

Stumbling on God's grace

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[0 : 0 0] Well, turn with me, if you would, to the passage you read in Romans chapter 10, page 946 in the Visitor's Bibles. Passage all about stumbling on God's grace.

Last Thursday, I was looking around the halls in Bath Street in the evening, and in the Grand Hall there were all the groups of young workers and students doing Release the Word.

Upstairs, I went into one room and I found John Taylor surrounded by a dozen Iranian men, all with open Bibles. I went downstairs to find Elspeth in another room surrounded by Chinese ladies, all with open Bibles.

And other two rooms were full of internationals doing exactly that. It was a great joy to see people who have had none of the cultural privileges or Christian heritage that we've had, to see them responding with joy to Jesus Christ.

A friend of mine, another minister, said to me a little while ago that a Chinese person had said to him in his church, I will invite all the Chinese people I know around to my house for dinner, and you will come and explain the Gospel of Jesus to them.

[1 : 1 2] Not a question, a command. And he said to me, no Scotsman has ever said that to me. Not ever. And so often that's what we find, isn't it?

Many from other nations with little or no Christian influence or privileges are responding to the Lord Jesus Christ. Whereas many of our own nation, by great contrast, are impatient, or disinterested, or increasingly, frankly, hostile.

To the faith which we've been so privileged to know in this nation for centuries. So we have a paradox.

On the one hand, we are rejoicing as Paul rejoices at the end of Romans 11, in the wisdom and the wonder of the works of God. Drawing people to himself from all over the world.

And yet on the other hand, we find ourselves grieving as Paul grieves at the beginning of Romans chapter 9. We have sorrow and anguish in our hearts that so many of our own kinsmen, according to the flesh, who have had all these privileges, yet reject the grace of God.

[2 : 2 5] Including many, perhaps in our own families. Many of our own friends. Some who are very dear to us, perhaps.

And at the moment, are very far away from the Lord Jesus. And that's the paradox that Paul sums up here in verses 30 and 31 of chapter 9.

They're like the man in Jesus' parable who finds, to his extraordinary amazement and joy, treasure in the middle of a field.

They've found righteousness, says Paul. They've found right relationship with God. They've rejoiced in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet privileged Israel, who have had the law, says verse 31, a law of righteousness, they've for the most part not reached the goal of their own law.

They've stumbled over God's grace. Not into it. Why, asks Paul, verse 32. Why, if God is sovereign in salvation, and he certainly is absolutely sovereign in salvation, we saw that in chapter 9.

[3 : 50] Why have God's people Israel not got it? What their own law was all about. Well, the answer, says Paul, in verse 32, is because they did not pursue it by faith.

They didn't believe. It's not God's grace that's deficient, says Paul. But God's saving grace must be received. It must be received with the empty hands of faith.

God's saving righteousness, which the law and the prophets all bear witness to, and which is all of God's sovereign mercy, remember, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, that must be received with humble, obedient faith.

It's all about faith from first to last, says Paul in Romans 1. Do you remember? The constant message of the scriptures, he says, is that the righteous will live by faith. That's what the Old Testament's about.

But Israel did not pursue God's saving revelation in the law and the prophets by faith. They would not humbly receive God's righteousness for what it really was, God's grace and his mercy to them.

[5 : 06] They rejected God's grace. Instead, Paul says, look, they pursued the law as if it were by works, as though it was a matter of their own righteousness.

They thought, you see, because of their privileged status as God's covenant people, his chosen people, that they could stand proudly and be welcomed by God like that into his kingdom.

But no one enters the kingdom of God that way. His kingdom is a kingdom of grace and mercy. And the only way to enter that kingdom is by kneeling penitently, not by standing proudly, not ever.

And they wouldn't see that all their privileges, not least the riches of God's kindness and forbearance, was meant to lead them to repentance. As Paul says in Romans 2.4.

But instead, their hearts were hard. They were impenitent. They were storing up, says Paul, wrath for themselves because they did not obey the truth. They were self-seeking. They preferred instead to obey unrighteousness, says chapter 2 of Romans.

[6 : 19] And Paul's just saying the same thing again here. They blinded themselves to the truth of God's righteousness. God's way of salvation revealed in the law and the prophets.

They wouldn't respond to God's word with faith because their hearts were hard and impenitent. They would not submit, says chapter 10, verse 3, to doing it God's way.

And that is the root of sin in the human heart, isn't it? I'll do it my way, thank you very much. Not yours. I'm sure that's why one of the commonest songs requested to be played at funerals is, guess, I did it my way.

And you see, when people, especially privileged people, who have enjoyed the riches of God's kindness in the revelation of his word, when they don't receive God's grace, but they reject it, it's not God who's to blame.

It's because despite the abundant overflow of his grace and mercy, as with Israel, the last verse of chapter 10 says, all day long God has held out his hands to a disobedient and contrary people.

[7 : 38] And that's why, as Paul demonstrates here, Israel had completely and repeatedly stumbled over the grace of God. In Jesus' day, they rejected the person of Christ, the true heart of the law.

Just as in Moses' day, they had rejected the promise of Christ, who was always the hope at the heart of the law. And so also, in Paul's day, they were rejecting again the preaching of Christ, which at last was reaping the harvest that the law had always looked forward to and promised.

So though God's people had persistently failed and continued to do so, God's promise, as we saw last week, has never failed. Rather, despite all of this, and in the midst of this, and indeed through this, mysteriously, God's promise is being fulfilled in the gospel of Christ.

Well, that's the big picture of these chapters. Let's look at the detail of the passage we read down to chapter 10, verse 13, where Paul is addressing how Israel persistently stumbled over God's grace in Christ.

First of all, look at chapter 9, verse 30, down to 10, verse 4. What Paul is explaining here is that how during Jesus' earthly ministry, Israel rejected God and his grace in the person of Christ.

[9 : 06] They rejected the one in whom is manifest the very heart of God's gracious covenant law of faith. We could sum it up in the words of John's gospel.

The light that shed light on every man was coming into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

And the light of the presence of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, exposed the truth in the hearts of so many of his own people, Israel. And these verses are describing the culpable perversion of God's saving covenant which they had in the law and the prophets.

Notice the references all the way through to the law and then the quotes from the prophets. He's showing us how that perversion was at last exposed in the rejection of Jesus Christ who is the very heart of everything that the law spoke of.

They rejected Christ himself who is God over all, says Paul. When they encountered him in the flesh, they rejected him and that showed simply that they had always rejected the very heart of God's covenant law of faith.

[10 : 24] See, verse 32 tells us that they had it all wrong. They didn't pursue God's covenant revelation. They didn't pursue his law for what it really was.

The revelation of God's gracious rule over his people who were in a relationship with him, not because of their righteousness, but because of his redeeming grace. And instead, they turned that law into mere religion.

Instead of it being a relationship of humble loyalty, which is what Moses constantly was calling them to. Fear the Lord, he said. Walk in his ways. Serve him with all your heart and soul.

Instead of that call to humble penitence and faith, to real faith, it became instead a matter for Israel of haughty pride.

Their hearts said exactly what God said you must never ever say in your hearts. Don't say in your hearts, it's because of my righteousness that God is bringing us into the great reward of this land.

[11 : 32] That is exactly what they did say. And so instead of being full of humble gratitude for God's grace and his mercy, they became full instead of pride and presumption.

As though God's covenant was all about them and about their superiority over other peoples, over their righteousness, about their works. Not humble faith in God's promise of mercy for a sinful and rebellious people.

But no, you see, they were wrong. And it wasn't the pride Pharisee in Luke 18, it was the penitent publican who went away righteous, justified before God.

And therefore, because their hearts were proud, they stumbled over grace. And the truth was, they were shown to be people who didn't really love and serve God at all.

In fact, they just loved and served themselves. They made God into their servant. And that's the heart, isn't it, of all human religion. Making God serve man to give me what I want, my way.

- [12 : 48] They claimed to serve God, of course they did, but their hearts were far from him. And when God himself in the person of the promised Messiah, the great cornerstone that God's own prophets had long promised would come, when he at last appeared and confronted them, and when he said to them, well then, submit to me, follow me, hear me, obey my words, well then they were exposed.

And instead of being a stepping stone to God's promised salvation, Jesus became a stumbling stone. He became a rock of offense. And they were exposed. And they were shown to be not real doers of God's law at all, but hypocrites, rejecting the real commands of God and instead giving themselves, as Jesus says in Mark 7, to the traditions of men, themselves.

They knew all the commands. They knew the great command, love the Lord with all your heart and your soul and all your strength. But they didn't love God. They loved themselves.

And the coming of Jesus switched the lights on, so it was no longer possible to hide. And those who really loved God and his word and his promise and had real faith were shown for who they were.

But likewise, those who didn't. That's the key by the way to the whole of Luke's gospel. In fact, the whole of Luke and Acts. It's people's reaction to Jesus and his word all the way through that show who are the true servants of the word.

- [14 : 34] The true people who see that everything that was written in the law and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why you have Simeon's words right at the beginning holding the infant Jesus in Luke chapter 2 and says, this infant is appointed for the rising and the falling of many in Israel.

Not just to be welcomed but also to be opposed and rejected. And of course, many do welcome him. We see that in Luke's gospel. Simeon and Anna, Zechariah, Elizabeth and the others.

We're told they were righteous, walking blamelessly in the commands of the law of God because they were also longing for the Messiah.

They were longing for the consolation, the promised consolation of Israel. They were pursuing God's law by faith. And that's why when Jesus came, they rejoiced and received him.

But many more were exposed. They didn't trust the heart of God's covenant. They didn't submit to God's righteousness now fully revealed to them in Jesus Christ.

- [15 : 44] They did the opposite. They rejected him. So his own synagogue rejected him and tried to kill him. On the night of transfiguration, Jesus stood there and there appeared Moses and Elijah, representatives of the law and the prophets as if to say, this is who we've been pointing to all the time.

And God in heaven said, yes. Now listen to him. He has the words of life. But by and large they didn't.

Like the rich young man, also in Luke 18. He'd kept the whole law, he said to Jesus. But he'd missed the very half of the law because when Jesus said, well then, one more thing is needed.

Leave everything and come and follow me. He was exposed because he was rich in his own eyes. And in the end he'd rather have that than have Jesus.

It turned out, you see, the salvation he really wanted wasn't the eternal life with God that he thought he wanted. It was eternal life with a God of his own imagining.

[17 : 01] Which was simply his present heart's desires going on and lasting forever. God. That's what so many people really want at heart. They don't really want God, they want what God can give them, more of what they themselves want.

You see, you can be very religious, but when you're faced with the reality about God in the person of Jesus Christ, well that man didn't really want God at all, not that God.

He'd rather retreat into his own religious delusion with a God of his own imagining. That's so, so common. A little after that encounter with that man, Jesus had his triumphal entry into Jerusalem as its rightful king and God, but instead of welcoming him, they challenge him and reject him.

How dare you say things like that and do these things? By what authority do you do that, they said. And do you remember Jesus told them the parable of the vineyard? about the workers who rejected every single messenger who came from the owner and then at last when he sent his own son, they killed him, the heir of the estate.

And Luke tells us, Jesus looked them in the eye and he said, therefore God is going to come and remove your vineyard from you and give it to others. Meaning that his kingdom would be removed.

[18 : 29] from the Jews and given to the Gentiles because in your hearts you despise God my father. Now at that point Jesus quotes to them exactly the same words from Isaiah as I quoted here in verse 33 by Paul.

You haven't believed, you've stumbled over the chief cornerstone, you've rejected him who is the very heart of everything you claim to love. And so verse 1 of chapter 10 clearly implies they're lost unless their hearts are changed.

Which is of course Paul's prayer that they will be. But not otherwise because Paul says religious zeal is not enough. Not if it's ignorant.

And there it is says Paul, it's culpably, it's willingly ignorant. Not that they can't have knowledge. Verse 3 is utterly plain. Do you see? It's that they will not submit to God's saving righteousness in Christ.

They have God's law, but they're not true doers of God's law. They're disobeyers of God's law at heart. Their hearts are hard and impenitent.

[19 : 53] They're circumcised, of course, they're very, very religious, but they're utterly uncircumcised in their hearts. They don't think that they need God's mercy to be right with him.

They're full of their own sense of worthiness and righteousness, a righteousness of their own, says Paul. And that's the proof, beyond all proof, that they refuse to submit to God's ultimate revelation of that saving righteousness, of what the whole law was about from the very beginning, in the person of Jesus Christ, when God in the flesh stood right in front of them.

For, verse 4, let me read it with emphasis, for the end of the law, the chief end, man's chief end is to glorify God, that's what this means, for the chief end, the whole goal of the law is Christ for righteousness, for all who believe.

That's what it was all about, from the beginning. But they didn't believe, and they proved in their reaction to Jesus, not to be people of faith.

Why? Because faith is submission to God's saving righteousness righteousness in Christ. That's what the Bible means by faith. Humble obedience to God's revelation of his righteousness by grace alone, through faith alone.

[21 : 30] That's what the law and the prophets proclaimed from the very, very beginning. But they refused that in their hearts. It's a very frightening thing, isn't it?

That people can fool themselves and fool others for so long about the real truth of how things stand between them and God. People can be the picture of respectability and morality.

They can seem to be very proper, very religious, very Christian. But an encounter with the real Lord Jesus Christ exposes their hearts.

Isn't that so? People can say, oh yes, I'm a Christian. I'm a pillar of the church. I love our church traditions. But say to them, well Jesus tells you to leave that thing that you treasure and follow me.

Leave that life of sin. Leave that wrong sexual relationship that you're in. Leave that obsession that's ruling your life. Leave that great church tradition.

[22 : 41] How dare you say that to me? Who do you think you are? And don't you know who I am? See, Jesus Christ in his word says, I am your Lord.

Submit. Submit to me. Listen to me. Do what I say. That's faith. And people stumble.

people. And just as it was for the Jews then, so it still is with many, many religious people today. But the whole goal of the law and the prophets was Christ and Christ alone for righteousness with God.

For all who believe, who humbly do submit to him and kneel to receive his mercy. That's what Paul goes on to explain here in verses 5 to 13 of chapter 10.

We uphold the law, said Paul back in chapter 3, for what it has always been. Not a law of works, he said there, but a law of faith. But just as in Jesus' day the Jews rejected the person of Christ, the heart of the law, so they had always, in Moses' time, rejected God's grace and the promise of Christ.

[24 : 03] Christ. Moses had urged them constantly to choose life through the one who was the hope of God's gracious covenant law of faith.

Remember in John chapter 5, Jesus said to the people, if you believe Moses, you will believe me because he spoke about me. He preached the same word of righteousness as me.

And that's what Paul says here, once again, from the law of Moses. And also in verses 11 to 13 from the words of the prophet, there has always only been one way, and that is to submit to God's saving righteousness by trusting his promises, by submitting to that word of God with obedient faith.

For verse 5, Moses himself couldn't be clearer, says Paul. Look, he wrote about this saving righteousness, the righteousness of the law. I don't think righteousness based on the law is a helpful translation there.

It simply says the righteousness of the law. What does Moses say? Well, the person who does the commandments will live by them. Not the person just who has the commandments or hears them or knows them and says, Lord, Lord, as Jesus put it in Matthew 7, but as Jesus said there, the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

[25 : 30] My true family, Jesus said, my mother and sister and brothers are those who do the will of my Father in heaven. Well, just as Jesus said, so Moses said way back then from the beginning.

It's quoting from Leviticus chapter 18. If you read that, you'll find it's a chapter all about real heart loyalty to the God of Israel, to the Lord, to him alone.

You shall not do, says God, as the Egyptians did, nor shall you do as they do in Canaan. You shall not walk in their statutes, you shall follow my rules, walk in my ways, because I am your Lord.

And so it goes on repeatedly all the way through, warning Israel truly to be God's people wholeheartedly, not just paying lip service to God, but real heart worship.

And Moses wasn't saying at all, ever, that they were to earn God's favour by doing that. Of course not, any more than Jesus is saying in the Gospel when he urges people to truly obey God.

[26 : 39] He's simply calling them to real faith. The faith that submits to God's promised way of covenant righteousness and therefore responds in humble obedience.

The obedience of real heart faith. That's what Romans is all about, the obedience of faith. What does that mean? Well, read on, says Moses.

Excuse me, once again, it means not just being a hearer, but a doer. Obeying the chief command of God, which is always about the love and loyalty of the heart.

That's what the book of Deuteronomy is all about. And it's from Deuteronomy that Paul quotes here in verses 6 to 8. Verse 6, look at it carefully.

Verse 6 is not, I think, a contrast with verse 5, as though Moses was somehow contradicting himself between Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Of course he wasn't.

[27 : 40] It's not that at all. The word but there is not a strong contrast. It's not like the but that's there in verse 8 or verse 14 or 16 or anywhere else in this passage.

It could just be translated and. And as I said, when we read, there's a word missing in our translation, the word likewise. So let me paraphrase.

Moses tells us about righteousness in the law. It's about doing, not just possessing God's commands, verse 5. But likewise, verses 6 to 8, he makes plain what that command is all about.

It's all about heart faith in God's promised grace. It's not a righteousness by works, your own righteousness. It's a righteousness of faith.

Trusting God's word that he has brought near to you in his marvellous promise so that you can believe it and confess it. That's what God's gospel has always been, says Paul.

[28 : 44] Simply put, verse 5 brings out that the real command of the law, the righteousness of the law, and it's spelled out in verses 6 to 8 with absolute clarity that that was never a matter of works, never a matter of establishing your own righteousness, but always a matter of righteousness by faith.

And that is the message of the book of Deuteronomy through and through. Right from the beginning in chapter 6, the great Shema, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our Lord is one, and you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength.

And these words that I command you today shall be upon your heart. And he goes on to lay out the commands that will express that real heart love for God.

A life of obedient faith. Trusting God and his ways. There are constant appeals to the heart all the way through Moses preaching in Deuteronomy.

Don't say in your heart, that's what Paul quotes here in verse 6, don't say in your heart it's because of my righteousness that God's brought me to this land. It's not. You're stubborn people, hard hearted.

[30 : 00] Remember the golden calf, remember all your sins, remember your need for God's mercy, said Moses. Circumcise your hearts. Don't be stubborn any longer.

Repent. Be humble. Submit to God's merciful righteousness in the covenant that he's promised you. Hold fast to him. Love him.

Serve him. Serve him with all your heart and soul. Let these words be on your heart, Moses said. That's a constant refrain if you read through that book.

You'll see. Trust him. Give God the deepest loyalty of your heart and he will give you life. Take to heart all of these words.

They are your life. He is your life. Clinging to him, your Savior God. The specific words that Paul quotes here in verses 6 to 8 are from Moses' last sermon in Deuteronomy 29 and 30.

[30 : 58] And they sum up his whole message of heart, trust and obedience to God's word of grace. In Deuteronomy 29, he warns the Israelites against haughty presumption.

Beware, he says, lest any one of you hear the words of this sworn covenant, this law, and blesses himself in his heart and says, oh, I'll be safe even though I walk in the hardness of my heart, the stubbornness of my heart.

No, says Moses, don't think that just possessing God's word and saying, Lord, Lord, I'm one of your people, don't think that's going to save you.

It won't. That will condemn you utterly before him, says Moses. No haughty presumption. And what you need is humble penitence, real faith.

Trust him and obey his word to you. Submit to his saving righteousness that he has promised all who will walk before him with humble faith. God commands you to have faith.

[32 : 03] That was Moses' message. It's not too hard for you, he said. It's not a far off. And Paul quotes Moses' very next words there in verse 6. You don't have to pursue what's impossible, he's saying.

Going up to the heights of heaven or down to the depths of the sea. It's not about you impressing me, says God, with your religious heroics. Not at all, as if anyone could.

It's simply about receiving, said Moses, what God himself has brought near. The word of his grace. And that word, verse 8, he says, is right in your mouth and your heart from God, so that you can do it.

God doesn't command the impossible. God gives what he commands.

He gives righteousness by his word of grace to be received by humble faith. And that was God's word through Moses, says Paul, in verse 8. It was a word of faith.

[33 : 09] And indeed, he says, it's the same, the very same gospel of God's grace that we are proclaiming now to you. You see how the words in brackets in our Bibles in verses 7 and 8.

See, Paul's just emphasizing that Moses was preaching about a covenant word of promise that was always going to be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the one who has come down from heaven to save lost sinners. He's the one who's been raised that we might be justified. Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 30 was calling the Israelites to trust in the God who would one day do for them what they could never do for themselves.

To offer God truly obedient hearts, circumcised hearts. But now, Paul says to the Colossians, now in him, in Christ, you have been circumcised by the putting off of the body of flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism.

This is Paul's book in Romans chapter 6. See, Moses and Paul and Jesus are all speaking the same gospel of God's grace and mercy.

[34 : 30] Moses and the author of Christ in the promise, looking forward to that great day of fulfillment. Paul, looking back in the light of the glorious reality of history, the Christ risen from the dead.

But both were calling for a heart and a life, submitting in response to God's marvelous command of grace. To bow humbly before his saving righteousness through Christ alone.

And that's why he emphasizes both true inward heart belief and also real outward public confession of his lordship in verse 9 and 10.

Because see, those two things are just two sides of the same coin. Just as Moses was clear that real love for God in the heart always issued in humble obedience to God's commands in somebody's life.

Well, so Paul is equally insistent. It's the person who submits utterly to the lordship of Jesus in their life that truly has heart-saving faith, says Paul.

[35 : 43] Jesus himself was just as plain. In fact, he was even plainer than that. Whoever it is who keeps my commands, says Jesus, lives under my lordship in their life, he it is who loves me.

He who does not love me does not keep my commands. Just as he said in Matthew chapter 10 about the public confession. Whoever acknowledges me before men as their lord and master, I will acknowledge before my father who is in heaven at the last judgment.

Oh, just here it says Paul in verse 10. With the heart one believes unto righteousness now, and with the mouth, indeed with the whole life, one confesses unto salvation on that day.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way. That's what both Moses and Paul and Jesus preached. That's why Jesus said, if you believe Moses, you will believe me.

The law preached God's grace in Christ to come, by faith, for everyone who believed. And you see how the prophets took up and made that last point clearer still to everyone who believes.

[37 : 04] Verse 11. It repeats the quote from Isaiah earlier on. And everyone who believes in him, in Christ, will never be put to shame. Not just Jews, says Paul, but Gentiles also.

And that must be so, because again, as Moses himself made so clear, what was so central to Israel's faith was the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

There is one God. And therefore he must be Lord of all, says verse 12. And he bestows his riches, the wonderful grace and mercy that he gives on all who call upon him.

All who call upon him. How humbling, how humiliating that is for the proud religious man.

See, the Pharisee in Luke chapter 18 was wrong, wasn't he? I thank you God, he said, that I am not like other men. And God says, oh yes you are.

[38 : 13] Read your prophets. Read the prophet Joel, verse 13. Everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved. What? What, says the Pharisee?

Even adulterers, extortioners, and strangling bankers and crooked politicians, tax collectors like this man? That can't possibly be so.

That's scandalous, God. Yes, all of those, says God. All need mercy. Yes, they do. That's true. Vast mercy. But there is mercy.

For I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, says the Lord. Without distinction. On all who truly bow the knee and the knee of their hearts before my son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But surely, surely they, people like that, can't share the same place as me in the kingdom. I fast three times a week. I type everything I give. I've served the church all my life.

[39 : 19] Everyone knows that. I mean, I've got theology. I'm reformed. I'm a pillar of the church. I belong to St. George's Tron. Or whatever it is that's important to you. And Jesus says, it's not whether he can share the same place as you.

It's whether you can possibly share the same place as him in my kingdom of grace. Because he has found mercy. He's attained the righteousness that is by faith.

Humble, penitent faith. But you, you don't want to submit to my way of righteousness. You don't want my righteousness because you'd rather have your own.

You don't think you need my mercy. Do you? And you prefer a church that's clean and tidy with no messy people, no people to irritate, no people to be awkward.

Just your kind of people. The right kind of people. Not dirty people. Not the scarred. Not people struggling to stay sober or struggling to stay clean from drugs or struggling to stay pure sexually.

[40 : 34] Not those confused people, those theologically in the wrong people. Those people who are all up the spot morally, who don't understand God's commands with the clarity that you do.

You don't want that. But my Father's house says Jesus is full of people just like that. And there's only one table in my Father's house just like here.

And we all sit at the same table. They don't have VIP seats. Not even for you. So unless you're willing to come down and sit with these my brothers, then I'm afraid there just can't be a place for you.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. It's the one who humbles himself who could be exalted in my Father's house. everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, the Lord of all, God over all, the Lord Jesus Christ, everyone who calls on him will be saved.

Everyone who believes in him will never be put to shame. Never. Never. Well, that's a word to humble a church, isn't it?

[41 : 54] Whether it's in Rome in the first century, whether it's in Glasgow in the 21st century. Especially if we're apt to think of ourselves more highly than we ought as a congregation. Or within a congregation.

Thinking about our brothers and sisters. Thinking about us and them. Or other such things. There's one Lord, says Jesus.

Whatever riches we have, it's all, all of his grace, it's all come down into our empty hands. But it's a word that explains the church and the world too.

The church is full of so many unlikely people. Just because in one sense there is nothing hard about finding God's salvation in Christ. Just because it is all by his grace, all people can stumble on it in the most amazing of ways.

And they do. Hearing about Jesus from a friend at a summer camp, from a book somebody gives them, from just wandering into a church building.

[43 : 03] And they find to their joy peace with God and righteousness and acceptance with him. And it's not impossible. It's easy. It's not far away. It's not at the end of endless religious rituals and performance.

It's so near that all you need to do is call out, Lord Jesus, help me. Be the Lord of my heart. Be the love of my life. And no one, whoever calls out like that, no one will ever be put to shame.

And it's true today, whoever you are. Yet there is a sense, isn't there, in which finding salvation in Jesus Christ is also the hardest thing in the world.

Because to truly call on his name, to truly believe in him, is to confess the risen Jesus and him alone as the supreme Lord of your life. It's to submit to him, to bow to me, and to be under his complete ownership and a humble recipient of his mercy.

That's humbling. the hardest thing in the world for a proud, self-sufficient person ever to do, isn't it? Not pleading my righteousness, my status, my learning, my service, not to do it my way, but to receive God's righteousness, God's way, and God's terms.

[44 : 37] I'm sure many of you now will have seen the film, The King's Speech. It was extraordinarily humbling, wasn't it, for King George VI to admit that he had to submit to lowly Lionel Logue, an Australian, with no qualifications, couldn't even speak the King's English properly.

And not even to be able to be called Your Majesty, but to be addressed by this commoner from the colonies as Bertie. I'll help anyone, and I can cure anyone, said Mr. Logue to the King, if they do it on my terms, in my place, my way.

And the King was outraged. It was a stumbling block to him. He would not submit. He wouldn't have it. But in the end, in the end, he humbled himself.

The King bowed the knee and it became the source of his salvation, his cure. Everything he'd been looking for, but could never find anywhere else.

Friends, let's not be those who stumble over God's amazing grace to us in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. bow the knee. Let him save you on his terms, his way, because there is no other way.

[46 : 11] It doesn't matter who in the world you are. Let's pray. Gracious God, your grace is so great, yet our hearts so often are so hard, so haughty.

humble us, we pray, by your grace. And as we come to this table, you would remind us that it is a table for lost sinners found only by the grace of God and through the blood of your dear Son.

that teach us where our boasting should truly lie. For Jesus' sake. Amen.