Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Security of Salvation, Part 1
Scripture: Romans 5:1-2a
Code: 45-40

And now we come to that very special time as we look together at God's precious Word. And tonight, as I mentioned this morning, we embark upon the wonderful study of the fifth chapter of Romans, Romans chapter 5. And Romans is a book — believe me — that taxes your mind, taxes your soul as well. It is so profound, so deep and so rich with the truth of God. And yet because of the wonderful inspiration of the Holy Spirit, because of the fact that He is our resident truth teacher, as we saw this morning, its truths can be opened to our minds. And I trust that as we look at the first eleven verses, not just tonight, but in tonight's message and then the next couple of weeks, that you're going to find yourself rejoicing in the tremendous security of your salvation. This is a great, great passage.

I was reading a book this week that was given to me and it was a book that had many interesting statements in it, a theology book.

One of them was this, and I quote, "Some truly converted people have fallen from grace and the danger of doing so threatens every Christian." Now, that is a very, very important statement, if it's true. If it's true that some Christians have lost their salvation and every Christian is in danger of doing that, that is indeed an important thing to know. For if you can lose your salvation you better find out fast how to hang on.

Now, this is a subject that through the years has been very hotly debated in theology. There have always been those who have affirmed that you can lose your salvation and those who have affirmed that you could not and the battle has gone on through the years; the issue of eternal security, or the perseverance of the saints, or as lay men sometimes call it, the once saved-always saved doctrine.

And some in our time today, in many churches, some of you in your own backgrounds, some of you even maybe to this very day believe that a Christian can lose his or her salvation. And sometimes we hear about those who quote/unquote "backslide" and fall away from the knowledge of Christ.

Now this particular doctrine that says you can lose your salvation basically makes salvation conditional. In other words, your salvation is only so good as long as you meet the conditions of maintenance. In other words, God has saved us and now if we continue to match up with the

standard we can hold on to that salvation; if at any point we fail to live up to the standard we lose it. Now it doesn't take much insight to realize that that is basically a works-righteousness perspective. In other words, you're really saying that salvation is conditional in the sense that my works have to stay up to standard or I forfeit my salvation.

Now this, I believe, is exactly the issue to which Paul speaks in Romans 5. And it fascinates me that in many, many treatments of the subject of the security of the believer, Romans 5 isn't even discussed, which amazes me. Or, sometimes it appears as a footnote. When I think it may be, of all the passages in the New Testament, the most absolutely definitive text ever written on the security of our salvation.

Now, let me see if I can tell you why it's here and why I say that. Paul is writing basically to affirm the gospel. And his thesis in chapters 3 and 4 is that salvation comes by grace through what? Faith; and that faith is all that is necessary to appropriate eternal salvation. Now this is quite revolutionary to a Jew, frankly, who has been reared on a works-righteousness system of salvation. In other words, by doing certain works he gains the favor of God. And, frankly, that is exactly how all other world religions are built, on the goodness of man, man living up to some religious code, some ethical standard.

And so, when Paul articulates in chapter 3 and chapter 4 that salvation is a free gift, that it is given by God's grace, that it is unearned and undeserved, and is appropriated by faith and faith alone, and that is all, men find that very difficult to comprehend. Because men basically are into works, they're into human achievement, they're into self-righteousness. They're into lifting up themselves by their own boot straps. Basically, the philosophy of men and the religions of the world is: I'm good, I'm religious, God would never send me to hell. You've heard that myriads of times. I mean, I'm a good person, I'm religious, I do my best, I... I believe and I'm sure God would never condemn me. And it's very hard for people who have been reared and taught to understand that they get into God's kingdom by being good or ethical or moral, to hear that it's only a matter of faith, and particularly the Jew.

And since Paul argues in Romans with an imaginary Jew from time to time, I don't doubt that that's in his mind right here. And he has just made this long treatise about Abraham being justified by faith, as an illustration of the justification by faith in chapter 3.

Now, immediately a Jew is going to say this, Paul, you say that faith is all that is needed for salvation. You say that faith is enough. Are you sure it's enough? I mean, are you sure that you just get in by faith and that's all? I mean, once you're in there don't you have to keep some kind of standard up?

Aren't you required to live at a certain level or you're going to lose it? Are you sure it's faith and faith alone by which we stand? It seems so over-simplified. Are you sure it will work? Can faith keep us saved? Don't we have to live up to some level? Or what about the future judgment, Paul? Is faith enough to assure us that we'll escape the condemnation of God in the time of great judgment? Or, they might have questioned this way. What... What maintains this salvation by faith? If we get in by faith, what keeps us there? What maintains it?

And I believe that's why chapter 5 is here, because Paul is speaking directly to that issue. Because the natural question they're going to have is, it's too easy. I mean, you just get in and you're in and you're in forever and it's all by grace and it's all by faith and that's it? And you know, sometimes we have the same problem. In fact, if you go around espousing the doctrine of eternal security — that is that you're saved forever — invariably if you run into someone who doesn't believe that they'll ask you that very same question. You mean to tell me that you can become a Christian and just do anything you want? That is inevitably the question they will ask. I've been asked that question a hundred times. You mean, when you become a Christian there's no standard after that, you can just do whatever you want? Doesn't your salvation somewhat depend upon your obedience and so forth? That is precisely the issue to which Paul speaks in this passage. And he presents six great links in a chain that ties a true believer eternally to the Savior; six great links in the chain that ties a believer eternally to the Savior. And we're going to look at each of these six, maybe two tonight, two next week and two the week after. And they are six great truths, believe me, six great realities. And the chain is so secure. I mean, after these three weeks you're going to go out of here knowing full well that if you have come to Jesus Christ you will belong to Him forever. That's a marvelous thing to know. I'd hate to live in eternal insecurity.

Now, there are six links in the chain, and we're going to see them as we flow through the text. Now let me say another word. One of the things that Satan does in attacking a Christian is to attack him at the point of his assurance of salvation. Satan likes to make us doubt our redemption. That's why when you put on the armor in Ephesians 8, it says put on the helmet of salvation. And Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, further defined that by calling it the helmet of the hope of salvation. Why? Because Satan wants to deal devastating blows to your head in the area of doubt, to doubt that you're really saved, to doubt that you're really redeemed, to doubt that God is really holding you in the palm of His hand forever, to doubt that you really belong to God. He wants you to believe that somehow, some way you forfeited your redemption, and so he blasts away at you, making you feel insecure, intimidating you. And so you must have on the helmet of the hope or the confidence that you're really redeemed. And I want to help you get your helmet on and show you why you can know that you do belong to God forever.

First link, verse I: "Therefore," and this is built on the past study of justification by faith. Since we have been justified by faith and all that's involved, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have," and here comes link number one, "peace with God." The first great reality that affirms to me as a believer that I am eternally secure in my salvation is that I am at peace with God.

This is... You know, I'm struggling all week long to try to put this into words what I feel in my soul about this, so you'll, I hope, be patient as I do my best with fumbling words to articulate a profound effect that this has had on me just this week.

The word “therefore” links us to the foundation that's been laid in chapters 3 and 4: Justification by faith, being made right with God through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. Now that initially ushers us into salvation. You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you are brought into salvation. And entering into salvation you come into the inheritance of an eternity filled with blessing. And it cannot be that Paul has time or insight to tell us all of the blessings that are ours in Christ, but one of them is that we are secure in that relationship because we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what is this peace? What are we talking about when we talk about peace with God? Well, some have suggested that it means we have tranquility of...of mind; we have a sort of a psychological sense of security, we have a sort of positive feeling about being secure. And that’s a rather subjective kind of thing, but that is not at all the intention of this passage. This is not subjective, this is objective. It does not speak of feelings. It speaks of a relationship. Feelings are not the issue here. It says that we have peace with God. Now if we have peace with God because of salvation, what did we have prior to salvation? Simple three letter word that begins with a 'w'. What's the opposite of peace? War. Now Christ has dramatically changed our relationship to God and that's what it’s talking about. We were at war, as it were. God was our enemy and we were His enemy. But because of justification by faith we have been brought into a relationship of peace, real peace. And that peace is not an attitude. It is not an attitude at all. It isn't a psychological tranquility. It isn't calmness of mind. It isn't a subjective kind of feeling. It is simply that the war between us and God is over. You understand that? The war is over.

Now, it is at this point precisely that I think most people miss the point of this text. Because people will always say, hey, I've never been at war with God, I like God. But the Bible says before you come to Christ you're at war with God. And some people might say, well now, wait a minute, I'm religious and I don't have anything against God, I believe in God, and I'm...I'm even concerned of what He thinks. I don't see myself as an enemy of God. I don't see myself actively engaged in striking blows at God's

kingdom. I don't see myself overtly set against His divine plan and His purpose and His will. I don't see myself at war with God.

That's right. I agree with that. And that isn't the issue.

The issue is not that you're at war with God. You know what the issue is? God is at war with you. That's different, isn't it?

Because you may say, “Well, I'm not... I don't see myself fighting God. I... I don't do anything to fight God overtly. That's not the point. God is your enemy, whether you are consciously His enemy or not. And His plan is this: You are so much His enemy and He is so much at war with you that some day He will take you and cast you into an eternal lake of fire to burn forever and ever. That's how much God is at war with you. And whether you understand your war with Him or not you ought to understand His war with you. Now, that puts it in a different light, doesn't it? You see, God is at war with the sinner. God is the enemy of the sinner. God fights against the sinner. God is the enemy of sin. God is the enemy of Satan. And by the way, if you're not a child of God you're a child of Satan and you belong to Satan's dominion and God is at war with that dominion. And that's the point.

You say, I'm not angry with God. That's fine. God's angry with you. I'm not doing anything to harm God. That's fine. God's going to send you to eternal hell. You see, that's the point. God is at war with men whether they're conscious of their own animosity toward Him or not. In fact, the background of this concept of peace is Romans l and 2. And that tells us about the wrath of God, doesn't it? Romans l:l8: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." You see, it's God who's at war with the ungodly and the unrighteous, and those who do not know Christ. In fact, God even says if you don't embrace Jesus Christ you are anathema, you are cursed.

In Exodus 22:24 it says: "And My wrath shall wax hot and I will kill you with the sword and your wives shall be widows and your children fatherless."

In Deuteronomy 32 it says, "They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God. They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people. I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation, for a fire is kindled in Mine anger and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase and set on fire the foundations of the mountains." God is furious. And who’s He furious with? Sinners. Sinners. Angry.

Joshua 28:l8 says: "When you have transgressed the covenant of the Lord your God which He commanded you and have gone and served other gods and bowed yourself to them, then shall the anger of the Lord be kindled against you and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which He hath given you."

In II Kings 22:l3 it says: "Great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us because our fathers have not hearkened to the words of this book to do according to all that is written concerning us."

In Isaiah 5, verse 25, it says: "Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against His people and He has stretched forth His hand against them and has smitten them and the hills did tremble and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the street. For all this His anger is still not turned away but His hand is stretched out yet."

In Isaiah 13, verse 9, it says: "The day of the Lord comes cruel with wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. Therefore," it says in verse 13, "I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place and the wrath of the Lord of host and in the day of His fierce anger." And it goes like that all through Isaiah, and then Jeremiah.

In Nahum it says that, minor prophet, "God is jealous, the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries and reserveth wrath for His enemies."

So, men may not be that angry with God but God is very, very angry with them. And that's the reason they're sent to hell. And He's angry with them because of their unrepentant sin. In Ephesians 5, verse 6, it says: "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience."

And when Jesus is shown returning in Revelation l9: "Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword and with it He smites the nations and rules with a rod of iron and treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of almighty God."

Now, the sum of all of this attitude is best articulated in Psalm 7, verse 11. Just listen to it. This is what it says: "God judges the righteous and God is angry with the wicked every day." The issue is that God is at war with the wicked. They are children of wrath. They are enemies, it says in Romans

8:7 and 8, enemies of God.

From time to time I have the privilege of doing Bible studies and chapel services for the professional athletic teams in our city.

And some years ago when George Allen was the coach of the Rams I was involved in doing those. And I asked one of the players one day. I said, how does George Allen feel about these chapels? And he said, Oh, George said to us one day, look, I don't know if there's a God, but I like having these chapels, because if there is one I want to be sure He's on my side. You want to know something? God is not on the side of sinners. God is not on the side of Christ rejecters. He is their enemy and He seeks their destruction.

Now, with that as a background, what do you think it means when it says we have peace with God? Does that sound good to you now? Does that sound wonderful to you now? It sure sounds good to me. We have peace with God. And it isn't that we did something and we have it from our end, it is that something satisfied Him about it. What was it? It was the perfect work of Jesus Christ. And God poured out His fury and His wrath on Christ. And it says at the end of verse l, "Through our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ...God was appeased, as it were, for all of His vengeance and all of His anger and all of His wrath, found its full fury on Christ on the cross, did it not? And we have peace with God. Boy, that is good to know. That's my new status and it flows out of the reconciliation accomplished by the work of Jesus Christ. You see, in Christ our sin was penalized, as it were. In Christ there was the full payment and God was propitiated, God was satisfied. The price was paid. And that's why it says in Colossians I, "Having made peace through the blood of His cross."

See? Jesus made the peace between God and us through the blood of His cross. "And you that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works He hath now reconciled in the body of His flesh through death to present you," watch this, "holy and unblamable and unreprovable in His sight." The act of Jesus Christ so fully accomplished peace with God that from now on forever you are holy, unblamable, and unreproveable in His sight. Why? Because every sin which you should have been punished for, Christ bore. Marvelous thought.

Now, so we introduce into the concept of justification the concept of reconciliation. And may I say for you who are thinking theology with me, justification and reconciliation are distinguishable as terms, but they are inseparable as reality because justification embraces reconciliation. That's the message of chapter 5. Justification embraces sanctification, that's the message of chapter 6 and chapter 7. Justification embraces glorification, that's the message of chapter 8.

So that justification, although it can be distinguished in terms of just the words from these other things, is utterly inseparable from them in reality. And so when you embrace Jesus Christ by faith and are justified, inherent in that justification is not only glorification to come, sanctification immediately to begin its process, but reconciliation to God. And so that we are no longer the enemy but we are His sons, we are His children and Paul says, from within us we cry, “Abba, Father,” Daddy, the term of intimacy.

God's wrath toward us, which would ultimately consign us to eternal hell, is removed. And all of His fury, fully absorbed and resolved in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, has spent itself. And we are left with a marvelous relationship of reconciliation. It's all through Christ. Just that... You ought to underline that line at the end of verse l, "Through our Lord Jesus Christ," because everything you have is through our Lord Jesus Christ, everything.

It says in Ephesians l: "For we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." You see, everything that is ours is because of Christ, everything. He made peace. He made peace.

You say, well, John, that's great. That's really great that He did that and He reconciled us to God. And in II Corinthians 5 it says He not only reconciled us to God but He gave us the ministry of reconciliation and that is to go out and preach the gospel to others who need to be reconciled. Reconciliation. You say that's great. He brought us to God, but, but, but, does He keep us in that relationship? I mean, how do we know that that goes on?

And that's really the question I want to talk about for a moment.

You see, Jesus not only... Now listen to this, very important. He not only reconciled us to God initially, but He maintains that reconciliation. And that is His high priestly work. You understand that? First John l says: "He keeps on cleansing us from all (What?) sin." You see, the continual cleansing, the continual mediation, the continual washing of our sin provides for us the maintaining of that reconciliation. Do you see? So you have two tremendous truths that cannot really be perceived. In the one hand we are at peace with God forever because every sin we will ever commit was already borne by Christ. And so there is nothing to violate our reconciliation, for the sin for which we should be cast out was paid for and covered. And even in the daily walking through the world as we sin the Lord keeps on cleansing and keeps on cleansing so then we are maintained in reconciliation, not only by the past act of Christ on the cross, but by the present mediation of Christ at the right hand of God. His

high priestly ministry says He ever lives to make what? Intercession for us. Isn't that great? I'm at peace with God.

For how long? For as long as Jesus Christ lives. And how long does He live? Forever. He intercedes for us. When a person embraces Christ by faith the spotless Son of God makes that person one with God and he's at peace.

And there's a corollary to mention. I couldn't help but think of this. When you love the Lord Jesus Christ you really do invite a relationship of peace with His Father, don't you? I mean, if you want to get to me, love my children, right? And do you know? In Psalm 2 the Father says, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry." And when Jesus came into the world the Father said. "This is My (What?) beloved Son. (What?) Hear Him." Hear Him. And to the Corinthians the Spirit of God says, you had better love the Lord Jesus Christ or you will be anathema. And in a very wonderful and sort of personal sense I believe when we love the Son we gain the love of the Father.

The famous missionary David Livingston spent a year or two with a certain tribe in the southern part of Africa. And he went into the interior with his wife (and they had a little baby at the time) to preach to another tribe. After he preached to this other tribe he returned to the first tribe and he found them in difficult situations because a neighboring tribe had attacked the tribe where he had been for a couple of years. They had killed a lot of the men and they captured the chief's son, took him away. At the moment of Livingston's return there had come a messenger from the invaders who had captured the son of the chief and they were begging for peace because they feared retaliation. The chief of the injured tribe who desired only to live at peace with his neighbors said to David Livingston, "How can I be at peace with them who hold my son prisoner?" And if this attitude is true in the heart of a savage chief, how much more is it true of God the Father? "How can I be at peace with those who trample underfoot the blood of My Son?"

But when you, in love, come to Jesus Christ you seek out the Father's peace. And because Christ has died on the cross to pay the penalty for all your deserved punishment and all that penalty has been spent, all that fury has been released, all that wrath has been satisfied, God can be at peace with you.

Now, I want to add a note to that and I think it's important to say this. I believe that produces in us a sense of tranquility, doesn't it? I mean, that gives me peace in my heart. That's not the meaning of the verse, but boy, that sure makes me feel at peace. That gives me, as the theologian Hodge called it, "A sweet quiet of the soul." I mean, I'm a friend of God. I'm... I'm a son of God. I'm a brother of Jesus

Christ. I'm in the family and God is at peace with me.

Paul put it this way when he wrote to the Ephesians. He said:

Put on the shoes, or “have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Do you know that? What was he saying? What do you mean have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace? What is that? Well, a Roman soldier, when he went to battle, put on hobnail boots and little things that looked like football shoes with little spikes sticking out the bottom of them, because when he got into hand-to-hand combat for a life and death issue he wanted to make sure he didn't slip and slide everywhere. So he had these little nails coming out and they would hold him on his ground and he could fight and carry the blows and so forth. And a... And so Paul says, when you go out to do battle with the enemy, with the powers of demons and the forces of hell, and you go into that spiritual warfare, you get your feet firmly planted and what you've got on your feet, they're prepared with the gospel of peace. And what is the gospel of peace? It's the good news that God is at peace with you. And you know what that means? That means God is now on your side. Did you get that? And so, when the enemy comes you just hold your ground and say, get ‘em, God. Because God is on your side. He is on your side. That's the transformation that has taken place in the reconciliation work of Jesus Christ. Oh, what a secure place, God is on my side.

You say, oh, what about when I sin? When you sin, first of all, in the past it was paid for by Christ, it is settled. The fury and the wrath that that sin should receive, Christ already received. And in addition to that He, present, continues to intercede on your behalf and to keep on cleansing you, and maintains the peace.

In fact, in Ephesians 2:l4, one of my favorite statements in all the Bible, it says of Christ: "He is our peace." And as long as He ever lives He will maintain that relationship of peace. Hear it, friend. God is satisfied with Christ's sacrifice for your sin, His wrath is gone, you are at peace, and nothing can change that relationship.

And so does God say in Hebrews 8:l2. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember (How often?) no more." Why? Because Christ satisfied God's wrath.

In chapter l0 of Hebrews, in verse l7, it says again: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

Now listen, for you to say or for anyone to say that you can lose your salvation is to say one of two things or both. The work of Christ was not sufficient, past tense, on the cross. The present high priestly work of Christ neither is it sufficient. Do you want to say that? Hardly.

Second link, do you think that one was good? Wait till you see this one. And this is as far as we're going to get, verse 2: "By whom," antecedent, our Lord Jesus Christ, "By whom also we have access." Circle that word in your Bible. "We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand." Stop right there. The first link that secures us eternally to the Savior is peace with God. The second one is standing in grace, standing in grace. We aren't moving in and out of grace. We're what? Standing in it. We're not coming and going through it. We're standing in it, standing in grace and the... My feeble brain can't touch the boundaries of this truth. It is so vast and so profound and every word is powerful. Start with “by whom.” By whom? Jesus Christ, everything is because of Him.

The key thought in the whole text is the mediation of Jesus Christ, through His marvelous mediation. By His death He brings us to God and to peace. And notice this, and it says: "By whom also we have access by faith," again. Now let me just stop on this word “access.”

That's a monumental word. It's a staggering word. It is a shocking word. It is an infinitely incomprehensible word. It is a word that is beyond the purview of a Jew to even conceive that anybody on earth could have access to God. Why? Because everything a Jew had ever known all his life was that God is the utterly holy and unapproachable one. Didn't he know that? Didn't he believe that? Throughout all their history that's all they knew. And by the way, the word “access” here, this word is used three times. It is used here and it is used in Ephesians 2:18 and 3:12 and it always speaks of access to God. He's given us access to God. And a Jew just never knew that.

In fact, what’d happen to a Jew if he ever got close to God?

He'd be consumed. If you go back, for example, to... And I'll just give you one illustration of it from the text, the nineteenth chapter of Exodus. And you might turn to it for a moment, Exodus l9. God is giving the law on Mount Sinai. And verse 9 says: "The Lord said to Moses, ‘Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud that the people may hear when I speak with thee and believe thee forever.’ And Moses told the words of the people to the Lord. And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go to the people, sanctify them today and tomorrow. Let them wash their clothes and be ready on the third day, for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people on Mount Sinai.’" Now He says, you've got to get clean, you've got to get straightened up, you've got to be ready when I come. "And set a bound,"

verse l2, "set a bound," put up a fence, a wall, "and say, take heed to yourselves that you not go up into the mount or touch the border of it. Whoever touches the mount will be put to death." I mean, God's going to be up there and you're going to be down here and don't you go near God, or you're dead.

And verse 13 says: "There shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet sounds long, they shall come up to the mount. Moses went down from the mount to the people, sanctified the people; he washed their clothes, he said to the people, ‘Be ready on the third day, come not near your wives.’" No sexual relationships. "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, thunders and lightnings, thick cloud on the mount and the voice of the trumpet summoning them exceedingly loud so that all the people who were in the camp trembled." Now, they're going to meet God. Right? Nice, warm, happy occasion; the whole place is exploding like a volcano, lightning, thunder, fire, fury. The people are shaking, this massive trumpet blast rattling their minds, they've been purifying themselves for three days. This is really a very big occasion. "Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the lower part of the mountain. And Mount Sinai was all together in a smoke because the Lord descended on it in fire and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him by a voice. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai on the top of the mount, and the Lord called Moses up to the top of the mount and Moses went up and the Lord said to Moses, ‘Go down, charge the people lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them die.’" Don't let them come near. "’And let the priests also who come near to the Lord sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth on them.’ And Moses said to the Lord, ‘The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai for Thou chargedst us, saying, ‘Set bounds about the mount and sanctify it.’ And the Lord said unto him, ‘Away, get thee down and thou shalt come up, thou and Aaron with thee. But let not the priests and the people break through to come up to the Lord lest He break forth upon them.’ So Moses went down to the people and spoke unto them." Now you can go back to Romans.

I mean, that's a pretty fearful deal, isn't it? One thing God established from the very beginning as He drew those people out of Egypt to take them to their land was that you don't have access to God. Now why do you think He wanted them to know that? Because He was teaching them a very important lesson about His utter holiness and man's utter unholiness. And there was no way that there was access, none. Even when God put the tabernacle in place, and He put the temple in place, they could go so far. The Gentiles could go so far, no further. The women could go so far, no further. The men could go so far, no further. The priests could go so far, no further. And there was only one priest who only one day a year could ever go into the presence of God and that was the high priest. After all kinds of cleansing ritual he went in there and he sprinkled the blood as fast as he could and

he got out of there.

And people who tried to approach God apart from God's prescriptions were dead on the spot. You think of Nadab and Abihu, who went in and offered strange incense or strange fire to the Lord, and they dropped dead on the spot. You think of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who tried to function as priest under the Most High God, to go in and to come before God, and the ground swallowed them up. No, if they knew anything, they knew that God was unapproachable. Only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies once a year, and that after special purification and only to hurry out. Access was not a word in their religious vocabulary.

And nor does any sinful man today have access to God. But Christ's death changed that. Isn't that great? You see, this is why the gospel was so hard for the Jew, to see themselves as rushing into the presence of God. That's why the writer of Hebrews says, “Look, let us come (What?) boldly before the throne of grace, for Christ has consecrated a new and living way.” Matthew 27:5l says that when Jesus was crucified, what happened to the veil in the temple? It was rent from the top to the bottom. Why? Access, access to God.

And that's what Hebrews 4:i8 is saying. "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace." Well, before, if you came near God you wouldn't find mercy and grace you'd find death.

In Jeremiah 32 we have a great teaching reflecting the new covenant and it says there: "They shall be My people and I will be their God. I will not turn away from them to do them good but I will put My fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from Me." They shall be My people and I will be their God and I will continue to do them good and they'll continue, He says, to draw unto Me.

In the tenth chapter of Hebrews, I can't resist it, one of my very favorite chapters in the Bible, particularly from verse 19 on in that chapter. He says: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say His flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near." Isn't that great? Access, access.

So, access is a rich word. By the way, the secular use of that word in the Greek is often used to refer to a haven or a harbor for a ship in distress. God then becomes a haven and a harbor for us in distress.

Now, when we get in there what have we found? Watch it, verse 2, we have access into this grace in which we stand. Oh, this is just beyond our imagination. We have access into grace. When we get in there to the presence of God we stand in grace. That's why it says, "Let us come boldly to obtain grace." Because when we come in we stand in grace. “Stand” means just that, *histmi*, stand firm, stand solid, stand fixed, abide. And we are abiding in a state of grace.

Now what is grace? What is grace? It is undeserved favor, right? In fact, if you were to get a definition of grace this is what I would say: God's unmerited favor by which He saves us and makes us righteous solely on the basis of His sovereign love and not because of any worthiness on our part and in spite of our sin because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I mean, He saves us by grace, which means we had nothing to do with it. And once we get in there we stand in grace. That is so important, to stand in grace, because grace means that He gives us what we don't what? Deserve.

People think, well, you got saved by grace, but boy, you're going to stay in there by law. No, no, you got saved by grace and now you have to do rules to stay in there, you have to keep the law and if you break the law you're out. No. This says you stand in grace, you are firmly fixed in an environment of grace and grace is God's unmerited forgiveness of sin. I think Jude said it in verse 24. Just listen to this; it's so marvelous. "Now unto Him," get this, "who is able to keep you from (What?) falling, and to present you (What?) faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." You know what? You know what the priestly work of Christ does? When you come in you stand in grace and that is the continual gracious, undeserved, unmerited forgiveness of God on your behalf for your sins. It continues. It is an aura of grace. And grace is that which forgives, and because of that He is able to keep you from falling. We stand in grace, safe custody.

We abide. It's what John l5 means when it says to abide in Christ. We abide in the environment of grace. We're so secure there. I mean, what did you have to do to get thrown out of grace? I mean, you didn't get anything... You didn't do anything to get in there. You can't do anything to get out of there. I mean, you say, well, if you sin so many sins you'll get thrown out. No. Because where sin, Romans 5 and 6, where sin abounds, what happens? Grace does what? Much more abound. You see, there's no way out because if you stand in grace, grace can only function where there is failure, true? Marvelous thought, and that's why you're so secure. If it was a place of law, if it was a place of rule-keeping, you'd be out and so would I. If your sins expelled you then it isn't grace. But by grace are you saved.

And Romans 5:20 says: "The law entered that the offense might abound but where sin abounded grace did much more abound." Oh, what a great thought.

You see, beloved, those two links... I mean, that would be enough, wouldn't it? We have peace with God. Now if you're going to quibble about that then you're going to have to say: One, the sacrifice of Christ was not adequate to cover all your sin and keep the peace; and the maintaining of that peace is beyond the ability of Jesus Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for you and you really... You're really denying who Christ is and what His work is, past and present. Peace with God would be enough.

But just to add to that the Lord says, not only that, you stand in grace. And grace can only operate where there is sin because it is undeserved favor, it is unmerited forgiveness. And so when you sin it functions. And so you're kept in a state of grace. Great truth, great truth. Jesus' high priestly work going on right now maintains the peace and maintains the application of grace to us.

We're going to see this later in verse 10 but I just can't resist pointing it out to you right now, this is so good. Look at verse 10. This kind of sums up what we said. “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Now just stop there for a minute. If the death of Christ could make peace with God, if the death of Christ could reconcile you to God, "Much more being reconciled we shall be being saved by His life." In other words, if a Savior dying could bring you to God, don't you think a Savior living could keep you there? Great truth. How much more if a dead Savior can redeem you, how much more can a living Savior keep you? And you see, that's the high priestly work of Jesus Christ. And He continually on our behalf goes to the Father. Like in Luke 22 when He...He sees Peter and He says: "Peter, Satan has desired to have you." Then He says this: "But I've prayed for you.” I've prayed for you and when this little test is over you're going to come out fine. And He gives us one little insight into how He maintains the place of His people in relation to God. He works on the behalf of Peter. And so He secures us. We are at peace with God. And we stand in grace. And Christ intercedes to keep the peace alive and to keep our standing.

Arthur Pink, I think, has a great statement. He says: "It is utterly and absolutely impossible that the sentence of the divine judge should ever be revoked or reversed. Sooner shall the lightnings of omnipotence shiver the Rock of Ages than those sheltering in Him again be brought under condemnation." End quote. Can't happen. The judge made a verdict, and that will stand forever.

Paul says, "I'm persuaded of this, that that which I have committed unto Him He is able to (What?) keep." To keep. That's 2 Timothy 1:12. "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day." Confidence in God.

In Hebrews, and I'm just going to wrap up, in Hebrews 10, note this and we're going to come to a great conclusion. Hebrews 10:10. We've been sanctified to the offering of the body of Jesus, once for all. It's not like the old priesthood, every priest standing daily ministering, offering the same sacrifices, never able to take away sin. But this man, "after He offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified." He's perfected us forever.

But the coup de grace on all this is in Romans, chapter 8 verse 31. Listen to this: "What shall we say to these things?" What's our response? "If God is for us (What?) who can be against us?" If we're at peace with God, if God is on our side, who is bigger than God that can change that? What's the answer? No one. "And if God didn't spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." In other words, if God gave us the best He had, His Son, "How shall He not with Him freely give us all things?" In other words, if He gave the supreme gift in His Son to redeem us, don't you think He'll give whatever it takes to keep us? That certainly is less than His Son.

And then verse 33 says: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Who is going to indict us? Who is going to accuse us? Shall God who justified us? "Who is he that condemns us? Shall Christ who died for us and rose again, and is at the right hand of God who also makes (What?) intercession for us?" You think the attorney for our defense is going to accuse us? Do you think the judge who said we were delivered from judgment and set free is going to reverse His verdict? Not on your life. There is no higher court than that judge. And if He has already given us the supreme gift in His Son to redeem us will He give us less? Will He not give us lesser gifts to keep us?

So, the state of peace with God and the state of standing in grace is not a precarious one. We are on firm ground. He holds us. That's His side, marvelous. Our side is that we persevere. We do obey. We walk in obedience. Why? Now listen carefully, because part of His keeping us is to empower us by His Spirit to walk in obedience. It's so important. So when you see somebody who you think they're a Christian and all of a sudden they bail out altogether, 1 John 2:19 says, "They went out from us because they were not of us. If they were of us they would have continued with us." Why? Because not only does God keep those who are His from His side, but He implants the Spirit in them and gives them the power by the Spirit to persevere, to walk in obedience.

So, if you want to attack the security of the believer, you are attacking, first of all, God. You're saying He changed His verdict. Secondly, you're attacking Christ, you're saying His cross work was inadequate, His high priestly work cannot maintain us. And then you're attacking the Holy Spirit in saying He is inadequate to cause the believer to persevere. And a discrediting of the entire Trinity is wrapped up in a denial of the security of the believer. Does that help you to feel secure? That's only two out of six, folks.

Horatio Bonar, the great saint of God, wrote these majestic words. I read them to you in conclusion:

“Thy works not mine, O Christ, speak gladness to this heart.

They tell me all is done, they bid my fear depart.

To whom save thee who can alone for sin atone, Lord, shall I flee.

Thy pains not mine, O Christ, upon the shameful tree

Have paid the law's full price and purchased peace for me.

Thy tears not mine, O Christ, have wept my guilt away into a blessed day.

Thy bonds not mine, O Christ, unbind me of my chain

And break my prison doors ne'er to be barred again.

Thy wounds not mine, O Christ, can heal my bruised soul.

Thy stripes not mine contain the balm that makes me whole.

Thy blood not mine, O Christ. Thy blood so freely spilt,

Can blanch my blackest stains and purge away my guilt.

Thy cross not mine, O Christ, has borne the awful load

Of sins that none in heaven or earth could bear but God.

Thy death not mine, O Christ, has paid the ransom due,

Ten thousand deaths like mine would have been all too few.

Thy righteousness, O Christ, alone can cover me.

No righteousness avail save that which is of Thee.

Thy righteousness alone can clothe and beautify,

I wrap it round my soul, in this I'll live and die."

Let's pray.

Gracious Father, what a blessed day. O what a great confidence has welled up within our hearts as we see that we are at peace with God and we stand in grace. Thank You for that. Fill our hearts with gratitude. Lift our souls in praise to You. We who do not deserve even the access initially, do not deserve that we should be kept in that place someday to be presented faultless, blameless, unreproachable in Thy sight. O, thank You, not only for the redemptive work of Christ past, but for the high priestly work of Christ present that keeps on cleansing. Thank You that we are at peace, that You are on our side, that You are our defense, our defender, our friend through our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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