

# STANDING IN GRACE: Romans 5:1-2 (Part 3)

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Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom indeed we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and exult in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:1-2).

As we continue to unpack this little gem of a statement by Paul, we find ourselves standing in awe of his explanation of “justification by faith”. That God freely declares as right in His sight “through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ all those who believe” is truly staggering (Romans 3: 22). It is **just-as-if-I’d** never sinned!

Last study we saw that the first mighty result of our having been put right with God is that **therefore we have peace with God**. No longer condemned by our sinful failures and guilty consciences, no longer strangers and aliens, we are now at home with God our Heavenly Father. We know God is not against us. We know God is for us. God Himself declares this all on the basis of what He has done through the atoning blood of Jesus.

Today Paul will tell us the second marvellous result of our “having been justified by faith”. It is that we have gained access into God’s grace. As Paul puts it, **indeed we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand**.

The word Paul uses to describe this new status the Gospel brings us into is a rare word, only used two other times in the NT. This special word translated as “access” or “introduction” is a word with two helpful pictures in it. <sup>1</sup>

## A SAFE HAVEN

The first picture this word “access” paints is of a harbour or safe haven for ships;

If we take it in that meaning, it means that so long as we tried to depend on our own efforts we were tempest-tossed, like mariners striving with a sea which threatened to overwhelm them completely, but now that we have heard the word of Christ, we have reached at last the haven of God’s grace, and we know the calm of depending, not on what we can do for ourselves, but on what God has done for us. Because of Jesus we have entry to the presence of the King of Kings; we have entry to the haven of God’s grace. <sup>2</sup>

Now isn’t that a wonderful picture? We all need a safe haven, and this word-picture reminds us of those disciples on the Sea of Galilee who thought they were going down under the “surging waves”. They were “swamped and in great danger” (Lk. 8: 23f). “Lord, save us”, they cried, “don’t you care that we are perishing?” But their Lord and Master stood up in the boat and commanded the wind and the waves, “Peace, be still!” Jesus brought them into a great calm. Through Jesus they were “introduced” into a safe haven.

Similarly, through the Gospel message of Christ, the apostle assures us that we believers “have access” to the very grace and goodness of God. The wind and the waves of this tumultuous world may rage all round us. People’s hearts may fail them for fear. But Jesus has introduced us to the deep calm of God’s lovingkindness. Our sins are forgiven and we stand in grace. We sing, “It is well with my soul!”

There was a time when we were outside of this grace. But the moment we commit ourselves to Christ’s Gospel word, we find ourselves inside the calm of the boat with Messiah who is taking us to the safe haven of His Kingdom.

## A ROYAL INTRODUCTION

The second picture this word “introduction” or “access” paints for us is the scene of being presented at a Royal Court. Jesus introduces us to the one God and Father of the whole family of heaven and earth (Eph. 3:15). In fact, not only does God accept us, but he positively welcomes us, indeed delights in us.

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<sup>1</sup> *prosagoge*.

<sup>2</sup> William Barclay, *The Letter To The Romans: The Daily Study Bible*. Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, Sixth Impression, 1966, p 71

The picture here that many preachers and commentators helpfully paint is of a man who has spent his whole life outside on the street of a great palace. Inside the royal palace there are endless comforts, riches, wealth, and always plenty of food fit for kings. But outside, this homeless man can only look inside longingly. He is hungry. Shivering in the cold.

He has no right of entry, no access to the palace. He is not fit to enter. His clothes are rags and smelly. Nobody from inside knows him. But one day, the king who has seen this pitiful sight takes compassion, and invites the homeless man in to the palace. The king's courtiers clean the man up, provide him with suitable clothes, and bring him into the fabulous banquet hall where he is treated like one of the king's own family. <sup>3</sup>

This is the picture Paul gives us here. Once we had no right of access. In fact, we were rebels facing sure and certain judgment. Lost. But the Son of the King has brought us to God, introduced us to His own Father.

If we would live dynamic Christian lives that testify to God's great love adequately, we must realise this, and get this into our heads and hearts. In Christ we have a whole new standing before God our Father... **through him indeed we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.**

Are we living in the light of this Gospel fact? When we approach the Living God, do we come with great difficulty and a sense of shame? Do we pray as sons and daughters of the King? Or do we feel like beggars, like paupers? If we come apologetically before Heaven's Throne, we dishonour the grace of God in Christ Jesus. We do not live in the light of the fact that Jesus has brought us into Heaven's court, has introduced us to his Father and to the angelic hosts, has given us "access" to the Royal Throne of the Almighty as the very children of the Most High God.

I don't know about you, but when I read of the mighty angels who worship before the One Who sits on the Throne of the Universe, I wonder what it must be like to be able to come and go as one of those worshippers. Remember what the archangel Gabriel told Zacharias who doubted his word of prophecy? With what boldness and authority did Gabriel say, **"I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news"** (Lk. 1: 19).

Well, the staggering truth Paul tells us here, is that we are as privileged and as favoured as Gabriel the archangel. For Jesus has introduced us to Heaven's court as his brothers and sisters! Through Jesus Messiah, we have gained access to the Royal Courtroom of the Universe! We have an audience with the God of the Universe! And furthermore, observe this open door is full of grace. We have access to God's incredible, unmerited, undeserved, unearned kindness.

No, I will go further. And I will go further not because my imagination wants to run wild or my typing finger is getting carried away. I will go further based on God's own declaration. He tells us that the mighty angels, these "sons of God" who in their holy characters are like "flames of fire", and who in their works are like mighty "winds" (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1: 7), are not as privileged as we who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. For, **Hebrews 1:14** asks,

**Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?**

We stand in a place of higher privilege, higher authority, than Gabriel and all the holy myriads of angels! Oh, blessed be our Lord Jesus who has introduced us to this staggering privilege of being welcome in the Throne room of the Universe --- not just as servants, not even on the level of the mighty angels --- but as joint-heirs with the Messiah! We are invited to come any time, all the time, as the very sons and daughters of the Living Creator Yahweh God.

As I was reading **Second Peter 1: 1** the other day, the word leaped off the page into my heart. I had never seen it before, though I had read it probably hundreds of times. Our English translations say,

**Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (KJV).**

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<sup>3</sup> The story of Mephibosheth, the banished, cursed and lame son of Jonathan, son of Saul is just this story. King David brings Mephibosheth from the "cold outside" right into the royal palace and seats him at the King's table **as one of the king's sons** for the rest of his life (2 Samuel 9: 11)!

However, the word for “like precious” or “equal precious” faith may legitimately be translated as “equally honoured”.<sup>4</sup> Has it dawned on your spirit that you are as privileged and as “equally honoured” through the Gospel as an apostle of Jesus Christ?

Oh sure. I would love to have been in the shadow of Peter. I would have given anything to have been with that privileged and chosen group who actually walked with Jesus, who watched his miracles, who heard his gracious words, who had private access to ask him their questions, and who received his individual and privileged insights. But Peter himself says, in respect of Gospel privileges we are **equally honoured** with the apostles.

Wow. What a standing you and I have. Jesus has opened the door to God’s Throne, to God’s heart for us. And it does not honour the God of Jesus if we just shuffle into His Presence. So, here is a good test to determine whether you and I have really grasped the impact of our having been “justified by faith”. The test is: Do you pray with confidence before God? Are you confident that God is listening to *you*? That He longs to hear from *you*? That He delights to bless *you*?

Indeed, the NT goes further, and encourages us to approach our Heavenly Father with *boldness*. The teaching is that since we have so great a Mediator, such a sympathetic High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, we are to,

**therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4: 16).**

The Greek tenses here indicate that we are to keep coming forward so that we may keep receiving the mercy and the favour freely offered. In other words, we have received our “access”, our “introduction” and we don’t need to spend anxious thought always wondering if God has really accepted us. We stand in grace! The Father will never reject Jesus and the ones who are holding his nail-scarred hands. Jesus has given you your royal introduction.

Now, I mentioned earlier that the NT only uses this word that is translated as “access” or “introduction” two other times. And it is significant that both of these times the word appears in the context of prayer:

**For through him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18).**

**In him we have boldness and confident access through faith in him (Eph. 3:12).**

Note that the immediate context of our “access” not only relates to confident prayer and fellowship with God through Christ on the individual level, but the broader context is speaking about Jews and Gentiles both together having equal access to God as Father.

I am sure this broader picture also applies to our “introduction” that’s mentioned in Romans 5:2. For up to this point Paul has been discussing how Jew and Gentile are both saved by God’s grace through Christ, apart from works or personal merit. All categories of men are saved by God’s mercy. He is rich unto all who call upon Him.

We must never lose sight of this big picture in the NT. It is right and proper that we individually should rejoice in “justification by faith”. But let us never forget that our salvation is a corporate business, and that when we believe the Gospel of Christ we are swept up into God’s grand plan for the ages. God is bringing a whole new community, a worldwide and international body into being through the Gospel of His Son.

And for us Gentiles, we should never lose sight of this grand design that God has swept us up into. We who once were outside of the blessings of God’s chosen people, strangers to the promises of God, separated from the Messianic glory and promises, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, without hope and without God, have now through Messiah Jesus “been brought near by the blood of Christ” (see Eph. 2: 11f).

Jesus has introduced us to all the promises and blessings of the Royal Court. He is the way and nobody comes to the Father but through him (John 14:6). Paul describes this change of status as “standing in grace” ...

**Through whom we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand.**

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<sup>4</sup> *isotimon*.

The idea that we now stand in grace is meant to once again emphasize the certainty and the assurance of our new position. Through Christ Jesus we stand tall. We stand whole. We are set firm in grace. The word conveys security with firmness.

I also think that our standing in grace is meant to highlight the contrast when we were once standing under condemnation. Paul will go on to write,

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14)

There is the grace of the Gospel right there. Once we stood under the condemnation and judgment of the Law, but now we stand in a new position of favour and blessing in Christ Jesus. Justified. Freely forgiven. Declared righteous before Heaven itself. Introduced by Jesus Messiah into the safe haven of God's grace as an heir who belongs in the Royal Court! So the question is: Are we living daily in the light of our new standing?

## IMAGINE BEING MARY

In order to drive home the incredible privileged position that we now have standing in this grace, let's think about when the archangel Gabriel took his trip from Heaven's Throne to visit the virgin Mary. Every Jewish girl for hundreds of years hoped she would be favoured to carry the Messiah. (Even to this day amongst Jews who still hope for their Messiah, Jewish women dream of the privilege of being the chosen one to be the mother who bears Messiah.)

But the event happened on a fateful day about 2,000 years ago,

Now ... the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary (Lk.1: 28).

Can we possibly imagine how we might feel if the same visitor came to our house one day? We are talking about one of the most exalted beings in all God's universe ... an archangel. This angel has already told us, "I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news" (Lk. 1:19).

We have already met Gabriel whose name means "Man of God" in the OT. In **Daniel 8** Gabriel appears to Daniel and Daniel said he felt enormous fear to the point of falling on his face (Dan. 8: 15f). But far from intending to bring fear to Mary, listen to Gabriel's words to the young Mary,

"Hail, favoured one! The Lord is with you" (Lk.1:28) <sup>5</sup>

Now try, if you can, for a moment to imagine how you would feel if God singled you out for such a life-changing, history-making home visit. Straight from God's glorious heaven into your humble house arrives this exalted being. Your immediate instinct is to just fall down in a trembling heap, wishing the ground would swallow you up. But you hear this encouraging word, "Hail, to the one being shown favour! The LORD is with you!"

Wow. Once the dust settled, wouldn't you feel enormously humbled yet privileged at the same time? You would think, God knows where I live. God knows my name. God wants little old *me*. Oh, what a difference this would make in your daily living, would it not? You could care less about what others thought of you. You have received your "introduction", your "access" into the very secret heart and grace of God for you. God sent His angel to visit you!

OK. Now what if I told you that the word Gabriel spoke to Mary is only used once more in the rest of the NT and it is spoken to you, the believer in Messiah Jesus our Lord? You'll find it in **Ephesians 1:6**. After writing to say that our glorious God and Father has chosen us in Christ "before the foundation of the world" that we might be "adopted as sons through Jesus Messiah to Himself" Paul says this staggering truth is,

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<sup>5</sup> Gabriel literally said, "Hail, the one being shown favour (*kecharitomene* is a perfect passive participle, vocative singular feminine)!"

To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He **freely bestowed** on us in the Beloved (NASB). Or, if you prefer the King James Version, **To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.** <sup>6</sup>

God's word, which cannot fail, is that you are **accepted**, and that He has **freely bestowed** the blessings of heaven upon you. Have you made the connection yet? As a believer in Christ Jesus you have God's gracious word from His own heart to you: *You* are as highly prized and favoured by the Living God for a special calling, as Mary was to bear Jesus the Messiah! Fact!

The only question left to ask then, is will you act on it? Will you make this a daily habit to step out on God's declaration that you have through Jesus gained "access" to the high favour of Heaven's Court? Will you declare by faith in the Gospel of Christ you are chosen to stand in grace? Will you enjoy your heavenly Father's favour so **freely bestowed** on you in Christ?

This is the test that determines whether you have really grasped the doctrine of "justification by faith". Since God declares us forgiven and accepted through the merits of His beloved Son, since we are "under grace" with full and free access to our Heavenly Father's heart, do we daily stand confidently in this safe haven of God's love?

You stand in grace, with God's very own righteousness through Christ upon you! Hallelujah. Now act on it every day. Make your boast in God's favour. You stand in it! Now do not dishonour God's very word nor His great salvation given so fully and freely to you in Jesus the Christ.

Jesus' Gospel has given you this access. We should not be apologetic or furtive Christians ever again. We should never again pray the dishonouring prayer that asks God to "please accept" us, to "please bless" us, to "please look favourably" upon us.

No. No. No. We should gratefully and confidently thank God that we have access to all the riches of God's glorious grace. I say to you in the name of Jesus Christ God's own Son, "Hail, O one being highly favoured! The LORD God is with you, for you, and you stand in His grace through Christ Jesus." Glory to God.

#### A CONTRAST

But I cannot help, but immediately feel a definite heaviness in my heart at the same time. Whilst rejoicing in our amazing place in Christ, I remember those who have not yet heard this Gospel announcement. Yes, we are the highly favoured, but there is a vast number of folks who do not stand in this grace and who have not yet felt the joy of their being introduced and having access to the God of heaven for,

**The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous (Ps. 1: 5).**

On that last great Day when every person who has lived throughout all the millennia stands before the Great White Throne, and when the books are opened and the deeds are examined, **the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment.** They will collapse in anguish and terror. Our Lord said there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus who has been appointed by God to judge humanity, will announce those heart-rending words, "**Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you.**"

What a stark contrast is this. So let us never forget that we are favoured to bless our fellows.

O Father, we bless you that by your grace in Christ Jesus we have been declared right in Your sight. We don't understand how, but we rejoice that Your lovingkindness has drawn us. For You have caused us to trust in the word of Your beloved Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, and so we do not fear, for we now have access to Your Presence, and through His righteousness, we stand in Your favour now. LORD God, we don't need the visit or special words of an archangel to tell us we are highly favoured. We have the word of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. We know that by his merits and shed blood we have a foretaste of the joy of this access into Your most holy Presence. We rejoice that by Your faithfulness to Your Son, we will be introduced into the everlasting glories of Your Eternal Kingdom. May Your holy Name, oh Yahweh our God, be praised for evermore through Jesus our Lord and Messiah.

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<sup>6</sup> *Echaritosen* is an aorist active indicative 3rd singular literally meaning "has favoured us".

