

Peace with God

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[0 : 00] Father, you know how easily we forget what you teach. And you know, Father, how easily it is for us to depend upon our own self-righteousness and our own self-justification.

And Father, you know how much our self-righteousness and our self-justification causes us trouble and beats us up. We ask, Father, that in your mercy you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, that you would expose to our hearts our addiction to our self-righteousness and self-justification.

And that you would, Father, hollow us out and humble us so that we would hunger for the justification that only you give, that only you bring.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son, and our Savior. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. There used to be a fellow that I'd see at least several times a week on Rideau Street.

And he had, he was quite muscular, a bit shorter than me, quite muscular. He liked wearing in the warmer weather, even in quite cold weather, quite, you know, short T-shirts, tight T-shirts that showed off his arms and his chest and everything.

[1 : 22] And he had lots of tattoos. And he had two other things which, you know, I'll be honest with me, creeped me out a little bit. One of them was some odd tattoos on his face, which I always find a bit odd.

And the other thing is he'd obviously had some bone, or some type of implants right up here in his head. He had a shaved head, so he had two horns sewn on his head.

And so the combination of a shaved head with horns and tattoos on your face, it's a bit of an odd, it's, I never felt very, you know, comfortable with him. On one hand, I'd pray for him, and, you know, maybe I could share the gospel with him one day.

But on the other hand, I was never disappointed that I didn't talk to him, if you know what I mean. That's, you know, these are all things I say, and then I confess them in the part of the service later on. But I don't, you know, I have no idea why he did those types of things.

And I have no idea whether he was involved in devilish worship or demons or anything like that. But here's the thing, I, the longer I've been a Christian, the more I believe that every single one of us has some experience of the devil and some experience of demons.

[2 : 35] And by that, I don't mean that, I mean, maybe it might very well be one of the people that we had as a ministry intern quite a few years ago now. Before she had become a Christian, she was a witch.

And then she came to faith, and she was a ministry intern here at the church. She'd been involved in Wicca. And I don't know, maybe some of you have at one point in time been involved.

Maybe even today you're still involved with Wicca and spells. And if that's the case, we're glad you're here. But I think every single one of us, even if we don't have that type of experience of the devil, have an experience of the devil and the demons.

And we do in the sense that every single one of us struggles with despair at different times. And every single one of us struggles with accusatory thoughts at different times.

And every single one of us struggles at some time or another with thoughts or experiences or feelings that are deeply shameful. And we feel ashamed.

[3 : 42] And we feel despair. And we feel a real sense of accusation. And if you say that you've never experienced those things, I don't believe you.

In fact, I don't think anybody here would believe you. And every single one of us has those experiences. In fact, many of you, maybe some of you this morning, as you're sitting here, in fact, have really been not even struggling with them.

Because you're not struggling with them. But you can hardly even sit or stand. Because there's so many accusatory thoughts or despairing thoughts that are flooding into your mind and your heart and your will.

And I think that if we have an experience of that, we have an experience of the devil. Because that's what the devil does to us. Whether we recognize him behind it or not.

And the scripture text that we're going to look at today is a very, very powerful text to those of us who struggle with shame, who struggle with despair, and who struggle with accusatory thoughts.

[4 : 48] So it would be a great help to me. And it would be a great help to yourself if you have a Bible, if you open your Bible to Romans chapter 5. We're preaching through the book of Romans. And today we're looking at Romans 5, verses 1 to 11.

And it's a very, very powerful text that speaks to those of us who struggle. And we all struggle at some time or another with despair, with accusatory thoughts, and just feelings of profound feelings of guilt and unworthiness.

It's a powerful, powerful text that speaks directly to those experiences. And it begins like this. Romans chapter 5.

I'm reading from the English Standard Version. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Actually, before we go any further, you know what we're going to do? Andrew, could you put that up on the screen? And we're going to read it all together. Romans 5.

[5 : 52] We're going to read it in a moment. And in fact, just if you're wondering, remember last week I asked you just to pray for me because I'm having more problems preaching on the book of Romans than any other book that I've ever preached on.

And it's such a deep book. And every week, the more I study it, the more I just realize how deep and profound it is. And I just feel so unworthy every Sunday to try to even remotely unpack the depths and the riches of this book.

So please pray for me. And I was going to come up with four points. You know, some preachers preach three-point sermons. John Stott knew a lot about preaching. His sermons always had four points. And I was going to do four points.

And then I realized that these, there's four. Why on earth would I want you to remember my words when you could remember the Bible? And so we're just going to read this text.

We're going to read it several times today because my four points are just the four basic phrases in these two verses. And so could you all read this with me? Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[7 : 03] Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

It's a really, really funny verse because it has two beginnings. Notice that, therefore and since. You know, usually you'll just have therefore or since, but it actually has two. It's actually one of the simple ways that the text wants us to understand that the very next thing that it says is very, very, very, very important.

Therefore, since. And that the first thing that goes directly to our experience of accusation, despair, profound feelings of guilt, and profound feelings of shame, even if you've been a Christian for many, many years and you still struggle with these things, is that very first phrase.

Did you notice what it says? It says, therefore, since we have been justified by faith. That's the first thing. In fact, in many ways, all I want to try to do this morning is try to help you to understand that phrase and the three consequences that the Bible tells us follow as we're gripped with this understanding that, therefore, since, we have been justified.

We have been justified by faith. What justified means is that, you know, if I told, I think I shared with you last week, if I told you, you know, after the service, everybody who came has a PhD, that would just be completely and utterly absurd for me to tell you that you all have PhDs just because you came to a church service.

[8 : 45] I could say that, but I don't have the power or authority to make that type of declaration for you. It would be sort of like, you know, some people, you know, say, we just need a couple million dollars to buy a building, and I say, you know, maybe you'll give us that money, and some people will say, well, I could give you a check, I could write you a check, but it's going to bounce.

Anybody can write a check, but not everybody can write checks that are going to bounce. And what this simple phrase is telling us, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, it wants us, it's just following what Paul has just said beforehand, and it's trying to help us to understand what Jesus accomplishes for us on the cross.

And it's trying to help us to understand that because of what Jesus accomplishes for us when he dies upon the cross, that if we receive that with open hands, then God himself makes an authoritative, powerful declaration that you are now right with him.

That what Paul has been trying to explain in the parts of the Bible up until now is that Jesus dying upon the cross is God's provision for human beings so that human beings can be right with him.

And when we put our faith in Jesus, God speaks over even the worst person that he says to you and me, you are justified.

[10 : 27] And what that means is that I am declaring, I have the authority, and I have the power, and I have the right to make these declarations. And because you have received what Jesus did for you on the cross, I declare that you are now right with me.

And that's what Paul wants to remind us by saying, therefore, since we have been justified by faith. But some of you might be saying, George, okay, that just sounds really, really, really nice.

But gosh, George, if you could just, you know, if I could actually just have the courage to talk to you really honestly, if you just knew how many times I either don't come to church or I can barely come to church because I'm so filled with accusatory thoughts, if you just realized, George, if God realized how hard it is for me to sit in a church when I'm just filled with shame, if you realize, George, how hard it was for me, I'm not sure that sounds all very nice, George, but it doesn't really deal anything at all with these very, very powerful experiences of accusation and guilt that I struggle with.

Like, how, that sounds really good, but I don't know if that can actually be true for me. It's true when I'm feeling good, but it's not true a lot of the time.

Well, you know, it's really interesting because what Paul does here, the therefore sins, he sort of is looking at the back, but he anticipates our objection like that in the part that comes just a little bit after this.

[12 : 14] I don't know if you noticed it or remembered it when Andrea was reading. If you look in your Bibles, look what Paul says in verses 6 and following. He says, for while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

What is this text saying? This text, you see, the problem I have when I'm getting overwhelmed with guilt and when I'm getting overwhelmed with shame and when I'm getting overwhelmed with accusatory thoughts is I start to actually, it's as if, you know, I said a couple of weeks ago that the last idol that dies in a Christian's life is the idol of self-righteousness and the idol of self-justification.

And it's as if I somehow believe that God looked at me and when he looked at me, he said, woe is George ever good. Look at all the good things George does.

You know, look at those times he's faithful to his wife. Look at those times he's good with his kids. Look at those times. Whoa, he visited somebody. Whoa. And so, I'm just going to do something that's going to top up George's goodness because George's goodness is this high and I don't know, I need him to be this high to get to heaven and so I'm just going to top up George's goodness.

[13 : 49] And that's sort of what goes on in our souls and in our thoughts when it, but what this text is saying is that God didn't look around at the good church people.

and he didn't look around and see all the successful people and he didn't look around and see all the people who are really smart and could remember complicated theological systems and remember Bible verses.

He looked down and what did he see? He saw weak people and he saw ungodly people and he saw sinful people and he saw unrighteous people and he didn't die for the good people who just needed something to top up their goodness.

He died for weak people like you and me, for ungodly people like you and me, for sinful people like you and me, for unrighteous people like you and me.

That's who he died for. That's who he declares right with himself when we put our faith and trust in Jesus. Those people.

[14 : 55] That's who he's referring to. Not the success. As I've been studying Romans, I now increasingly understand all that old hymnody that talks about how our righteous acts are like filthy rags.

And until I started to study Romans, I didn't really, it didn't really grip me how deeply my idolatry and our idolatry to self-righteousness and self-justification robs us from thinking about who it was that Christ died for.

And the wonderful thing as I've shared before about this word justified justified is that this word justified means that right now I know when I put my faith and trust in Jesus what God's final word is about me.

I don't know if Jesus is going to come back in five minutes. I don't know if I'm going to die in my drive home. I don't know if I'm going to live another 50 years. Because I don't know the future.

But I don't know the future, but I can know one thing about the future. that when I put my faith and trust in Jesus, God declares me.

[16 : 08] He has the authority. He has the power. And He declares me right with Himself because I have put my faith and trust in Him. And so I can now, today, know God's final word about me that will be spoken in the last day at the final judgment.

And you can know that word too. And God's word and His final judgment trumps the judgment made by teachers, the judgment made by governments, the judgments made about your social class or your education or your accomplishments.

It trumps the judgment made by wives and husbands and fathers and children and relatives and sports coaches. God's judgment trumps every judgment like that.

And that's what God wants us to. That's why it says, therefore, since we have been justified by faith. In fact, it even goes beyond this and it even actually tries to, Paul tries to, to make us to understand because he knows how the devil can say, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's all right.

But what about those times when you just said, I know God told me to do this, but I don't want to do this. And you might even resent that God has told you certain things to do. It might just make you angry at God and as soon as you say, well, what about justified by faith and all that, and then, excuse me, the devil brings all these times where we've actually been an enmity to God into our minds and God anticipates that in giving us an image of what his son did for us on the cross.

[17 : 58] I like reading, you know, thriller types books and some of the books will talk about, you know, war and stuff like that and I like reading novels like that and there's a very, very common phrase in a lot of those books.

Maybe somebody's coming to go a very, very difficult mission or they have to protect a very, very different, a very, very difficult place and one of the other soldiers, one of the soldiers asks another soldier, are you willing to die for this?

And the soldier will say, I'm not going to do this so I'll die for my country. I'm doing this so that the other guys will die for their country. That's why I'm trained.

I'm not trained to die for my country. I'm trained to be so effective at killing that the enemy will die for their cause. And that's just how we understand how it is in war.

But did you notice not only in verses 6 to 8 that reminds us that when God says, therefore, since we have been justified by faith and justified means that we put our faith and trust in Jesus and what he's accomplished for us on the cross and then God who has the authority and the power to make a declaration declares us to be right with himself, he does it not only for weak, ungodly, sinful people, he does it for people who were his enemies.

[19 : 23] He does it for you and me. Did you notice that? Look at what it says in verses 9 and 10. Actually, we'll go up to verse 8. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And then notice again, it's just so reverses it, but the double thing to make sure we notice, since therefore we have blood, justified by the fact that he died, he shed his blood for us.

It's a concrete image to make us see that we're not just talking about some type of imaginary story, we're talking about the fact that if you went back in a time machine, you would see Jesus, the blood coming from his wounds in his head, from the thorns that were on his brow, and you would see the blood dripping from his hands and his feet, and you would see the blood dripping and pooling on the ground from the whips that he had on the back, and you would see that blood dripping, and then you would see that the blood no longer drips because he's dead.

There's that final few moments, but then the blood, heart starts pumping, he's died, and it's a powerful, a powerful, grounded image of death.

for those of you who think in pictures, and images are really important, it's a text speaking directly to you to think of the blood, and so in verse 9, it says, since therefore we have now been justified by his blood, by his death, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God, for if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

[21 : 13] More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. And here the Bible is giving us this other image of what it is that Jesus, as he dies upon the cross, and that what it is that he accomplishes for us on the cross.

And we've already seen different images that all of the anger and the wrath that we maybe would labor under, an image to understand what Jesus accomplishes for us on the cross, is that in the cross, as Jesus dies for us, he swallows all the wrath and all the anger that we could possibly fear or think or imagine or that could be claimed against us, that he in his death swallows that wrath against us.

And we've already seen in the Bible that on the cross, that all of the things that make us enslaved, that the things that we are slaved to in terms of how other people think about us, our slavery to trying to make ourselves righteous, our slavery to making ourselves think that we can justify ourselves, our slavery to things like debt or money or sex or having things be perfect and all of the things that we are slaved to, that Jesus on his death is the one who swallows those things and he is our great redeemer.

And we've seen the image for those of us who struggle with money and we worry about how we're going to pay those bills. And the Bible has given us this image that imagine every single debt that is ever possibly owed by you that you could never pay, that would completely and utterly crush you, that on the cross, Jesus deals with all of those debts for you.

And now we see in this language of reconciliation the language of friendship. We see the image of two really, really good friends sitting in Tim Hortons or sitting in Starbucks or sitting on somebody's porch, maybe in the spring or the fall and you're on the swing and you're just talking and you're just really, really close and you're pouring your hearts out and it's a beautiful day and you're completely and utterly just at one with this person and you're both sharing your heart and that's the image here.

[23 : 33] That it's the image of, it's the image of those of us who worry about, it's telling us that there's been many times in our lives that we have to understand that we have made, that we are at enmity with God.

But God has never been at enmity with you and me. He sees our rage against Him when He impinges upon our life and His response was just, I know you find me your enemy.

I know that in your heart of hearts there are times that you would like to speak just like those soldiers do in the movies and books that are popular in your culture, that you go into battle not so that you will die for your country but so that God will die.

Somebody else will die. And I know that's what in your heart of hearts you sometimes think and experience and it was while you were thinking this that I died upon the cross for you.

You might view me as your enemy, He says to you and me, but I do not view you as my enemy. And I will die upon the cross so that on the cross we see God dealing with all that has kept us at enmity from God.

[25 : 00] It's all dealt with by Jesus when He dies upon the cross. And Paul is saying, just think for a second, if God knew that we were at enmity with Him and still Jesus died upon the cross for us while we were enemies, imagine how He'll treat us now that Jesus has risen from the dead and dealt with all of our enmity against God.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith. Could we all just say this whole Scripture text together?

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Some of you might say, okay, George, that's... I don't know if it's...

I don't know if I... I don't know if I've really grasped that before. That I don't have to worry about... I don't have to worry about...

[26 : 22] about the accusatory thoughts. that those aren't coming from God because all of the accusations were dealt with by Jesus.

All of my sense of indebtedness and obligation and being crushed by obligation has been dealt with by Jesus. All of the enmity and rage I sometimes have felt that God or other people, part of His creation, has been dealt with by Jesus.

All of the anger has been dealt with. All of the things that enslave me and so make me feel with guilt have been dealt with by Jesus and the cross.

And that God, seeing all of that and knowing all of that, He sent Jesus to die for me when I was weak and ungodly and a sinner. But I don't feel it.

I don't feel it. That's a really powerful and that's a very, very common thing. And in fact, if you look at that second thing, the second point up there, it wants to say that because we have, we've been justified by faith, one of the three consequences is that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, but we don't feel it.

[27 : 40] In fact, here are some of our religious traditions. The devil uses them to fool us. Those of you who've been growing up in reformed traditions, the devil has used the doctrine of election to cause great mischief for those of you who've grown up in reformed traditions.

Because you have this sense that God will only, you don't think you're part of the elect because the fact of the matter is is you find church boring.

Or on Sunday afternoons, you'd rather not go off and witness to the poor or pack things for the poor. What you'd really like to do on Sunday morning is sit down with a couple of beers and a big bag of chips and watch football all afternoon.

You don't feel like you're part of the elect. And a choice of going to a prayer meeting on a Thursday night or going out to have a beer with your buddies. In the bar, you'd always choose beer with your buddies.

And so therefore, you're not part of the elect because you don't feel like you're part of the elect. The devil has used that doctrine in reformed churches to cause great lack of confidence and get you to focus on all the wrong things.

[28 : 59] I'm going to tell you to forget about election. Like, it's almost as if it's one of those things that you have to just completely and utterly ignore. Why? Because the Bible doesn't say, for those of you, Jesus died upon the cross for those who like to go to church on Sunday mornings naturally and those who naturally like to pack shoeboxes for the poor on the afternoons and those who naturally would much rather listen to a Matt Chandler pod talk than watch an NFL football game.

And I've only died. No, he dies for the weak, ungodly, unrighteous, sinful people. That's who he died for. And it's not a matter of trying to work up some type of feeling of election or some type of accomplishment in your moral accomplishment in your life so you can think you're elect that now he accepts you.

Forget about all of that. It's all wrong. wrong. You put your faith and trust in Jesus as a weak, ungodly, sinful person.

Maybe as a person with next to no interest in spiritual things, but you put your faith and trust in Jesus and he deals with everything on the cross.

He declares you right with himself. And some of us, we're not from that doctrine. And some of us are saying, gosh, George, I don't even know what this doctrine of election is. We're actually going to talk about it in a couple of weeks in Romans.

[30 : 27] But for many of us who are from more Wesleyan or Pentecostal churches, we have a different problem. And the devil has used an emphasis upon emotion or certain experiences to make us think that we aren't loved by him.

That, you know, we just don't feel our salvation or, you know, we just don't feel the joy of the Lord and we just don't have these experiences like we used to.

And the devil uses this to make us think, oh, if you're really a Christian, you'll have these regular, profound experiences of being convicted by sin or you'll have these regular experiences of being profoundly close to God or you'll have this final triumph over temptation and sin because if you're a real Christian, you will no longer have a problem with pornography.

If you're a real Christian, you will no longer have these problems with debt. If you're a real Christian, you will no longer have these problems of lack of forgiveness or of anger. If you're a real Christian, you have some type of breakthrough on these types of things connected with an emotion.

And I'm going to tell you that the Bible is saying to forget all of that. Forget all of that. It's a lie from the devil.

[31 : 52] Therefore, we have been justified by faith. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible's description of peace is something objective, not something subjective.

I'll give you an example. I have no fear of flying. I know this is going to sound a bit crazy, but I actually think, you know when they're going through all that thing up at the front at the plane or the little thing if you've flown lately about what happens in the event of an emergency?

Well, first of all, if it was me, I would just say if there's going to be an emergency, that's when you should actually pray. Because, you know what, you're about to meet your maker. And I actually think that dying in a plane crash is actually a pretty good way to go.

That it would be pretty quick. I know I'm weird, but I think that if I'm going to die, a plane crash is pretty good. Or a plane accident, you know, all of a sudden, I don't know, a bomb goes off, you just die.

Like, you know, one minute you're, I don't know, watching Ant-Man on the screen, and the next minute, you're in the throne room of God. I don't know. I mean, it would be really hard for my wife and kids, but, you know, it wouldn't be that bad for me.

[33 : 11] But I know that some people have a terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible fear of flying. And I've sometimes sat beside people that you didn't realize how long somebody could have white knuckles until you've sat beside some people.

But here's the thing. My confidence in the plane or another person's nervousness of the plane my peace or the other person's peace is actually completely and utterly irrelevant to whether or not the plane crashes.

Isn't it? Completely and utterly irrelevant. What matters is the competency of the plane and the pilot. And what is here Paul has been talking about is that you want to have peace with God.

That's an objective thing. Because of what Jesus has done for you on the cross, when you accept that in faith, you realize that you have to trust in Jesus to make you right with himself. God objectively accomplishes something for you.

And he sure wishes you had more times of peace where you had trust and confidence in it. But whether you have feelings of peace or whether you don't are irrelevant to the reality of the situation.

[34 : 25] In fact, that's one of the interesting things if you just sort of jump down a little bit to verses 3 and 4 and 5, it helps you to understand something about what he says there.

If you know down there, because Paul in a moment is going to talk about, look, verse 3, do you suppose, oh man, sorry, I should read the right chapter, that helps, yes. Verse 3 over here, and not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

And I'm not going to really talk very much today about how it is that the peace in all deals with suffering. We're going to talk about that again in a couple of weeks when we get into Romans 8, a far more profound reflection upon suffering in the gospel.

But you'll notice here that what the Bible is saying is that there's two witnesses that we can call out to in terms of our feelings that bear witness to the fact that we have been justified by what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

The first witness is in a sense an objective witness. We should just look at the cross and think about it. Jesus died in history.

[35 : 47] He lived in history. He died in history. The tomb in history was empty and is empty. And he rose again from the dead.

And we can just think about the fact that on the cross Jesus died and paid for all that keeps us from God and he did it while I was weak. He did it while I was ungodly.

He did it while I was a sinner. He did it while I was his enemy. He did it while I was in debt. And he did it for me. And I can think about it. And I can remember it.

That's one of the reasons why it's so important for Christians to hear the gospel time and time and time again. But the other witness is Jesus, God doesn't just give us an external, objective witness, but he does and it's very precious.

He also pours out the Holy Spirit upon his children. There's an inner witness of the Holy Spirit that we maybe do not feel all of the time.

[36 : 48] Maybe we only feel at some time. But I'm going to tell you brothers and sisters, if you've given your life to Jesus, it is a good thing to ask the Father to pour out his Holy Spirit upon you.

It is a good thing to ask him to pour out his Holy Spirit upon you that you might know his love for you. That you might dwell and rest in his love for you. And so when it says here, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, he's talking about something objective.

The second thing, I know my time is starting to come to an end, but it's the next thing that for me personally has meant the most to me this week. Just for me personally as I've reflected upon it.

It sounds, it's a really, it's the hardest part to say, but actually, let's put it out, can we all say this whole verse together and then I'll point out to you which is the part that's meant the most to me this week. Can we say it again?

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

[38 : 02] Personally, what's really struck me this week is the third part. we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

And it, I have to confess when I first saw it, it didn't jump out at me. But it's, remember, Paul is here telling us three different consequences, three things for us to understand about the benefits of the fact that we've been justified by what God has done for us on the cross in the person of Jesus.

and one of these consequences is that as I stand here before you now, on one hand, I stand before you in the Ottawa Little Theatre, but on the other hand, objectively, I stand in the throne room of God in his gracious presence.

And so does the weakest Christian. So does the most guilt-ridden Christian. The most ignorant Christian.

So does the Christian who has been most beat up. That when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, the image here is, and it's a very, very powerful image, because if you think about it for a second, how could I dwell with the Queen?

[39 : 20] I mean, that would be impossible. That could only happen if somebody who knew the Queen and the Queen loved was to say, George, come and meet the Queen. And in fact, say, not only Queen Elizabeth, George needs a place to stay.

And he's my buddy. He's my friend. I like him. You're going to like him too, Queen Elizabeth. Can he stay with you? He's going to stay with me. We're going to bunk together in your house.

Eat at your table. And we wouldn't expect that we could do that to the Queen by ourselves, but that's in a sense what the Bible is saying that Jesus does for us. When we put our faith and trust in him, it's as if Jesus takes us and puts his arm around your shoulders and ushers you into the very presence of God.

And until you see God face to face, you are always in the throne room of God. I mean, part of the thing that really struck me this week is that really, right now, God is basically only seen through his created order.

Maybe at times we have glimpses of glory and have glimpses of his presence. And 2 Corinthians reminds us that these are all just the smallest, slightest tastes of an eventual glory that will fill us, that if we were to experience it now in our fallen bodies would unmake us.

[40 : 48] But this is our Father's world. The planet Earth is always in the throne room of God. I don't go anywhere on this planet without being in the throne room of God.

And that's how I am to understand how I live in the world. How, if you're a civil servant, how you serve as a civil servant. Sure, on one hand, you're in cubicle land, but really, you are in the throne room of God in his presence.

Can you just say this verse with me one final time? Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through him, we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. By the way, I forgot to mention that in the original language, this idea of standing is permanent residence, permanent, proper place.

Just this final benefit. Do you know this? That we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. One of the things that the Bible wants us to have is a certain hope. A certain hope that God's final word has been spoken about you.

[42 : 04] A hope that that final word has been spoken about you and that even though on one hand, if you live long enough, your body's just going to get weak, it will no longer be strong.

We always, as the Bible says, hold this treasure in jars of clay. But the final word about us will be to enter into God's glory.

And the final word about us that we can know today is that God is making us, remaking us in his image so that ordinary human beings like us can dwell in his glory and reflect his glory throughout the entire created order.

and the witness of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to grant us that type of not presumptuous hope but confident hope. The reason that we can take risks of looking at what's going on in our lives, the reason that we can take risks to go to faraway places to share the gospel, the reason that we can take risks in our places of work that we stand for those things that are right and that are true and that we bear witness to Jesus, the reason that we can have all of these types of stands is that the more that we have this sense that God's final word has already been spoken about us, that he's not weighing our merits but he's pardoned our offenses as the gospel grips us more and more and more.

It allows us to take risks. It allows us to look at ourselves. It allows us to confront our shame and confront our guilt and confront our wrongdoing.

[43 : 40] I'll just ask you to stand for a moment. Andrew, could you put the Romans 1 text up please? Every week, if you're a guest, you don't know this, but every week we've been saying Romans 1, 16 to 17.

It's the text at the beginning of the book of Romans that basically summarizes the whole message of the book of Romans. And actually, why don't we just say it together and then I'll say a final thing before we pray.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.

As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. See, the text is telling us that God acts with power to make us right with himself.

and we enter into this power by faith. And the Christian life goes from faith to faith, from strength to strength. It's shared from my faith to you so that you might have faith.

[44 : 47] That's how it's shared and that's how it's grown. And so, if you this morning have never put your faith and trust in Jesus, there is no better time than today to call out to him.

He died for people who don't like church. He died for people who'd rather make lots of money than read the Bible. He died for people who'd rather spend time in a bar than in a church.

He died for ordinary people like you and me. And for those of you who've grown up in church homes, I just want to tell you the final idol to die is self-righteousness and self-justification.

And you've got to realize that he didn't die because you're good. He died knowing who you are to the depths of your spirit and still he died for you to make you right with him when you put your faith and trust in him and there's no better time than today to do that.

Call out to him and ask that that text of scripture be the story of your life. And for the rest of us, we're going to just pray that God would make us, that he would grip us with this teaching of what Jesus accomplishes for us on the cross.

[46 : 00] Let's pray. Father, I ask that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon those who have not yet come to a faith in Jesus.

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon them. Father, silence the devil and whatever he's saying about how it's going to wreck their lives or screw up their lives.

Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon them to bring them to a point of release that they lay down their weapons and they lay down, they just open their arms and that they call out to you that Jesus would be their Savior.

Father, I ask that your Holy Spirit would fall upon those in that struggle and that wrestle right now. Father, for those of us who have been kept far from you because we think we need an experience or we think that we need to prove that we're really spiritual and that we're elect, Father, we ask that you would silence the evil one in those things and that you would help people like that turn their hearts to Jesus and put their arms out and trust that you do all that's needed to make them right with you.

And Father, for all of us who are here, help us to be gripped with the gospel. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and make us disciples of Jesus gripped by the gospel who are living for your glory.

[47 : 18] And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.