

## **ACCESS TO GOD**

### **ROMANS 5:2**

## **INTRODUCTION**

How would you describe your relationship with God?

For those outside of Christ, the relationship is clearly one of enmity—God is your enemy.

For those “in Christ”—that is, those who are united to Christ through faith—the good news of the gospel is that there is no longer a relationship of enmity with God.

As a result of your justification through Jesus Christ, your relationship undergoes a fundamental change so that instead of hostility with God you now enjoy peace with God.

Paul listed that as the first benefit of justification which is meant to reassure the believer of their future salvation.

However, that is often as far as a Christian goes in considering the nature of their relationship with God.

Many believers think of the nature of their relationship with God in primarily negative terms.

What I mean is, you might think of your salvation from God’s wrath and think of your relationship in terms of what is no longer true—there is no longer the fear of condemnation.

Your relationship with God is focused on the negative idea of escaping judgement.

But if that is all you think about, then your relationship with God is no better than that of a slave to a master.

There certainly is validity to thinking of God as your Master and yourself as His loyal slave.

After all, one of Paul's favourite ways to describe himself is to refer to himself as **"a slave of Christ Jesus,"** as he does even at the beginning of his letter to the Romans.

However, if that is the only way that you think of your relationship with God, then you will have misunderstand the nature of the slavery analogy to be something cold, distant, and unloving.

You see, the primary dynamic in a master-slave relationship is authority and submission.

The master has authority and the slave recognises that by offering submission in the form of respect and obedience.

That is appropriate in a relationship with God since He is the Creator and Sovereign Ruler over His creation who exercises power and authority over all people, and in response a believer should offer submission in the form of respect and obedience.

I would imagine that most Christians today would describe their relationship with God in those kinds of terms.

However, Scripture describes our relationship with God in other terms too.

These terms help us understand what is absent from the master-slave relationship as we tend to think of it.

Scripture describes the relationship of believers to God as more than just authority and submission—it includes love that produces intimacy and enjoyment.

I would suggest that the reason why so many Christians struggle in their relationship with God and feel a lack of excitement and enthusiasm about God is that they relate to Him only as their Master to whom they must submit and not their Father whom they are invited to love and enjoy.

The nature of a believer's relationship with God is at the heart of what Paul lists as the second benefit of justification through Jesus Christ.

As a result of being declared righteous by God, believers in Christ are invited into not only a peaceful relationship with God, but a loving, intimate relationship with God.

That is because, as Paul explains, we have access to God through Christ.

Access to God is one of the most important, and yet overlooked, aspects of the gospel.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The doctrine of access is one of the most important in Christian theology, for it concerns man's way to God." Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God's River: Romans 5:1–11* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), 25.

In order to understand the significance of access to God, we begin with a definition.

“Access” is the permission and ability to enter into a secured area or into the presence of someone important such as God.<sup>2</sup>

But there is a story in the Bible that gives us a much better picture of the concept of access.

Turn to the book of **Esther**.

In **Esther 1:13-14**, we see **Ahasuerus**, otherwise known as “**Xerxes**,” the king of **Persia**, consulting his trusted counsellors:

**13 Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times—for it was the custom of the king thus to speak before all who knew law and justice**

**14 and were close to him: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media who had access to the king’s presence and sat in the first place in the kingdom.**

As the story progresses, we encounter a crisis for the Jewish people as Haman is determined to destroy them.

In Yahweh’s providence, the queen is Jewish woman—Esther.

When her relative, Mordecai, prevailed on her to speak to the king about the crisis facing their people, she initially responded as we read in **Esther 4:11**—

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<sup>2</sup> Chad Brand et al., eds., “Access,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 16.

**11 “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that for any man or woman who comes to the king to the inner court who is not summoned, he has but one law, that he be put to death, unless the king holds out to him the golden sceptre so that he may live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for these thirty days.”**

Despite the risk, Mordecai is able to convince Esther to speak to the king.

She asks all the Jewish people to pray as she takes the bold risk of entering the presence of the king without his permission in **Esther 5:1-2**—

**1 Now it happened on the third day, that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king’s house in front of the king’s rooms, and the king was sitting on his royal throne in the throne room, opposite the entrance to his house.**

**2 Now it happened that when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she advanced in favour in his eyes; and the king extended to Esther the golden sceptre which was in his hand. So Esther came near and reached out and touched the top of the sceptre.**

That is a good picture of the concept of “access,” but as the concept is applied to God’s relationship with people, it refers to their ability and permission to enter into His presence.

We can trace this rich theological theme throughout Scripture, beginning in the Garden of Eden.

**Genesis 1–2** describe not only the creation account, but Yahweh’s creation of a being—male and female—in His image so that they would enjoy a loving, intimate relationship with Him.

We see a picture of this intimacy in the conversations Yahweh has with Adam during the search for a suitable helper for him.

Then we encounter the tragedy of the Fall as Adam and Eve choose to rebel against Yahweh in sin.

In **Genesis 3:8**, we read of what was lost as a consequence—  
**<sup>8</sup> Then they heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God in the midst of the trees of the garden.**

Adam and Eve had previously enjoyed the unparalleled privilege of a loving, intimate relationship with God as they had unrestricted access into His presence.

Now after the fall, that privilege is lost and because of sin people do not have access to God.

From **Genesis 3** on, the biblical narrative tells of God’s saving work to restore men and women to a loving, intimate relationship with Himself by restoring their access to Him that sin had broken.

In **Exodus 19** we read of the restrictions on access to God, even for the people of God under the Mosaic covenant.

The great announcement of the covenant is made by Yahweh in **Exodus 19:4-6**—

**4 “You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I lifted you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.**

**5 So now then, if you will indeed listen to My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine;**

**6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”**

However, even in this context, access to Yahweh is limited.

**Exodus 19:9**—

**9 Yahweh said to Moses, “Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever.”**

After emphatically warning people of their need to be both holy and distant from the mountain, Yahweh granted only a very restricted access to His people, as we read in

**Exodus 19:16-17**—

**16 So it happened on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.**

**17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.**

Clearly the people of God did not have the access to God that Adam and Even enjoyed in Eden before sin broke the relationship and brought distance between God and man.

That is clear from **Exodus 19:20-21**—

**<sup>20</sup> And Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.**

**<sup>21</sup> Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, “Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to Yahweh to see, and many of them perish.”**

That is the consistent pattern that we see in the Old Testament as the message to God’s people is that access to God is limited and can only be experienced in a very restricted way.

This distance and restrictive access, even for the people of God, was constantly reinforced by the worship that centred on the Tabernacle and, later, the Temple.

The Temple had various courts, segregating people according to the degrees of access that they were allowed.

The Gentiles were limited to the very outermost court.

Next, the Jewish women could enter further in, but not by much.

The Jewish men could go one court further, but only that far.

The priests could go further still, but even they were kept largely out of the Temple itself and confined to the court in which they offered sacrifices.

Each group could go nearer to the Holy of Holies, where God's presence was manifested, but none could actually enter there.

Only the high priest could enter, but even he was restricted to only once a year and very briefly.

The high priest could only gain access into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement.

If he tried to enter in an unworthy manner, Yahweh would strike him dead immediately which is why his special garments included bells so that the people knew if the sound of the bells stopped that he had been struck dead, as we read in

**Exodus 28:35**—

**<sup>35</sup> It shall be on Aaron when he ministers; and its sound shall be heard when he comes into the holy place before Yahweh and when he goes out, so that he will not die.**

Everything about the Temple architecture and the manner in which Israel worshipped God there reinforced the idea that they enjoyed only the most restricted, limited access to God.

As much as Yahweh was working to save His people from sin and its consequences such as His righteous wrath, the Old Covenant simply did not provide the solution of restoring the people of God to a loving, intimate relationship with Him through unrestricted access into His presence.

However, Yahweh had also promised that when His redemptive work reached its climax in the revelation of His promised Messiah that He would grant His people full and free access to His presence once again.

One of the most compelling examples of this New Covenant promise is found in **Zechariah 3:3-8**—

**3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.**

**4 And he answered and spoke to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have made your iniquity pass away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.”**

**5 Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of Yahweh was standing by.**

**6 And the angel of Yahweh testified to Joshua, saying,**

**7 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘If you will walk in My ways and if you will keep the responsibility given by Me, then you will also render justice in My house and also keep My courts, and I will grant you access to walk among these who are standing here.**

**8 Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a wondrous sign, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.**

With that background, we are now better equipped to understand the significance of what Paul describes as a benefit of justification.

As a result of receiving the righteousness of God through Jesus Christ, believers now have unrestricted access into the presence of God.

Through Christ, we can enjoy more than a relationship of submission to God as our Master—we can enjoy a relationship of love with God as our Father, with whom we enjoy an intimacy that goes beyond what even Adam and Eve enjoyed in the Garden of Eden.

If you are to experience assurance of your future salvation then you need to understand the nature of the relationship that you have with God through Christ.

It is this confident assurance that will enable you to overcome any struggles with a lack of excitement and enthusiasm about God.

It is this confident assurance that will enable you to relate to God as your Father whom you are invited to love and enjoy.

So as we'll learn from Paul today, as a result of being declared righteous by God, believers in Christ are invited into not only a peaceful relationship with God, but a loving, intimate relationship with God.

That is because, as Paul explains, we have access to God through Christ.

## PROPOSITION

So as we examine **Romans 5:2** today, we'll consider the significance of our access to God as a result of our justification through Christ.

To accomplish this, we'll use **five questions** to **understand and apply** Paul's explanation:

1. When do we obtain access?
2. How do we obtain access?
3. To what do we obtain access?
4. To whom do we obtain access?
5. By whom do we obtain access?

### 1. WHEN DO WE OBTAIN ACCESS?

In order to understand the significance of our access to God, we need to ask when we come to obtain this privilege.

Paul definitely has an eschatological focus in this section of **chapter 5** as he emphasises the believer's hope.

We know that "hope" as the New Testament uses the term is a far cry from the way in which we use the term in our culture.

When we speak of "hope," we tend to use it as a feeling of expectation and desire.

It can describe our optimism, or it can be little more than wishful thinking.

Paul, like the other New Testament authors, uses “hope” very differently—it describes the believer’s confident certainty in the future.

That confidence is, of course, rooted in God’s faithfulness to His promises and because of this we can be certain that in the future we will experience all that He has promised us in Christ.

Therefore, a believer’s hope is a believer’s full confidence and complete assurance of their future salvation.

Since we know that this is Paul’s focus in **chapters 5–8**, and especially in this first section of **chapter 5:1–11**, we might easily wonder whether this access to God is a future reality that we are still waiting to obtain.

However, Paul emphatically indicates that this privileged access is a past tense experience for everyone who has been justified.

Look at **verse 2**—

<sup>2</sup> through whom also **we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...**

Though this is clearly translated as a past tense event in our English Bibles, we lose the emphasis of the Greek grammar.

You see, Paul uses what is called the “perfect tense” to emphasise the existing result and present state that one obtains as a result of a past action.<sup>3</sup>

That stands in contrast to the simple past tense that he used in the previous verse to describe our justification.

In other words, Paul is purposefully highlighting that believer’s obtain access to God simultaneously to their justification and that, having obtained this access, they continue to enjoy the access in the present and into the future.

To put it simply, when you are justified you are given access to God which is permanent.

It is an irrevocable access that you are granted through Christ because of your indissoluble union with Him.

But the perfect tense not only emphasises the permanence of the past event, but the present importance of it.

That is, we experience this access to God in our present relationship with Him.

Now, this is not to say that we experience the fullness of this access in the present.

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Joshua W. Jipp, Second Edition, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 262.

In fact, the New Testament is clear that we are waiting to inherit a future salvation in which we will also experience the fullness of our access to God in the glory that awaits us in the eternal state.

This is even what Paul reminds us of when, at the end of **verse 2**, he writes that “**we boast in hope of the glory of God.**”

Nevertheless, we who are justified have a permanent and irrevocable invitation into the presence of God as we enjoy an intimate and loving relationship with Him even now.

The tension between the reality that we presently experience and yet still wait for in the future is what theologians term the “already but not yet” tension.

We already have full and free access to God, but we do not yet have this full access in all of its glorious fullness.

As we look again at **verse 2**, we see that these conclusions are verified by what Paul says when he writes of the access “**in which we stand.**”

This verb, too, is in the perfect tense and this grammatical feature again emphasises the ongoing state of our access.

At this point we must consider the translation of the key word in this verse—translated in the Legacy Standard Bible that we use as “**introduction.**”

Other translations prefer the term “access,” and both “introduction” and “access” are legitimate renderings of the Greek word.

Introduction carries the idea of establishing a relationship between two parties, and it is certainly true that Christ establishes a relationship of loving intimacy between the God and the believer.

However, as we’ve seen, Paul emphasises the permanence of this privilege, and so I think that the translation of the term as “access” captures this idea better.

The translation “**introduction**” seems to emphasise the believer’s initial entry into the presence of God, whereas the translation “**access**” draws attention more to the believer’s continuing ability to enjoy the presence of God.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, I think that the concept of “access” gets closer to the idea that Paul intended to communicate.

So in answering the question of when we obtain access, we conclude that we receive this privilege as an immediate result of our justification.

Since it is a permanent state that we enter into, we now have an ongoing ability to enjoy the presence of God that will be most fully experienced in the eschatological future.

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, ed. Ned B. Stonehouse et al., Second Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 328.

But the question of when leads most naturally to the question of how we obtain access to God—the very question that we turn our attention to next.

## 2. HOW DO WE OBTAIN ACCESS?

Even though we have sufficient revelation to answer this question from **verse 1**, Paul is always striving to be as clear as possible and so he points again to the means by which we obtain access when he writes in **verse 2**—

**<sup>2</sup> through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...**

To remind you, our access to God is the second of five benefits that we receive as a result of our justification through Christ.

Paul grounds this entire section from **verses 1–11** on the opening statement of **verse 1**—“**Therefore, having been justified by faith....**”

From this verse alone we have enough to answer the question of how we obtain access to God.

It is the result of justification by faith alone.

But Paul is not content to leave it at that.

So he clarifies and emphasises the role of faith in our access to God.

The incomparable privilege of gaining access into the presence of God is gained, like justification, by means of faith alone.

Paul doesn't waste any words, and here again we see the pastoral insight of the apostle who is concerned for those he shepherds in his ministry.

Paul is well aware that there are many Christians who are clear on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, but having begun their relationship with God by faith, they fall prey to the subtle but disastrous idea that we must maintain our relationship with God by works.

To use the concept as it's translated in our text, many believers think that we receive a mere introduction to God by faith alone, but that the relationship from that point on must be supplemented by our religious efforts and accomplishments.

However, this is contrary not only to the gospel but even to the very nature of love.

God's love exists eternally between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, and in the fullness and overflow of this eternal love, God determined to set His love on His chosen people.

Since God's love for those in Christ comes from the fountain of His eternal love, long before the creation of the world and any effort we can make to earn God's love, it is a complete contradiction to try and keep that love by earning as if it were merited.

That is why the loving, intimate relationship that we obtain through Christ is based on grace alone, because grace is the experience of God's decision within Himself as Triune Father, Son, and Spirit to love us as His chosen people.

Therefore, any effort to earn or maintain a relationship with God by religious efforts and accomplishments is contrary both to the gospel and the love of God that characterises the relationship with Him we have access to.

This is precisely the error that the Galatians fell into as they tried to maintain their relationship with God through their obedience to the Mosaic Law.

Paul had to harshly rebuke them in **Galatians 3:3**—

**<sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**

That is, Paul rebuked the Galatians for trying to progress in their relationship not by the Spirit of God who gives us faith and assures us of God's love, but by the "**flesh**" which represents their own efforts and resources.

Rather, as Paul says in **Philippians 3:3**, believers in Christ are those who "**put no confidence in the flesh.**"

The opposite of confidence in our own efforts and resources is confidence in what God has accomplished in Christ on our behalf.

That is why Paul emphasises faith alone as the means by which we gain AND maintain access to God.

In order for the access that we gain to be secure and permanent it must rest on God's grace not on human efforts.

Therefore, we receive it by faith in order that it may be based entirely on grace, which is the same logic Paul used in **chapter 4:16**—“**For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be according to grace....**”

Having answered when and how we obtain access, we must clarify what it is that we obtain access to?

### 3. TO WHAT DO WE OBTAIN ACCESS?

As Paul speaks of the benefit of justification, he does not use the language we might expect when describing an “**introduction**” or the privilege of “**access**”—

**<sup>2</sup> through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...**

Though we would normally expect Paul to write of an introduction to a person, his emphasis on grace is certainly not out of place.

As we have just noted, Paul's repeated stress on faith alone places a corresponding stress on grace too.

If faith is the means by which we enter into a new relationship with God, then grace is the ground of the relationship.

That is to say, grace grounds the relationship in God's initiative and effort to love us rather than the other way round.

To get clarity on what Paul means by “**this grace in which we stand**,” we must consider what “**this grace**” refers to.

You see, Paul is not just thinking of grace in a general sense, but is thinking specifically of “**this grace**,” in whatever way that makes it a more specific grace.

It could be that “**this grace**” refers to our justification.

It fits both the context and the theology of Paul’s letter.

Paul has gone to great efforts to explain that justification, as the heart of the gospel message, is received by grace alone through faith alone.

That effort is what directly preceded this text in **chapters 3–4**, and everything that Paul is dealing with now is an implication of that same justification by grace through faith as he states explicitly in **chapter 5:1**.

Though it’s a possible interoperation, it doesn’t seem to be where Paul is focussing now as he seems to have moved on from justification to the benefits that flow from justification.

The other option is to understand “**this grace**” as referring to the broader grace that we receive from God through Christ.

In other words, it is synonymous with the great salvation that we receive according to the gospel.

That seems to be a better fit with Paul’s the way Paul’s argument is flowing in **chapter 5**.

“**This grace in which we stand**” is then Paul’s way of referring to all that we receive from God through Jesus Christ.

As we noted earlier, grace is the experience of God’s decision within Himself as Triune Father, Son, and Spirit to love us as His chosen people.

Grace means that the love we receive from God is based entirely on the decision within Himself to love us and therefore to draw us into a relationship with Himself through the saving work of Christ.

“**This grace in which we stand**” is an entirely new way of relating to God, as if we have been transferred from the realm of human effort and achievement to the realm of divine achievement.

If the concept of access concerns man’s way to God, then Paul is saying that we have come to a permanent state of relating to God on the basis of what He does to bring us to Himself rather than on the basis of what we do to find our way to Him.

In simpler terms, by pointing to grace as the defining characteristic of this intimate relationship we are brought into, Paul is saying that we enjoy the presence of God because He first loved and pursued us, not because we first loved and pursued Him.

If this is true, then answering the question of what we gain access to raises the question of whom we gain access to.

## 4. TO WHOM DO WE OBTAIN ACCESS?

Though Paul uses the language of access to a realm or sphere, we shouldn't miss the point that we have access to a Person not a place—

<sup>2</sup> **through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...**

As we've come to understand, gaining access to grace is really another way to speak about gaining access to the God of grace.

As **one commentator** puts it well—

*“Access to this grace’ is access to God. Grace is not something apart from God, but is God giving Himself to us in His graciousness.”<sup>5</sup>*

In other words, grace is Paul's description of the way God relates to His chosen people—it is the way God loves His people.

Therefore, obtaining access **“into this grace in which we stand”** means to obtain access to God Himself.

Paul is clearly explaining that believers are brought into the presence of God in an intimate, loving relationship as a benefit that we receive from our justification.

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<sup>5</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 219.

This would have been an incredible message for Paul's Jewish audience.

For Jews, the idea of having direct access to God was unthinkable, because to see God face to face was to die.<sup>6</sup>

With the Old Testament background of restricted and indirect access to God through the Temple, we can understand the Jewish amazement at the benefit of direct access to the presence of God.

As Paul explains, the gospel promises that every believer can enjoy the intimacy of a relationship that was previously enjoyed only by the likes of Abraham and Moses.

As we have said before, this is the very best part of the gospel.

The best part of the gospel is not the judgement of God that we are saved from, but the relationship with God that we are saved to.

Through Christ, we now enjoy an unparalleled access to God that the Old Testament saints could hardly have dreamed of.

What enables this direct and privileged access to God is our justification by which we stand before God clothed in perfect righteousness.

Therefore, we can have a greater confidence in a greater intimacy in our relationship with God.

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<sup>6</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Romans*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 276.

The confidence that we enjoy by our new access is based upon the certainty of the means by which we gain that access.

Since we have been definitively declared righteous by God the Father based on the atoning sacrifice of His Son on the cross, we have the unshakable assurance that we can never lose any of the benefits that our justification through Christ has secured.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews, which the early church believed to be the apostle Paul, wrote in great detail of our confident access to God.

#### **Hebrews 4:16**—

**16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

#### **Hebrews 10:19–22**—

**19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,**

**20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,**

**21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,**

**22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**

The intimacy that we enjoy by our new access is, again, based on our justification, because not only does such a decisive divine declaration assure us of the permanent nature of our access but it assures us of the intimate nature of it too.

With Jesus Christ as our perfect sacrifice, the justification He secured for us means that we are invited not only into the outer courts, or even into the Temple itself, but into the very Holy of Holies where the presence of God dwells.

We can see God face-to-face, so to speak.

Though our experience of this intimacy is bound for now in the “already but not yet” tension, we should not overlook that while the Old Testament saints sought the most restricted access to God in the Temple, we ourselves have become the Temple in which the Spirit of God dwells.

As Paul writes in **Ephesians 2:20-21**, God dwells within believers who together constitute the Temple of God—

<sup>20</sup> **having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,**  
<sup>21</sup> **in whom the whole building, being joined together, is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord.**

Or more plainly, as Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 3:16**—

<sup>16</sup> **Do you not know that you are a sanctuary of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?**

As much as we want to explore the glories of what it means to dwell in the presence of God through the access we have to Him in a loving, intimate relationship, it is clear that in asking to whom we have access compels us to ask BY WHOM we have this access?

## 5. BY WHOM DO WE OBTAIN ACCESS?

Paul's focus on Christ and our union with Him throughout this section of **verses 1–11** shines through in the prominence that Paul gives to Christ in **verse 2**—

**<sup>2</sup> through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand...**

Though it was an almost unthinkable privilege—especially to a Jew who had been taught that to see God face to face is to die—Paul makes it clear that we can be assured of such a glorious privilege because of the One who accomplished it.

Through His atoning sacrifice, Jesus Christ made God the Father accessible to any person, Jew or Gentile, who trusts in what He accomplished on their behalf.

In fact, Scripture records the most remarkable illustration of the access that Jesus accomplished for His people.

As Matthew records the crucifixion of Christ, he records the very first thing that happened after His death in **Matthew 27:50-51**—

**<sup>50</sup> Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.**

**<sup>51</sup> And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.**

The very Temple architecture that served to constantly reinforce that God's people had no direct access to Him under the Old Covenant became the scene of the most vivid illustration of what Christ accomplished under the New Covenant.

Christ died so that those who are united to Him by faith can receive the matchless privilege of entering into the presence of God as only the high priest could do once a year.

As the idea of access concentrates on the way to God, we understand now that it is the Son who brings us into this loving, intimate relationship with the Father.

That is why Jesus said in **John 14:6**—

<sup>6</sup> **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me."**

This is why the false teaching on Roman Catholicism is not only heretical but is a blasphemous insult to Christ.

While Scripture points to Christ alone as the One by whom we obtain access to God, Roman Catholicism denies this and dishonours Christ by teaching that we must come to God through Mary.

However, as Paul affirms in **1 Timothy 2:5**—

<sup>5</sup> **There is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.**

Since Christ, however, is the perfect Mediator, He is able to secure our access to God.

As Paul writes in **Ephesians 2:13-18**—

**13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

**17 And He came and preached the good news of peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near;**

**18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.**

Because of Christ, we have the confident assurance of a loving, intimate relationship with God, as Paul describes in **Ephesians 3:12**—

**12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.**

## CONCLUSION

Access to God is one of the most glorious benefits of the gospel because it redefines the nature of our relationship with God.

For those who are justified through faith in Christ, we can relate to God not only as our Master to whom we owe respect and obedience.

Through Christ, we can relate to God as our Father with whom we enjoy a relationship of love and intimacy.

We were created to know and enjoy God, but through Christ we can finally experience this matchless privilege as the people of God.

While there is yet still a fuller experience of the presence of God that we are confidently assured of, we nevertheless have a confidence and boldness to approach God even now since we have direct access to Him.

Friend, it is this confident assurance that will enable you to relate to God as your Father whom you are invited to love and enjoy.

You are invited into not only a peaceful relationship with God, but a loving, intimate relationship with God.

But make no mistake, you can only approach God on the basis of His grace in Christ.

If you would dare to draw near to God on the basis of your own efforts or accomplishments, then not that not only is there no intimacy for you in your relationship with God but there is also no peace.

By rejecting the grace of God that is received through faith in Christ alone, you are rejecting God Himself and remain condemned under His wrath as an enemy of God.

Therefore, you must seek access to God by faith in Christ alone.

Friend, if you are already united to Christ by this same faith, then learn from Paul that you are invited into the most loving relationship with God as you experience the joy and intimacy of His presence through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Through Christ you are introduced to the love of God the Father to whom you have direct and intimate access so that you can know Him and enjoy Him forever.

## BENEDICTION

May the peace of God, our heav'nly Father,  
And the grace of Christ, the risen Son,  
And the fellowship of God the Spirit  
Keep our hearts and minds within His love.

May this peace which passes understanding,  
And this grace which makes us what we are,  
And this fellowship of His communion,  
Make us one in spirit and in heart.<sup>7</sup>

### **2 Corinthians 13:14**

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with you all.**

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<sup>7</sup> *Benediction (May The Peace Of God)*, <https://gettymusic.store/products/benediction-may-the-peace-of-god>