five or six pieces on the plate, and oh, how I wanted one! But I knew if I took one it would be missed. So with unerring logic I reasoned that if I took a little bite from each one, the pieces would all look alike and no one would know the difference. (I don’t know how anyone ever found out, do you?)

Well, my observant parent did find out, and the board of education was laid on my little southern exposure until I cried for pain - and I learned a lesson about deception and stealing. But I still was not free of blunders that called for correction. In fact, there was a time when I felt everything was going wrong and that nobody loved me and that I couldn’t do any better. For a little fellow, I was deeply discouraged.

Then one wintry day my father called to me.
“Come here, Boy,” he said, and he took me outside the little basement flat we called home and pointed down a long hallway. At the other end was something that caused my eyes to dance with glee. It was a Flexible Flyer sled. He’d gotten it at a second-hand store.
It was in beautiful shape.

"It's yours," my father said.

"For me, Pop?" I couldn't believe it. "Yes, Boy, all yours."

There were tears in his eyes when he turned to me.

I think now that he must have been recalling the painfulness of the discipline he had had, rightly, to give me.

All he said was, "Now my Boy, do you believe I love you?"

In a far greater way, God loves us.

He sees our misery, our resentment against Him, our self-pity and discouragement and despair. These things He must deal with. But He sees also His "Gift" for us - the blessed, bleeding Son of God who gave His life for us.

He looks at us through Calvary's suffering and He puts the question squarely to us: "Now do you believe that I love you?"

My dear friend, let God love you today. Open your heart and life to Him. Commit your all to Him. He will give you His best in return. I beg of you, COME RIGHT IN.

Come Enjoying

We love to be near Him

"We also joy in God ... "(v. 11).

Note that little word "also." It implies (as the previous verses indicate) that we have at least the beginning of appreciation of our "so great salvation." We know that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Now, while maintaining a genuine and growing appreciation of that mighty truth, we move on to genuine enjoyment - delight in a Person, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of some person whose nearness you really delight in. What are some of the aspects of that relationship?

Well, you like to be with that person. Also you find it easy to talk about the things that you

have in common - his interests and yours. And when his timing of activities is different from yours, you know there must be a good reason, so you fit into that schedule with a minimum of murmuring.

How do these facts fit into verse 11: "We also joy in God"?

Most of my listeners and readers know that my mother went Home to be with the Lord when I was a baby, too young to have any remembrance of her.

But my sister, who was older, has a clear recollection of that sad October morning when she was told that in the hospital, the night before, our mother had died.

The neighbor women in our then small town of Santa Clara, California, began coming to the house to call. They had loved our mother, her vivacity, her humor, her deep sensitivity for the needs of others. For the most part these women were now sad-faced and silent.

One plain little woman could not restrain her tears as she murmured over and over, "Daisy, Daisy - how I'll miss her! I never got enough of her."

Most of us have to admit with shame that we "get enough of" our blessed Lord with a few minutes with Him in the morning and perhaps again at night. We do not know too much about the truth of the old hymn:

*In the secret of His presence How my soul delights to hide!
Oh, how precious are the lessons That I learn at Jesus' side!*

David knew what it was to long for the nearness of God. He said: "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land ... My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Psa. 63:1; 84:2).

Where does the "joy" come in? Listen to David again. "He [God] satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness ... O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed [happy] is the man that trusteth in him" (Psa. 107:9; 34:8).

The nearness and the joy invariably go together.

We find, too, that conversation about Him becomes a natural thing.

We have to admit - don't we? - that many people do not really enjoy hearing about God. They meet you quite cordially in the barber shop, the beauty parlor, the supermarket or

wherever. They find no hesitancy in talking about a variety of subjects, including babies and diets and prices and weather.

But suppose that in one of these places you should utter a word about God. Immediately a strange coolness comes into the atmosphere. If the person you are talking to does not actually walk away or otherwise terminate the conversation, you sense a certain uneasiness.

Most people are afraid to talk about God to anyone else. They feel comfortable with thoughts about God only when they are in a religiously structured setting - as, for example, a church.

We talk about things we're excited about. If Sister has just become engaged, you may be sure she'll be talking about her boy friend, and she will long since have shown you that beautiful ring on her finger.

If Brother has come into possession of a new car - it may be an old jalopy that goes only about twenty-five miles an hour - he's proud of it and ready to talk about his great buy. If Father has received a promotion, he wants you to know. Oh, he may hedge until you ask him, but he's really eager to discuss his good news.

We speak freely about Him

Mother has special interests to share too - perhaps news about someone's grandchild or her own.

Yes, people talk about the things that excite them.

The only reason many Christians don't speak freely about God is that there is no excitement for them in that concept. They don't have any real interest in God. To them He is far away and formal, and they are afraid of Him. Fear - real, craven, cringing fear that runs away from God - is part of sinful human nature.

The only way to remove this barrier is to let God have a share in what I call "the ordinaries of life."

If you would speak for your blessed Lord in a manner that is both natural and enthusiastic, start praying your way through the day so that you become as familiar with God's presence at the sink as in the sanctuary... You are as aware of His nearness when you are training the children, or diapering the baby, or doing the dusting, as when you sit with bowed head in the house of God.

You business people, pray about your job - the daily routine as well as the hiring and firing that may be your responsibility.

Pray about your relationship with the boss, who most assuredly doesn't realize that you're as smart as you really are or he would have promoted you to Vice President in charge of Widgets (or whatever) long ago.

Pray about your relationship with fellow workers, some of whom are angling for your job, and others who are dragging their feet so they can have things their own way, being opposed to all change.

You students, pray about your studies (something more than "O Lord, don't let the prof call on me today"). Pray about your writing, whether it be a term paper or a master's thesis or a doctoral dissertation - or just a letter.

What I'm trying to say is: Bring God into the "ordinaries" of life. Do this, and you'll have something to say, and people will listen. And in the whole process you will reap a great deal of joy.

One other point:

We wait God's time

God's timing is always perfect. Everything about your life, my friend, is part of His perfect purpose. There are times when we do not realize this fact, when everything seems to be going wrong. But this is His word:

"I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer. 29:11).

You may feel like saying, "All right. If all that is true, why am I sick ... why am I down ... why am I having all this trouble?"

The answer, my dear fellow believer, is this: Just wait! God is not through with you yet. He has a refining work to do before you can - gloriously and increasingly - "joy in God."

I often think of the beautiful story that Amy Carmichael told in her book, *Gold Cord*. She was watching a refiner at his work in an Indian bazaar. There he was, squatting in front of his little charcoal brazier, blowing upon the flames with a homemade bellows until the contents

were white - hot.

The metal in the crucible melted and the slag came to the top and he skimmed it off carefully. Then he let the whole mass cool - only to heat it up again.

Finally he sat back on his heels and announced to no one in particular, "It is finished." Miss Carmichael, that great missionary lady, went over to the silversmith and said, "Sahib, tell me, how do you know when the work is finished?"

He looked up and flashed her one of those sunny Indian smiles, and replied, "Sahiba, I know the refining is finished - that the metal is pure - when I can see my face reflected in the molten metal."

Likewise the wonderful heavenly Refiner is doing something in your life. One of these days He will remark to the angels and all the saints in glory, "It is finished! I can see my Face perfectly reflected in the pure gold of that life."

Yes, this is the formula for truly enjoying God: love to be with Him, speak of Him freely, wait for His timing - wonderful truth available today. COME RIGHT IN.

A personal word

These lines have been intended to show you that you are a special person - you who have trusted Christ as your Savior and Lord.

The door into the Father's presence is always open for you. You have access to the very throne of God, using Jesus' name. But to realize these benefits, you must do something.

How will you respond ... today ... and tomorrow ... and all the days to the Father's loving invitation? Oh, COME RIGHT IN.

