

God's gracious gift of his presence

In Process

by Glen Doss, Major –

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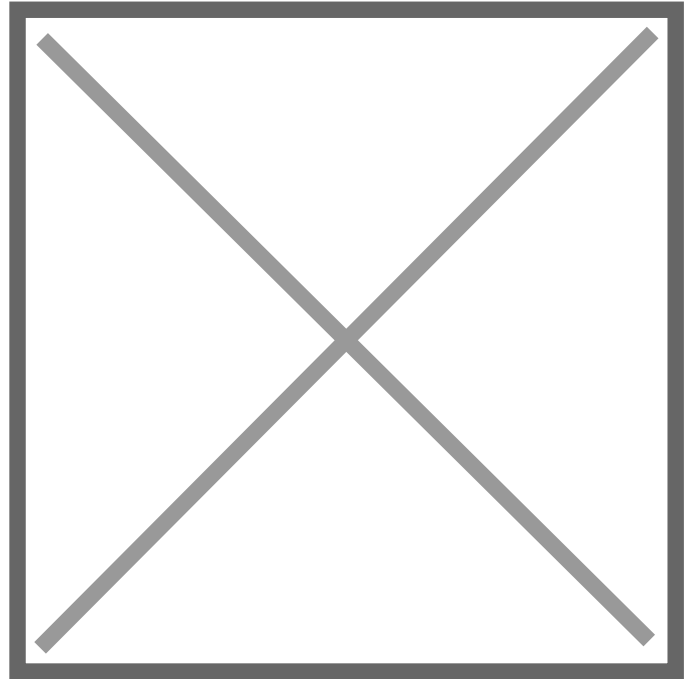
As I think back to my state of mind during the days and weeks leading up to my conversion at age 39 and compare that to what I felt afterwards, I am awed and amazed at the contrast—no wonder I fell so in love with God! I was such a wretched man! And God saved me—saved me from myself—for today I know it was I myself turning the vise grip that was crushing the very life out of me—I simply didn't know how to stop!

One thing I immediately knew beyond any shadow of doubt as the Lord embraced me that night was that he cared for me. And he wasn't about to punish me as I had feared (as a strict parent might) for my wrong behavior that had left so many casualties in its wake. As I felt the warmth of his unsurpassable love enfolding me the way a mother cradles an infant at her bosom, I marveled at the wonder of this deep love. God's unqualified acceptance of me awed me more than I can say—I was immensely grateful!

When we presume to compare a spiritual experience to another kind—to contrast a strong, personal witness of God's presence with an awareness, say, of a warm, humid wind blowing into one's face—mere words will never suffice. But I can share that a spiritual experience is far more full and convincing than any other. The five physical senses can be fooled, as we know from watching a magician at his trade. But what I experienced the evening of my conversion, and during many intimate encounters with God afterwards, was a sheer, out-and-out consciousness of his presence with me. Have you had such an experience of God, as well? A feeling of his warm and gracious self fully embracing you, loving you, forgiving you, letting you know everything is all right now that he is on the scene—he is right there with you and will remain with you? That was my experience, one that took me back across three decades to when I was a small child and God first held me in his arms, years before I walked away from him.

My response was one of jubilation, excitement, deep and profound appreciation. I now knew there was Someone in the world who loved me immensely despite all my shortcomings, all my grave errors, in spite of the hurt I had caused so many. And he was all-powerful, dependable, faithful; therefore, I need be afraid no longer. I felt the embrace of his love in a wonderful, seemingly magical way.

Men and women out there, perhaps you haven't come as despairingly as I to the very brink of suicide,



but I know that many of you are miserable. I speak from rich personal experience as I advise you to fully trust yourself to God—he will not let you down. There is no longer any need to bask in your own misery, seeking consolation in something impotent and deceiving, whether it be food or alcohol or one's own fleeting strength. Certainly you can't find it in another person! The really wonderful thing is that as we learn to love and trust God more and more, we also learn to love and appreciate other people more—this is what it really means to love them in the Lord.

Dear God, just to think that you walked among us in human form once upon a time, that others felt the flesh of those arms and hands and observed the intelligent, deeply probing look in those that eyes that saw everything! To think they dialogued with you the way any person talks with another makes my spine tingle today! Oh, how I would have loved to have been there!

But you are here with now in the privacy of my living room late on a Sunday night, and I know your presence more assuredly than I do this cup of tea that I am sipping, more definitely than I detect the computer keys beneath my fingers. Your warm, enfolding presence I cannot deny! Lord, you are certainly as real to me in spirit as you were in flesh to your disciples long ago! I can't thank you enough for this priceless gift of your warm and abiding presence! Forever and ever will I express my appreciation to you! In the precious name of Christ Jesus my Savior I pray. Amen.