

Romans 1:16–17 "What Makes Me Right With God?"

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[0 : 00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Let's just bow our heads in prayer, please. Father, we ask that you would gently but powerfully pour out the Holy Spirit upon us and open our hearts to know Jesus more and more and more, to trust Him more and more and more, to worship Him more and more and more. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

So, you might not all have heard of Scott Adams, but you've probably all heard of the Dilbert cartoons. And Scott Adams was the guy who wrote them. And you probably have heard that he died, I think, within the last week or so. But what you might not know is that in Christian internet circles, he's caused a lot of conversation. Because about a week, I think, before he died, he did a video.

[2 : 17] And in the video, he said, I know I'm going to die, like within the next week. And for many years, I've had Christian friends who've tried to tell me that I need to give my life to Jesus. I need to trust Him as my Lord and Savior. Now, he was an agnostic. And he said, you know, just by the way, I was never bothered by my Christian friends trying to get me to convert. He said, it just showed to me that they believed it was true. And I can respect that. However, he said, now I'm probably a week away from death. And I've done some calculations. I don't know if he said the word calculations, but it was something like that. He said, you know, I've come to realize, if I give my life to Jesus, or I don't know if, no, if I convert, and Christianity is not true, then I'll just die.

On the other hand, if I convert and die, I spend eternity with Him. He didn't mention hell, but he just mentioned that other thing about eternity with Him. So he said, I've just come to realize this is a good bet. And so I want to tell people that not, I haven't done it yet, but within the next couple of days, while I still am of sound mind, I am going to convert to Christianity. And then a little bit after his death, his first ex-wife, she read a statement that he written. And I don't have the words precisely correct. But he said, I want everybody to know that I am of sound mind, not of sound body, but of sound mind. And I believe that Jesus Christ is my Savior and Lord, and I look forward to spending eternity with him. She read that after he had died. So as you can well imagine, this has caused a lot of conversation in Christian circles as to what exactly had happened. Did he become a Christian? It touches on a whole pile of things, well, misperceptions and doubts and worries and all that Christians have themselves and that the outside world looks in. Because on one hand, you know, so, you know, obviously, obviously, I have no idea what happened exactly. I mean, I know what he said he did and whether, you know, the rest of that's all in God's hands, and that's completely fine. That's the way it should be, because I'm not God. But, you know, is it just that God wants you to say a certain phrase the right way? And if you say the certain phrase the right way, you get a little tick mark, and now automatically you're guaranteed to heaven. And if you don't say the right things, you get a tick mark on a different part of the form, and it means

you're not going to go to heaven. Is that what faith is? A lot of Christians struggle with this, by the way, without necessarily knowing it. Throughout the years, as those of you who come to the church know, at different times, I'll suggest that for those of you who are adults and have either never been a Christian or wandered far from the Christian faith, that now is a good time for you to give your life to Christ. And sometimes I give a bit of a model prayer, and it's been a case over the years where after that, some Christian has come to me and said, George, that wasn't the right prayer because you missed this word. I'm not making this up. Very sincere. They're really trying to be very helpful, you know, whatever that word happens to be. I can't remember. I just thank them very much and then, you know, move on. But is it just trying to get the right phrase? Is Christianity completely dependent upon, like, what is faith? Like, most people will hear, at least if you become familiar with Protestant Christianity, of which I am a Protestant, is that you have to, you know, believe in Jesus. And is believing the same as having faith in him? Is it like passing a theology test? Is it having a particular emotion? Like, what on earth is it? And the text that we're going to look at today begins to get us into what it is and what it isn't in a way which is going to be very helpful for Christians and those outside the Christian faith at the same time to see what's being asked and what's not being asked, what's involved with this faith in Jesus or believing in Jesus. So if you have your Bibles, I invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 1, verses 16 and 17. We're just looking at two verses. They're very packed verses, but we're just looking at two verses. Romans chapter 1, verses 16 and 17. If you're using this, it's on page 8. And I'll read the whole text very, very brief. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Pagan is a better word there, really. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. Some translations say from faith to faith. Some say from faith to first to last. There's different ways to try to translate the original language, all basically getting at the same idea. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written. And now he quotes Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 4. The righteous shall live by faith. And so the way the book of Romans is structured is the first 15 verses is sort of the opening to the letter. So there's a very long extended greeting to the people in Rome whom he's never met. And then he gives them a few of his travel plans.

And now if this was an academic article, this is the praesi. This is the abstract at the beginning of the article that explains basically what's going to go on in the rest of the book. These two verses, that's why we're just looking at two verses today.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek or the pagan. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. So first point, if you could put it up, Claire, that would be helpful. The gospel is a message from God about Jesus that comes in his power to save. That's sort of the first idea which is being communicated here.

[8 : 26] Earlier on in the letter, we're told that the gospel is a message from God, a declaration of some victory that God has won. It's a message of victory centered on the person and work of Jesus.

And earlier on, he did imply that the right response to this would be faith as well. And so this is a message from God about Jesus that comes in his power to save. And salvation is the big idea. And underneath that big idea, the book of Romans is going to break it into different moments and aspects and everything. Just sort of remember the image of the Harry Potter tents. The tent seems small on the outside. You get into the tent, and you realize that inside the tent is bigger than outside the tent. And then just imagine that you go into rooms in there, and inside of the room is bigger than the outside of the room.

And that's what it's going to be. Salvation looks like a very small idea, but once you get into it, it's way bigger than you realize. And in the ancient world, and even in our days, but in the ancient world, it had two fundamental ideas involved with salvation. And once you hear them, you realize how a lot of the things that go on in the gospels, the records of what Jesus did, illustrate these two ideas. And the first idea is that it's deliverance from a certain, deliverance from deadly peril into secure safety. Deliverance from deadly peril into secure safety.

So the image there would be that you're out on a boat, and all of a sudden a storm comes in, and you're no sea person or boat person, and the waves are coming up, and the water, it's the Atlantic, northern Atlantic, and the water's really cold. And even with life jackets, you know, the water will kill you within a minute or two of hypothermia. And the water's coming into the boat, water's coming into the boat, you absolutely are going to die. And all of a sudden you hear a helicopter, helicopter,

and you see a search and rescue helicopter, and some guy or gal dropping down from the helicopter and grabbing you, and he has, or she has saved you, delivered you from certain peril, of the certain peril of death. The other image is deliverance from certain death by illness into secure health. It would be as if, let's say you could, somebody from the future comes back in time, and in the future, they've completely and utterly cured cancer, and you are, you're with your loved one, and, or like Scott Adams, and he's dying of cancer, and he only has a day or two to live, and that person who's come back from the future has the pill or the injection, the injected in him a day before he dies, and he's not just, not dying of cancer, he's restored to full health. That's the idea behind this ancient word. So if you think about it, you can see how many times Jesus is healing, it's an image of salvation, and the times he's in water with a boat with a storm, that's another image, set of images in the Gospels of salvation. And, and so, oh, and sorry, so here's a practical, point before we go any further. This is a really important point for Christians to get their minds around. So I, I said that the, what is it, the Gospel is a message from God about Jesus that comes in his power to save. So we might say, well, okay, if somebody was to tell others about Jesus, who's most likely to be successful? And so maybe, first of all, we do a bit of a poll of each other, and we pick the persons who's the most confident, and we pick the person who's the least confident. And then we might say, well, obviously the person who's most confident is going to be more successful at sharing the

Gospel than the person who's least confident. And then we might say, okay, what about persuasiveness? Who's the most persuasive and who's the least? And, and, and we might, after thinking about, okay, we pick the person, well, that person's obviously going to be better at sharing the Gospel than the least persuasive one, because that's just how it works. But that's completely wrong.

[12:41] The Gospel isn't a message about, from God, about Jesus that comes in your power, but in his power. The actual message comes with a power from God. It's completely and utterly independent of however persuasive you or I might be, however confident you or I might be. It might be very much the faltering eyes looking at the ground, few words of quoting something in the Bible and how God loves you and you should give your life to Jesus because he died to save you, that touches that person's heart and to give their lives to Christ. It's the message that has the power, not the send, not the deliverer who has the power. So never feel that you can't tell another person about Jesus because you lack confidence, persuasiveness, and theological acumen. It's his power, not mine.

Now, this leads to a bit of a question, though. Okay, well, okay, George, I'm still not, okay, George, look at those texts again, verse 16, 17, for I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation. Okay, you've sort of, I have questions about that, but that's the idea. And it's for everyone who believes, to the Jew first, then also to the pagan, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. Now, I'm a little bit confused. So, George, are you saying that first you believe and then you have faith? faith? Or do you have faith and then you believe? Or is belief, you can have belief without faith? Or do you have faith without belief? Or, and what are those things, George? And like, you know, is it like an idea? Is it being able to say the right sentence like Scott Adams did? Is it a theological test? Is it emotions? Is it willpower? You know, all of those things I don't think I'm very good at. I'm not good at keeping ideas very straight in my mind. And you know what the heck, George? Like, if it's all God's power, then why doesn't he just do it? Like, why do I have to do something? Like, why doesn't his power just come? Like, I don't understand, George. It doesn't make any sense. Well, those are good questions.

And you might or might not realize this, but many Christians struggle with what exactly faith is and belief is. We often connect it to the people who seem to be most emotional. And if we're like me, I'm not like that. I mean, I am actually, I'm sort of like a, one of the things I say at weddings, it's often at weddings, the guy who cries, not the woman. And that's because I think women and emotions are like on dimmer switches. They can get a bit, you know, brighter and then a bit softer. And men are often like on-off switches. They either keep all their emotions contained or they lose it. Anyway, that's a whole, I'm more that they keep them contained or lose it type of guy. That's just the way I am. Some of you would say miswired as opposed to wired. So like what on earth is going on there about all of this? Like what exactly is faith? And by the way, so the rest of the book of Romans is going to be developing this, it's actually a really important idea. The word for faith is used,

Paul uses it in the New Testament 140 times. And he uses it as a verb 54 times in all of his writings. And in the book of Romans alone, the word faith or belief is used 40 times as a noun and 21 times as a verb.

[16 : 35] So the first thing is there is no difference between the word, it's the same word in Greek, pistis. And so what that means is even in this four little, these two verses, it appears four times. Like look at it again. For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who pistis, to the Jew first and also to the pagan. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from pistis for pistis. As it is written, the righteous shall live by pistis. So why do they use different words? Well, they use different words because on one hand it's a very, very simple idea, but it does have different aspects. If you could put up the second point, that would be very helpful, Claire.

In the Bible, faith is about receiving a person into yourself, into your life. It involves acknowledging, consenting, receiving, and giving permission. In the Bible, faith is about receiving a person into yourself. It involves acknowledging, consenting, receiving, and giving permission.

So it's a person-to-person word. It's not a person-to-idea word. It's not a person-to-a-thing word in the Bible. It's a person-to-person word. And in terms of the basic idea of receiving, if you go back later on and read the classic text for Christmas, which is John 1, 1 to 14, you'll see that it says about how you have to believe in him. And it says, for all who believed in him, who received him. You see in John's gospel, Jesus connects believing, or pistis, because it's the same word, with receiving. Receiving a person into your life. And this, by the way, is something that any human being can do. I mean, it's, there's really, it's a funny thing. I don't know how many of you are familiar with David Woods. And he's a source of a lot of controversy amongst Christians because of his very, I don't know what you want to, when you call it, he's very outspoken. He's probably the major English-speaking apologist against Islam. And people either love him or hate him. But he is, I'm not making this up. He is literally a diagnosed sociopath who spent time in jail because he decided on a whim to try to bludgeon his father to death with a hammer.

And while he was in jail, he became a Christian. And he is married, and he is the dad. He eventually, after he became a Christian, he got out of jail, he married and had four kids. The question is, how can a sociopath get married? Well, even a sociopath can open up their lives to another person. Two-year-olds can do it. Down syndrome can do it. Open yourself up to the other.

[19 : 48] And if you think about it, when you open yourself up to the other, there's also a bit of an expectation that they will open themselves up to you. That it's mutual. And so part of the gospel message is, God has said, in the person of Jesus, I have demonstrated beyond all shadow of a doubt to anybody who wants to listen, that I am completely and utterly willing to open myself up to you.

The question is, will you open yourself up to me? There's a type of mutual indwelling that goes on with receiving.

And so, you know, within this, what was the thing I said in the Bible? Faith is about receiving a person into yourself. It involves acknowledging, consenting, receiving, and giving permission. It would be a little bit as if, you know, I don't know. There could be a YouTube, you know, an Instagram influencer, social media influencer that, you know, influences like 20 million people, and I wouldn't have the vaguest idea who they are. So, you know, one day, I don't know, I'm at a coffee shop, and I'm reading a book, and they're reading a book, and I sort of look over at their book, and they look over at my book, and then they see that I'm writing on paper, and, you know, they're writing on paper, and, you know, before you know it, we have, I say a couple of things, and the other person doesn't grunt, and, you know, if they just grunt and ignore you, then it goes nowhere, right? But they say something back, and before you know it, you have a conversation, before you know it, you're friends. And then later on, I find out, good grief, that person has, like, 20 million followers, right? There's a bit of an acknowledgement now as to who exactly it is who's decided to become your friend. And so that's part of the receiving, is an acknowledgement of who the other is. It's acknowledging that this is Jesus. He is the Savior, the Lord, God, the Son of God. A two-year-old might not know all of what that means. That's part of growing up, that you acknowledge more and more who they are. And it's all about consenting. Here, the great image of is of when the angel Gabriel comes to Mary, and it isn't as if God says, sends Gabriel to Mary and says,

Mary, I have a message from God. Sucks to be you. He's going to make the zygote in your womb right now, and once again, sucks to be you. No, that's not the message.

[22 : 11] He says, God has chosen you for this. This is what he'll do. Will you say yes? She has to consent. And that's why it is that God's power to save just can't come upon you against your will. You need to consent. Just like if a person's trying to talk to me, and I just don't want to talk to them for whatever reason, maybe just because I'm in a really, really bad mood, and I'm being a very, very bad person, and I have to repent of it later. But if I don't, you know, I have to consent to getting into that relationship. So in the Bible, faith is about receiving a person into yourself. It's a person-to-person word. It involves acknowledging, consenting, receiving, and giving permission. Giving permission to go a bit deeper into it. I remember my neighbor just after they'd moved in, and, you know, we're making a little chit-chat, and I asked him a question. He said, whoa, that's a bit personal. We just met. And I apologized. So sorry, I wasn't, I didn't mean anything. Now, two years later, I asked a similar type of question. He answered it quite fine, right? But the point is that there's always this type of permission involved in it, and that's what faith is. It's not an emotion. It's being open to the other. It's entering into this type of a relationship. So you say, George, okay, that's, okay, that's, I say, so that's why, George, that

Christians aren't exactly sure what's happening with Scott Adams. I'd say, yeah, we're not sure. Like, was he opening himself up to receive Jesus, or did he think that if he just said these six words or eight words in the right order, bing, you go to heaven? Like, you know, I don't know. I have no idea. I couldn't talk to him. We'll find out in heaven. I'll find out in heaven. But, okay, then, George, why is it that it says ashamed? Like, that's a bit of a puzzling type of thing. Like, I'll just be really honest with you. I don't want to do anything that's going to increase my shame. And so notice what it says here, Romans 1, 16 to 17, for I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the pagan, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.

Like, why on earth is this word shame there? Well, that's a really good question. And there's sort of several aspects to it, and Romans will make it clear, because, I mean, this is just a praise for the book, so the rest of the book is going to keep opening these ideas up in the different nuances of them.

So this week, I was really very thankful with Amy. She had her, I don't know, second or third year graduate architect students, I got interviewed by them, because they're going to do a project on the Bible House.

And so I was answering some of their questions, and they were a great, great, great, great group of young men and women. It was really fun to do. And at one time, I don't know if I'm going to get the word right, I should have, I meant to email Amy to see if I got the word right. But they mentioned something about how, is the way the Bible House is, does it sort of fit the ethos or the, something like that of its heritage?

[25 : 40] And it's past, and as you move into the future, does it sort of fit in some way? And I said, that's a really good question. And I said, actually, it is. Because for us at our church, the Bible is really important for us, because we want to live, we want to follow Jesus in light of the Bible as a counterculture in the dominant culture. That's what we want to do. We want to be, listen to the Bible, follow Jesus, and be a counterculture in the dominant culture.

And I think one of the reasons, if you do that, you're always going to have to be dealing with potentially attempts by the dominant culture to shame you, because you're trying to live as a counterculture. And that will be talked about more in the rest of Romans. But there's, there's something else, which I think, why is this word shame here? And I think it comes with thinking about what most Canadians say about themselves. And what most Canadians say about themselves is this, I am a good person. I am a good person. And now there's a bit of an exception to this, obviously, because there's a huge political divide. And if you're on the left, you can call people Nazis and not think you're being a bad person by doing that. And you obviously don't think they're good persons. And there's the equivalence on the right towards the left. Given that most of Canada is left, and the media is all left, that doesn't get seen as much. But it's a human problem right now, that political and cultural divides blind you to evil that you do. But within the tribe, or with people that you don't know, within your own stream, it's very common for people to say that I'm a good person. And it would be a massive social faux pas for me to say, no, you're not.

Let go. I am a good person. And then I said, well, no, like, just think about it for a second, you know, and, and this and this and this and this. And then later on, if they told their friends, the best I could hope for is if they said, maybe he's on the spectrum and doesn't pick up social cues.

That would be them showing grace to me. But fundamentally, they would all agree that I was a terrible, terrible person for implying that they weren't a good person. It's a very important value.

[28 : 14] Now, it's very, very interesting if you play around with what it means. Because in fact, see, one of the things that Canadians also are sort of united around is they hate people who are self-righteous. But they never think to themselves, isn't saying that I'm a good person saying that I'm self-righteous? Like, isn't that the case? And by the way, if the average Canadian hates people who are self-righteous, why is it that we think that God is fine with you being self-righteous?

Like, that doesn't make any sense, if you think about it. Just pause with some other things. If you could wrap the third point, that would be very helpful. You see, what the text scripture is saying here is that only God can make you right with him.

And he does this with perfect justice and perfect mercy and grace. Only God can make you right with him. And he does this with perfect justice and perfect mercy and grace. You see, if you think that you can be good enough to get into heaven, what you are saying is that my self-righteousness will work.

But if we don't like people who are self-righteous, why do we think that God would like us being self-righteous? Like, maybe we need the gospel. Maybe we need the power of God for salvation that comes for those who believe. But you see, there's this other thing that comes up with this whole idea of I am a good person. I've been around the sun quite a few times, so to speak, as I'm getting quite old. And I've been a minister for 40 years plus. And I've often had to talk to people and had people in my church. I can remember one particular person. She was very insistent that she was a really good person. She was a real terror in this church. And part of the reason that she was a terror is that people were terrified of actually ever confronting her about the bad things that she did because they knew the bad things that she would do to them if they said that. And I used to think it was maybe just her with us. And then I was at a party and I met a whole pile of her co-workers and discovered she was just like that. And here's this thing about her. She really believed she was a good person, but absolutely no one who worked with her thought she was a good person.

Like zero. Like why is that? Why do we have this fixation about saying that we're a good person? It partially shows how fragile we are.

[31 : 14] But I think it also shows, and you know, there's cracks in that, the whole issue of self-forgiveness and the 4 a.m. moments when we can't live with ourselves and all. But I think this idea of self-righteousness, you see, if we're completely and utterly committed to self-righteousness and the Bible is telling us that we can be made right with God and it has to, only God can do it, it's striking at something very, very deeply hardwired in us. But it's also actually answering a longing that this desire to be a good person reveals. Another thing that happened with the architecture students, and I thank you for praying because I'm not naturally clever in the moment, so I don't know who was praying for me on Thursday afternoon.

But we got talking a little bit about the building and I just, all of a sudden, it popped into my head that one of the issues for churches with new buildings is the issue of beauty. That some churches value beauty and others don't want beauty. They want the building to be as plain as possible. But ironically, often even those churches that want it to be very plain end up being beautiful in a plain type of way. They get dimensions right and everything like that.

And I just threw out to the students, and this is the thing that comes from somebody was praying for me, I said, you know, I think that beauty is hardwired into human beings. Jonathan Camere, a presbyter who trained with us, asked him, he's going to be doing the communion bit later, asked him a little bit about how music and harmony is hardwired into individuals.

He's a French horn player as well. But there is something about beauty hardwired into us. And here's what I think our addiction and fixation on being a good person reveals. It reveals two truths that only the gospel makes clear and satisfies. You are hardwired to be a good person, which means being right with God. That is hardwired into you. And at the same time that you say you are a good person apart from Christ, you are revealing that you know you're not a good person and can't fix it.

So you declare this instead. And the Bible has this wonderful news to me. George, you're vastly worse than you realize. That's what the next part we're going to go to, how every human being is

vastly worse than they realize. But you are vastly more loved by God than all of your sin, than all of the things in you that are bad. And so I think this idea is showing in us that we are hardwired to actually be right with God and to truly be right with him. Only God can make you right with him. And he does this with perfect justice. He does it with perfect justice and perfect mercy and perfect grace. [34 : 20] I've lost my... And that leads us to the... Oh yes, that's what I was going to say. This... I've lost my place in my notes. That's what happens sometimes. Put up the fourth point. I'll read the text and listen to the fourth point. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power... Just very briefly in closing. For it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the pagan. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. And here's the fourth point. First, God makes you right with him, and then in him you begin to truly live. First, God makes you right with him, and then in him you begin to truly live. Now, the righteousness of God in the original language, the people who heard it in the original language, they would have heard two things being said at the same time, and you can't communicate that in English. On one hand, they would have said that when it says the righteousness of God is revealed, it's saying that what's being revealed is that God is perfectly just. He's perfectly righteous.

He's perfectly good. He's unfailing. He never wavers. You don't have to worry about him having favorites or anything like that. He is always just. Always. He's perfectly just. On the other hand, what they'd hear is that there's a being made right with God that comes from God, that they would have heard the two things at the same time. And so that means that he's going to be able to be just and make you right with him, and this is going to end up being a challenge. I'm going to talk about this more in the weeks to come, because it's a challenge to all of the religions of the world, none of whom can pass that test. It doesn't matter if it's Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, different secular things. No religion can pass the test of having a God who stays just without descending into injustice and favoritism to save some people who don't deserve it and deserve punishment. None of them can solve it, and that will become clear in subsequent weeks. But what this idea is going to contain, it's very important, and the book of Romans is going to develop it, is to be made right with God. God has to do two things in the person of his Son, and this is really important for you to hear. On the first hand, there has to be, in a sense, a pain of a debt, or a just punishment, or a proper cleansing, a proper removal. There's different images, and it would be as if, you know, for all of the wrong things that I did, and if you were to see, unvarnished, the wrong things that I've done throughout my life, you would say, George, these are the certain types of punishments that you need to have, and all of those, they have to be completely and utterly dealt with, and even then you're going to realize that the way you've hurt some people can never really be fixed, but that really has to be dealt with. The bad things have to be dealt with in a just manner. But if being made right with God was just having all those bad things dealt with, and just leaving you naked, you still wouldn't be right with God. There has to be something positive that comes to you as well, which is new life, a new standing with God. A way to understand it a little bit would be, like, in the miracle that we just saw, that after Jesus has dealt with everything that you've done wrong that deserves to be dealt with, and you're there, just plain, simple water, he turns you into wine. And so being made right with God is a positional word. It's a relational word.

At our last synod, so one of the things I do is, you know, our whole synod's all gathering, and I'm the guy who says, by the way, everybody wants to do something, and I eventually get up and say, by the way, you do realize there's a huge elephant pooping in the room, and nobody's talking about it, which really makes you popular, by the way. And I'm joking. And so I got up and said a whole pile of, you know, several things about it that were wrong, and then a couple of other people did, and then there was a break. And after the break, I spoke to the people behind the motion, and then after the break was completely over, they announced that they were removing the motion. And one of the main movers of the motion, he came up to me and said, George, are we good? Are we good? Are we right with each other?

And I said to him, Howard, I was going to come up to you and shake your hand and give you a hug. Too many times over the decades, I've had people want to move unbelievably bad motions, and when people pronate problems to them, they just dig in. You listened, and were willing to change your mind.

I want to give you a hug. Yes, we're good. We're right. That's what being right with God is, that you can be made right with God. That power that comes from God. It's not a self-righteousness.

[39 : 43] God does something in the person of his Son that when you open your life to him and receive him into your life, he makes you right with him. He makes you right with him. And that's why the fourth point is, first God makes you right with him, and then you begin to truly live. That's the order. He makes you right. And then out of that place of intellectual, emotional security, you learn more and more about Jesus, and you have that place to deal with the bad things in your life that you still have to deal with. Because being completely and utterly in God's presence is only going to happen when you die, or when he comes again. And in all cases, it's new heaven and the new earth. And until then, you can be right with God by putting your faith and trust in Jesus, which means opening your life to him. If you haven't done it, there's no better time than now. And you know what? Don't worry about wording. Just say, dear God, all that stuff in Romans 1, 16 to 17, that's me. I want it. He'll start out the wording. He doesn't care about the wording. He desires the intent. I invite you to stand.

Just before we pray, there's a famous, a well-known Canadian bishop who ended up leaving the Anglican Church of Canada and joining our movement. And he likes to tell the story, this is relevant to faith, that when he graduated from seminary, one of the biggest seminaries in Canada at the time, he won the theology award. And he said, I was a priest for quite a few years before I realized I was really good about theology, but I didn't know Jesus. And I had to open my life to him. And then I became a Christian. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, thank you that you have made a way for us to be right with you because you love us.

And Father, we've just heard this promise that as we learn more in Romans, that you've done it in a way that never stops you from being just. You're always good all the time, always just all the time. And yet mercy and grace doesn't erase justice, but is even greater than justice. And Father, we thank you that you have done this. We thank you that there is a power in this message. And we thank you, Father, that it's not just for the elite in emotions, elite in willpower, elite in imagination, elite in communication that a two-year-old can receive, that those mentally impaired can receive, Father, that it's a simple human thing. And we give you thanks and praise that you have made us right with yourself when we put our faith in Jesus. And we ask, Father, that this truth of who he is and what he's done for us, as it becomes more real to our hearts, that we will increasingly live lives of truth and justice, of mercy, of kindness, of beauty, of patience in our day-to-day lives and in our places of work and influence. And so we ask and thank all these things in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

[43 : 22] Amen.