

COME SIT WITH ME

Index

Page		
2	Preface	
3	Introduction	
11	Chapter 1	To be in His Presence
16	Chapter 2	Child of God or a homeless wanderer.
22	Chapter 3	Faith and doubts. <i>"I believe; help my unbelief!"</i>
28	Chapter 4	Beside or inside?
33	Chapter 5	Enter my rest
37	Chapter 6	Christ in you the hope of glory
40	Chapter 7	My presence will go with you
45	Chapter 8	He will live with them, and they will be His people.

I would like to express my appreciation for the many who have shown me God's love through their lives but particularly to my wife, Gill, for her open advice, corrections and challenges to the way I have tried to express a number of points. I would also like to thank Lindsey Thompson who painstakingly wades through my documents with a green pen correcting my typos and poor punctuation.

"Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible[®],

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Preface

As you go through this booklet, I want to encourage you to move from just reading about, to the reality of entering into a relationship with God where you can experience His power and His presence.

As well as quoting scripture, Christ used parables to move the Jewish people away from a limited, legalistic attitude to scripture about God to an experiential one. He used illustrations from life to make scripture actively real. I make no apology for doing the same in this booklet. To me God is very real, especially when I am aware of His presence, and I want to share that reality with others, hopefully by including illustrations, supported with relevant, Spirit-led use of scriptures.

The front cover is a photo taken in the Yosemite mountains; this scene is typical of so many I saw there. Before visiting the area, God had shown me a vision, a God-given picture in my imagination. In the vision, God the Father was a man sat on a fallen tree beckoning me and saying, "Come sit with me".

Later, looking through the photos they reminded me of the vision, but on one photo in particular I realised I had inadvertently included two people sat enjoying the scene and each other's company. It reminded me so much of the vision and so I have used it. Apologies to the unknown couple for printing it without their permission.

Come, take a couple of hours. Sit and read this booklet, but in a particular way. Use your imagination to picture yourself sat with Jesus (it doesn't have to be in the Yosemite mountains but somewhere special to you) listening to Him as you read, especially the scripture sections. This exercise is opening the door to the Spirit and presence of God. If your heart opens in this way, I pray that like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, you will realise that you ARE in, and EXPERIENCING the presence of, the Lord and it is the Lord Himself talking to you through the book... not just me or some stranger.

Introduction

As a young man in the Merchant Navy,
before the days of internet, facebook and Skype,
the only form of communication with loved ones was old fashioned letters.

For those of you who don't go back that far, it meant writing your thoughts and news with a pen on pieces of paper which were then placed in an envelope and posted to the relevant address. It was quite a novel idea and eventually the envelope came through your letterbox rather like junk mail does today but you received it with a lot more enthusiasm.

When letters were received onboard ship,
everyone would take them to their cabin and read in private.
The most mundane pieces of information were fascinating
because as you read, it was as though your loved one was sat there
talking to you.
For a few brief minutes you were transported

into their presence:

you were with them and they were with you.

When the ship returned home and you were reunited, sitting together holding hands and talking was an even more gratifying experience than just reading a perfume-sprayed letter.

We need to be communicating
one way or another with the ones we love.
Without that activity life can be quite empty.
Many people spend half an hour to an hour on facebook each day
communicating with family, friends and acquaintances.

Jesus tells a story in the Bible about a father who,
every day,

watches longingly for the return of his son.

He had left home in search of adventure taking his share of his father's assets with him.

The father's heart longed for communion with his lost son.

"Oh to be reunited again,"

was the cry of the father's heart. *Luke 15:17-20* "But when he came to his senses, (having squandered everything) he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."' "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

This story would have shocked the hearers. In their culture a father would not run to the son and publically show such compassion and emotion. Especially to a son who had asked his father for his inheritance before he died. This was tantamount to saying, "I wish you were dead so I could have your money".

The son would have been expected to run to the father,

bow down and kiss his hand.

The father would have stood in a stately manner,

received and accepted the adoration as his right.

The reason Jesus told the story of the prodigal son was to try and change the Jews' concept of God the Father.

In their minds He was a stern miserable old man with a raised stick
saying,

“Thou shalt not...”

Jesus showed many examples over the three years of His ministry to
demonstrate a true picture of the Father.

A Father who showed compassion.

Who healed the sick,

raised the dead

and forgave sins.

Yet who was angry with injustices to the poor.

But above all,

a Father who wanted to be in communion with His children.

This can be seen more clearly after reading what John records.

*John 14:8-11 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is
enough for us.”*

*Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not
come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father;
how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”*

*“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?
The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the
Father abiding in Me does His works.*

*“Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise
believe because of the works themselves.*

There is a common factor in all the events.
The healings.
The compassion.
The resurrections.
The story of the prodigal son.

These were not just the words and actions of a revolutionary Jewish Rabbi, but of God the Father Himself, through Jesus the Son (who had humbled Himself and took on human form). Rather like a complex Russian doll, one within the other. All to enable the Father through Jesus to relate to us, either by sitting, walking, eating and all other aspects of living with us, **because that's what the Father wants to do!**

God the Father came in Spirit,
in His Son

who played the role of a Jewish Rabbi

and was saying to the Jews through Jesus,

"I'm your heavenly Father."

"I love you."

"If you make one move to return to me in repentance like the son in the story, I will run to you,

I will hug you,

I will kiss you

and kill the fatted calf

so we can feast and celebrate together,

I love you!"

The son had rejected and neglected the father but after being reunited, they both felt active joy in each other's presence.

Whether you know it or not, God is your heavenly Father.

Eternal life or heaven is not so much a place
as a relationship within His kingdom and presence.

Jesus prayed for us to have eternal life and then,
so there could be no doubt, qualified the meaning.

*John 17:3-5 "This is eternal life,
that they may know You, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, (back in your presence) with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

If you have been away from Him and not included Him in your life He is standing looking, longing and waiting for your return, and if you return, before you even get the chance to say, "Father forgive me for I have sinned," He is running towards you with open arms to embrace and kiss you.

Wow! Such love, to read His love letter to you (the bible) with the smell of heavenly perfume, leads you to experience a sense of His presence. The next level is like the home coming where you sit together holding hands and experience His presence flooding your soul.

His ultimate objective is ... well, we'll come to that later in more detail but suffice to say, a people side by side with Him in a new heaven and earth ruling the universe together. All this raises the questions, are we (or are you personally)

ready to draw close to God and allow Him close to us, have we realised that we need Him and without Him we are empty?

Let's take a different approach with a physical example.

The heart pumps blood round our body.

This keeps us alive.

If we have a hole in our heart,

depending upon the size,

it puts a strain on the heart and also makes us weaker.

So we struggle to do any strenuous activity,

we feel too weak.

By surgery this can usually be repaired

and then we can live a normal fulfilled life, physically.

There is a sense in which we have a hole in our spiritual hearts. The only satisfactory solution is to fill that hole with the presence of God. Yes, purpose, a vision for life, a sense of direction, interests and activities, a loved one etc can all be a great help.

However, bottom line, we need to spend time sitting in God's presence, that is the only satisfactory solution to successfully fill this hole and allow the heart to pump life in all its fullness round our soul.

In a marriage sometimes ten minutes conversation can sort a problem. There are however, other occasions where you both know you just need to spend more time together. Just to reconnect and experience the joy of being with each other.

Part of a prophetic word that led to the writing of this book was "Come my child, sit with me, let my presence **flood** your soul."

In a way, sitting with God is like being in the navy,

coming into port,

receiving mail then going into the privacy of your cabin and opening the perfume-sprayed letter from your loved one.

The smell fills the air as words sink into your heart

and mysteriously you feel the presence of your loved one.

But it is more than that.

The letter may have raised questions.

So you write a reply and wait possibly weeks before receiving an answer.

Sometimes when you are in the presence of God you can have a two-way conversation that is infinitely more satisfying and instantaneous than any human conversation.

“How can that be?” I hear you say.

“Does God actually speak out loud to you?”

No, (although He could if He wanted to)
this is going on in your thoughts and heart.

Sometimes you can be mistaken

but usually your God-thoughts are confirmed by events that follow.

The reason for writing this book is to help you enter into experiencing the presence of God and hopefully to highlight things that may hinder this encounter.

All it takes is a little time,
a willingness to pray and to read His Word,
and the rewards are priceless.

*Isaiah 40:28-31 The Everlasting God, the LORD,
the Creator of the ends of the earth
Does not become weary or tired.
His understanding is inscrutable.
He gives strength to the weary,
And to him who lacks might He increases power.*

*Though youths grow weary and tired,
And vigorous young men stumble badly,
Yet those who wait for the LORD
Will gain new strength;*

They will mount up with wings like eagles,

They will run and not get tired,

They will walk and not become weary.

There is a refreshing that comes from time spent with the Lord.

All that He is permeates us if we sit in His presence.

He has everything we need from physical energy to wisdom.

So let's do an Enoch and walk with God,

let's walk through this book together.

Then sit and enjoy God's presence.

Chapter 1

To be in His Presence

To be in anyone's presence very simply means being next to them. In the story of the prodigal son, God the Father was in Jesus speaking through Him to people a few feet away. They didn't know it but they were actually in God's presence. On the road to Emmaus, in disguise, Jesus walked with the disciples. They didn't recognise Him until later when He broke bread.

Luke 24:30-36. When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst (There is a saying "Talk of the devil and he appears" but far better than that, 'talk of Jesus and He will appear'.) and said to them, "Peace be to you."

So it is possible to be in someone's presence but not recognise them.

Like in the examples above.

However there was a difference between the disciples and the other Jews in the first illustration.

Although the disciples didn't recognise Him they were affected by His presence,

"Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

With the other Jews,
they were in the main, harder of heart,

rejecting the story of the prodigal son,
Jesus and the Father in Him.

If we harden our hearts
we become less able to receive anything from the spiritual realm.
Notice the disciples said their hearts were burning.
Their hearts (the part of their being that is linked to their spirit)
recognised Jesus, but at that point it just hadn't penetrated their minds.
Jesus said in *Matt 18:20* "*For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.*"

So the truth is that Jesus IS there whether we feel it,
recognise it, or not.
It doesn't even need two or three of us together before He shows up.
Matt 28:20 "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" He is constantly
present among believers: on their own or in groups.

So why aren't we aware of Him?
Why can't we sense His presence?
Why can't we "see" Him?

There are many reasons which we will explore but in this chapter,
let's look deeper into the heart condition.
Maybe there is more wrong than just a hole that needs filling with God's
presence.

Matt 5:8 "*Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.*"

Simple!
All you need is a pure heart!
That is, pure by God's standards.
Most of us would say, "I'm good but not that good."

Others of us would recognise that we just don't meet the requirements, we are not even good never mind pure.

Ez 36:26-27 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

This was a promise God made to the people of Israel.

He said He would give them a new heart.

He will take the initiative,

and that initiative has already been taken by Him!

To those who recognise they are not completely pure in heart

and admit their need of salvation,

He says, *Rom 10:9,10,13 ...*

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation... for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

When Jesus was raised from the dead it demonstrated God's power and

therefore His ability to do what He says in The Book,

graciously forgive,

give faith and save.

(Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

When you call on the Lord and return to the Father, like the prodigal son, the Father starts to transform you.

He says, *Luke 15:22 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;*

The significance of the best robe is
status and righteousness in the eyes of the father.
He declares you righteous, therefore you are righteous.

The ring is a signet ring which the wealthy pressed into a soft wax seal to
authorise a command or payment like signing a cheque,
or giving his son a credit card.

The sandals in that culture are the prerogative
of a freeman but not of a slave.

The powerful newscast showed the pulling down of Saddam Hussein's statue in
Baghdad where the locals swarmed over it,
each taking off a shoe and hitting the statue with it.

In the West, that would be meaningless but not to them.
In the little book of Ruth,
Boaz challenges the man who has the right to take Ruth as a wife.
The man declines,
takes off his shoe and hands it to Boaz
as a witness to the fact that he hands his rights to Boaz.

Walking home with one shoe publically demonstrated his submission.
When the father gave the son sandals,
he was declaring to the world that his son was a free man,
not a servant like the son was prepared to be.
*Luke 15:21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and
in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

Our heavenly Father, when we turn to Him,
looks at our stony, impure heart and gives us a new one because we
"called on His name".

Like the prodigal son,
we decided to return home and confess,
"Father... I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

But the Father hugs us, kisses us, loves us and says,
“Come my child, sit with me, let my presence flood your soul.”
Why? Because He loves us and knows only He can fill that aching hole in our
heart and bring us a sense of completeness and fulfilment.

But to receive it,
all we must do is recognise our inadequacy
and return to our Father like the prodigal son did.
Then it will be so natural (or supernatural) to experience His presence.
What does it feel like? Ask Him, call out to Him. He will answer.

Chapter 2

Child of God or a homeless wanderer

In Genesis 4, you can read the story of Cain and Abel. Eventually Cain murders Abel and the Lord rebukes and disciplines him.

Gen 4:12-16 "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant (homeless) and a wanderer on the earth."

[13] Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! [14] "Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant (homeless) and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

[15] So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

[16] Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

The word Nod in Hebrew means "wandering". He could not live in the presence of God because of his sin; Adam also hid from the presence of the Lord in the garden when he had sinned.

Therefore he lived in a place of wandering,
the land of Nod;
a place where there was no real rest or peace,
only constant moving and hiding for fear of being caught.
The threat of being avenged seven times more may deter some from killing him
but it was no guarantee against persecution.

It is interesting to see how Cain qualifies the Lord's statement,
"you will be a vagrant (homeless) and a wanderer on the earth."

Then Cain says, *“My punishment is too great to bear! “Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, (Therefore) I will be a vagrant (homeless) and a wanderer on the earth,”*
Because of his sin he could not enter God’s presence,
he had to hide from it.
This results in him becoming a homeless wanderer.
The two go together.

Much like Adam and Eve being expelled from the garden of God’s presence because of their sin.

Cain lived his life in exile, excluded from the presence of God.
I see nowhere that the scriptures say
Cain came to God and said, “Father forgive me for I have sinned.”
His initial reaction was to complain to God for the severity of his punishment. He probably quite liked the feeling, or sense of security offered by being in God’s presence,
rather like a teenager wanting the security of a roof over his head
with free meals yet still wanting to do his own thing,
which parents may not approve of.

God, however,

was the original good parent,
not afraid to discipline a rebellious teenager,
“If you want to stay in my house you follow my rules;
if not, pack your bags.”

So Cain hardened his heart like stone to cut off the feeling of guilt,
which if he had admitted it would doubtlessly have changed the situation.

*2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish
but for all to come to repentance.*

(He does not wish for you to be outside relationship with Himself because that **IS** to perish!)

*John 17:3 "This is eternal life,
that they may **know** You,
the only true God,
and Jesus Christ
whom You have sent.*

This "know" is not academic but personal, intimate, relational knowing, like man and wife etc. It is the same (in the original) know/knew as used in the KJV *Matt 1: 24-25 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And **knew her not** till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. The NASB Bible gives the meaning in a fuller sense. *Matt 1:25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.**

When we look through scripture, there are many who did possibly worse than Cain yet because they came to God truly repentant and sorry for their sin, God forgave them. Cain, however chose not to, he lived in exclusion even though his son "walked with God" and after 365 years carried on walking with God into eternity. *Gen 5:23-24 So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

God has given us such frightening freedom. To choose whether to follow God or our own impulse. When we see the lives of those who choose not to follow God, their freedom often leads them into captivity of some kind (like the prodigal son and Cain for example).

On the other hand,
those who choose to submit to and follow God
find their submission leads them into
an even greater freedom than they could ever have imagined.
As we submit to God more of His nature is released within us because
He made us in His own image.

God is in us trying to break out
and He does this through communion and intimacy with us!

*2 Pet 1: 2-11 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the
knowledge (personal intimate knowing)
of God and of Jesus our Lord;
seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything
pertaining to life and godliness,
through the true
knowledge (personal intimate knowing)
of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*

*For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises,
so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature,
having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.
Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence,
in your faith supply moral excellence,
and in your moral excellence,
knowledge, (information-type knowledge)
and in your knowledge, self-control,
and in your self-control, perseverance,
and in your perseverance, godliness,
and in your godliness, brotherly kindness,
and in your brotherly kindness, love.*

***For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither
useless nor unfruitful in the true
knowledge (personal intimate knowing)
of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

*For he who lacks these qualities **is blind or short-sighted**,
having forgotten his purification from his former sins.
Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling
and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never
stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and
Saviour Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.*

The above Scripture is the opposite of a vicious circle. First paragraph states that Grace and Peace is lavished on you THROUGH your “personal intimate knowing” of God. Then as this opens up, everything we need comes through the conduit of our “personal intimate knowing” of Him. The reason given in the second paragraph is so that *you may become partakers of the divine nature*. God actually wants us to partake of His nature and become like Him.

As you see your own child develop and achieve,
there are moments when with pride you shout

“Wow! That’s brilliant!”

be it the first legible writing on a card or winner of a race on Sports’ Day. God the Father couldn’t resist saying, at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan,
(Matt 3:17) “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.*”

It was like a graduation day, not just an adult now, but trained, equipped and ready to go. No wonder the Father was thrilled and shouted

“Look everyone, that’s my boy!”

The plan of ages to redeem you and me and include us in His family was finally coming into operation.

What do you want to be?

A child of God or a homeless wanderer?

Do you want a relationship and communion with God,
or a restless emptiness that nothing you try,
or ritual you perform, can fill?

God wants relationship not empty ritual.
Do you?

If you don't want a relationship with God then read no further.
However,
if you do then simply ask Him into your heart.
How will you know He has answered your prayer?
It can differ for different people.
Some will feel a peace flooding over them.
Others a sense of release,
all the tensions draining away.
It will be real,
very real.

Chapter 3

Faith and doubts. *“I do believe; help my unbelief.”*

So, you've made your choice.

You don't want to be a homeless wanderer,
a rebellious son or religious Pharisee.

You want a relationship with God. You have decided to follow Jesus.

You have accepted Him as your Saviour. You are a child of God.

Hallelujah! Or is it?

Do you feel like a problem running around looking for a solution?

Do you have uncertainties about your salvation,
whether God is really real; was it all one big con?

You're OK in the presence of other believers
but elsewhere you are full of doubts.

Are you like the father who was challenged by Jesus? *Mark 9:21-24 And He asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood.*

“It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!” And Jesus said to him, “‘If You can?’ All things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the boy's father cried out and said,

“I do believe; help my unbelief.”

Wait a minute, surely you either believe or you don't believe, I hear you say.

No, you can have both in abundance but if you do, they cancel each other out!

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

*KJV Rom 10:17 So then **faith cometh** by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

So the more we hear the Word of God, by grace, the gift of faith is poured out into us. But like the father of the demoniac, it is possible to believe and doubt at the same time.

Here is a great example in scripture: the disciples see Jesus walking on the water. *Matt 14:26-33 When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying,*

"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him,

"You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

Was Jesus rebuking Peter for his little faith?

No, the little faith he had enabled him to walk on the water in the first place.

That's what kept him afloat! So why did he sink?

Jesus said ***"Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."***

Peter made a choice, he looked at the waves, let go of the courage he was given and was filled with fear.

But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him,

"You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

It was the doubts and lack of courage that outweighed his faith and caused him to sink. The little faith he had enabled him to walk on the water in the first place. It was not lack of faith but an abundance of doubts that caused him to sink.

But he called on Jesus who not only saved him but got into the boat with him; then the strong wind died down. In the midst of your doubts and surrounded by your uncertainties, you need to call on Jesus,
He will save you.

He will get into your boat,
dispel the doubts and bring you peace; then you can get out of the boat and walk on the water again.

Let's look at the analogy of a pump.

The pipe goes deep down into the ground below the water table. Every time you pull the handle down it tries to suck the water up. Sometimes it doesn't work because air is passing round the piston; it loses suction and doesn't pull up the water.

So you have to prime the pump by pouring some water in above the piston, this seals the piston so that no air gets passed and water is drawn up the pipe.

There is a story of a pump in a very arid land. At the side is a container of water and a sign that says,
"Please use ALL the water from the container to prime the pump, then fill the container before leaving."

A traveller arrives at the pump, he sees the sign but he has a problem. What if he pours ALL the water into the pump and it doesn't work?

Should he just drink the water and leave?

What a dilemma!

Do you believe you need to prime the pump?

Probably.

Do you believe God when He says something to you from His Word? Probably. Because with the Word comes a gift of faith to believe. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. You don't earn it, it's a gift.

So what is preventing you from pouring the water into the pump of your situation? Lack of boldness? Doubts? "It may not work, the pump might be broken". On the one hand we believe, on the other, we doubt. Peter believed, then let go of his courage and started to sink.

*"You of little faith, **why did you doubt?**"*

All you need is a small container of faith to get the pump working; faith is like pouring the water into the pump of your situation. If you mix doubts with faith it doesn't work! *Luke 17:5-6 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea'; and it would obey you.*

So often we are praying, "Give me more faith Lord." And He is saying, "Fear not, I have given you faith, **stop doubting**. Only believe, you have enough faith to prime the pump; I'll provide the rest. Go for it my child, **go for it!**"

Let's think about a child taking its first steps: the parent stands it a foot or so away, it begins to put a foot forward but the child looks and sees no furniture to grab.

Fear wells up so the child drops to the floor.

The parent is disappointed and tries to encourage the child.

"Come on, you can do it! You can!"

Like a parent, God so longs for us to step out in faith – we need to look into His face, believe that He has equipped us and ... **go for it!**

When I was working on the bridge of a ship there was a large steering wheel which, by hydraulics, signalled electric motors to move the rudder. This was on a ship weighing tens of thousands of tons. It was not like the wheel on an old sail ship that could take two strong men to move the rudder. Later technology enables there to be a wheel a hand span in diameter which you could move with one finger to electronically activate motors to move the rudder. This would be on a ship hundreds of thousands of tons.

All you need is a little faith. Just like the small steering wheel moves a massive ship in the right direction, so a little faith causes God's power to be activated. If,

however, you lose courage and do nothing because you doubt, you will be like Peter and sink.

So many times God's Word tells us not to fear. Fear is the breeding ground for doubts.

Boldness is the container that holds your faith and resists the doubts.

For forty years Joshua had supported Moses who led the people to the edge of the Promised Land. Now, Moses was dead, just before the big push to possess the land, everything is at a standstill. God spoke to Joshua and effectively was told "Moses is dead, **but I'm not!** So, get up off your backside and take this people into the land I want to give them!"

*Joshua 1:5-9 "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. "**Be strong and courageous,** for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. "Only **be strong and very courageous;** be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. "Have I not commanded you? **(for the third time) Be strong and courageous!** Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*

When God says something once it is a warning, twice it is definite, three times is even more definite than definite. It means if you reject the instruction you lose badly. So when God says not to be afraid He knows that if you allow fear in, you are defeated big time.

So how do you stop the fear? *1 John 4:18,19 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear... We love, because He first loved us.*

We are back to love again. It should not be a big struggle; it is resting and trusting in His love and that love drives out fear. A small child will enjoy the thrill

of the rides at the fair, resting in its father's arms but outside those arms it will be frightened and cry in fear.

God is not waving a big stick saying

"Stop being afraid!"

He is holding out both arms for you to run into saying,

"Come here, I love you, there is no need to be afraid!"

Once in the presence of His arms of love everything else fades away.

"Fear! What fear?"

Oh, He so wants you to spend time in the presence of His love.

Outside of His love, we can live in fear and everything will be seen as a fearful stick waving "thou shalt not". Inside His love is a freedom where the "thou shalt not" just doesn't arise.

But you have to choose.

God does not force Himself on you; every step of the way there are choices. As Joshua said to the nation after a lifetime of serving the Lord,

Josh 24:15... choose for yourselves today whom you will serve:... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Are you beginning to see that being

IN God's presence

and allowing Him in **US**

is SO much more than just being next to Him?

But being next to Him is the starting point.

Chapter 4

Beside or inside?

I know many Christians will say, “But I have accepted Christ, He’s already inside me”. Yet in reality those Christians may not know or experience that truth. Look at this passage below in John 15 and note that at least twelve times it relates to remaining in Christ or Him remaining in us. The purpose of all these “remainings”

climaxes with a statement (verse 11) followed by a command in verse 17,

“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Then finally *“This I command you, that you love one another.*

*John 15:1-17 “I am the **true** vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. (this is the last “I am” in the book of John, of Jesus’ seven “I am’s”, where He contrasts Himself with that which is inferior.) “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Clean and prune in the Greek are very similar sounding words, so it is a play on words as well as a transition from the vine to the disciples.*

*“Abide in Me, and I in you. Oh dear, do you mean I have to remain in Him if I want Him to remain in me? As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it **abides** in the vine, so neither can you unless you **abide** in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who **abides** in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. “If anyone does not **abide** in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. “If you **abide** in Me, and My words **abide** in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; **abide** in My love. “If you keep My commandments, you will **abide** in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and **abide** in His love. “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

*“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.
“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.
“You are My friends*

if

you do what I command you. “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. “This I command you, that you love one another.

This is not ‘a take it or leave it’ recommendation but a command. Why? Because without the love which we only receive **IN** God we drastically reduce our ability to bear fruit.

Historically the vine has been symbolic of the nation of Israel. Interesting that Christ uses the vine as an illustration but qualifies Himself as

“The true vine”

as opposed to Israel, which is often shown as “the wild vine”.

At one point it was even on their coins. When the nation was out of phase with God Ezekiel said this, *Ez 15:1-7 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest? “Can wood be taken from it to make anything, or can men take a peg from it on which to hang any vessel?*

“If it has been put into the fire for fuel, and the fire has consumed both of its ends and its middle part has been charred, is it then useful for anything? “Behold, while it is intact, it is not made into anything. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it still be made into anything!

“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘As the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I set My face against them. Though they have come out of the fire, yet the fire will consume them. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I set My face against them.”

Oh dear, there are only two uses for the vine.

Fruit or fire fuel.

No fruit, then the only other option is the fire. Consider the oak tree, so massive and all it produces is a few small nuts, but look at the volume of good, hard, strong timber. Now consider the vine, so flimsy by comparison yet the amount of fruit it can produce is phenomenal, probably far more than most trees. I think Christ deliberately chose the vine to illustrate His point that without Him as the “True Vine” we are useless, but in Him and with Him the potential is limitless. The only way we can produce fruit is to remain in Him. Our very reason for existence is to produce fruit, if not we are only good for fire fuel.

I love the fact that Christ said He has chosen us, not the other way round. At that time, potential disciples (or apprentices) would look around and find the rabbi they thought would suit them and sign up with the rabbi of choice. Rather like choosing a course or college today. With Christ, He was the one who looked around and chose the most unlikely of disciples and said “follow me”.

There is no ‘let out’ clause where we can say we’ve made a mistake choosing this course, or there is more to this than we thought, or it’s way over our heads etc, etc. If Christ chose us, He is well able to equip us and enable us to bear fruit. All we need to do is trust and obey. He says “Walk on the water”, you walk on the water, no need to worry, you are in Him and He is in you, simple! As soon as you let go of Him and don’t remain in Him you are like the branch that is severed from the vine.

This particular scripture is so meaningful to me. When I was being challenged before my conversion, searching for the “Truth” I was reading this chapter sat on the settee at home. As I read, this person, who, at the time, was no more

than a historical figure, sat beside me, then as I continued reading, it was like He was speaking the scripture to me.

No longer just a historical figure but a REAL living person called Jesus, sitting next to me and speaking. I couldn't see Him but I could feel Him and hear Him in my head.

"I am the vine... you are the branch...without me you can do nothing...stay in me and I will stay in you...I want you to bear much fruit...you did not choose Me (even if you think you did) I chose you so you could bear much fruit... I love you no less than the Father loves me...

STAY IN MY LOVE...

STAY IN MY LOVE...

STAY IN MY LOVE..."

The voice in my head subsided and His presence left but the memory hasn't and the words of that chapter are etched on my soul. I only have to see or hear them and the experience is alive again. That was my first encounter of Christ beside me on the settee but there were more encounters to follow.

The scripture tells us as we remain in Christ He will remain in us. Yes He invites us to sit with Him so that His presence can saturate our whole being. So the answer to the chapter heading, "Beside or inside?" Is YES, to both!

I am the vine you are the branch,
Father's the gardener, He has the lance.
I'll stay in you if you stay in me.
There's no other way for you to be free.

See the branch, starting to shoot.
Look at the vine and see the fruit.
The branch alone is dry and dead.
Remain in me and the branch is fed.

The branches are all part of the vine.
The fruit from all makes the new wine.
Wine that will cause old skins to burst.
That's why I made the new skins first.

You as the new skins flex and give.
Allowing my life in you to live.
The Father prunes those dead and alive.
You can't avoid the surgeons' knives.

The new life I give is supple and tender.
Whatever your problem age or gender.
I'm bending backwards, ready to forgive.
My heart's desire is for you to LIVE!

Chapter 5

Enter into My rest

After the Lord had completed creation, He took a rest. The Hebrew word is “Shabbat”. It means to cease striving and struggling and just stop. Later the law was introduced and the people were commanded to keep the seventh day holy and cease from their own activities. It was called the Sabbath. There was a lot of detail and warnings introduced to reinforce the principle. Jeremiah warned of the dangers of not following the principle.

*Jer 17:24-27 “But it will come about, **if you listen attentively to Me,**” declares the LORD, “to bring no load in through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but to keep the sabbath day holy by doing no work on it, then there will come in through the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited forever. “They will come in from the cities of Judah and from the environs of Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the lowland, from the hill country and from the Negev, bringing burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, and bringing sacrifices of thanksgiving to the house of the LORD.*

*“**But if you do not listen to Me to keep the sabbath day holy** by not carrying a load and coming in through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem and not be quenched.””*

There is a spiritual principle here too. If we continue to carry “burdens” instead of handing them over to God, the anxiety we experience is like a burning feeling inside us. Like the gates and defences of Jerusalem (the city, or presence, of God in which we should be dwelling at peace) being burnt, so our defences and immune system will suffer.

This was a physical example to the people of Israel but in the NT the Sabbath has not just moved from Saturday to Sunday. The Sabbath is every day, it is our whole life. We are meant to enter into God’s rest for our whole life.

Heb 4:1-13 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed (believed is more than academic acceptance, it is to trust and utterly rely upon) enter that rest, just as He has said,

“AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY (who do not believe as above) SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,”

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: “AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS”; and again in this passage, “THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.” Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before,

“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.”

For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

There is a lot to unpack in this scripture. First there is a promise of being able to enter into God's rest, but there is only one way. God's way.

This is not a NT-only promise. It goes back at least to Moses. In Exodus chapter 20 Aaron and Moses go up the mountain to speak with God.

Among other things God says, *Ex 20:4-6* “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

Would you believe that after this encounter with God, later on, in chapter 32 Aaron is making a golden calf for the people to worship?

I would imagine the fires were raging in Aaron’s heart as he disobeyed directly the command that God gave personally to him.

No wonder God was angry.

Years later speaking through David He says

“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.”

God so wants us to enter His rest.

He has bent over backwards to make a way.

He has wiped our slate clear of our sin,

He has given us a new heart and His Holy Spirit.

Then through His Son He says, *Matt 11:28-30* “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

He even tells us how to do it, “learn from me”. The people of old could not enter in because they were hard of heart but Christ says, “*I am gentle and humble in heart;*” stop striving!

There is no pretending possible here. We can’t act calm and claim to have entered God’s rest. The writer says we must not make the same mistake as the others, *so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.*

He goes on to say why: *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

There is no fooling God, He spots the con man in us straight away. We must humbly lay our burden down at the foot of the cross and look up to the most humble man who died for you and me but is now ALIVE!

Chapter 6

Christ in you the hope of glory

Paul had a **secret** that burned in him wherever he went.

A **secret** he wanted to tell everyone he met.

A **secret** he knew would change the world if it was embraced by others.

A **secret** that the Father got excited about the day Jesus was baptised.

It was then that the final plan was unfolding to make this **secret** possible. Christ prayed for it on the night of the last supper.

John 17:20-26 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

"O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

Twice Christ mentions us being in Him and He being in us. Christ died.

The world thought it was the end,

but in actual fact it was only the beginning!

When Bannister broke the record for the four minute mile

and Hillary climbed Mount Everest,

both proved possible that which was thought impossible.

There soon followed a flood of people achieving

the “impossible” and
doing what had been proved possible.

Christ rose from the dead and sent the Holy Spirit:
now it was possible for the thing once thought impossible,
but only to those who believe. Now Christ’s prayer was to be fulfilled.
Now the secret that prophets of old longed to know was being revealed.

Ephesians 2:17-3:7 And HE came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that **by revelation there was made known to me the mystery (Secret)**, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the **mystery (Secret) of Christ**, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been **revealed** to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.*

So what was **this secret** not known in other generations that
God has now revealed through **NT prophets** and apostles including Paul?

*Colossians 1:25-29 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery **(Secret)** which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been*

*manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery **(Secret)** among the Gentiles,*

which – is - Christ – in - you, - the - hope – of - glory.

We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

It's not ritual, it's not self effort, it's not academic qualifications, it's not primarily living a decent life. The only hope you have of fulfilment is:

CHRIST IN YOU THE HOPE OF GLORY.

That is the secret that has changed the course of history, caused empires to rise and fall, including the British Empire.

This all ties together with the previous chapters:

he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

We submit to Him and He will dwell in us,
that gives us the hope of glory ... simple!

Chapter 7

My presence will go with you

One morning before leaving for work a scripture came strongly to the front of my mind, *Luke 21:12-15 "... bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.*

So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.

What on earth was that about? I soon found out upon arrival at work. The manager called me into his office looking very angry.

"These Christian stickers you have been placing in control areas all over the station are causing an offence, this has got to stop."

They were small round stickers the size of a 50p piece with texts like, Jesus loves you, Jesus saves, Jesus is Lord, wise men still seek Him etc. I did not have to think what to say, I was amazed at the authority that came over me. Jesus gave me the words, authority and the wisdom.

I looked him in the eyes and said,
"What! Cause an offence?"

This is a main line power station, you have conducted tours of school children being shown around the control centres where there is pornography hung up and my stickers are offensive?"

He spluttered and stuttered, "P-p-p-pornography is normal, you're the kinky one....."

I laughed and he was lost for words.

Whilst I was in the office one of my colleagues had put a large

"Jesus is Lord" sticker on his door

(about the size of a road tax disc). When we came out he saw it and tried unsuccessfully to remove it.

"They are so difficult to remove," he said, annoyed.

"Yes, a little spirit will help, usually an evil spirit." I replied.

I heard no more, the stickers remained and sadly the manager died of a heart attack a few weeks later.

Sadly I hadn't prayed for him, I can only hope the message on the stickers caused him to seek God in his heart. He was not old but we can be called to meet our Maker at any time.

The promise of Christ is amazing,
I did not need to prepare what to say,
He gave the words
but more importantly

He was IN me and I was IN Him

and I saw His glory in the outworking.

During the whole event I never felt one twinge of fear or anxiety which was strange because having spent ten years in the Merchant Navy, with its military-like structure of authority I would normally not have challenged a superior in the way I did.

As an officer, I expected a crew member to do as he was told and likewise if I was ordered by a senior officer I would have obeyed.

Moses was facing some difficulties leading the people of Israel through some problem areas.

Ex 33:12-23 Then Moses said to the Lord,

"See, You say to me,

' Bring up this people! '

But You Yourself have not let me know whom You will send with me.

Moreover, You have said, 'I have known you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight. '

Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your

*ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight. Consider too, that this nation is Your people." And He said, " **My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.**"*

Wow, what a promise!

I don't think it was what he was expecting but he grabbed it with both hands then continued...

Then he said to Him, " If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here. For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the other people who are upon the face of the earth?"

They certainly would be distinguished.

This was not insignificant.

Think of the size of creation.

The sun is a million times larger than the Earth,
the sun is just a speck of dust compared to all creation,
but God is IN all of creation and this creator has promised Moses

"My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest."

You have to admire Moses, he is on a roll now so the next thing he asks is to see God's glory.....

The Lord said to Moses,

*"I will also do this thing of which you have spoken;
for you have found favor in My sight and I have known you by name."*

Then Moses said,

"I pray You, show me Your glory!"

*And He said, " I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you,
and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you;
and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious,
and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."*

*But He said,
"You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!"*

*Then the Lord said,
"Behold, there is a place by Me,
and you shall stand there on the rock;
and it will come about, while My glory is passing by,
that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand
until I have passed by.*

*Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back,
but My face shall not be seen."*

Moses only saw the back of God's glory but Christ prayed that His friends would actually be with Him to see His glory.

Moses hid in the cleft of a rock.

For us Christ is that rock who was cleft for you and me to hide in safely.

We can hide in His glory!

Not our glory!

John wrote about Him,
*John 1:14 And the Word became flesh,
and dwelt among us,
and **we saw His glory,**
glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The promise to Moses,
because he had found favour,
was not just that God would go with him but also,
"I shall give you rest."

That means no worries or anxieties for Moses while he remained in Him.

When we accepted Christ,
He accepted us.
Because we found favour in His sight,
we also can enter into His rest.

That means no worries or anxieties for us.
We can be confident that His presence goes with us,
just like when I was brought before the manager.
If ever His presence is not with us we should be asking,
“Lord is this where you want me? Am I still resting in your rest?”
Indeed like Moses we should say,
“ If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.”

Chapter 8

He will live with them, and they will be His people

Have you ever been in a medieval church building on a dark dreary day? It looks drab, feels cold and unwelcoming. Then the sun comes out and light pours through the stained glass windows. Suddenly the place is changed, it is filled with warmth and colours, light from the windows bounces off the walls and the place is alive. Now hallelujah springs from the heart not just the lips. So what transformed everything? The light.

Gen 1:1-5 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

The very first time God spoke in the scriptures it was to say, **“Let there be light.”** We can do nothing without light. The ninth curse on Egypt through Moses was darkness, *Ex 10:21-23 Then the Lord said to Moses, " Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt." So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.*

Interesting that God’s people had light. If our hearts are for God the very first thing He speaks to us is, “Let there be light.” He wants us to have light. God told Moses to instruct his brother on how to pronounce a blessing on the people and it included, *Nu 6:[25] The Lord make His face shine on you...* But He gives us light so we can shine on others, He blesses us so we can bless others.

God through Isaiah rebukes Israel for their hypocritical attitude, *Isa 58:1-14 Cry loudly, do not hold back;*

*Raise your voice like a trumpet,
And declare to My people their transgression
And to the house of Jacob their sins.
"Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways,
As a nation that has done righteousness
And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God.
They ask Me for just decisions,
They delight in the nearness of God.
'Why have we fasted and You do not see?
Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice? '
Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire,
And drive hard all your workers.
"Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist.
You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high.
"Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself?
Is it for bowing one's head like a reed
And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed?
Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the Lord?
"Is this not the fast which I choose,
To loosen the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the bands of the yoke,
And to let the oppressed go free
And break every yoke?
"Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry
And bring the homeless poor into the house;
When you see the naked, to cover him;
And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?
"Then your light will break out like the dawn,
And your recovery will speedily spring forth;
And your righteousness will go before you;
The glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
"Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am. '
If you remove the yoke from your midst,
The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness,
And if you give yourself to the hungry*

*And satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
Then your light will rise in darkness
And your gloom will become like midday.
"And the Lord will continually guide you,
And satisfy your desire in scorched places,
And give strength to your bones;
And you will be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.
"Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins;
You will raise up the age- old foundations;
And you will be called the repairer of the breach,
The restorer of the streets in which to dwell.
(possibly meaning, to clear as a means of access)
"If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot
From doing your own pleasure on My holy day,
And call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable,
And honor it, desisting from your own ways,
From seeking your own pleasure
And speaking your own word,
Then you will take delight in the Lord,
And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

Rightness and light seem to go hand in hand. Self-centredness, selfishness and darkness also go hand in hand. This scripture, although long, is so simple. In darkness it is not possible to see beyond yourself. A little light enables us to see further. John in his gospel highlights this.

Jn 1:1-13 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

The scripture continues to reveal that this is Jesus, the Son of God in human form. Sadly most of His own people did not recognise Him. All they saw was a radical rabbi. Gradually as the hearts of His disciples softened their spiritual eyes were opened to see who He really was. After the Holy Spirit was poured out their eyes were opened more and more. This is why we desperately need the Holy Spirit in our lives.

I remember Katherine Khulman, a woman greatly used in the gifts of the Spirit. Referring to an unspiritual minister she eventually led to the Lord, she said he was someone educated beyond his intelligence but was not born of the Spirit.

Similarly Christ talking to the Sadducees (who probably were educated beyond their intelligence)

told these bible scholars they were

“badly mistaken”

because they did not know

“the scriptures or the power of God.”

Paul before conversion knew the scriptures but did not understand them. When he received the Spirit his eyes were opened to understand their meaning and afterwards constantly gave the message, “Christ in you the hope of glory.”

John, as an old man had a vision on the prison Island of Patmos.

Rev 1:10-19 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, " Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two- edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. (John was shown Christ's glorified face, not His back like Moses)

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, " Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. Therefore write the things which you have seen..."

That is a lot of light, His face shining like the sun at full strength! In human terms what John saw was almost too much for him to cope with. Yet when Christ said, "Do not be afraid!" he was strengthened and carried on. Moses had to cover his face after he had been in God's presence because the people were afraid. John was given the vision because he had spent a lot of time with God so he was able to cope and we are the richer for it. There are many things that God wants to share with us but we need to be in communication with Him first.

The analogy of Christians being the Bride of Christ blatantly assumes complete intimacy and devotion which will generate fruit. The vision of John shows developments beyond this life of which we don't have a complete picture. The reason we don't have a complete picture is because in this life we are looking through a dark glass.

This scripture and the ones laid out below are followed by a reflection compiled by my daughter Julie, which she did for the house group she belongs to.

KJV 1 Cor 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

KJV Psalm 36:9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

Matthew 18:3 "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

2 Cor 12:9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Hebrews 12:2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith,

*Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock;
if anyone hears My voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.*

Stained Glass Window

God's truth is like sunlight –
it's too dazzlingly brilliant for us to look at directly.

Our faith is like a stained glass window:

when the light shines through it we are able to experience God
in a way that makes sense to us.

The colours, shapes and patterns come to life and we find meaning
in them as they tell the story of God's love for us.

God's truth becomes our beauty as our lives are illuminated by him.

But faith is not static.

It changes and grows with us.

Our own experiences add colour and detail to the window.

It is tempting to elaborate;

to better define and categorise our faith.

We add in lead partitions in the form of extra rules,
regulations,
doctrines and opinions.

We seek to emphasise what we think is important by layering on
more paint.

Gradually, the light dims.

As the colours fade we seek to rectify this by adding yet more paint.

But, of course, this just makes things worse
and we find ourselves in the dark;
no longer able to find any meaning in our lives;
desperately clinging to what we think we know;
to what we once thought was true.

And so the more complex and rigid our beliefs; the more convinced
we are that we are right

and others are wrong,

then the harder it becomes for God's light to shine through.

In the end, it can be our own beliefs that separate us from other
people and block out the simple truth of God's love for all of us.

At this point we need a power hose

or perhaps even a wrecking ball.

And then, the miracle happens:
when our hopes and dreams are shattered;
when all we hold precious lies in tiny fragments at our feet;
there, in our brokenness, His light pours in.

This is the message of the cross:
in surrender to brokenness we are reborn.
His strength made perfect in our weakness.

But if we are to start from scratch, can we each paint our own
window in any way we please?
Can the truth be anything we want it to be?

NO, because adding self-centredness to the paint mixture is the surest way to make it completely opaque and, once again, we end up painting God out of our lives.

There is only one truth and yet there are countless perspectives and interpretations of that same truth – like many millions of stained glass windows, each with the potential to glorify God or to block Him out.

The most important thing about a window, perhaps the only important thing, is its translucency.

It lets in light.

And so,
God's truth will illuminate
the lives of everyone who is open to His light;
everyone who is ready to listen, to let go of their own
preconceptions, to admit they might be wrong;

everyone who will allow God to be God;
everyone who is willing to put aside their own agenda;
to lay down their own life, as Jesus puts it, in order to find life.

This is what Jesus asked of the rich young ruler. Could He be asking the same of us? Or, perhaps, He has other plans. It's both terrifying and exhilarating to realise that with God, anything's possible. Let Him have the paintbrush and see what He will make of you. Let Him be the author and perfecter of your faith.

I feel there are so many things that could be said.
It is difficult to know where to stop. John's vision and revelation includes some of the ultimate objectives of our heavenly Father.
In closing let's look at some more of John's comments,
*Rev 21:1-4 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth,
for the first heaven and earth had ceased to exist,
and the sea existed no more.
And I saw the holy city – the new Jerusalem – descending out of heaven from
God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband.*

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying:
“**Look! The residence of God is among human beings.
He will live among them, and they will be his people,
and God himself will be with them.**
He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist any more
– or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the former things have ceased to exist.”*

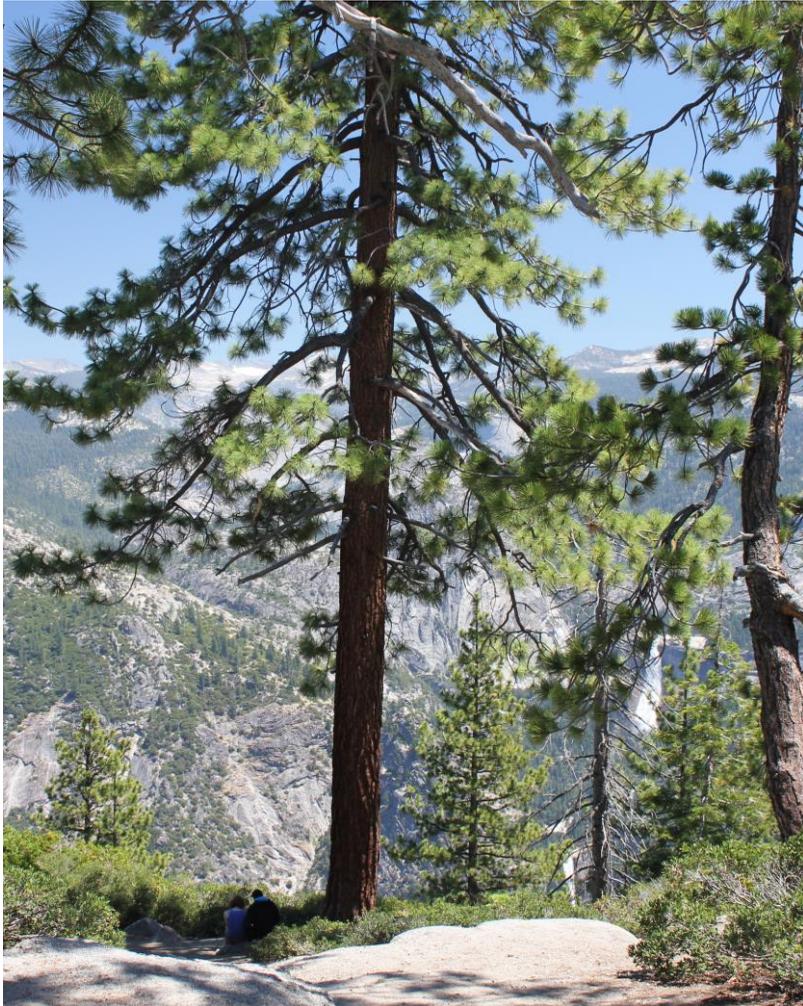
John is referred to in the gospels as the one whom Jesus loved. This makes us assume that he was loved by Jesus more than any of the others were. I don't think this is the case. I think John probably realised far more than any of the others how much Jesus loved **him**.

This realisation of the love Jesus had for him enables John to have insights and a relationship with God that we all envy. This love enabled him to be the only disciple who stayed without fear at the cross with Jesus. To write about God's love in his gospel and letters. Finally to experience and write about his mind blowing visions of God's desire to dwell among us.

I pray that as you spend more time sitting or walking with the Lord, you will discover new depths of God's love and even more things than I have spoken of here.

The beginning.

“Come sit with Me”



Brian Johnson

bj.logos@gmail.com

A different style to his earlier booklets and a new topic but still to the same purpose: to stimulate thinking about relationship with our Creator God. Read this and discover truths about God's longing for us to spend time in His company.

Bruce Ackers, Elder, Coton Green Church

'This study is a helpful next step from the previous booklets reminding us that true discipleship is formed by our daily relationship with Jesus - just being with Him in everyday situations - listening, watching and learning.'

Dr Richard Massey, former Principal of Birmingham Christian College.

Here is a simple but profound read. There are no instructions here, nor institutions, no rule nor rote. It's all about relationship. If you don't want to get up close and personal with the God from whom, to whom and through whom are all things, the pioneer & the perfecter of faith, then you'd better put this booklet down.

John Plumb

'Come, sit with me' – this is the call of God to each and every one of us, and Brian delves into this theme with enthusiasm, using his deep knowledge of Scripture to explore great Biblical principles such as the vine and the branches, the Sabbath rest and light. As he shares stories and poems from his own life, Brian invites us all to hear God's call for ourselves and accept his wonderful invitation.

Helen Pollard (Christian Music Ministries)

This booklet is, A gentle upwards stroll to the highest places in God. A lifetime of divine relationship pours out in every insight. Brian's familiar style, is an Eternal voice. The stained glass beauty of a familiar sanctuary, only hints, at what God has for us here.

Nick Cross (Founder and Director of Soul Café)

This is my favourite to date of Brian's booklets. While reading it I felt a deep sense of peace and serenity. In it you can discover the Father's love and compassion for each one of us. You can be affected and transformed by His presence. You can learn to know you are a child of God and enter into relationship with Him, and discover how His presence will go with you as you remain in Him.

Lindsey Thompson, Lighthouse (Junior Church) Leader and Co-ordinator

I found this a very refreshing book, to show us how easy it can be to sit in God's presence when we give time and space for God. The words of the Chorus came to me 'to be in your presence not rushing away' the chorus goes on 'this is my desire oh Lord'. In this Book Brian certainly challenges us and encourages us to spend that time with God as did Mary at the feet of Jesus.

Rev. Peter Norris Minister Aldersbrook Baptist Church

Print order

1,54,3,52,5,50,7,48,9,46,11,44,13,42,15,40,17,38,19,36,21,34,23,32,25,30,27,28

Turn over left to right remove (1,54)

53,2,51,4,49,6,47,8,45,10,43,12,41,14,39,16,37,18,35,20,33,22,31,24,29,26