

Access to God

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[0 : 00] Have you ever seen the Queen? I don't mean a picture of the Queen or the Queen on television. I mean have you seen the Queen in the flesh? I've only seen her once and I was very little.

I remember it was at an airport, I don't even remember which airport, and my parents pointed in the direction and I saw some very faint figures and I couldn't distinguish one from the other. But they were saying, that's the Queen. If you want to visit the Queen at home, it's even more difficult.

Unless of course you receive a personal invitation. If you go to Buckingham Palace in London, you'll see that in front there are large gates with policemen outside.

If you manage to get inside, there are sentries, guards there, marching up and down. The palace itself has huge walls, four metres high, with barbed wire along the top.

[1 : 20] Inside there's a sophisticated alarm system. Despite this, from time to time somebody manages to get in, as happened not so long ago.

Probably the most famous case is that of a certain Michael Fagan, back in 1982.

Michael Fagan was an unemployed man, I still don't know how he managed it, but he not only got into Buckingham Palace, but he actually made his way to the Queen's bedroom while she was sleeping there.

And she sat down and they had a conversation. Until, finally, she was able to raise the alarm. And Michael Fagan left the room, but has gone down in history.

Now, today, many people imagine that it's very simple to have access to God. They think there are no walls, there are no gates, there are no guards.

[2 : 35] Nobody there to stop them from approaching God. Anybody, they say, can come to God whenever they want. They fancy that God is always there, at any time, and he is a kind God, and he is a merciful God, so everybody is free to approach God whenever they want.

But when we read this letter, the letter of Paul to the Romans, we see that things are not like that at all.

In fact, there's a barrier, a barrier that is infinitely higher than any physical obstacle. The physical obstacle that would give you access to some important person.

And that obstacle, according to the Bible, is called sin. Well, sin, what is sin? Sin is basically disobedience to the law of God.

Disobedience. Disobedience. Rejecting God. Turning your back on God. Disobedience. The Apostle Paul, in his letter, shows that we are all, all of us, everybody in the world, is under the dominion of sin, under the power of sin.

[4 : 15] And he writes, there is no one righteous. There's nobody who is good. Not even one. The whole world, he says, is guilty and accountable before God.

It doesn't make any difference whether you're a Jew or a non-Jew, whether you're religious or an atheist, whether you're rich or poor, whether you're intelligent or simple.

We're told that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No exceptions. Everybody in the world, by nature, is in that condition.

The problem, you see, is that God, certainly he is kind. Certainly he is merciful.

But God is also infinitely righteous. He is infinitely holy. And only those who are as righteous and as holy as God can come into his presence.

[5 : 34] And when the righteousness, the perfection of God comes into contact with sin, not only is there rejection on the part of God, but there is also hostility, enmity.

We become enemies of God. God is angry with us. God is angry with us. Not with a sudden explosion of anger, but a fixed anger against sin and sinners.

We read in the first chapter of the apostle Paul, in verse 18, the wrath, this fixed anger of God, is being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness, evil of men.

We're also told that God expresses his wrath, his anger, every day. In the first chapters of this book, Paul invites us to follow his reasoning.

Man is powerless. He's completely without any strength to free himself. To free himself from the bonds of sin.

[7 : 12] How can a righteous, a holy and a just God accept sinners like us?

How can God justify us? How can God call us just? He can never close his eyes to our sin.

He can never pretend that our sin doesn't exist. The only answer which the Bible gives us, the only possibility to be accepted by God, is through faith in Christ, through believing in Jesus Christ.

Right back at the beginning of history, in the Garden of Eden, we find that this wonderful promise, soon after the first man and woman sinned against God, we find this promise, that God would send somebody who would crush, destroy the serpent, the devil.

And down through, and this person of course was Jesus Christ, down through the centuries, the prophets spoke again and again about this person who would come to save.

[9 : 00] And all true believers, in those times before the coming of Christ, all believers, great and small, from Abraham down to the simplest person.

All these people were saved from their sins by faith in this person, the Messiah, the promised one who would come.

The only difference today between the faith of the people then and the faith of people now, the only difference today is that the Savior has now come.

We live after Christ, we live after the cross, we live after the resurrection. But today, the believer is justified, accepted as just, in just the same way as in Old Testament times.

So, as soon as a person puts their faith, all their faith in Christ as the Savior, what happens?

[10 : 15] All the goodness, the righteousness, the perfection of Jesus Christ is credited to them.

They are, they receive his righteousness and they are declared by God to be righteous, to be good, to be perfect if you like, on the basis of what Jesus has done.

Now, the question is, when a person arrives at that point, how does his position change? And in the verses we read at the beginning, we can see that it changes in three respects.

Although there are also others. these are the three main ones which Paul underlines. Three words. Peace, access, hope.

Peace with God, free access to God, hope of the glory to come. Peace with God.

God. We must distinguish between peace with God and the peace of God. One follows on naturally from the other.

[11 : 35] But it's not possible to know the peace of God, that inner peace, from a clear conscience, if we aren't right with God first.

So we need to have peace with God before we can really know the peace of God in our hearts and souls. Because you see, there is such a thing as a false peace.

A sort of sense of well-being which is only an illusion, self-deception if you like. And this happens, people receive this false peace, when they concentrate completely on the goodness of God and the mercy of God and they ignore his justice and his holiness.

And the idea that these people have is that it is possible to be good enough to satisfy God.

In other words, for these people, what counts are my qualities as a person, my abilities, what I can do, and my efforts.

[13 : 01] And add those, those qualities, those abilities, those efforts, add those to the fact that God is good and merciful and loving and then you have your solution.

But it's a false solution. Is there anything God cannot do? Is there anything God cannot do? Many people would say, there's nothing God cannot do.

He's omnipotent, all-powerful. But there is something God cannot do. He cannot deny himself. He cannot go against his own character.

He can't stop being just and holy. This is how a false peace arises.

And this is extremely dangerous. Because a person who has this false peace imagines that God's smile is on him.

[14 : 09] But in reality, he is still under the just anger of God. And there are countless millions of people in our world who think this way.

And because they think that they are okay with God, they feel they don't need to look for him. But God says in his word, there is no peace for the wicked, for sinners, for those who do evil.

A false peace also arises when people have a false, a wrong idea about faith. Many people think that faith means that you accept certain truths with your mind.

But the problem here is that these people are counting on their faith and not on Jesus Christ and the work that he has done.

And you know, these people, these people who have a false peace, they're very interested in forgiveness but they're not so interested in living a holy and a righteous life.

[15 : 46] Those who have a false peace are actually still in a state of war. But when these people, when a person puts his or her trust in Jesus Christ, everything changes.

Why? Because the cause, the reason for this barrier, this hostility, this enmity is taken away.

The great barrier of sin no longer exists. for such a person. Why? Because Jesus has suffered the punishment in that person's place.

Jesus has suffered the punishment that I deserved. By placing my faith in him, the barrier has been removed because Jesus has paid for me.

It's not a kind of truce. You know what a truce is? When two countries are at war, at a certain point they stop fighting because they want to talk.

[16 : 59] So for a time there is a truce, a ceasefire. You know the troops of North Korea and of South Korea, North Korea and South Korea, they stopped fighting in 1953.

But officially they're still at war. They're still at war. Take the war in the Balkans which finished in 2001.

The war has finished but there is still a lot of hatred and bitterness. Many, many memories of massacres and cruelty.

Terrible things happened and people can't forget. But for the true believer in Jesus Christ things are so different because God takes away the cause of the enmity of the anger of the hostility and he promises complete forgiveness and he says in Psalm 103 verse 12 as far as the east is from the west so far he has removed our transgressions as far as the east is from the west how far is the east from the west you can't say there's no low limit to the distance God removes the cause and he gives not only that he gives a new heart a new heart so it's not just the end of hostility of enmity but that person receives a heart of love of gratitude to

God and of fellowship communion with his creator the person who has truly become right with God through faith in Christ one who's been truly put right with God can pass through periods of doubt periods of worry anxiety Satan the devil will try to rob that person of this inner peace how can the true Christian the true believer defend himself how can he overcome the devil there is one argument to which the devil has no answer and do you know what that is we find it in Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10 this vision that the apostle

[20 : 02] John received and in chapter 12 and verse 10 we read then I heard a loud voice in heaven say now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ for the accuser of our brothers the accuser of our brothers the devil who accuses them before our God day and night has been hurled down they overcame him how did they gain the victory they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony the blood of Jesus Christ is the only argument well one clear argument to which the devil has no answer now this brings us logically to our second word which is access if all the barriers all the obstacles have been removed then this means that we have access we can come before

God when Adam and Eve were banished when they were cast out of the garden of Eden God stationed he put cherubim these are mighty angels before the gate leading to the garden if you like or before the way leading to the garden with flashing swords to guard the way to the tree of life we read that in Genesis 3 24 it's as if God was saying no entrance you can't come in because you have sinned there is no place for you you cannot come in you may remember that in the tent of meeting in Old Testament times the tent of meeting known as the tabernacle God God's presence was represented in that tent and later in the temple and in that tent and later in the temple there was a holy place where only the priests were allowed to go but there was also a curtain and on the other side of the curtain there was the holy of holies the most holy place and only the high priest could go

there and only once a year for the ordinary

Jew it was not possible to come into the presence of God to even to enter that tent even to enter into the holy place and the holy of holies where God revealed himself but what do we read in Hebrews chapter 10 again what a wonderful change has taken place for Christians Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 19 therefore writes the author therefore brothers since we have confidence to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way open for us through the curtain that is his body and since we have a great high priest over the house of God let us draw near let us draw near to

God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water access entrance into the presence of God it is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which gives the believer the right to enter into God's presence this is the door that opens up to us every and every other blessing we have is based on that but without access we have nothing this is our position this is the grace in which we stand or the grace in which we stand firm verse 2 of our text chapter 5 verse 2 why do we stand firm not only because the ground on which the

Christian is standing is the truth he stands firm in the truth but also thanks to the strength that he receives from the Lord thanks also to the constant day by day mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ for him who speaks in favor of the sinner who has come to Christ and in Romans 8 34 we read this who is he that condemns who can condemn the true Christian Christ Jesus who died more than that who was raised to life is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us speaking in our favor on the basis of his work on the cross so we stand firm on the truth thanks to the strength that we are given thanks to the constant intercession of our savior but also in

[26 : 14] Hebrews 7 25 we read these lovely words he is able to save completely completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them we have a living savior a living mediator at the right hand of the father peace with God access to him and now thirdly and finally hope of the glory of God hope of the glory of God let's remember that when in the new testament we find the word hope it doesn't simply mean a desire which might or might not be fulfilled hope really means certainty about something future so the believer's hope the believer's certainty is what according to

Paul the glory the certainty the hope the certainty of the glory to come heaven heaven is the Christians eternal hope how could we rejoice in something that may never happen it's not that kind of hope someone might say well I hope to pass my exam and I'm so glad doesn't make sense does it but if somebody says I know I will pass my exam that's the cause for rejoicing so the hope of the Christian is a certainty and the certainty is that one day by the grace of God he will arrive at the glory how can we have this certainty because we know certain things the Christian knows certain! he knows he has been justified by faith he knows that that faith is not something coming from himself but is a gift of God he knows that he has peace with God through Jesus Christ he knows that he has been forgiven he knows that he is a new person God has changed his heart he knows that he has access to the throne of the king of kings to God himself he knows that Jesus is alive and is speaking in his favor interceding for him he knows he will enter the glory of heaven and if the Christian begins to doubt well there's a direct line and Romans 8 30 a kind of chain a link if you like between justification being declared just in

God's sight and glorification so Romans 8 30 says those he justified he also glorified so if you have been justified then it is certain 100% certain that one day you will be glorified there can be no doubt about it so the believer who has grasped has understood the doctrine of justification that is a Christian who knows true freedom you see so many fears and worries arise because people have misunderstood or forgotten this truth those who are truly justified declared just in the sights of God will be glorified that's the promise that we have in the scriptures brother or sister don't let anyone rob you of that certainty let us rejoice that we have peace with

God we are reconciled to our maker we have fellowship communion with the savior we are under his love care and concern we have peace with God we have access to the throne of God at any time you know there are those who are allowed to enter Buckingham palace whenever they want they are the members of the royal family and that is our position if we are Christians in him and through faith in him writes Paul in Ephesians 3 12 in him in Christ and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence no gates no guards no walls no alarms a green light come in let us rejoice in the hope of the glory of

[31 : 33] God finally we have entrance entrance into our full inheritance one day when we go to glory are you justified do you have peace with God do you know that you have free access to the throne of God almighty do you have this certainty this true hope of the future glory if you can't honestly say that this is your position what should you do well your starting point is the cross the cross where Jesus died for sinners it was there that the savior died in the place of sinners he paid the price he suffered the punishment that I deserved he suffered the punishment for all who will believe in him so

I invite you whoever you are wherever you're from to come to the Lord just as you are repent turn away from your sins cast yourself throw yourself on his mercy trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone then you will know the joy of all your sins forgiven then you will be declared just in the sight of a holy God you will know peace with God you will have daily access to God and you will be able to rejoice in the hope of the glory that awaits you Amen