

A Certain Status: True Acceptance with God

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[0 : 00] And this morning we're going to be reading through the first eleven verses of Romans 5. The Apostle Paul writes, As it is written, none is righteous.

No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless.

No one does good. Not even one. Let's skip on to verse 21. Paul continues, But now the righteousness of God has been manifested 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 of 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.

[1 : 57] Then over to Romans chapter 5. Verse 1. 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.

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.

And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

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

[3 : 15] 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. Well, amen.

This is God's word, and we'll be returning to it shortly. Well, do you turn with me to Romans chapter 5. I really know I'm back.

The stream is not working, the Wi-Fi is down at Bath Street, and I can't even get the song words right for the hymn, so I really feel at home again. Great. Thank you for that, and it really makes me feel back where I belong.

Well, I thought that after a time of absence from the pulpit, it would be good, I think, to return with a focus on the very heart of the gospel.

[4 : 26] And we're better to do that than in these central chapters, central verses of Paul's letter to the church in Rome. And this passage, Romans 5, 1 to 11, is a passage which is packed full of some of the very key doctrines of the Christian faith.

It touches on justification, on reconciliation, on regeneration and rebirth, on renewal by the Holy Spirit, and by the great hope of glory, of resurrection.

Full of these great doctrines. But, as I hope those who have studied Romans and released the word, and some of you here will have done that over recent years, I hope you'll be quick to point out Romans was not written as a doctrinal treatise.

It's not a textbook of theology in that sense, is it? No, it's a pastoral letter. It's written by a missionary apostle to people that he loves, that he cares for in the church in Rome, and he wants to motivate them and mobilize them for mission along with him.

Romans is a missionary letter. It's written to galvanize the church to join in joyfully in the advance of the gospel. To join in the great task of world evangelization, which is the heartbeat of the apostle Paul's life.

[5 : 47] He himself is eager to reach regions beyond, to go and preach the gospel where the gospel has never been heard. He tells us that very plainly at the end of the letter. And he wants the church in Rome to be part of that, to be involved with him.

But what kind of church is it that will be that kind of missionary church, that truly gospel-focused church? That's the question.

And that's the question, isn't it, always for our church, for every church today. Clearly, a church that's divided because its members are proud, because they're arrogant, because they're filled with self-focus, with self-importance, that church will never be a dynamic or a fruitful gospel church, will it?

No, it's only a church that cherishes the gospel of sheer grace, that banishes all pride. It's only that church that can be truly confident in the power of God's gospel of grace, because they will be seeing the power of that grace at work among themselves.

And so they'll be committed to sharing that transforming grace with others. And that's why this letter was written. As Christopher Ash puts it, it was written to lift Jesus very high and to bring you and me very low.

[7 : 12] You see, the purpose of this letter for its first readers and for all of its readers today, says Christopher Ash, is that the glory of God should be seen in a united missionary church humbled together under grace.

And that's why Paul is concerned in this letter so much to press home so clearly the gospel of grace alone, because only that gospel going deep into the very pores of the church's life, only that gospel can make a church truly humble and therefore truly fruitful in God's hands.

Now it was the rediscovery of that gospel of grace alone during the Reformation in the 16th century that set the whole continent of Europe ablaze with gospel mission, a gospel of sovereign grace able to save to the uttermost even the enemies of God and His people.

But we've got to be careful because it's possible to become so focused on the so-called doctrines of grace that actually that becomes a matter of pride for us. And that really would be the supreme irony, wouldn't it?

And it is possible to be so much talking about sola gratia, about grace alone, that we forget that, of course, what Paul really means is the grace that is focused in Jesus Christ alone, the grace of a personal Savior, the Lord Jesus.

[8 : 35] It's the Lord Jesus who saves us. And we must never depersonalize our salvation. It's striking just how personally Paul speaks of Christ the Savior all through Romans.

Romans tells us very clearly that our salvation is sola gratia. It's by grace alone. But that is because it is sola Christus. It is through Christ alone. And that is certainly something that John Calvin and the other great reformers greatly emphasized, never forgot.

But it's something that's not always been so clearly emphasized by people in the reformed tradition today. We are saved by a great Savior himself, Christ alone.

We must never, ever depersonalize our salvation as though it was all about some sort of a process. No, no, no. It's all staked on a person. It's all through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you read through the letter to the Romans, you will see again and again and again how Paul emphasizes that. Chapter 1, verse 18, he thanks God through Jesus Christ. Chapter 2, verse 16, he says God judges all men through Jesus Christ.

[9 : 46] Chapter 3, verse 22, we read the righteousness of God comes how? Only through Jesus Christ. Here we are in chapter 5, verse 11, we rejoice in God how? Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 21, we have eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. End of chapter 6, exactly the same, verse 23, eternal life is in Jesus Christ our Lord.

End of chapter 7, just the same, thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. End of chapter 8, nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

On and on and on it goes. Go through the letter. Highlight the phrase with a pen. Our salvation is solus Christus and totus Christus.

That's what people use those words meaning. They mean it's just all and only in and through our union with the Savior Himself, with Jesus Christ our Lord.

[10:43] It's all about Jesus. All about Jesus. That's why my little title for this series is the guaranteed fruits of Christ's saving grace.

Because it's in Him, it's in our great Savior Himself, and it's in Him alone that all the fruit of God's grace and mercy are ours. And this little section, 5, 1 to 11, is crammed full of these wonderful fruits of grace that are guaranteed to us, to all believers, because, and only because, ours is a totally sovereign salvation.

And as Josh said, we're going to spend these Sundays in August here in Romans 5, 1 to 11, where Paul lays out these great gospel certainties, all of these fruits that are ours, from God, the sovereign Lord, alone.

And alone are ours in the person of our great Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. And I hope that just taking some time to mine these riches in these verses will help us to meditate more deeply on the meaning of belonging to Jesus.

And that our love for Him, and therefore that our love for one another will grow in depth and in zeal as a result. And we're going to begin today by focusing on what Paul tells us in verse 1 of chapter 5 about the security that we have because we are justified, because we have been declared righteous by God alone in Christ alone.

[12:16] And here he tells us that we have, through our great Savior, we have a certain status. our true acceptance with God, our personal righteousness in His sight is guaranteed.

And it's guaranteed because, and only because, we are righteous through our great Savior alone.

And not, not, through any, any religious performance, any pedigree, or anything like that.

It is God's grace alone. Not any spiritual heritage. It's not our doctrinal purity. Not our church polity. It's none of these things.

It's by God's grace alone in Jesus Christ that we have security of acceptance with God. And we have that forever, for certain. And security is a very important thing, isn't it?

Security of knowing that we are, we're accepted in life. It's very important to us in so many ways, just in ordinary life, isn't it? Little children, when you go to school, they want to know that they're going to be accepted by their friends.

[13:21] Some of them going back to school soon, in a few weeks, in a different class, perhaps some in a different school. They'll be saying to their parents, am I going to have friends in this new class? Will I be accepted? They're not just little children, is it?

Teenagers desperately want to be accepted by their peers. That's why they're so often slaves to fashion. Are they wearing the right shoes, the right sneakers, the right jeans, the right tops? Are they watching the right things?

Are they going to the right places? Will you be accepted by all of these things? That's why so often people become slaves to these fashions. Because at a deeper level, we know, don't we, that all of us crave acceptance.

We crave love. And we need that. And if we lack assurance about that, for example, if we lack assurance that we have the love, the acceptance of our parents, perhaps, especially our father, that can lead to all manner of psychological insecurities in life, can't it?

I remember years ago watching that film, The King's Speech. Do you remember? Some of you will have seen it, I'm sure, about the last king, George VI, and his terrible stammer.

[14:34] And the great sadness, the pathos of that film was that so much of it was traced back to the fact that he never had the acceptance of his father. It was his older brother. His father poured all his love and attention onto.

And he was always disregarded. And sadly, that is often the story of people's lives, isn't it? Some people have not had the certainty of acceptance by their parents when they're young.

And sometimes, their whole life struggles because of that and is blighted by it. People like that often live under a burden of trying to prove themselves, trying to seek love, seek acceptance.

The thing that's very elusive to them and has proved elusive from their earliest days. Sometimes people like that find it very difficult to form and make relationships and keep relationships, don't they? Because they're desperately fearful of losing that acceptance and that belonging.

There's such a huge difference between the fragility of that person and someone who has always been able to say, yes, I know that I have the unequivocal love and acceptance of my father.

[15:37] I know he's proud of me. I know he'll always be proud of me. I know he'll always be my rock of strength. And that's just a fact, isn't it?

That certainty about a parent's approval and perhaps especially a father's approval, it's such a vital thing for health and wholeness and stability in people's lives.

And so also, you see, in a far, far, far greater way is certainty and security about our acceptance with God himself.

Often it's unconscious, but nevertheless, the truth is that from time immemorial and still all over the world today, there are people who are not secure, who don't have that assurance about God's acceptance, who fear God's rejection of them, and therefore, they're seeking that acceptance.

They're driven by it to devote their lives to doing more things, to being better in the hopes that, like the father who never acknowledges his child, at last, somehow they can do something, do enough to win that affection, to win that acceptance.

[16:50] And that quest for acceptance is the thing that defines all human religions. Whether or not it's an overtly religious thing, it can actually be quite an irreligious, it can in fact be a secular or an apparently atheist variety.

But it's all about reaching out and reaching up, seeking approval from the God that you can never be quite sure that you've done enough to win his favor. And that's true whether your idea of God is a religious one or indeed whether it's a material God, whether what you really crave and seek the acceptance of is the world, of society, of whatever it is, of the planet.

But you see, friends, Christian teaching, the Christian faith is the very antithesis of all of that religion. The Christian faith is not about religion at all.

Because it is all about the grace of God our Savior. The writer C.S. Lewis was once asked, wasn't he, famously, to sum up what distinguished Christianity from all these world religions.

And he said, oh, that's easy, just one word, grace. Grace. See, religion of whatever flavor it is, is all about reaching up to find God and to please God and to seek acceptance with God.

[18:15] through rituals or sacrifices or behaviors or whatever it might be. But the grace of Christian faith is the very opposite. It's all about God reaching down to find us and to give us, to give us his unqualified favor and love and acceptance.

acceptance. And it is only grace that can guarantee acceptance with God because it gives that acceptance and that love and that security and gives it freely and abundantly.

And this passage is packed with the guarantees of the grace of God. It's grace that guarantees not just the present but also the future, the full glory of life to come. And you see, where religion puts burdens on people's backs, the grace of God in Jesus Christ does the very opposite.

It puts a song of joy and rejoicing in our hearts. Did you notice that? Three times in this passage we're told about rejoicing. Verse 2, we rejoice in the hope of glory, the full salvation that is still to come.

Verse 11, we rejoice in God himself because of his grace to us in Jesus Christ. And even, look at verse 3, even we rejoice in sufferings now because so secure are we in Christ that we know that even such sufferings in this world serve his wonderful purposes of grace for us.

[19:47] So as I say, I want us to wallow for a few weeks in these wonderful guarantees of God's grace. And first of all, look at chapter 5, verse 1 here. Paul says, we have through our Lord Jesus Christ the guaranteed fruit of a certain status with God, a status of peace with God who is our creator and our judge.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And you'll see that begins with a therefore.

And Paul in this verse is summing up everything he's been talking about since chapter 3, verse 21, the passage that we read earlier, which is all about justification, which means God declaring someone to be in the right with him.

And it's by grace alone and it's something we receive through God's grace to us by faith alone. Turn back to chapter 3, verse 22 that we read there.

The righteousness of God, the right standing, the acceptance with God is through Jesus Christ for all who believe.

[20 : 55] That is all who have faith. And because that is so, therefore, chapter 5, verse 1, therefore, since we have been thus justified, that is declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You see how that declared righteousness of God brackets that whole section. Chapter 3, verse 21 and here in chapter 5, verse 1. So in verse 1 here, he's summing it all up.

He's giving the unequivocal result of that. That because God's saving righteousness is by grace through faith and only because it is, we can be absolutely sure, certain, that we have peace with God and are at peace with him.

A certain status. No doubt. Absolute certainty because it all comes from God himself through Jesus. And I want to look at three certainties that we need to get ourselves very clear on if we're going to understand just how it is that we can say, if we are believers in Jesus Christ, that we can say that we know we have a certain status with God, that we are in the right with him and that we shall always be in the right with him.

Because, you know, there are many people who think that that's a very arrogant thing to say. There are people who profess to be within the Christian church who would say, no, that's presumptuous. How can you possibly say that you know God will accept you?

[22 : 24] Surely it's much humbler to say, well, maybe, maybe God will have mercy on you if you're worthy enough, if you lead a worthy enough, a faithful enough life.

But it's arrogant to say you can know for certain that God will accept you. But no, it's not, you see. Actually, to say that is what is very arrogant because what that assumes is that you might be good enough in yourself for God to have to accept you because he's in your debt and he's obliged to offer you his salvation because you've done so well.

That's actually to be arrogant, isn't it? But you see, to be certain of your acceptance with God actually requires great humility. It requires great self-humbling to accept that, no, you cannot do anything.

You cannot win anything of acceptance with God. It's all his doing. It's all of his grace. And the truth is, only the gospel of grace, only the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ can ever give anyone real certainty of that acceptance with God.

And here's the first thing that's certain. Verse 1, peace with God is real and certain. And that is so because real righteousness comes only from God.

[23 : 48] Only from God. The putting right of a wrong relationship, it's something that God must do and it's something that God has done. And that is because it is God who has the chief problem in this relationship, not us.

Now, it might sound odd, but that's the truth. Because, you see, we need peace with God, don't we? Not primarily because we are at war with God, although in our hearts we have been at war with God, but the real problem is that God is at war with us, with human beings who have rebelled against Him.

And in any broken relationship, there are two sides, aren't there? And both partners are estranged. There can't be reconciliation unless both sides are dealt with.

And in this relationship, you see, it is we human beings who have caused the breakdown. We are the ones who have broken faith with God. We are the ones who have been the unfaithful ones, the adulterers.

And because of that, God is rightly angry with human beings. Turn back again to Romans 3 and look at verse 23. It says it so clearly. All sinned and fall short, lack the glory of God.

[25 : 10] That is, as Paul says earlier in chapter 1 of Romans, we have exchanged the glory of the immortal God for idols, for other gods.

Ultimately, of course, what we have done is made ourselves, our own gods. We live life saying, I'll do it my way. It's no accident, you know, that I read once that that song, I'll do it my way by Frank Sinatra, is one of, if not the, commonest song that is requested to be played at people's funerals. And it sums up rightly, doesn't it, the truth? Because so many human beings have just lived their way, not God's way. And that's the human heart. Now, you can scorn God's glory in a very pagan, irreligious way.

Romans chapter 1 describes that. Chasing debased behavior, living a wild and profligate life. But you can also scorn God's glory in a much more pious and religious way.

And that's what Paul talks about in chapter 2, where he speaks about religious people like the Jews, who were very religious and very morally superior, but utterly hypocritical and just as twisted in heart as the worst pagans.

[26 : 29] And you see, Paul sums up and says, with all of this rejection of God, religious or irreligious, God is not at peace. He is at war. And the wrath of God, he says, is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, all unrighteousness of men, whether it's reprobate filth or whether it's religious fraud.

It's all the same in God's eyes. And there's no way out, not for anyone. Again, look at chapter 3, verse 9, that verse that we read. All, he says there, all, both Jews and Greeks, Gentiles, that's the whole world, all are under sin.

They're under the crushing power of sin and its fruits. Well, is it impossible then for any of us by what we do to win the favor of God?

Yes, it is impossible, says Paul. Look at chapter 3, verse 20. By the works of the Law, no human being, no human being, the most religious person in the world even, no human being will be justified in his sight.

Not one. But despite that, so many people all around the world today go on, trying and trying and trying in their lives. Many religious people seek him.

[27 : 43] Many people think actually that's what Christianity is about. Living a good life, doing the right things, keeping God's law, and then God will allow you into his heaven. That's not Christianity.

That's a hopeless religion dressed up using the language of the Christian faith. It gives no certainty. None at all. Nothing but fear. Nothing but lack of certainty.

Despair. That's the tragedy. I'm afraid of Roman Catholicism still today. It's a religion dressed up in the languages of Christianity. And all the people I know from that background live lives of fear, of uncertainty, and very often of despair.

It's the same with what we call the prosperity gospel, which again uses the language of Christianity, but it's just dressing up mere pagan religiosity. It's about paying things, giving your money, doing this and that, and then God will bring blessing.

But this text tells us that in contrast to all of these things, we can, and indeed true Christians, do have peace, do have certain acceptance with God, because, look at chapter 3, verse 24, because, although we have all fallen short woefully of God's glorious purpose to us, verse 24 says, we are justified by His grace as a gift, 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, but all by God's gift to us.

[29 : 27] Now that is very humbling, isn't it? Our human pride finds that very, very hard. That we contribute nothing, not one iota, nothing, to our standing with God.

Not by being a faithful church member for many, many years. Not by being an elder, or a minister, or a preacher, or an evangelist, or anything. Not by any of these things. We contribute nothing. It is all His gift.

And yet, that is precisely why, friends, it can bring us certainty of peace with God. Imagine you are on holiday or working in a faraway country and suddenly war breaks out.

You get a message from the foreign office saying, all British citizens must evacuate themselves immediately to save yourselves from this terrible war. What are you doing? Well, you're doing everything you can, aren't you, to find a flight out of that place, to find the money, to pay for a ticket. And what you find is, it doesn't matter how much money you have, there are no flights, there are no seats, every seat is taken. And then along comes somebody you knew a long time ago and discover now is working in the embassy and they put into your hand a first class ticket on the next plane out of that war zone to home.

[30 : 50] A guarantee of safety and a flight to salvation. Utterly impossible otherwise. That's the gift of God's grace.

It's only his gift of righteousness that can guarantee us that peace with God, that real reconciliation. It can't be bought. It can't be bargained. It can only be received as God's free gift.

Chapter 5, verse 11, through Jesus Christ we have received reconciliation, he says. But you might be saying to yourself, hang on, how can that be a free gift?

How can it be like that? How can that be just and right? If God's a God who takes sin and evil seriously at all. How can verse 6 of Romans chapter 5 be right at all?

Look at it, God justifying the ungodly. That can't be right. Imagine a judge. Imagine a judge declaring a heinous rapist, an abuser, not condemned but justified to walk through.

[31 : 52] even though all the evidence was utterly damning and the jury says we are utterly convinced this man is guilty. We'd be outraged by that. There must be punishment. There must be imprisonment, we say.

We all have that sense of justice, don't we, in our hearts? Of course we do and so does God. So surely God must punish sin. Yes he must and that is God's great problem.

Can he be just in punishing rebellious human beings sin and also at the same time merciful in justifying sinners and making peace with them? And the answer Paul gives us is yes he can and that is because of the second great certainty that in Jesus Christ our great Savior the punishment of God is real and is certain also.

You see there can be real saving righteousness from God himself because in Jesus there is real redemption by God himself. How can God both punish man's sin and pardon man's sin?

And so declare sinful people, ungodly people, righteous, justified, not guilty. How can he do that freely as a gift? Well the answer you see is there in Romans chapter 3 verses 24 and 25.

[33 : 12] Look again. Paul says that this gift comes only through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus in our wonderful Savior. The redemption.

What does that mean? Well that language comes from the Old Testament. That language comes from the Exodus. That was the great redemption of God's people. The great rescue of God's people from the powers of Egypt remember.

To become his chosen people by grace. God's people and you remember it was a great rescue. Read the story but don't forget that it was a rescue in the midst of great judgment.

Do you remember? God said to the people I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. And it was a great judgment. God judged every home in Egypt that night. In every home every home the firstborn was slain by God's avenging angel. Oh you've been on sabbatical too long pastor.

[34 : 15] It wasn't every home was it? Of course. Go back and read the story. You've forgotten. The Israelites were spared weren't they? So not every house was judged. No.

You go back and read the story. Every house in Egypt was smitten with the judgment of God. Every single house faced and received a penalty of death.

God's judgment through his angel. But in the houses of all who heeded God's promised way of salvation that blood that was shed that judgment that fell was not upon them themselves it was the blood of the Passover lamb.

Remember? And when the angel of the Lord saw the blood on the doorposts and on the lintels he passed by and the wrath of God's judgment was turned away.

It was propitiated. Not not because judgment was averted on that house but because judgment had already fallen on that house. God's wrath was already spent in the death of the lamb that God had provided.

[35 : 28] the substitute for the blood of his people. The blood of the lamb that propitiated that turned away the wrath of God that saved his people.

And look at verse 25 here in Romans 3. See what Paul says? Just in this same way there is redemption for all who are in Christ Jesus whom God put forth as a propitiation by his blood. the lamb of God. God cannot be just unless he does truly punish sin. That's true. But in order to be wonderfully merciful he himself bears that punishment for us in his own person on the cross so that he might be as verse 26 here says just the punisher of sins but also do you see the justifier of sinners through Jesus Christ through Jesus Christ.

It's impossible for us to plumb the depths of that reality fully and any illustration always falls woefully short but think of this think of think of a football club perhaps your football club because of rioting and bad behavior of the fans the football league impose a great punishment they're going to lose crucial points in the league and that's the way that all the fans are punished in the punishment that the team and the club is going to bear and the president of the league confronts the manager of the team and says you're going to lose 12 points in this last month of the season the manager looks at him and says well that's catastrophic for the club we'll be out of Europe we'll lose all the TV money lose the gate receipts it's a disaster well so he says the chairman of the league that behavior must be punished but sir the club will go bankrupt he says we can't pay our debts yes says the chairman

alas that's true but justice must be done it must be seen to be done and there's a long pause and the manager looks in consternation at the chairman of the league and says but sir you're not just the chairman of the league who's called to pass judgment you're the owner of this club and he says yes and so it's going to cost me also everything

I will sell all that I have to pay the club's debts but the club must be punished yet so it can be saved I will pay the price myself I will bear the punishment for all you see in just that way God himself in the person of his only son paid it all he paid it all for us so that we might reap that fruit of a savior's grace peace with God real and certain because there is real righteousness from God as a gift and that can only be because the punishment of God was also real and certain that there is real redemption by God at great cost at infinite cost the precious blood of our Lord Jesus and therefore you see thirdly we can know that our pardon from God is real it is certain it's something to be received by God simply in the empty hands of faith look again at these wonderful words in chapter 3 verses 24 and 25 as someone has said perhaps the most important words ever written on this planet justification the status of right standing of peace with God is a gift of his grace through the redemption that's in

[39 : 32] Jesus Christ it's a gift simply to be received by faith for all sinned and fall short of 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 by his blood and that's why if you look again at chapter 5 verse 2 through him through Jesus we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand what is faith faith is simply the empty hands that receive this extraordinary gift of God's grace it's simply the door that we walk through into the father's house into the home of his marvelous grace and our Lord Jesus Christ himself is that door our great savior is that door I am the door he said if anyone enter by me he will be saved it is certain certain through him we have obtained access by faith into this grace it's certain you see it is isn't it so deeply humbling because there's no other way no other way into the peace of

God and acceptance with him except humbly through Jesus by faith alone but it is utterly certain just because it is by faith alone just because it is a sheer gift of God's amazing grace therefore since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ the grace of God and only the grace of God that's in our Lord Jesus Christ can give us that guarantee of that certain status with God forever and that's why the Christian gospel really is good news good news for the whole world sometimes people totally misunderstand the meaning of this word faith they think faith is all about working up some feeling about something trying to believe that something is true when it really isn't that's the very opposite of what the Bible means by faith faith just means receiving and not rejecting the grace of God in Jesus Christ the Son why is it so hard to do that for people to receive his grace well it is hard isn't it and it's hard because your hands have got to be empty to receive that great gift you can't grasp hold of other things you can't keep hold of other justifications as to why

God should accept you you can't do that at the same time as receiving his grace it requires utterly empty hands because the gift of his grace is so enormous and so overwhelming there is no room for anything else proud hearts stubborn wills cannot receive the grace of a savior and therefore they can't share it with anyone else either only empty hands the hands of those who acknowledge that they have nothing no status with God for our own merits but we can have a certain status we can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ friends don't refuse his grace you have been stop trust him have faith open your hands open your hearts to our great savior and as a church let's never forget that this alone is the true grace of our great savior the

Lord Jesus because only if we are a church who are humbled truly together by this gospel will we be a church who can herald together this true gospel to the world to our families to our friends to our city to all who are here the grace of God to us through our Lord Jesus Christ let's pray Lord it is indeed only by grace the grace that is in our great savior Jesus that we can enter and stand in your presence at peace as the hymn says not by our human endeavor only by the blood of the lamb but how thankful we are that that's so because it means that you call us to come into your presence and you draw us by your grace because our transgressions are not marked and we are cleansed by the blood of the lamb and so we come Lord humbly and yet boldly and gladly into your glorious presence through our

Lord Jesus Christ and as we come together now to his table will you fill our hearts afresh with that great assurance of your grace which is ours certainly through our great Savior because we ask it in

his great and glorious name Amen!
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