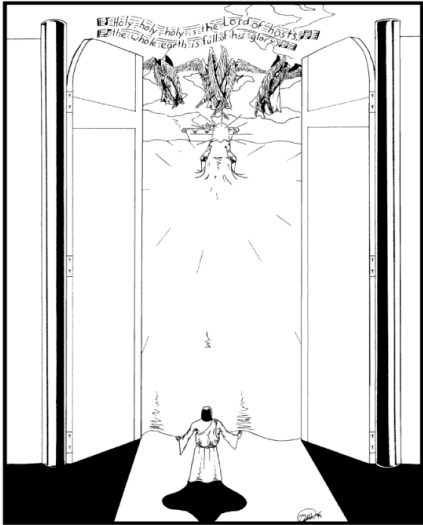


COME BOLDLY



by Chuck Gianotti

*Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace,
that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*
Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV)

It beckoned me¹—the voice beyond the door. Faint, hardly perceptible. Not the sound, but the meaning of it. It had been there all along. Understanding was growing, yet more perplexing it became. Before—the ignorance of immature, brash youth was blissful—I didn't know what I was missing. But that was OK—then ...

But, now I'm compelled to come and search out. Something beyond my reach, yet it draws my yearning, reaching heart deep within me. It's meeting a need I wasn't sure I had—no, I am sure, but—not sure at the same time. Compelled to go further and find out. There must be something good, satisfying—yet at the same time, something fearful, unknown, holy, awesome.

It becomes clear to me the Lord is there. I know it, because I sense, no—recognize His voice. He is the one calling me, I know it! But, can I handle it?

“Come boldly into My throne room of grace!”²

I understand the words, but how can I comprehend it? Am I worthy? Of course not! That's the problem. Who can stand boldly in His presence? Not I, for sure!

“No, Lord.” Quietly, at first, barely audible, a whisper.

It seemed to make no difference, the voice kept calling.

“Enter ...”

“No, Lord.” Louder. Who am I? That is your inner sanctuary, the holy of holies. The place of your Shekinah Glory³. I cannot go in there; I would die. I am unworthy. The Sovereign of the universe is seated on His throne, high and lifted up⁴—images fill my void, creating imaginations in my heart. I can't do it! King David—the man after God's heart—yes. Abraham, the friend of God—yes. Peter the Rock and John the beloved—yes. But, me? No way, Lord!

“Enter!”

Cover my ears, get busy, do something. Teach the word, preach, counsel, Sunday school, give money, usher, anything—I'll do it. But “enter”? No way, Lord!⁵

“Enter!” He beckons.

How can I not? How can I say, “No” and “Lord” in the same breath? Do I believe? Do I trust? Do I obey? Yet, how could He possibly mean me? He must intend something else, someone else. Can't mean me, can't mean there, can't mean now, and it can't be God—can it?

¹ This is an imaginative story that reflects the struggle between our unholiness and the holiness of God. Pertinent scripture references are included at the end and are referenced in the text by superscripted numbers. Special thanks to Matt Cramer for his art work and to Pauline Hawkins for editing the text. Chuck Gianotti, December 2000

² See Hebrews 4:16 (all references are to the New International Version, unless otherwise stated)

³ The “Shekinah Glory” refers to the visible sign of God's presence in the holy of holies.

⁴ Isaiah 6:1

⁵ Matt 16:22

“Trust and obey!”

Yet, what am I to do with the unholiness that is me—my sin. I must get cleaned up first. I must straighten up my life. Spend more time in prayer meetings, more time reading the Bible, more time in obedience before ... I am such a failure.

“Enter!”

I’m a failure, but I must obey—all logic aside, all rationale away—simply obey.

I can't believe it, my hand is reaching for the door! What am I doing? Slowly, nervously, as my fingers get closer, I shake. That’s not *my* hand, is it? I can't believe I am doing it! How dare I?

Behind me, another voice. “Who do you think you are, you sinner? Just because you are a Christian and claim to be saved—does that give you the right to enter? You fool, you will die!”

That's right, I knew all along. I am not worthy. I don't want to add to my folly that worst of all sins—presumption, hypocrisy. To enter the way I am is a complete farce. I pull back.

“Enter!”

There it is again. My retreat is arrested. Which voice do I listen to? I begin to reach forward.

“Fool, holier than thou—are you? Look at those filthy hands! Even the Book says, ‘Get rid of all moral filth and evil that is so prevalent.’⁶ You are no better than anyone else—how dare you think you can enter in and no one else! You don't see very many others in there, do you? And the ones who do enter are different, they were made different, born spiritual. They are special, you are not. You are no better than common—ordinary at best, and, truth be known, you are worse than the rest. Look at what you did back ...” The roar of the prowling lion deafens⁷.

“Enter!” The quiet voice, like a sharp sword, cuts through the raucous ...

The struggle with my hand—my filthy hand—intensifies. Deep within me the move is to reach, but everything else works against it. Yet, I must obey. I know I am unworthy, I know I haven't gotten rid of all moral filth. But, He commands. I want to obey, even if I die.



What else can I do? I can not stay out here any longer, listening to those voices, though they be a thousand strong. I’m weary of being beaten up, dragged through the gutters of my heart.

The One inside knows already my filthy hands, my unworthiness. Maybe He wants me there to judge me, to destroy me? “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”⁸ I must trust. To do anything else is worse than death. I reach out.

More voices behind: “Naïve,” “Fool,” “Hypocrite.”

My hand touches the door—I begin to nudge it open, as slightly as I can. If I am to enter, I will do it in the least offensive way. Maybe He won't even notice me. I don't want to offend.

What if He echoes the voices behind me? “Hypocrite,” “Fool,” “How dare you, you filthy rotten sinner.” Yet, Jesus is my advocate⁹, the scriptures say, my intercessor.¹⁰ He is there to defend me, not accuse me. There is someone else who does the accusing.¹¹

⁶ James 1:21

⁷ 1 Peter 5:8

⁸ Job 13:15 (NKJV)

⁹ 1 John 2:1

¹⁰ Romans 8:34

¹¹ Revelation 12:10

“Enter!”

I push the door open. Oh, no! I can't enter. I cannot set foot in there. I didn't realize. Everywhere I look, I see purity. There is no sin in his presence. There is brilliance all around, the only thing discernible. What is it—it's...it's like cloth flowing, brilliant—from the center along the ground. “The train of His robe filled the temple.”¹² Everywhere His pure, white, spotless garment.

To step foot inside would mean instant defilement. I needn't look at my feet. I know they are dirty, filthy—they have carried me to places of sin. I need time to wash my feet. Give me time, please, Lord.

From behind, “Fool, you were brazen enough to dare touch the door, now do you think you can waltz into His presence and traipse over His holy garments? Insult to the holy!”

From inside, “Enter—I will clean your feet. You must first step inside.”

Lord, I don't want to defile your presence with my dirty feet. Let me clean them before coming in. Yet, I am reminded when Jesus went to wash the disciples' feet, Peter too objected! But, to Peter (and I sense to me) He says, “If I do not wash your feet, you can have no part in me.”¹³ Yet, dare I think that your pure hands should touch me, touch my feet? Who am I? What's the alternative, Lord?

I can't live any longer apart from your presence, your throne room—yet, if I step in I will die. Your holiness will melt me down, shrink me to nothing. I will be exposed as a complete and utter failure. The minute I touch your robe with my dirty feet, I am undone!¹⁴

“Enter!”

Yes Lord. I lift my foot.

“Fool!” “Hypocrite!” I begin to recognize those voices behind me. The one comes from a fellow I looked down upon for years. Another from a Christian I refused to forgive. Yet, another, a co-worker who knows me pretty well.

But, there is one voice lurking, prowling, louder than all the rest. I'm beginning to recognize it, I have heard it before, very familiar. “Who do you think you are?” The father of lies, the great deceiver.¹⁵

“Enter!”

I must obey, I don't understand—this goes against all sensibilities. But, “There is a way that seems right to man, but the end is the way of death.”¹⁶

I must believe you, Lord. I can't listen to those voices, that voice, my own thoughts. I am so unworthy, but I must obey. Lord, you know me, how can you command me to enter?

“Yes, I do know you. Enter!”

Enter I must. I step in ... and drop to my knees. In ... but how can I stand? If I must enter, I will grovel. Maybe, just maybe, He will see my lowliness and overlook my sinfulness. Maybe, by chance, something will happen.

“That's right, you better be on your knees! Who do you think you are to bulldoze into His presence like you own the place. On your knees, you sinner.” The voices reverberate behind me through the open door of my mind. “He's gone off the deep end. He actually thinks he is worthy, ha!”

“Oh, Lord, you know it's true. Can I leave now?” I am undone. I should not be here. How could I have been such a fool.

¹² *Isaiah 6:1b*

¹³ *John 13:5-6*

¹⁴ *Isaiah 6:5*

¹⁵ *John 8:44, 2 John 1:7*

¹⁶ *Proverbs 14:12*

But ... the door shuts behind me. The voices are quelled. It is just me alone ... in His presence ... on my knees.

Soon it will be over; I can hardly stand it. My sin is ever before me¹⁷, like burning skin, acutely aware of every nerve cell aflame. “Oh, Lord have mercy on me,”¹⁸ I cry. “Lord, please forgive! Lord do something or banish me from your presence forever. I can't stand it. Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”¹⁹

“Boldly!” The voice comes from deep within the throne room.²⁰ He commands.

Fear takes a sudden turn—I better obey, now! What a strange feeling—the fear that once repulsed now attracts me. I could not turn back even if I wanted to. Boldly, I approach.

Why do I feel this way? The attraction now stronger than the repulsion.

“Stand up.”

I stand up...but my eyes are down. That would be too much.

“Boldly!”

Slowly, I lift my eyes, tears begin flowing. Tears responding to a strange sensation of being exposed, but not naked.

My shame is giving way—He knows me ... He loves me ... He accepts me! I have nothing to hide. He sees it all, hears it all²¹—He wants me with Him! Joy of all joys! I never thought ...

This must be what the woman caught in adultery felt when left standing before Jesus.²² Those who saw shame were shut out. The only presence that mattered was His, the one whose eyes showed forgiveness and acceptance.

With great difficulty, I raise my eyes. The first thing I see are His feet, nail pierced, marks glowing red. Profound joy overwhelms me, my eyes weep even more. Such love for one like me! Then His knees. How many children sat there and were embraced in His arms, at home and happy and secure.²³

Then His side, thrust through by a coarse, splintered spear. The marks are still visible.²⁴ From there blood and water flowed,²⁵ sure sign He had died. Then His hands, the Shepherd's hands, that were pinned to the cross, holding the weight of my sins. The same hands that broke bread and took the cup, because that's how He wanted to be remembered—symbols of his love.

Finally, standing fully upright, eyes locked with His, I see His golden crown²⁶. Nothing like anything I have ever seen before. I don't understand it fully—like golden thorns blossomed into the most beautiful array that can be imagined. The finest of possessions, accented with brilliant red. That which was earthly, caused by sin, has become His crown. That which was mockingly placed by rebellious creatures, has become His eternal badge of victory, even over sin. Even the vanquished bring glory to God!

Then His face, that beautiful face, which at one time was so beaten He was unrecognizable.²⁷ Yet, I see Him clearly. I know Him, because I am one of His Sheep!²⁸ It's Him, absolutely no doubt. And He knows me!!!!

“Welcome!”

¹⁷ Psalm 51:3

¹⁸ Luke 18:13

¹⁹ Luke 5:8

²⁰ Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV)

²¹ Psalm 139:1-4

²² John 8:1-11

²³ Mark 9:36

²⁴ John 20:27

²⁵ John 19:34

²⁶ Rev 14:14

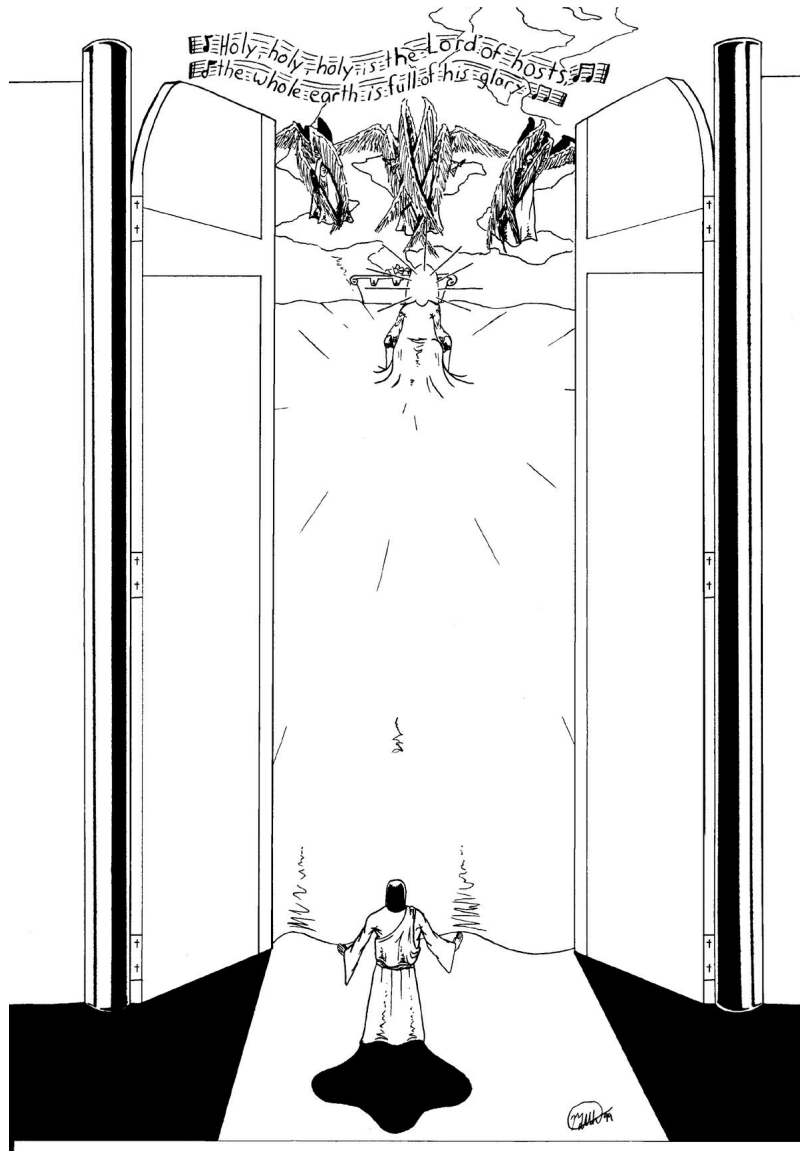
²⁷ Isaiah 52:14

²⁸ John 10:14

I am actually here—in His presence! Words fail me, but there's more. How can I describe it? There are no words adequate.²⁹ He is beautiful!³⁰ And I am here, changed forever!

Now, there is only one voice I will obey. For to come boldly into His presence is a command I desperately need to obey—on a daily basis. For in His presence is the forgiveness and acceptance necessary for me to live victoriously, with confidence. Boldly!

*Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,
who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD”
Psalm 89*



²⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:4

³⁰ Isaiah 4:2