

# A Certain Status with God

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're now going to turn to God's Word. Our preacher this evening is Willie Phillip, our Senior Minister. He's going to be taking a break from 1 Peter.

He'll come back to finish that off in a few weeks' time. Over these next few weeks, Willie is going to be concentrated in Romans chapter 5. Romans chapter 5, which you will find in page 942 of the Pew Bible.

But our reading this evening, I'm going to read from two places. You'll see at the beginning of chapter 5 there in verse 1, Paul begins, therefore. And the content of that argument that Paul has been arguing takes us back to chapter 3.

So we're going to read from chapter 3, verse 21 to 26. But I want us just to begin in verse 10 of chapter 3.

Let us hear then the Word of God. As it is written, No one is righteous. No, not one.

[ 1 : 09 ] But now, the righteousness of God has been made manifest apart from the law. Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short or lack the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in His divine forbearance, He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

And then beginning in chapter 5, verse 1 through verse 11. 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.

[ 2 : 31 ] More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that sufferings produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not pour us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

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 and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, 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. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Amen. And may God add His blessing to this, the reading of His Word. Well, do turn with me, if you would, to Romans chapter 5, page 942, I think, in our church Bibles.

[ 4 : 09 ] As Terry says, we are beginning this evening a short series focusing on Romans chapter 5, at least the first part of it, which is a densely packed little passage which contains, almost in a summary form, the great doctrines at the very heart of the Christian faith.

I know that many of our Release the Worders, at least those in second year, are well on in their study of Romans on Thursday nights. And Rupert suggested that it would be helpful, perhaps, if we at least dipped into the book a little bit in Sundays just to help things along.

I think the Bible class are also studying Romans and are well past chapter 5. Now, so, I have to say at the outset I do feel a little vulnerable this evening because I'm now preaching to a room full of experts in a letter to the Romans.

So, if a large queue forms after the service to speak to me and put me right, I will be heading straight out that door and hiding in the office for a short while afterwards. But, seriously, there is surely no better thing for a preacher than to know that he needs to be on his toes because everybody is right up there with him in the Bible text.

That's a great privilege and it's a great thing. So, I hope that this will be familiar territory for those studying Romans in the Release the Word, at least. But, I think it will do the rest of us no harm at all to focus on this little passage for a few weeks because it is just full, as I said, of the very heart of the Christian gospel.

[ 5 : 44 ] The great doctrines about the grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, of course, as I am sure all the Release the Word will be very clear by now, Romans is not a doctrinal treatise.

Not in that sense. It's not a textbook of theology like that. It's a pastoral letter. It's written by a missionary apostle to the church and it's written to motivate and to mobilize the church in Rome to join in the advance of the gospel with Paul to the whole of the known world in those days.

That's Paul's purpose in writing. He's eager to preach the gospel in regions beyond those that have heard of Christ. and he needs the church in Rome to help him with that task.

That's the point. That's why he's writing. Makes that very clear at the end of the letter in chapter 15 and so on. But what kind of church will be the kind of missionary church that will join with him in that great task?

They're clearly not a church that is driven by divisions and it's divided by pride which is the root of so many church divisions.

[ 7 : 05 ] That kind of church will never, ever, ever be dynamic in proclaiming the gospel. It's only a church that cherishes the privilege of gospel grace, a grace that banishes all kinds of human pride.

It's only that church that knows the power of grace because they see that grace at work in power among themselves. It's only a church like that that will be committed to the proclamation of the gospel of grace to the world, to others, knowing that it will also transform them.

And that's why this letter was written. Christopher Ashe has put it so very well. It was written, he says, to lift Jesus very high and to bring you and me very low.

That's about as good a summary as you could find. The purpose of this letter is so that the glory of God will be seen in a united missionary church that is humbled together under the true grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ and therefore is able to take that grace to others.

And that's why Paul is so determined to lay out in all of its glory the gospel that is about grace alone. because it's only the gospel growing deep down and going right into the church's pores that will create a church that can be fruitful in God's hands in that way.

[ 8 : 38 ] No other way at all. That's why the church of the Reformation was so vital, so dynamic in spreading the gospel like wildfire right across the continent of Europe in the 16th century.

it was because they had come to understand so deeply this gospel of sovereign grace alone which has power to save to the uttermost everyone who believes through Christ the Savior.

But, and this is important, it's possible to focus sometimes so much on the doctrines of sovereign grace alone that we forget that that terminology is really just shorthand.

It's really just shorthand for a salvation that is all about a personal salvation through a personal Savior through Jesus Christ alone. It's the grace of the Savior, it's the grace of God in Jesus Christ who saves us and he alone.

Striking just how personally Paul puts that all the way through this great letter. All through Romans, yes of course, our salvation is sola gratia by grace alone.

[ 9 : 54 ] But that is because our salvation is solus Christus through Christ alone. That was something that the 16th century reformers like John Calvin and others never ever forgot.

They emphasized hugely that it is the person of the Savior to whom we are joined through which our salvation comes.

they emphasize that very, very strongly. It's something that's not always been so emphasized in the traditions that have come after them. I want to say we must never ever depersonalize our salvation.

We are saved by a great Savior himself. We are saved by Christ alone. Just look at Romans chapter 1 and verse 8. you'll see where it begins at the very beginning of this letter.

Paul thanks God how? Through Jesus Christ. And that refrain you will find coming again and again and again all through the letter.

[11:01] Look at chapter 2 verse 16 where he talks about God judging all men's hearts how? By and through Christ Jesus alone. As we read in chapter 3 verse 22 do you see the righteousness of God which we must have if we're to be acceptable to God comes how?

Through Jesus Christ. Chapter 5 verse 11 that we'll come to eventually we rejoice in God says Paul how? Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

End of chapter 5 verse 21 eternal life is ours how? Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Look at the end of chapter 6 the very last verse 6 verse 23 where is our eternal life to be found?

In Christ Jesus our Lord. Last verse of chapter 7 just exactly the same. Thanks be to God says Paul through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And the end of chapter 8 verse 39 again exactly the same. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[12:17] I could go on there are more but I'm sure you see it. Our salvation is solus Christus and totus Christus. It's all and only and completely in and through Jesus Christ the person of our wonderful Savior himself our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's why I've chosen for our title for this little series the fruits of a great Savior's grace. I could have called it something else like the guarantees of a gospel of sovereign grace but that just doesn't quite do justice to Paul's emphasis on the person of Christ Christ himself.

It's in him and it's in him alone that grace and mercy are ours. So we're going to look focusing at chapter 5 verses 1 to 11 over these Sunday evenings and this is the very heart of Paul's exposition of the gospel where he lays out the wonderful fruit of what has become ours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The great certainties the great guarantees that we know are ours because and only because ours is a sovereign salvation. It is all from God and it is all through God in the person of his son the Lord Jesus our Savior.

And tonight I just want to focus really on what Paul says in chapter 5 verse 1 which is all about the security that is ours because we are justified because we are declared acceptable by God alone and in Christ alone.

[14:00] Paul tells us here that we have through our great Savior a certain status. A certain status. That our personal righteousness, our acceptance with God is guaranteed because we are righteous through our great Savior alone by grace and not by any religious performance or any religious pedigree of our own.

Security is a very important thing in life, isn't it? Security of knowing that we'll be accepted by others is very, very important to us in all kinds of ways.

Children want to be accepted by their friends and not rejected, don't they? So when they're little, when they're in primary school, when it comes to a new year, what's the first question they ask? Will I be in the same class with all my friends?

And when they get older, when they're teenagers, they're desperate, aren't they, for acceptance from their peers? That's often what makes them slaves to the latest fashions and all the rest of it. Do I look okay in this dress? Is this the right thing I should be wearing for going out? Will I be acceptable with my crowd? And at a deeper level, all of us, young and old, we crave acceptance, we crave that love.

[15:22] We need that in life. If we lack assurance, for example, if we've lacked the assurance of the love and the acceptance of our parents, it can be a very damaging thing.

It can lead to all kinds of psychological difficulties and problems and insecurities right throughout life. I think that's particularly so for somebody who has lacked that sense of acceptance and approval from their father.

That was the real pathos, the power of that film, the king's speech, wasn't it? Most of you have seen it, about how the second son, who had to become king eventually, Bertie, that terrible stammer and all of those things, and it all came back to a lack of acceptance, lack of approval from his father.

And some people, sadly, have not had that when they're young. And sometimes when that is the case, the whole of their life has been blighted and will be blighted by that fact.

And they live, therefore, under a burden of trying to prove themselves acceptable to others, trying to seek the love and the acceptance that they desire so deeply inside, but which has been denied

them from those they most wanted it from in their earliest years.

[ 16 : 51 ] And often you will find that people like that through all of their life are desperately fearful people, fearful of losing that acceptance, fearful of losing that certainty in relationships with others.

and it can make very, very great handicaps indeed. What a huge difference there is when somebody has been able to say all of their life, yes, I know that my parents love me, I know that my father loves me, that he's proud of me, that he always will, that he will always be a rock of strength in my life.

It's just a fact I'm describing that certainty about a parent's approval, especially a father's approval, is such a vital thing for health and wholeness in our human lives.

We know that. But so also, friends, in a far greater way and even a far more significant way, is the certainty and security that we desire and that we need of our acceptance with God himself.

Now, it's true, often that is an unconscious thing for many people. But from time immemorial and still all over the world today, among every human culture, you will find people who are not secure and who do not have assurance of their acceptance with God and who fear rejection from God and so who, seeking that acceptance, are driven to devote their lives to doing more things and better things and all kinds of things in the hope that like the father who never acknowledged his child, at last, they will be able to do enough to have the certainty of that acceptance with God.

[ 18 : 49 ] It's that search, it's that desire, it's that need which defines and indeed which creates all human religion. Whether or not it's an overtly religious type of religion or whether in fact it's quite a secular and atheistic variety.

There are both of these things abroad in the human world. But it's all about reaching out and reaching up, seeking approval from the God or from the being or from the force or whatever it is in your mind, seeking that approval but you can never be sure that you've done enough or you've achieved enough.

Or you are enough to have it. And that's true whether yours is a religious idea of God of whatever stripe or kind. Or whether yours is just a material God whether it's the favor of the world or society or your academic peers or your social peers or your friends or whoever else it is that you want. But you see the Christian faith, the Apostle Paul is speaking about here in this letter, is the very polar opposite of all of that. Because it's not about religion at all.

It's all about a Savior's grace. The great writer and thinker C.S. Lewis was once asked to say, what is it that differentiates Christianity from all other religions?

[ 20 : 22 ] And the questioner thought they'd ask a very difficult and long question which would require a great and long answer. And C.S. Lewis just looked at him and said, I'll tell you in one word, grace.

See, religion of whatever flavor is all about reaching up to find God and to please God and to seek for acceptance with God. But the grace of Christian faith is the absolute opposite.

It's about a God who reaches down to find us and to give us unqualified favor and acceptance. And only grace guarantees acceptance with God because it gives that acceptance freely and abundantly.

And Romans chapter 5 verses 1 to 11 here is a passage packed with those certainties, the guarantees that come from the grace of God given to us through Jesus Christ.

The grace that guarantees not only the past and not only the present but also the future. Gives us full certainty about the life to come.

[ 21 : 44 ] Where religion, you see, religion puts lifelong burdens onto people's backs. The grace of the Lord Jesus does the opposite. It puts a song into people's hearts. It's a song of rejoicing.

You'll see it. It's all the way through this passage. Look at verse 2. We rejoice, says Paul, in the hope of glory. Verse 11, we rejoice in God himself. And even look at verse 3, we rejoice in sufferings now because so secure are we in Christ that we know that even the worst sufferings this world can bring serve wonderfully, if mysteriously, God's eternal purpose for us in Jesus Christ. So we're going to spend the next few weeks, I think, wallowing in these great certainties, in these guarantees of a Savior's grace. peace. And first of all, as I said, I want really to look at the guarantee that's there in the very first verse of a certain status with God, a status of peace with God, our Creator and our Judge.

Verse 1, therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now you'll see, as Terry said, that that passage begins with a therefore.

And Paul in this verse is summing up everything that he's been talking about since chapter 3 verse 21, which is all about justification. That is, God declaring somebody to be acceptable to him and to be in the right with him by grace alone, received from his hand by faith alone.

[ 23 : 30 ] And this righteousness of God, if you look back to chapter 3 verse 22, is, Paul says, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and it's for all who believe, all who have faith.

And therefore, he says here in verse 1, since we have been justified, since we've been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. You see how those things bracket that whole section, peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. And that verse, verse 1 of chapter 5, is summing up the whole thing. It's giving the result of all that Jesus has done. Because God's saving righteousness is by grace and through faith, and only because it is, we can be absolutely sure that we have peace with God.

We have a certain status, no doubts at all, absolute security, because it comes directly from God himself through Jesus. things. I want to look at three certainties briefly that we need to get ourselves very, very clear on in our mind if we're to understand just how it is that we can say, if we're believers in Christ, that we know that we have a certain status with God.

And it's important because to some people to say that is anathema. To some people to say, to dare to say that we can be certain of our acceptance with God is just plain presumption.

[ 25 : 02 ] How can you dare to say that you know God will accept you? What makes you so special that you think God will accept you? Surely it's so much more humble to simply say, well, maybe if I live a good life and I keep faithful to the end and all of these things, well, just maybe God will accept me.

Sounds a little more humble, doesn't it? But it's not. Actually, to say that is something far, far more arrogant.

Because what you're really saying is that you assume, well, actually, it is within my power to be good enough, to make myself acceptable to God so that, in fact, God will feel obliged to praise my efforts and to give me a place in his kingdom.

that to be certain of acceptance with God actually requires great humility, great self-humbling.

Because it means accepting that actually, no, we cannot do anything at all to foster our acceptance with God. There is nothing that we can do as sinners who lack the glory of God to deserve the prize of glory that the gospel gives us.

[ 26 : 25 ] We are to have that. It must come only by grace, quite apart from anything that we can have done. Only the gospel of the cross that humbles us, that can give us any certainty about our salvation.

And here's the first thing that is certain. peace with God is real and certain, says verse one. And that is so, because real righteousness comes only from God.

That putting right is something that only God can do, but it is something that God has done. And God had to do it himself because God is the one with the chief problem, not us.

That may sound very odd again, but that is perfectly true. We don't need peace with God because we are the ones waging war upon God, although we are. We need peace with God because God is at war with us.

In any broken relationship, of course, there are two sides, aren't there? Both parties become estranged from one another, and there can't be reconciliation unless both sides are dealt with, that's obvious.

[ 27 : 42 ] that in this relationship, it is we, it is we human beings who have caused unequivocally the breakdown. It's we who have broken faith.

It's we who have committed adultery. And God is rightly angry with that, just as anyone is rightly angry when someone sins against them in a relationship in that way.

Look back again to Romans 3 verse 23 because we need to get our minds clear here. All sinned and lack God's glory.

That is as chapter 1 of Romans says, we've exchanged the truth of God and the glory of the immortal God for idols, for other gods. Ultimately, of course, we've made ourselves gods.

We've taken our own lives and ruled our way. I'll do it my way. It's no accident, by the way, that that is the song that is number one in songs played at funerals and crematoriums in our country.

[ 28 : 47 ] Did you know that? I did it my way. It shouldn't surprise us because that is the very heart of the human condition. I did it my way, not God's way. Now, you can scorn God's glory, of course,

in many ways.

You can scorn him in a pagan way. Romans chapter 1 talks all about that, chasing debased behavior and a wrong prodigal kind of lifestyle. But you can equally turn away from God in a very pious and religious way.

As Romans 2 describes, like the Jews, very religious, very morally superior, so they thought, but in fact hypocrites and in their hearts just as twisted, just as rotten as the worst of the pagan Gentiles. And all have gone that way, says Paul. And with that, God is not pleased. Indeed, God is at war with rebellious humanity.

His wrath, says Paul, in chapter 1, is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, against all unrighteousness of men, whether it's through reprobate filth or whether it's through religious fraud.

[ 30 : 03 ] God. There's no way out, not for any. Look at Romans chapter 3, verse 9. Jews and Greeks, just the same under sin, that is under the power of sin.

Can't we by ourselves work our way back into God's pleasure? No, says chapter 3, verse 20, not ever. By the work of the law, no human being will ever be justified in God's sight, not one.

Now, people do not believe that because we suppress the truth of God. And so all over the world today in all kinds of different religions, many, many people keep on trying.

In fact, many people think that that's what Christianity is actually about. But that is just a hopeless religious falsehood dressed up in the language of the Christian faith.

And it gives no certainty, not at all. It gives only fear. You're honest about your lack of holiness.

[ 31 : 12 ] If we're honest about the truth about our lives, it gives not just fear, but it gives despair. Isn't that right? I'm afraid that is the tragedy of so much of Roman Catholicism still today.

The heart of it has not changed since the 16th century. I meet and you probably meet too many people who have come from a Roman Catholic background and what they are marked by is no assurance, no certainty.

They're crushed so often by guilt and by fear, though they go to mass every single week of their lives. But you see, this text, friends, tells us, look at it, chapter 5, verse 1, that we do have peace. We do have a certain status of acceptance with God. And that is because of what chapter 3, verse 24 says.

Although we have fallen short, utterly short of God's purpose for us, we are justified, says Paul, by his grace as a gift.

[ 32 : 21 ] As a gift. Not by our good works, not by our prayers, not by our performance, not by our faithfulness, not even by our fruitfulness in ministry, just by God's gift.

That is so very humbling. And that's why our pride finds it so hard, that we don't contribute anything, not one iota to our standing with God, not the fact that you've been a faithful church member all your life.

Not the fact that you've been an ordained elder in the church for 50 years and more and you've got a long service certificate. Not the fact that you're a pastor or a preacher or you've stood and preached the gospel.

These are good things to do, but our acceptance with God is not because of these things, but all because of his gift.

gift. And that is why, though, it precisely can be a certain peace. It has been given to us.

[ 33 : 33 ] Just imagine what it must be like to be in one of these war-torn countries like Syria, to be an expatriate stuck there in the outbreak of the terrible fighting and you're desperately trying to get out of the country and all the planes are full or it's absolutely unaffordable for you.

You're in despair. And all of a sudden, along comes a friend and he puts a first-class ticket into your hand, something you could never have afforded, but it's your passport out to peace and safety.

It's a guarantee of your saving. That's the gift of God's grace. And only his gift of righteousness can give us and guarantee us that peace with God.

Because real peace with God can never be bargained for. It can never be bought. It can only be received as a free gift of his grace. Chapter 5, verse 11, Through Jesus Christ we have received reconciliation.

Well, you might say, I can see that. I can see that's what it seems to be saying, but hang on a minute, how can it be a free gift? How can that be just and right?

[ 34 : 52 ] How can that be right if God is a God of justice and takes sin and evil seriously at all? How can Romans chapter 5, verse 6, be right? Look at it. God justifying, declaring to be in the right those who are ungodly.

God that looks so wrong. Just imagine a judge who at the end of a trial declares a heinous rapist and child molester who has been unequivocally proven guilty by the evidence and declared guilty by the jury.

Just imagine if he stood up and said, well, you are guilty of sin. Your crimes and your wickedness are utterly debased and disgusting. Nevertheless, I am releasing you.

There would be outcry, wouldn't there? Rightly so. We would be saying there must be punishment. There must be justice. We've all got a sense of that justice deep within us, haven't we?

And of course that's right. Of course we do. So doesn't God have that sense of justice? Surely, God must punish sin and wickedness. Well, he must.

[ 36 : 08 ] And that is God's great problem. Can he be just in punishing sin and yet, at the same time, be merciful, justifying sinners and making peace with them?

And the answer is, friends, Paul says, yes, he can because of the second certainty that in his Son, Jesus Christ our Savior, the punishment of God is real and certain also.

There can be real saving righteousness for us from God himself because in Jesus there is a real redemption by God himself for us.

How can God both punish man's sin and pardon man's sin? God's sin? How can he do that so as to declare sinful, ungodly people righteous and justified, not guilty?

How can he do that freely as a gift and be a just God? Well, the answer is in chapter 3 in verses 24 and 25 of Romans.

[ 37 : 18 ] You see there, Paul says, this gift comes only through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, our wonderful Savior. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

You know where that language comes from? It comes from the Old Testament. It comes from the Exodus. That was the great redemption, the great rescue of God's people from the powers of Egypt. That was how God's people became his chosen people by grace.

You remember it was a great rescue but it was a great rescue in the midst of a great judgment. God said to his people, I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

And it was a great, great judgment. Do you remember? God judged every home in the land of Egypt. In every home, the first born son was slain by God's avenging angel.

God's evil. No, no, that's wrong. Sorry, I made a mistake. You're saying, not every house. Couldn't be. All the Israelites were spared, weren't they?

[ 38 : 28 ] So not every house was judged. Yes, every house. Every house was judged. Every house was smitten by God.

Every single house in the land of Egypt received a penalty of death. death. But in the homes of all those who heeded God's way of salvation, the blood shed was not their own blood, but it was the blood of the Passover lamb.

When the angel of the Lord saw the blood on the lintels and upon the door posts, he passed by and God's wrath was turned away, was propitiated from that house.

Not because judgment was averted in that house, but because judgment had already fallen in that house.

Because God's wrath was already spent in that house, in the death of the lamb that God himself had provided. Provided as a substitute for his people.

[ 39 : 47 ] The blood of the lamb that propitiated, that turned away the wrath of God and saved his people. And Paul says here, you see, in verse 25, that in just exactly this way there is redemption for all in Christ Jesus, whom God put forth as a propitiation by his blood.

God cannot be just unless he does truly punish sin. That is absolutely true. But you see, in order to be wonderfully merciful, he himself has borne that punishment in himself for us, in his own person, at the cross.

so that as verse 26 here says, he might be just, the punisher of sins and the justifier of sinners through Jesus Christ.

It's impossible for us, impossible as finite human beings to understand fully any possible illustration that we could give is woefully short and feeble and inadequate.

But, let me suggest this. There's a football club and the fans of that club riot terribly.

[ 41 : 22 ] And as a result of that, the punishment that is meted out by the football association is that they will lose 20 points from their league. So, in punishing the team in that way, all the fans of that team are punished.

And so, the president of the football association comes and summons the manager of the club and he says, you are going to lose 20 points as your punishment. The manager responds and says, but that's a disaster for us.

We won't be in Europe next year. We'll lose all our television revenue. We'll lose all our gate receipts. It'll be a disaster. Well, says the president, so be it, but that behavior must be punished, must be seen to be punished.

But, sir, says the manager, that means the end of our club, it'll go bankrupt. We can't possibly pay our debts without these things. Yes, alas, that is so, but justice must be done.

It must be seen to be done. And then there's a pause as the manager looks at him quizzically and says, but sir, you are not only the president of the league and the one who is called upon to pronounce this judgment.

[ 42 : 41 ] You are the owner of this football team. Yes, he says, that's right. And so it'll cost me everything.

But I will sell everything else I have, all my businesses, all my property so that I can pay the debts of this club and it will not be destroyed. But the club must be punished and yet so it can be saved.

I myself will pay the price. I will bear that punishment for all. And just so God himself, you see, in the person of his son, paid it all for us, that we might reap the fruit of a great Savior's grace.

Peace with God is real and certain because there is real righteousness from God as a gift. And that can only be because the punishment of God was real and certain.

Because there is real redemption by God that great cost, that infinite cost in the blood of his own. And therefore, you see, and finally, our pardon from God is real and certain.

[ 44 : 09 ] Simply, to be received from God with the empty hands of faith. Let's look again at these wonderful words in Romans 3, 24 and 25.

As someone has said, perhaps the most important words ever written. Justification, Paul says, our right standing with God is a gift of his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, verse 24.

And verse 25, it is a gift simply to be received by faith. So, look back at chapter 5 and verse 2.

Through Jesus, we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. Do you see?

What's faith? What is faith? Paul says it is simply the empty hands into which we receive this extraordinary gift of God's grace.

It's the door that we walk through into our eternal home in the Father's house, in the home of that marvelous grace. Jesus. And it's our wonderful Savior himself who is that door.

[ 45 : 25 ] I am the door, says Jesus. If anyone enters by me, he'll be saved. Through him also, says Paul, we have obtained access into faith, by faith, into this grace.

It's certain. You see, it is desperately humbling certain. Because there's no other way into God's grace than humbly by faith through Jesus Christ alone.

But it is utterly certain, just because it is by grace alone received into our hands. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The grace of God, friends, and only the grace of God that is in Christ Jesus can ever give us certainty about our status with God.

But it can, through Jesus Christ, our great Savior. Sometimes people misunderstand so badly the meaning of faith.

[ 46 : 35 ] It talks of it as some kind of working up of a feeling inside us about something or trying to believe something that isn't true. That is just not what the Bible means by faith at all.

Faith simply means receiving and not rejecting the grace of God in Jesus Christ, our wonderful Savior. That's all. Receiving, not rejecting.

Why is it so hard to do that? To receive his grace? Well, I think it's because our hands have to be empty to be able to receive so, so great a gift.

You can't grasp hold of other things and have room for the grace of God in Jesus Christ. There's no room for other justifications, other gods, other reasons as to why God should accept us.

It's only into empty hands, humble hands, that that gift can be received. Proud hearts and stubborn wills just cannot ever receive the grace of our Savior.

[ 47 : 58 ] Only the hands that acknowledge that we have nothing to bring, nothing to offer, nothing of ourselves. But empty hands can receive a certain status with God.

Friends, don't refuse the grace of our wonderful Savior. Don't reject him. Receive him. Have faith. faith. And you can know that peace with God. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, how we thank you that we do not have to climb mountains of merit to find your favor, but that you came down to seek us and to save us and to take us to the glory of your heaven.

Give us, we pray, humble hearts, willing hands, and may we respond to the grace of our wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.