

Through Him Access by the Spirit to the Father

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- [0 : 00] Let's turn together to Ephesians and chapter 2. Paul's entered to the Ephesians and chapter 2, and you'll find it on page 1175.
- Ephesians chapter 2, and last week we focused just on verse 17, and tonight we're going to focus just on verse 18.
- Last week we spoke about Jesus, the preacher, and here's what we said. Jesus came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and peace to those who were near.
- But tonight we're going to look at prayer. We looked at the preaching of Jesus, but now the prayer of the people of God. And here's the way that Paul puts it.
- Verse 18, For through him, that's through Jesus, through him we both, that's Jew and Gentile, we both have access in one spirit to the Father.
- [1 : 17] Now just let me read that once again, because I want us to be very careful about how we understand this verse. I want us to really try to stop and to think and to appreciate and to treasure what Paul is saying.
- For through him, that's through Jesus, we both, don't worry about the both, because we've already discussed that, Jew and Gentile, the wall, the barrier between Jew and Gentile, has been broken down in the gospel.
- Through him we have access. Far as we're concerned tonight, here's what the verse says. For through him we have access in one spirit to the Father.
- This week I signed up for a different bank account.
- Same bank, but a different bank account. And the bank account is given the grand title, Royalties Gold.
- [2 : 24] It's one of these bank accounts that is not free. You have to pay a certain amount of subscription too. You have to pay a little monthly amount. But, they tell you, they tell you, and I'm not here to sell any particular bank or any particular account, but they tell you that if you do have this account, the benefits will vastly outweigh what you have to pay every month.
- Now as it happens, in my line of work and as I looked at my own expenditure and I looked at what this bank account was promising me, it appeared to me to make sense for me to sign up for, that may not make sense to everybody, but it appeared to make sense for me to sign up to this bank account.
- Whether it actually pays off or not, well, we'll just wait and see. But, in any case, I signed up. And what you do is, you go in and you sit down with somebody who is employed by the bank and they go through all the benefits that this bank account gives you.
- And they list them all and you discuss them, the ins and outs, the small print, what ifs, and all that kind of thing. And you list them all one by one.
- And then, what they do is, they make a calculation. And what they say to you is, that if you don't have this bank account, here's what you're going to be spending on, say, insurance and various other things.

[4 : 02] Here's what you're going to be spending. But if you do have this bank account, here's what you're going to be saving. In several different ways, and I'm sure there are about seven or eight different areas in which there are benefits in having this account.

That's the way they do it. So you spend a long time with a very kind employee and she brings you through all the different details and what you have to do and all the rest of it. And afterwards, that's the way you sign up for it.

Do you know, as we go through the letter to the Ephesians, if I was to give this letter a title, that's what I would call it.

Royalties Gold. I can't think of a better name and I'm not advertising any bank. I didn't tell you who the bank was. You probably guessed, but it doesn't matter.

It's the name that I really want to emphasize. Royalties Gold. And you know what Paul is doing? And we've seen this all along. All the way through this letter, he's doing exactly what I did in the bank.

[5 : 09] He's going through and he's listing and he's focusing on all the benefits that there is in knowing Jesus as his Savior.

It's not just one benefit. See, I hear people saying, well, if you're a Christian, your sins are forgiven. That's one. It's a marvelous, a central foundational benefit and joy of being a Christian.

Without it, you can't be a Christian. There's no such thing as a person, a Christian who hasn't got his sins forgiven. But there are other benefits that arise out of that. And one of the big problems, one of the big dangers of living the Christian life is we lose sight of these benefits and we live a sub-rate Christian life.

We don't live as we should. We don't live counting what God has done for us. And in order to do that, we have to come back to the Bible. And this is what Paul is doing.

And I've said this before, you can't help but sensing the apostle's thrill as he thinks over what God has given him in this gospel.

[6 : 13] First of all, he's been chosen by the Lord, by the King of Kings. There's your royalties. He has an inheritance. You remember that great verse in verse 11, chapter 1, in him we have obtained an inheritance.

There's your gold. And we have been redeemed, he says. We have been sealed with God's spirit. We have been saved, in chapter 2, by God's grace and God's grace alone.

We have been joined and fastened to Jesus Christ. We've been raised together with him. We've been united to one another in Jesus. And now, here is yet one more benefit to having the Christian life.

You know, I suppose being a Christian is like taking out a different bank account. Have you ever thought about it? We're all born with a bank account, as far as the Lord is concerned, as far as God is concerned.

The problem is, it's in the red. Our bank account, your bank account, my bank account, the one that I was born with, is in the red.

[7 : 16] I owe God everything. I'm a sinner. And there is nothing I can do to cancel that debt. And the more I leave it, the longer I leave it, the more debt I get into.

Just like, if you ever leave a bank account in debt, the letters will start coming. And the interest will have to be paid on an increasing level. And the longer you leave it, the worse it becomes.

And that's the way it is with our life and our relationship to God. We're in debt. Our bank account is in debt. But you know, in the gospel, God comes to us as the great bank manager.

And he'll do what no bank manager will do. I'm sorry about bank managers. Sorry if I'm insulting any. I don't mean this as just an illustration. He'll do what no bank manager will do.

And he'll come to you and he'll offer you a new account in which your debts are paid, cancelled. And in which he says, that's it. It's clear.

[8 : 14] You're no longer in debt anymore. But he does more than that. See, a lot of people think, well, that's the Christian life. Our debts have been cancelled. But there's more to it than that.

Because he says to us, I'm going to give you a new bank account. A royalties gold bank account. And this time, I'm going to pay into it. He doesn't just cancel our debt of sin.

He actually pays his own righteousness into our account. That's what it is to be a Christian. And that's what the apostle just can't get his head around.

He can't get over. The lavishness of God, the generosity of God in not only forgiving his sins, but in giving and giving and giving and bestowing and pouring out his own gifts and all the benefits that we have as a Christian.

And part of the reason we have so much difficulty in living and struggling, I know that for anybody the Christian life is a struggle, but sometimes we only have ourselves to blame by not coming back to the Bible and not really seeing the thrill and not sharing in the thrill that the apostle shares with us of what we have and not making use of the benefits that God has brought to us and given to us in Jesus.

[9 : 39] That's what we're doing tonight. We're trying to discover these benefits so that we live by these benefits and so that we will, so that we will, our lives will be richer as the Lord Jesus Christ enables us.

Now, what does he say here in verse 18? Here it says, I'm going to say it once again, for through him we both, we both, Jew and Gentile, we have access in one spirit to the Father.

In other words, he is saying, we, if you're a Christian tonight, if you live by faith in Jesus Christ, if you have come to him confessing your sins, turning away from your old life and trusting him with all your heart, not trusting yourself, but trusting in his death and his resurrection alone, he says this, we have access to God.

We have access to God. Now, think about that for a moment, especially in terms of the way in which God reveals himself to us in the Bible.

You see, we have this mistaken notion in those who are religious that somehow or other that access is automatic to God and it's only a question of me use, it's only a question of me coming in whatever sincere form I want to come in.

[11 : 09] But, if you listen and if you read the Bible, you discover that the God who reveals himself in the Bible prohibits us from entering into his presence and that was true ever since the Garden of Eden when man, when Adam and Eve sinned and fell and disobeyed God, they were evicted from the Garden of Eden and an angel was put at the door of the garden and that angel symbolized God's prohibition, no entry, access denied.

You and I are very accustomed to access being denied to us in various different forms. If you go to the airport, you'll get into the main lounge, you'll be able to have a cup of coffee, you'll be able to meet people who are coming off the plane, but if you do not have a ticket for the flight and photo ID, you will in no way, there is not a chance in this world of you getting through the door that takes you through security.

You have absolutely no chance. Access is denied. and that's only one area in which you and I are familiar with that great round red sign that says no entry.

Do not go any further. And that was God's message to the people of Israel. If you're familiar with the Old Testament and you'll know that God chose to dwell amongst his people, Israel, he chose them to be his own people and to come amongst them and yet, even although he dwelt amongst them in all his glory, yet they were not allowed to come into his near presence.

He ordered that the tabernacle be built and right in the middle of the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies. That very special, ornate, sacred place that was hidden from the ordinary people of Israel and it was hidden because there was the place that God dwelt, the glory of God dwelt, dwelt within the particular furniture that God ordered to be put there, the Ark of the Covenant most notably.

[13 : 28] But on no account must anybody ever enter into that place and that was for a very important reason. And the reason was simply this, that God was holy, perfectly and completely holy, so holy that there could not be any contact between the people of Israel and him, even although they were his own people having been chosen out of the world, there could not be any access.

So God in the Old Testament tells us you have no access to me and it's because of your sin that you have no access. And that's the way we're all born.

We have no access to the Father. We have no right to be saying, oh well I can, well you know you listen to people sometimes and they think as if, they talk as if, you know, they could come in and out of God's presence at will.

No problem. But that's not the way it is at all. God in the Bible has told us that we cannot have any access to him unless our sin is forgiven.

And the only way for that sin to be forgiven is by the shedding of blood. God throughout the pages of the Bible and throughout the pages of Israel he made that provision.

[14 : 44] He ordered it so that none other than his son Jesus Christ would come into the world and shed his own blood at Calvary so that by his blood our sin could be forgiven so that, verse 18, we have access in one spirit in one spirit to the Father.

So tonight if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible tells us we have access to God. Now, what does this verse tell us?

The verse goes on and it tells us that it tells us much more than perhaps we would discover at first sight.

For example, if you read it again, you'll discover that God is revealing to us in these words in terms of the Trinity. Let's read it again. For through him, through him is through Jesus, we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

Through him, Jesus, we have access in one spirit to the Father. God. Now, that's the Trinity, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[16 : 05] In the Bible, God reveals himself to us as one God, and yet, he reveals himself to us as three distinct persons. Now, that doesn't mean three gods.

Neither does it mean three sections or three parts to God. God cannot be divided into three. three. There's no division in God.

God is one. What the Bible teaches is that God is one, and yet, God is three. And I can't think tonight of a greater mystery as I try and understand the Bible.

You can read about it. You can try and study the verses and the passages that explain to us, that bring to us the truth of God being three, and yet, you can never understand it.

It's one of these great insolvable mysteries that we're going to have to accept by faith. God is Father. God is Son.

[17 : 06] God is Holy Spirit. And it's not as if the Father was always there, and then the Father created the Son, and then they both created the Holy Spirit. That's not true.

The Father was always there, eternally. The Son was always there, eternally. And the Holy Spirit was always there, eternally, because if any one of these persons was created, they could not be God.

God is three, three persons, not three gods, not three thirds, but three persons. Each one of them eternal, and each one of them is one.

God is one, and God is three. And neither of them is greater than the other. The Father is not greater than the Son.

The Son is not greater than the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not greater than the Father. These three are one God, equal in power and in glory.

[18 : 17] That's what the Catechism tells us, which is exactly the teaching of the Bible. These three are one God, equal in power and in glory. Now it's hard for us to get our heads around that.

I don't think there's one person here tonight that hasn't slipped into the trap of sometimes thinking of the Father as just a little bit higher than the Son. And the Son is just a little bit higher than the Spirit.

We must never slip into that way of thinking, and that's why tonight, as I've done on several occasions, we've come back to this great doctrine of the Trinity.

It's a doctrine that we have to try and get our heads around if we're going to understand God as he's revealed to us in the Bible. God is one and God is three and these three are equal in power and in glory.

So when we talk about the Holy Spirit tonight, we're talking about a distinct person. and yet cannot be separated from the Father and the Son.

[19 : 21] When we talk about the Son this evening, we're talking about a distinct person which cannot be separated from the Father and the Spirit. And it's very dangerous to try and separate them the way that we naturally and logically tend to do.

We have to think of them as one and three. And as soon as we begin to think too much of one, we have to begin to think of three. And as soon as we begin to think too much of three, we have to think of one.

And as soon as we begin to think of differences, we have to make sure that we remember that they're all one. And we have to always check ourselves and scold ourselves and bring ourselves back and rein our thinking in and our understanding in.

As soon as we begin to stray onto the wrong path. Because all kinds of mistakes have been made throughout the ages by people who have gone off the right path and thought about God in a distorted manner.

God is one and God is three. And here in the gospel, and when it comes to our access, our prayer to the Lord, here we are told that all three persons are involved.

[20 : 36] The father is involved as the one to whom we have access. The son is involved as the one through whom we have access. The Holy Spirit is involved as the one by whom we have access.

All three. And what God is saying to us is this, that every person who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has a ticket, if you like.

We have a pass to enter into the presence of God at all times, at any time.

There is no procedure we must go, there is no hierarchy we have to go through. We can go straight into the presence of God.

Now you think about that for a moment, you think that right now, if I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I can open my mouth and I can speak directly to God even as I sit here in this church.

[21 : 37] and I can know that the God of the universe hears my prayer and receives my prayer and accepts my prayer and will answer my prayer, perhaps not in the way that I expect him to, but he will answer prayer.

And it seems to me that we've allowed ourselves at times to be confused by the whole subject of prayer. And one of the ways in which we can be so easily confused is that we can, is that we can think about it as something that's so complicated that we could never have a part in it.

And this is why this verse is so precious to us tonight because it places the truth before us that everyone, if we believe in Jesus, if you don't, how can you have access to God?

On what basis will God accept you? God has told us he's only going to accept us on one basis and one basis alone. And that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's why the apostle says it's through him, through him and through him alone. Jesus said, I am the way. We just read it. John chapter 14 verse 6.

[22 : 54] You can read it again. John chapter 14 verse 6. I am the way and the truth and the life. Then what does he say? No one can come to the Father except through me.

That's the plain teaching of Jesus Christ himself. No one can come to the Father except through me. And here is Paul saying it a little bit different. It's exactly the same thing. Through him we have.

Now what does that through him mean? What I've just said that Jesus came into the world to be our sacrifice. To take away the one barrier that stands between us and God.

This is why you have no access while that barrier remains. And the barrier is our guilt. And as long as that guilt remains we cannot have access.

It's like a wall between us and knowing God. You cannot talk about knowing God. You can talk about God's glory and his and his creation.

[23 : 54] You can say how much you enjoy his creation. You can say how thankful you are every day as I've heard many people doing. You can be aware of God. You can be aware of what's right and wrong and you can try and live a moral life but that's not going to get you to know God because this great barrier stands in front of you and stands between you and God and until that barrier of your guilt is taken away then you will never have access.

You can never say I know God and you can never say that he is my God. Now that might be quite shocking but it's true.

Surely we're here tonight to discover what God says about ourselves because it's only by listening to him and by asking him to show us himself that we can ever hope to discover how we can be right with God tonight and I hope that's why we're all here.

I hope that's why you're here to know how you can be right with God as long as this great wall stands between you and God. There's no access. But Jesus came into the world so that by his death at Calvary so that by him suffering the wrath and the anger of God that we deserved that wall could be removed.

And once that wall is removed you can go straight in. That's why Jesus called himself the door.

[25 : 33] John chapter 10. I am the door. By me if any man shall enter and he'll be saved. have you entered through the door?

There is only one door. Jesus Christ. And he tells us that whoever believes in him and to believe in Jesus is to receive what he has done to take his death on the cross as your substitute.

So that by that substitute you can come in to God's presence and you can know God for yourself and that your life can be changed and that your sins can be forgiven and that you can come straight to God as your father.

But the verse also goes on to tell us not only that it's through him that we have access but it is by the spirit. And here is the other, here is the trinity in detail and in God's comprehensiveness if you like.

We have access not just through Jesus but we have access in one spirit to the father. What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Well again it would take us two or three evenings to discuss this in any detail.

[27 : 04] But let me just go back to what I said before that the Holy Spirit is God. Every bit as much God as the father and the son. But the work of the Holy Spirit is to dwell within every child of God.

Jesus' work was to come into the world and to be the substitute for our sin. To pay the price for our sin at Calvin. Thereafter the Holy Spirit's work is to come into all those who believe and who trust in Jesus for their salvation.

The moment a person believes that person becomes indwelt with the Holy Spirit. There's another benefit. God lives in his people.

He doesn't just call them his people. He lives within them. That's what Jesus said. You remember if I can find this verse again because I live you also will live in that day you will know that I am in the father and you in me and I in you.

And he tells us that the Holy Spirit even the spirit of truth he will be given to you and he will dwell within you. There it is in verse 17 you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you.

[28 : 30] Now what this tells us is that as we enjoy and make use of that access that we have to the father we the whole of the God in God in his oneness is involved in that access.

And when Paul talks about us having access to God he's talking of course about prayer. Prayer and the way in which we can enjoy and make use of the great privilege that we have to come to God.

But it's not just coming as strangers that we are to God. Paul tells us that we come to God as father. As our father.

You see it's one thing to have access. And of course you'll agree with me when I say that if access is denied in certain places it's also denied towards and in respect with certain people.

In fact the more important a person is the greater the access the greater the denial of the access. For example none of us can simply phone up Gordon Brown tonight or Barack Obama or the Queen.

[29 : 42] We simply can't do it. It's impossible. You'll be refused. None of us will possibly be able to do it. And if you are ever given the opportunity to meet with royalty or government or anyone like that then it will only be for a short time and you will be a stranger.

You will always be a stranger to those people. I spoke recently to someone in the congregation here who was traveling to London to get an award from the Duke of York.

And it was an immense privilege this person was telling me how privileged that she felt. Quite rightly so. Any one of us who has been in that position we feel incredible sense of privilege.

It's the most humbling experience when that happens. But even when it does happen we're only strangers. We're in amongst maybe hundreds of other people and you get to meet them for maybe a few minutes and that's it.

Away. And we've always been a stranger and we're still a stranger. But you know what this verse tells us? It tells us that by believing in Jesus we have access not as a stranger but as our father in heaven.

[31 : 00] And this of course goes back to the way in which Jesus taught his disciples to pray in the Lord's prayer. Our father who art in heaven hallowed be your name.

The homeliness of God our father. The holiness of God our hallowed be your name. The heavenliness of God who art in heaven.

But what right do we have tonight to call God our father? the right that Jesus has given to us as we look to him in faith.

Now tell me tonight that that is not the greatest privilege that you could ever possibly have. To have the right to enter into the near presence of God.

God. As a son. As a daughter. And know that he will accept you.

[32 : 09] As a son. As a daughter. Let me ask you this question. How can we not be thrilled this evening at such a privilege?

How can we not make use of that fantastic privilege far more than we do?

How can we be so complacent and so cold and so hesitant and so distracted?

I can tell you if you ever get a letter inviting you to come and meet royalty you will not be distracted. You will not be distracted.

All your thoughts and all your focus will be on that invitation. Why is it tonight that it's different when it comes to God?

[33 : 16] And surely this very verse is our invitation. God's love. By which we are able to come straight into the presence of God with all our needs, with all our distresses, with all the things that we find difficult, with our joys, with when things are going, when we're rejoicing in something that God, that we can see God has done for us.

to thank him for what he's done, to thank him for sending Jesus into the world. You can tell him anything you want. You can confess the filthiest, dirtiest sin, the thing that makes you more ashamed than anything else in this world and you know that he will forgive you because he knows it already.

You're not confessing anything to him that he doesn't know already and you're not telling him anything that he's not fully aware of, much more so than we are. Why then do we hesitate?

Why do we stop? Why do we not enjoy? The great purpose for which we have been created is to enjoy God.

What is it that stops us from enjoying God? Have you ever asked that question? It's only me. I'm the biggest problem. And if tonight my enjoyment of God is not what it should be, then the reason is me.

[34 : 57] And I need to ask the Lord to change my thinking, to change my lifestyle, to change my heart so that he increases and I decrease.

increase. That's what John the Baptist said and that's what we have to say as well. He must increase and I must decrease. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we ask now that you will continue to bring to us your truth in the pages of the Bible and in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And our Father, once again, we pray that as we have rediscovered the value and the preciousness of prayer, the reality of what prayer is, we ask that every one of us will make use and that we will come into your presence and to bring ourselves to you with all our confession and all our need and that we will begin to enjoy your fellowship and your nearness to us.

Lord, we give thanks that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. And we ask, Lord, that we might be able to see, as never before, all our benefits, all the benefits that we have in Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.