

A continuous standing with God

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Date: 26 January 2014

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[0 : 0 0] Well, perhaps you take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 5, which you'll find on page 942. We'll be looking tonight at chapter 5, verses 1 to 11, but first we're going to read just a verse or two from chapter 3, a page back, 941.

Let me read Romans 3, chapter 20. For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

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.

And on to chapter 5, verse 1. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance.

[1 : 3 0] 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. 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.

[2 : 3 8] And may God bless to us this his word. Amen. Well, would you like to open your Bibles with me at Romans chapter 5 and at the passage we read together?

Second of our studies, in the fruits of a great Savior's grace. And tonight I want to concentrate really on verse 2 and verse 11, which speak to us eloquently of the continuous standing that we as Christian believers have with God.

As I said last time, one of the things that all human beings crave and need is acceptance. Love and acceptance and approval from those who are most important to us.

And that goes very deep because we want to be accepted. We want to be loved for who we are and what we are.

Now that, of course, is a problem when people want to define who they are by some factor that is so important to them that their whole identity becomes bind up with that factor.

[3 : 56] That's what can lead to real slavery, real psychological and even physical bondage at times. Take the example of a young girl who's so desperate to have a body beautiful and approved by others in that sense, like the fashion models and so on, that drives them to seek that desperate approval in all kinds of desperate ways by becoming desperately thin, overly obsessed with their looks and so on, in such a way that it makes them psychologically ill.

And there are many other examples similarly. But you see, our identity does not lie in our bodies or our looks or in our professional reputation or in our marital status or our fertility status or anything else at all, including our sexuality.

That's become such a big issue today, hasn't it? But if I'm determined to define myself by my so-called sexuality, whatever that is, by the way, the very idea of a nebulous thing called sexuality, it's a very recently manufactured idea, 20, 30 years ago.

Nobody had ever heard of something like that. But if I am determined to define myself, say, by my sexuality, then I will be determined, won't I, that my sexuality is accepted and is approved and is even celebrated by others because I've made that my identity.

It's who I am. And so to reject that is to reject me as a person. But all of these ways of thinking are deeply flawed, terribly misplaced.

[5 : 57] The truth is that our identity, our value, our worth, the very heart of who we are and what we are, it doesn't lie in any of these things.

It lies in the simple fact of our humanity, that we are creatures made in the image of God himself, made by God and made for God.

And to define ourselves in any other way at all, far from dignifying us, in fact, actually dehumanizes us.

Bob was quoting from C.S. Lewis this morning, and I'm going to again this evening. C.S. Lewis in the book *Prince Caspian* at one point makes Aslan say this to one of the children. You come from the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve, and that is both honor enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth.

And friends, that is what the Christian gospel teaches us. And so when we begin to understand that truth, when we begin to grasp the reality of all this as the gospel of Christ unfolds it to us, then we naturally begin to realize that the real acceptance that we need, the real acceptance that we crave, the only acceptance that matters at all is our acceptance by God who made us.

[7 : 29] But of course, as we begin to understand the Christian gospel, we also begin to understand that that is the one thing that by our nature eludes us.

Because as we read in Romans 3 verse 23, all human beings alike have sinned and lack the glory of God, the glory God created us for, and the glory God desires from us as creatures made to be in his image.

All alike, whether irreligious pagans or whether religiously pious, all alike, says Paul, are under sin. That is utterly under sin's power and sin's sway.

So that as Rupert read to us, by the works of the law, no human being will be justified, will be accepted in God's sight. And you see, that is the collective malady of the human condition.

That is the pathology that underlies all human ills. All of the multiplying of symptoms that manifest themselves in our human condition, both morally and very often psychologically also.

[8 : 45] There is a collective anxiety, a collective neurosis that is deeply embedded in the human heart. And just like any other neurosis, very often it goes unrecognized, but it is there.

It is a destructive, damaging force at the very heart of our lives. But you see, the gospel of God is the sure and the certain answer to all of that uncertainty, to all of that lack of peace that is at the heart of our human condition.

No human religion on earth can possibly ever bring peace to the anxious heart. In fact, human religion feeds on that anxiety and that uncertainty that we feel.

Because it's all focused on making us constantly reach up and reach out to try and know that we can please God. Try and know that we could please the gods or whoever it is that we think is out there.

But the anxiety never dies. The anxiety is constant. That's what fuels religious activity. It's what gives human religion its power, its hold over people.

[10 : 04] Only grace, the grace that reaches down in a wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ, only grace can bring us that certainty.

But it does. That's why verse 1 of Romans chapter 5 is so important with that great therefore. Therefore, because we have been justified by grace, that is, by God's grace, as a sheer gift received into these empty hands of ours by faith, because of that, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our status before God is certain. It's certain today, and it's certain forever. Because it's not something we have to do, not something we can do.

It's all about something God has done himself. Our wonderful Savior has done it. God was angry with us. That's the truth.

And he has made peace with us through the blood of his cross, as Paul says to the Colossians. He himself, in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus, he's made himself a propitiation, a sacrifice, to turn aside his own wrath against our sin.

[11 : 26] And so, we are at peace. Verse 11, we are reconciled. And notice again, it's not through some sort of peace and reconciliation process in which we participated.

Look at it. It's something we simply received. We have received reconciliation as a free gift. A gift that was achieved for us, if you look at verse 10, by the death of his Son.

And when? While we were still enemies. So, let's be absolutely clear about this. It is nothing to do with us making peace with God.

As though we were once rebels, but somehow we have reconciled ourselves to God. People often talk in that way, don't they? People sometimes say that sort of thing. Oh, you better make your peace with your Maker before it's too late.

But the Bible says, no, that is impossible. You can't make peace with your Maker. The Gospel is all about God making peace with us.

[12 : 35] In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself. And therefore, if you look at chapter 2 of our chapter, through him also, that's a better word order there, through our Lord Jesus Christ also, through his once for all death on the cross, says Paul, we have obtained access.

That is permanent access into a world of wonderful grace, into God's own presence, into the Father's house. And there, says verse 2, we stand.

We stand in grace, now and always. We have a continuous standing with God.

And that's the second great fruit of our wonderful Savior's grace. Our personal relationship with God is guaranteed because we are reconciled through our great Savior alone, by grace, not by our faithfulness, not by our fruitfulness, but by his grace alone.

If we've entered by the door that is Jesus Christ himself, then we have gone from one world to another. Just like the children in Narnia who went through the door and found themselves in another world.

[14 : 03] Except this time, it's a one-way door. There's no going back through that door. No going back. We have left the world that we were once in. The realm, as Paul puts it, of being under sin.

The home of sin and death. And we've entered the home of grace and peace. Look down to verse 21 at the end of chapter 5. See the stark contrast that Paul makes between these two worlds.

Once he says we belong to a realm where sin reigned in death. But now, look, grace reigns through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You go through the door of the Lord Jesus Christ, our wonderful Savior, in his death on the cross, and you go into a world where grace reigns now and forever.

That's the Christian gospel. And we stand, therefore, continuously, now and forever, in grace. We've been brought back into the nearer presence of God himself, and we've been brought back permanently.

[15 : 15] Our status is certain, and so our standing is continuous in God's presence. We have permanent acceptance with God, and therefore, we really do have permanent access to God.

because our righteousness with God is real and is unshakable by grace, then our ongoing relationship with God is real and unshakable by his grace.

That's what verse 11 of Romans 5 proclaims, loud and clear. We have received reconciliation. Do you see, he also says, we rejoice. We rejoice in a real and permanently restored relationship.

We rejoice in God, now, he means, through our Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoice in his person and his presence. We rejoice just like friends do, together, sharing in each other's joy.

We have permanent access into the presence of God in a way that no one could ever have before the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead.

[16 : 30] Under the Old Testament era, only the high priest could enter the most holy place behind the curtain and even then only once a year and bringing a blood sacrifice.

But now, Paul says, through Christ's permanent sacrifice that fulfills all the need for sacrifice that will ever be, we have a permanent access to the most holy place.

We have a continuous standing with God. We have fellowship with him always and forever. And friends, Christian faith simply means trusting in the fact of this whatever our feelings may happen to be at any particular time.

I want to think how this fact relates to our various feelings and think about when these two things seem to be in conflict as they sometimes are.

Do we respond with faith or with fear? So we're going to think about facts and feelings and faith and fear.

[17 : 44] First of all, then, the fact of our permanent access to God. The most important thing to say about it is, as I've already said, it is simply a fact.

We've received this reconciled relationship. We've received this intimacy with God. That's what verse 11 is saying. It's happened once and for all. It's ours now and we can't unreceive it.

That's why we rejoice or, as you'll see, the footnote translates, we boast. We celebrate confidently in God our direct access to the Father through Jesus Christ and through him alone.

We don't need anyone else. We don't need anything else ever to bring us into the nearer presence of God. We are there continuously all the time.

We are now and we always will be in God's nearer presence because we've received the privileged status that guarantees that presence.

[18 : 47] And that is true, friends, whether we feel that presence more at some times than others or not. It's a fact. A few years ago I was in South Africa for a ministry conference.

It was held in Cape Town and when I arrived in the country I went through the passport control and then I was in the country. And at first it was very obvious I was in a new country.

The scenery was very striking. The people were very different. The buildings looked different. The sun was visible in the sky so it obviously was a very different country from this one. And it was very obvious.

But I have to say at times during the 10 days or so that I was there perhaps when I was inside the hotel or inside the conference center it felt as if I could have been anywhere in almost any part of the world.

Most hotels and conference centers inside are just the same aren't they? And it didn't feel at times as if I was in Africa. But if I was in any doubt about that all I had to do was walk outside the building and look up to the sky and I could see Table Mountain there and the sun shining above it.

[19 : 59] And I could see all the people around me and I remember I'm in Africa it's obvious. What I didn't need to do was to go back to the airport and find an immigration officer and get him to stamp my passport and say to me all over again yes you've now entered the country.

I was there even when it didn't feel like I was there. I just needed to reckon on the facts as they really were facts not on my feelings about what the truth might seem to be at that time.

Well think about a newly married couple. By the way it was remissive this morning not to congratulate our apprentice Anna on her engagement to her fiancée Graham.

I can't see where you are Anna but you'll be blushing anyway so I won't look at you. But congratulations. But talking of wedding days there's all the excitement and the show and it's very obvious isn't it at any wedding who is the bride and groom and it's very obvious that they are now husband and wife.

They clearly entered into a new world of married life. But you know even then and even on the wedding day sometimes it doesn't quite feel like that at first.

[21 : 08] We go down to the vestry after the service to sign the wedding papers and so on and when I say to the bride well congratulations Mrs. Dimbleby Smythe she usually looks around at her mother-in-law.

Mrs. Dimbleby Smythe Senior She doesn't realize that that's actually her now. Now it's the last time she's going to sign her maiden name. She needs to get a grip on the facts.

It's a new world. A new intimacy and relationship. By the way that's the right place isn't it? And the only place for that full sexual intimacy.

But marriage does open the door to that newly intimate relationship and not just once. Always. After the first night of marriage a man doesn't have to go and find a minister again and get himself married all over again so that he can be intimate with his wife again.

Thank heavens for that. Goodness. Of course not. The certain status of marriage what is written upon that marriage paper has opened the door forever properly to a continuous standing to a relationship of continuous and permanent married intimacy.

[22 : 29] And friends so it is with our entrance by grace into God's intimate presence and peace. Verse 2 we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

we're there even if sometimes we forget it even if sometimes we don't feel it. Jesus has brought us there himself and that means we're there forever.

And that is the fact for every true Christian who has trusted Christ. Christ. And it's so vital to emphasize that fact because secondly our feelings do sometimes seem to deny that fact.

Sometimes we just don't feel as if we really are intimate with God. Sometimes we just don't feel as if God is present. Sometimes we just don't feel assured of his peace and his acceptance that it really is real that it's happened.

Isn't that right? You know that's right. We all feel that at times. All sorts of things can make us feel as if things are not right with us and God.

[23 : 48] Sometimes it is sin in our lives that shakes our assurance of God's presence that makes us feel that there's no connection between us and God anymore. And the truth is if we let sin, willful sin, come between us and God then we shouldn't be surprised, should we?

That it affects our feelings about our faith. Shouldn't be surprising that we would lose sight of the face of God if we're deliberately turning away from him and rebelling against him.

Somebody's put it like this, sin grieves the spirit and he withdraws, not his presence, but the sweetness of that presence. And when that happens, our assurance will cloud over too and dark doubts may disturb our peace.

peace. The whole world looks so very different, doesn't it, when the clouds cover the sun. And that can happen, so to speak, in our Christian lives when we're being willfully disobedient.

One of the most common reasons in my experience for younger Christians to get into that state of doubt and confusion is because they've got themselves into a wrong relationship, very often a romantic relationship.

[24 : 59] deep down they know it's wrong, but they run away from anybody who tells them it's wrong. Usually it takes them away then from church fellowship and people who will be faithful with them.

And it's hardly surprising then, is it, that after a little time people feel, well, very distanced from God and begin to question their own faith. That's just one thing.

There are many, many other things, of course. But the answer to that, if it is willful sin, if you know that you're doing wrong, the answer to that is very, very simple. One word. Repent.

Stop it. Ask the Lord to forgive you. Ask the Lord to help you do what is right and turn away from what is wrong. And when you turn towards the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, his smile will once again shine upon you.

And you will know and feel his presence. But sometimes it's not unacknowledged sin. Sometimes it's the shame of sin that we have acknowledged and have repented.

[26 : 11] But it can crush us and it can make us feel as if God has cast us off. Again, we know the gospel. We know Romans 8 tells us that no one can bring any charge against God's elect. We know that no one can condemn those whom Christ has justified, whom Christ has declared right with God.

That's the fact. But our hearts often don't feel that fact, do they? Our hearts so easily condemn us.

Because our hearts have access, don't they, to so much evidence of our own sin. Wikipedia, WikiLeaks, Edward Snowden, all of that.

They have nothing compared to the secret files about sin that would condemn me from my heart. And I guess most of you are the same.

And you see, that means that even when we are penitent about our sin and not proud, so often we can feel condemned. We can feel as though we can't have access to God, as though we wish we could.

[27 : 18] Sometimes it's various kinds of sufferings that make us feel that God has separated himself from us.

And again, we know because Paul tells us in Romans 8 that none of these things, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, sword, none of these things can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ.

That's a fact. But the truth is, it often feels like they do, doesn't it? And you get that hard, hard news from the doctor that suddenly shatters your hopes.

Or when you're facing terrible struggles at home or at work, or maybe being victimized at school by friends because of your faith. It feels as if God has distanced himself, even as if he's abandoned you.

Isn't that right? We say things like this, so many bad things have happened to me. It just must be, must be that God's angry with me. Or it must be that I've done something that has made him desert me and leave me.

[28 : 36] Sometimes we even say, well, I've begun to wonder if I ever really was a Christian at all. I'm not sure I am. It can be very, very, very easy to think these things.

And then, of course, lurking behind all of these is Satan himself, the great accuser, the one who prowls, says Peter, seeking whom he may devour, telling us in our ears, in the quiet moments of the night when we're at our lowest point, telling us that we must have lost that access to God that we once had because, well, we would feel differently if it weren't true.

Telling us that really we can no longer expect God to hear our prayers. We can no longer expect God to draw near to us. See, he is the great liar. He's the father of lies.

And he loves nothing more than to find something that is the truth that he can latch onto, that we know is true, a sin that we know is real in our life, something that we've done or something we've said or something we haven't done.

And we know it's true. And he latches onto that truth and he takes it and twists it and uses it as a dagger to drive it into your heart, to deceive you and to accuse you and to turn your eyes away in the other direction, away from the grace of our wonderful Savior, which he so despises.

[30 : 07] and always loves to turn people away from. Now friends, when the facts of our wonderful Savior's grace are assaulted by these feelings in our weak hearts, we can react in one of two ways, either with fear or with faith.

either we trust the facts and we believe what God has told us is true, that we do have permanent access to God our Father through Jesus, through Jesus alone, and through Jesus forever, or we fear.

that means we don't trust God's truth, we don't honor the wonderful cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we disbelieve that we have permanent access to God our Father through Jesus' death alone.

And you know the tragic thing is that so many of us so often do the latter, we fear, and we deny in practice what we say we believe, that we have true and permanent access to God our Father.

But in practice what we do is we seek some other means of finding that acceptance with God and feeling accepted again. But you know, when we do that, what we're really doing is scorning the cross of our wonderful Savior, what we're really saying is, well, it's not enough on its own to bring me continuously to God.

[32 : 03] I need another door, I need something more to reopen my relationship with God. We may not realize it, but that is what we're saying when we do that.

You don't believe me? Let me ask you, when your heart condemns you for your sins, or when you're struggling, or when you're suffering, when you're feeling dry as though you're not experiencing God and as you feel you want to.

Who or what is your real priest to open up that access to God for you again? Is it our great Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, alone by simply trusting that he has done for you what he says he has done for you, and open the door forever to the Father's house?

Or is it someone else? Is it something else? Do you say, I have a priest forever, and I know I do stand continuously in his grace, so I'll rejoice in God with absolute confidence through Jesus alone, no matter how I'm feeling, or what the devil tells me?

Or do you actually seek out for yourself another priest, another mediator, one that you can see, to give you something that you can see, or you can feel, or you can touch, something that gives you a sense of assurance, a better assurance about God's presence with you?

[33 : 41] So very, very tempting, isn't it, to do that? To seek out these other assurances. Might be for some the assurance of institutional access to God, perhaps, through institutional priests and practices, like going to some special holy place, like millions and millions of so-called pilgrims do every year, as though going to some place would give you better access to God than Jesus Christ, our wonderful Savior, has already done.

or to some special holy person, as if their prayers and their blessing would be able to give you better access to God, than our wonderful Savior Jesus.

That's a great attraction, isn't it, of course, of Roman Catholicism with all its wonderful institutionalism, with its confessionals, with its penances. You go and you see a visible priest, he speaks words to you, gives you things to do, and you can go away with a sense of holding on to something and saying, well, there's some assurance if I do this.

It doesn't last long. Actually, plenty of Protestants can act so very similarly, can't they, with their clergy, as though a pastor or a minister had some special access to God for you that you don't have through Jesus, our wonderful Savior.

It's very tempting to some to seek a mystical or experiential access to God through experiential praise priests who claim to lead people into worship, into God's nearer presence.

[35 : 20] There's such a huge, huge misunderstanding, isn't there, everywhere today, especially in the whole Christian music industry, as though music were some kind of special worship, some kind of special temple sacrifice.

that could gain you special access into God's presence and power. If you just read the so-called worship albums that you'll buy in the Christian bookshops, that's what they say.

I looked at the cover of two CDs, one of them said this, this will take you onto a deeper level with God, just by listening to this CD. And another one says it leads you into the presence of God.

It's another alternative human priesthood, isn't it, that we have to have as well as what our wonderful Savior Jesus has done for us on the cross.

But this CD can do what he hasn't done properly. It's very, very tempting, isn't it, also, when we don't feel God's near presence, to seek access to God by our own performance.

[36 : 30] Long periods of intense praying or fasting or some other spiritual discipline. Things that aim to seek the Lord's face constantly and intensely until our feelings are aroused.

Many, many well-meaning young Christians have so often been led into bondage by very well-meaning older Christians. well-meaning but overly pietistic.

Friends, it's Jesus himself who tells us plainly that so often those kind of things are not the hallmark of true piety, but the very mark of paganism and hypocrisy. Read what Jesus says in Matthew 6 in the Sermon on the Mount.

It's the pagans who turn to that kind of relentless religious fervor. It's the hypocrites who go on and on like that. Jesus says, don't you do as they do. You can come directly to your heavenly father, says Jesus, with just a few words of humble trust.

Our father in heaven. You see how all of these things, things that we so often do in response to our feelings, all of these things flatly contradict what Paul is teaching us here.

[37 : 54] That if you're in Christ by faith, then you have entered forever God's nearer presence through Jesus Christ, our wonderful Savior alone.

You can't get any nearer than where he has brought you. If anyone loves me, Jesus said, you remember in John 14, my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

A permanent home, not a temporary tent, not a caravan. We will make our home with him forever. You stand continuously in the grace of God's nearer presence.

What more can we possibly, possibly add to that? Say things like, well, this will take me nearer into God's presence.

Friends, that is a terrible blasphemy because it implies that Christ hasn't done enough for me. I've got to add something myself to keep this privilege with God.

[39 : 03] I've got to do something myself to foster this real intimacy, this real nearness. No, says Paul. Never, ever. You're not justified by singing.

Even if you sing the same song 20 times over, as some Christians seem to think is especially effective in bringing you nearer to God. All that does is drive sane and balanced people out of the church altogether.

Nor are you justified by spiritual heroics in prayer or fasting or meditation or memorizing catechisms or reformed confessions or books of theology or anything else in the panoply of spiritual gymnastics.

You don't need all that, says Jesus, because I've already brought you to the Father. All you need to do is very simple.

You just kneel down and you say to him, Father, in heaven. And that's how you pray. No shouting. No need for long interminable prayers.

[40 : 14] Our Heavenly Father isn't deaf. He's not demented. He can hear you. He'll get it the first time. You don't have to repeat it 50 times. So Paul's saying, come, I know that sometimes you don't feel that God is near.

But don't react with fear. Have faith in the facts. Have faith in the truth about the fruits of our Saviour's great grace to you.

See, reacting with fear really means rejecting the Lord Jesus. It means distrusting him. It means turning your back on everything that he's done for you. All his wonderful love for you, as though that somehow was not enough.

You're scorning the precious blood that he shed so willingly for you when you think like that. No one in my life, I think, has helped me and countless others more to understand this than William Still.

And this little book, The World of Grace, if it's still in print, it's full of so many treasures from the preaching that so blessed me and so many others years ago.

[41 : 32] Let me read a little bit to you. This is the way to deal with the crippling fears that terrorize us and paralyze us. Run to God and believe in the rest he promises.

The only cure for insecurity is to let the real and substantial securities we have in Christ and in our loved ones and friends in Christ come home to us and seep into the very roots of our personality.

That may seem very difficult, but it's not hard to see what in fact militates against the healing process of our rest in God and our enjoyment of him. It's that we will not accept his estimate of us.

We just don't believe him. We tell God he's a liar. We're worse than that. We know better than he does. We won't let him be good to us. That's the root of our trouble.

That's why thrashing either by ourselves or by others is the worst thing in the world for us. You could really see this, he says.

[42 : 36] The light and the truth of God's sheer grace could really penetrate and percolate into the depths of your soul. It would help an awful, awful lot.

Most of the trouble with us, he says, is insecurity. And the great answer to that is that God sets an infinite value upon us.

And the hardest thing in the world is for us to accept, really accept God's kind, generous estimate of us.

He knows our faults better than anyone else. And yet he is the kindest with us. Nor is his kindness false or unreal. He is really kind because he really values us.

And we just won't believe it. We won't believe it. If we let that sink into our fibers, it will deal with all the lack of confidence.

[43 : 41] It will at the same time give us a confidence which is completely humble. Friends, those words are so true and so very vital for us all to take in deep down into our souls.

And not only for our own personal lives, but also for the life and the health of our corporate life together as a fellowship. Listen to William Still again.

I find it very hard to convince some people in the fellowship that they are really accepted. They'll tell you all about their past. I'm not caring about their past. I have a past.

I'm not caring about that either. I'm not going to dig into it or into yours. It doesn't matter a rap what our past is. It doesn't matter who we are or what we are.

If God has laid his hands upon us and chosen us in Christ to be his, then we've got to learn to love one another and trust one another equally. Whoever unequal we may be intellectually and as far as class, education, and culture are concerned, that's of no importance.

[44 : 52] Absolutely of no importance. There's room for all kinds. Let's have the clever and let's have the simple. And let them join together and be brothers and help one another and drive the devil out.

Sometimes we forget there is such a person as the devil, such a being. We must never do that. Don't be distracted by him, but keep him in mind and keep him at bay.

David says, in the midst of foes, he set a table for me, and I sat under his shadow and ate and enjoyed, and Satan's wild beasts could not touch me. Friends, let's get a load of this and swallow it whole.

That is Paul's message here to us tonight in these verses, friends. Get a hold of it and swallow it whole that we have received in the reconciliation that is in Christ.

all that we need forever to keep us intimately in the presence of our God and Savior.

[46 : 11] Just as a woman can look at her wedding ring and see that, yes, she is married. Of course she is, whatever her feelings might be. Or just like someone in a far city can go out and look at the landscape and the terrain and be reminded, yes, I am here in this country.

Well, let me show you once again the landmarks, the wonderful certain fruit of our great Savior's grace here in verse 2 and verse 11. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through him also we have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.

and we rejoice now in the hope of the glory of God. More than that, verse 11, we also rejoice now in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Doesn't that tell you that whatever you may feel at times or whatever you may have done, the fact is that if you love the Lord Jesus Christ, then you stand continuously in his grace.

And so you can rejoice. You can celebrate confidently. You can boast with great joy in your permanent access to the Father's heart through Jesus Christ alone, through our great and wonderful Savior.

[47 : 47] you. You can live today, you can live tomorrow, you can live every day to come, not in fear, but in faith.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, our wonderful Savior.

And although we cannot compute or understand, sometimes when sin overwhelms us, when the struggles and the sufferings of this fallen world make us weak, or when the devil himself terrorizes us with all his worst, we find it so hard to grasp the truths of your great grace.

But it is marvelous, and it is wonderful, and it is certain, because it's not our doing, but it is the fruit of our great and wonderful Savior.

And so may he fill our hearts and our minds with joy and with peace this night. For we ask it in his name.

[49 : 14] Amen.