

# Romans Chapter 8 v 31 B

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] Chapter 4, where the writer says, Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

How can we draw near to God with confidence? Well, the clue, if I can put it that way, is there. It's a throne of grace. God is almighty, all-powerful. He is the one who rules over the universe and all things.

But his throne is a throne of grace, a throne of mercy, a throne of love, a throne from which he dispenses forgiveness for sins and eternal life.

And our confidence is that through Jesus Christ, his Son, the way has been made for us to draw near to God and worship him. And so we're going to do that by singing our first hymn in our hymn books, Before the Throne of God Above, I have a strong, a perfect plea, a great high priest whose name is Lord.

That's Jesus. He is the one who has paid for our sins and provided grace and forgiveness for us.

296. Let's stand as we sing. Don't worry, you're not the only ones who are late.

[ 1 : 14 ] That's quite all right. Come in. Find a seat. There's a big crowd of visitors over there. They were all late as well, so just so you feel better about it. Welcome to all of you, late or early, visitors or regulars.

It's good to see you. Let's continue in our worship of God.

Let's come to him in prayer together, bearing in mind his word to us and the words we've been singing. Let us pray. O Lord our God, you are indeed the God who sits on a throne.

For you are the king, the king of the universe, the king of the world. Lord, why are you the king?

Because, first of all, you're the creator of all things, this universe, this world.

You're the king of all human beings because you're the one who created us and made us. Your word tells us in your image. We bear something of your likeness. We bear those creative skills that are part of your character.

[ 2 : 22 ] We have the ability to love, to reason, to think. We have the ability, O Lord, even to hate.

We have the ability, O Lord, to communicate. And we thank you especially that, O Lord, you've created us so that we might be in communication with you, in relationship with you, in fellowship with you.

O Lord, again, we recognize even as we come to you, our God, that sin has marred that communication. Sin has spoiled that image in our lives and in the lives of others, of your beauty and majesty and goodness and faithfulness.

And, O Lord, sin has marred that communication by which we can come to you and know you. So many people do not know you, O Lord, deny you or at least doubt you.

And, O Lord, we thank you that you have not left us in that place of blackness, cut off with no light, no truth, no witness. We thank you that in your love for us, in your grace for us, though you are the king of the universe, you step down into our world as the Lord Jesus Christ.

You, the very eternal God, took on humanity, took on weakness, took on frailty. You came amongst us to make yourself known, to reveal yourself to us.

[ 3 : 38 ] And what a revelation Jesus Christ is to us of the very personal nature of God. When we read of you, Lord Jesus, and your life, you seem to leap out the page to us in your compassion for the lost, in your love for the disabled and the heartbroken, in your care.

You stand out, O Lord, in your truthfulness, in your veracity, in your unwillingness to compromise upon what is right and what is wrong. And, O Lord, when we look at you, Lord Jesus, we see that we are nothing like you.

We are those who are so full of frailties, so full of deception. In our hearts we say one thing with our mouths, but in our hearts we are different.

Thank you, O Lord Jesus, you came not only to show us the beauty and the greatness of God, but you came to bring us to yourself. You came to win for us forgiveness for sins through the cross. You came to suffer in our place, but also to rise again so that you are the ever-living one who gives eternal life to all and everyone who will look to you with faith.

[ 4 : 49 ] We thank you again that you are here by your Holy Spirit to do us good. Thank you, O Lord, that we meet in this way Sunday by Sunday because we know that we need you and because, Lord, we know that you desire to bless us and do us good.

So meet with us, help us, strengthen and encourage us, we pray. For we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Great to see you. Over to you. Okay. So yeah, my name is Elizabeth and I've been in the church for as long as I can remember.

And this last year I've been a Relay worker, which is kind of an internship with UCCF, which is a Christian charity that works with Christian students in universities all over the UK, enabling them, encouraging them to speak for Jesus in the context that they find themselves.

So I just finished that at the end of June. And so I've done a lot of talking about Relay this year. I seem to have written a lot of prayer letters and letters to people and spoken at events like this and at churches.

[ 5 : 54 ] So I thought today that I would speak not just as a Relay worker, but as a friend. Because I'm not a Relay worker anymore, but I am your friend. So I'm going to share 10 highlights, as a friend to a friend, of my year doing Relay in Cardiff.

So the first highlight of my year has been the connections formed and the friendships fostered. So even just applying for Relay, I spoke to Peter and some of the elders here. My friends, my family, I prayed about it.

And that was just really healthy. I think it's quite hard to grow up in a church and grow up in families and in friendship groups and make that transition into being an adult and more particularly being a Christian.

So it was really nice to have those conversations and to have people praying for me even before it started. And it's been really great to have friends further afield who I've been able to catch up with and re-engage with them.

And it's been great to have people here who I've known have been praying for me, encouraging me. That's really kept me going. And with my friends and family, it's also offered opportunities to speak about my faith in ways that I haven't previously been afforded.

[ 6 : 58 ] So perhaps my private spiritual life this year has entered my kind of public working persona. So it's been a joy to share of stories in my professional work with my friends and family and to have them listen to God's goodness.

So the second highlight is the training that I've received. Yeah, I've really enjoyed the kind of the intellectual academic side of Relay, the kind of the theological study. And I feel very blessed to have received such good, high quality training.

And yeah, every month we would hear from speakers who are kind of world-renowned speakers. And it was fantastic to have such a rich biblical teaching every month.

And although that was intense, it was also incredible because each month we were reminded to see Jesus in all areas of our lives. And to continue knowing, enjoying and loving God, which is harder than you might expect when you're doing full-time ministry.

Because it can be easy to see your private faith as a public occupation. So my third highlight is reading the Bible. I never thought that I would say that that would be a highlight. At the first Relay conference, we had to prepare three Bible studies.

[ 8 : 08 ] And I thought that was my worst nightmare. But through the year, I've seen that God is at work as we open the Bible. Yeah, just think of two students. One who I saw this year grasped grace for the first time.

And another girl who saw the seriousness of scripture. And just love following the story of Ruth. And seeing the faithfulness of God in that story. My fourth is a quick one.

Climbing a mountain at 1am in November in minus 10 windchill. That was a memory not to forget. My fifth highlight is the team time that I shared with UCCF Wales and with the South West.

They became a family. My supervisor joked that each one was the best one yet. But it really did feel like that. To be meeting with those people on a monthly basis. My sixth highlight is the friends that I made.

The Relay workers that I shared conferences with and team time. They became great friends. And I hope they will be friends for life. Having their stories shared with me and growing together.

[ 9 : 06 ] Allowed deep friendships to grow in a relatively short space of time. In fact in July I went to five weddings. And nearly all of them were Relay workers or people I've met this year. The seventh highlight is travel.

I love travelling and this year has allowed that in supply. So I've been and helped out at Christian Union events in Bristol. In Cornwall. In Wales. And in Leeds. So these times have been really special.

And it's been really great to see more of the UK. My eighth highlight is Wales. Just Wales. It's been a joy and a privilege to be there. And I've loved it. I went on Christian camps in Wales growing up. So it's been a really great opportunity to meet back with friends there.

And also just to see it and enjoy the country for all it is. The ninth is responsibility. Which again is something I didn't think I'd say. The responsibility of Relay initially felt quite overwhelming.

I didn't think that I was the sort of person to do it. To help students. To lead them spiritually. But this year I've seen much of God's grace. Enabling and sustaining.

[ 10 : 04 ] And in lots of ways I think responsibility of Relay has really helped me. I've learnt to trust in God and also to take risks. Because he's good. And one of those risks is starting teacher training in September.

I trust that God will lead me and grow me as I depend on him. My final highlight is that God has changed me on Relay. Relay has been really significant for me and my faith. I think for the first time that I've grappled with grace.

And I'm starting to understand it. And that's been a really joyful experience for me as a Christian.

Coming through Relay I treasure lots of the memories. And I'm reminded of the grace that God has shown me again and again.

So all that's left to say is a big thank you to you all for your support and your prayers. And please continue to join me in praying for the work of Christian unions and students across the country. One particular prayer request at the moment would be the fact that new staff workers are coming up through the ranks and taking up their positions at the end of the month.

So please pray for them with me. Thank you. Thank you. That's great. Thank you. Thank you.

We're going to read together now from our Bibles, from God's Word and Matthew in chapter 12.

[ 11 : 14 ] Matthew in chapter 12, verses 1 to 21. If you'd like to find that, if you've got one of the Red Church Bibles, that's page 977.

Page 977 in the Red Church Bible, Matthew chapter 12, beginning at verse 1. I'll just say that on Wednesday I put a challenge out to the Bible study folk that usually what we have in the open air is we have either somebody giving a short evangelistic talk, either from the UBM or somebody giving their testimony.

I'll be preaching, but somebody giving their testimony. So I said, did anybody like to give their testimony in the open air this afternoon? I've had no volunteers, and they say one volunteer is better than ten pressed men.

So I may be pressing some people if I don't get a volunteer. Okay, so if you'd like to or feel brave enough or able to, then please throw a word to me afterwards, and that would be great.

But please come along if you can. It should be lovely weather, and the more the merry, as they say. It's just a great opportunity to make Christ known in the open air this afternoon.

[ 12 : 21 ] Well, let's read God's Word, beginning at verse 1 of Matthew 12. At that time, Jesus went through the cornfields on the Sabbath. That was the Jewish holy day.

His disciples were hungry and began to pick some ears of corn and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, Look, your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.

He answered, Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and his companions ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests.

Or haven't you read in the law that the priests on the Sabbath day in the temple desecrate the Sabbath, and yet are innocent? I tell you that something greater than the temple is here.

If you had known what these words mean, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and you would not have condemned the innocent, for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.

[13:25] Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

He said to them, If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

Then he said to the man, Stretch out your hand. So he stretched it out, and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

Where of this Jesus withdrew from that place? A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. He warned them not to tell others about him. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah.

Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love in whom I delight. I will put my spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

[14:30] He will not quarrel or cry out. No one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he has brought justice through to victory.

In his name the nations will put their hope. If the young people and Sunday school leaders would like to go to their activities now, please. If you have a Bible and turn, not to Matthew, but to Romans, and to chapter 8.

Romans and chapter 8, and verse 31. Romans and verse 31. We're going to read this in a moment or two, but if you just have it open before you, that will be helpful. Romans 8, verse 31.

That's page 1135 in the Church Bible, if you've got one of those. 1135. Recently, in the last six months or so, a new catchphrase has entered the English language, the phrase fake news.

It's a particular favorite of one particular politician, but it's passed into everyday language, so it's used in all sorts of circumstances. Fake news means to publicly announce something which is untrue, or at least is not completely true.

[16:01] How do we know that what we're being told is fake news or not? Not just in the media, but in our lives in general. How do we know that what is being stated, what is being declared, what is being said, is actually true?

Well, we need to ask the question, is there any evidence to back up that statement? Are there any witnesses that can support it? Is it just simply a word that's spoken out into the ether, but has no foundation whatsoever?

That's no less important for Christians as well. That's no less important for believers. The apostle Peter makes plain when he speaks about the gospel of Jesus Christ, the news of God.

He says this, We did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses to his majesty.

The gospel that we speak, the truth of God, is not fake news because it is grounded and rooted in evidence, historical and eyewitnesses.

[17:14] Now, last Sunday we began a very short little series on Romans 8 verse 31, and that's why I've asked you to have it open before you. I'm just going to read it for you again, and just a few verses following.

What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

We look particularly at the second part of verse 31, where Paul uses the word, if God is for us. He means, since God is for us. That's what it means. After all the evidence that he's accumulated, after what he's just been saying and speaking about God's goodness to us, about his, we saw in verse 30, predestining, calling, justifying, and glorifying us.

And he came to the conclusion that those words, God is for us, means that God is on our side. God is rooting for us. God is working in all things for our good, as he's already explained in verse 28.

[18:42] But that's not easy for us to accept, I would put to you. Not in every circumstance and situation. It's not easy for us to accept and acknowledge that God is for us.

Sometimes we doubt that it's true, and we thought about that particularly last week. It's not that we're not believers in Jesus, that we doubt that God is for us in every circumstance, situation, but there's something about us that makes us feel as if we are exempt from that promise.

One of the chief and compelling evidences that Paul puts before us here, that God is for us, is what he goes on to say in verse 32.

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world is the evidence and the proof it's needed for us to take God's promise and believe that God is for us.

For us, every single believer, every single Christian, whoever we are, whatever our background, whatever our circumstance. And so I want to pick up with this and run with this a little bit this morning.

[19:51] Because there are some of us who think that maybe we're just not that sort of Christian that God is for all the time. We can't be included.

Are there second class Christians, perhaps we might even say, whom God is not for in the same way he is for others? How can we look into that question and answer it?

Well, by looking, as I say, to the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all. The coming of Jesus is the evidence of the love of God for all those who are his.

The evidence that God is for us. And so what I want us to do is look at Jesus' life for a moment, just highlights, and look at the sort of people that Jesus was for, clearly on the side of, clearly rooting for and working for their good.

He is God in the world. When we look at Jesus, he is God living and breathing amongst human beings, living and breathing and acting as God in God's world, revealing the evidence that God is real, but the very character of God as well.

[21:02] So what sort of people is God for, as we witness in the life of Jesus? And are we included in that group, or any of those groups of people that Jesus is for?

Now many of us, as I say, I think there are times when we fail to accept that God is for us. Perhaps that may be even the case this morning, because of circumstances in life, because things are hard, because things are difficult, or because things have been, and we're still reaping the consequences of them.

And for some of us, it's very hard for us to accept that God is for us. Particularly there may be some of us who would say, I cannot accept that God is for me because I am too sinful. I'm just too sinful. I'm too bad. If only you knew what was in my heart, if only you knew what I had done in the past few months, if only you knew what my past life was like, then you would not be able to say to me, God is for me.

I am just too sinful. Now every single Christian is aware of their sin. Every single Christian is aware of the convicting work of God's Holy Spirit within them.

[22:11] His work is to illuminate the dark areas of our hearts and our lives, those recesses where really nobody else can see. He's the one who shows us the ugly truth that we are sinners before God, that our lives are not as they should be.

In fact, we cannot, and we will not, come to Jesus for forgiveness or salvation until we first realize that we are sinful. And that work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian is not something that just is at the beginning.

It's not just at the start that we feel or are aware of our sin. It's something that the Holy Spirit continues to do in our lives, through our experiences. That's part of his guiding and leading work in our lives is to show us and to make us aware of things that are wrong and lead us and direct us into those things that are right.

We never reach a point in our lives as Christians in this world where we can say, I've no sin. I'm sinless. I haven't done anything wrong this week.

I am holy. That's his work. That's his ministry. But for some believers, this conviction of their sin can be so enlarged in their minds that it begins to put God's grace in the shade.

[ 23 : 29 ] This awareness of sin can be so big and their sin can be so huge that in one sense, it's like a cloud covering over the sun. They struggle to rejoice in the truth that God is for them.

They struggle to accept that God is rooting on their side, that he is working good for them. They struggle with that because their sin is, to them, too great for God's grace.

Now, what about the life of Jesus? How did Jesus deal with people who were sinners? Do we see him acting for sinners? Do we see him, perhaps, as many people might think, Jesus is for the good people but not for the bad people?

When we look at his life, do we find him only spending time with the really nice people, the sort of the middle class of his day and age, the ones who were warm and cuddly and friendly and good? No, we don't. When we examine the life of Jesus as it's laid out in these four biographies, because that's what they are, eyewitness biographies of Jesus' life, the Gospels, we find that that's far from the case.

[ 24 : 35 ] Jesus is more involved with and interactive in the lives of sinful people. He goes out of his way to be with them and to seek them out and to, in one sense, assure them that God is for them and willing to forgive them.

Those of you who know something of the life of Jesus. Here's just three examples. There's Zacchaeus, the man who was hiding up, well, not hiding, look, was very short and had to climb a tree to see Jesus.

We know that by his own confession, he was a thief, he was a tax collector who used to collect the taxes for the Romans and used to sift off some of the money for himself. He was an unpleasant, nasty person and nobody liked him.

But Jesus said, Zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house and in Jesus he found forgiveness and he found a transformation. Then we have in John in chapter 8, we have a situation where a woman is brought before Jesus who has been caught in adultery.

She's someone who is sexually immoral and there were many other people like that. She's just one of many and they want Jesus to condemn her. They want Jesus to give them the nod that they can put her to death and Jesus won't do it.

[ 25 : 47 ] In fact, at the end he says to her, I don't condemn you. Go and sin no more. And then of course, when we get to the very end of Jesus' life, when he's upon the cross, as he's suffering and dying, as he's crucified between two criminals, two criminals who were murderers, we're told.

They were the people who used to lie in wait and mug people on the road and beat them to within an inch of their life, usually to death, and steal their money. There was two of them. And to one of them, this murderous criminal, this despicable robber, Jesus says, today you'll be with me in paradise.

These are people who are sinful. These are people who were so, one sense, bad in the eyes of many and in their own eyes, yet Jesus goes to them.

In fact, we find that Jesus spent so much time engaging with and going to the people who felt themselves and knew themselves to be sinful that actually those who hated him, the goody goodies who thought they were better than everybody else, called Jesus a friend of sinners.

So if you're a sinner this morning and if you feel sinful, let me assure you that this, Jesus is a friend of sinners. No matter how sinful you are, the Bible says that God's grace is more than enough and that in the Lord Jesus Christ there is forgiveness and that God is for you, whatever your sin has been.

[ 27 : 21 ] Then of course, there's some of us as well, it's not just that we feel ourselves to be sinful and we feel bad about the way we've lived or the things that we've done, but there's some of us who feel that God is not for us because we're too weak.

What do I mean by that? In other words, we've got nothing to offer God. We've got nothing to give God. We've got nothing that we can do for God that he should be for us.

Perhaps that's due because we're very old, if I can put it that way. Perhaps that's due because we're particularly poor. Perhaps that's due because we have some disability or whatever it may be, but there's something about us and we just feel so weak.

We feel so unable to give to God a life that is lived for his glory. We hear of people like Elizabeth living for the Lord and serving him. We think, oh, I'm just too weak to be able to do that.

I can't do that. She's much more, I'm not trying to build, she's much more worthy of God's goodness than I am. Now again, as Christians, we accept and acknowledge that we are weak.

[ 28 : 22 ] We accept and acknowledge that when it comes to pleasing God and serving God and living for God, fulfilling God's commandments, we are helpless. We are powerless. In fact, Paul says earlier on in Romans that says Christ died for us when we were without power.

But for some of us, that sense of weakness is overwhelming. It crushes us to the point where we think somehow God is disappointed in me. God is disappointed in me because of my inability to live for him and serve him and glorify him.

I feel so weak. I feel such a weak Christian. My faith is weak. My life, my witness is weak. But what sort of people did Jesus come to, minister to? What sort of people did Jesus delight to show his love for, his support for?

Wasn't it the very weak and the helpless that he came for? Wasn't it those who considered themselves and were in fact unable to do anything that Jesus came for?

Again, it was the disabled he came to, didn't he? It was the incapacitated. It was those who were considered by others to be useless that Jesus sought out and revealed himself to be that we read again and again in the Gospels.

[ 29 : 34 ] Just three examples again. In John chapter 5, we have a man who has been an invalid for 38 years. He's sitting by a pool, a pool which people thought was a miraculous pool.

Somehow that if the water was disturbed, you could get into the water and you could be healed. 38 years he'd been lying there, but Jesus goes to that one man and he heals that one man and he shows compassion to that one man and he assures him that God is for him.

And then in John chapter 9, we have a man who's been blind from birth. We don't know what his age, but he's clearly a man well on into his adult years. And Jesus goes directly to that man, a man that people thought was cursed by God, that God was against because he was disabled, but Jesus says, no he's not.

And to prove it, he goes and heals that man. Man blind from birth. And then in Mark in chapter 5, we have one of many people who are demon possessed.

It's a mystery in one sense to us, but here's a man, he is so out of his mind that day and night, he screams and cries out and he cuts himself with stones. And Jesus goes directly to that man and he sets him free and he assures him that God is for him.

[ 30 : 51 ] Dear friends, it doesn't matter how weak you are, you are not accepted and God is not for you because of what you can give to God because that is not grace. You're accepted and you're received and you are loved by God.

Undeserving as we are, unmerited favor is what grace is. So even though you may be weak and you feel frail and you feel unable to give anything to God, that does not stop the promise of God being that God is for you.

God is for us. Following on, if one sense from that sense of weakness, we can also have that feeling of being too unimportant. We hold no position in the community or in the church.

We're almost invisible to everybody else. People don't notice us. We don't feature in the list of people that matter. We're not in the who's who, as it were, of anything.

Never mind the who's who of important people in the world. Never mind in Whitby or in the church. We're just nobodies. We feel nobodies.

[ 31 : 57 ] Perhaps we've always been told we're nobodies. We're never going to amount to anything. We just don't matter. Now again, it's true that as Christians, it's important that we have humility.

It's important that as Christians, we recognize that we need to be humble before one another. We're not to think too highly of ourselves, the Bible tells us. We're not to consider others less important than ourselves or ourselves more important than others.

But for some of us, that humility can be a bad thing. We not only do not think of ourselves as above others, we don't even feel of ourselves as being equal to others.

We see everybody else as being superior to us. We feel that we're inferior Christians, inferior people.

And therefore, God can't be for us in the same way he's for others. God can't be for me in the same way he's for the pastor because, oh, he's an important person, isn't he?

[ 32 : 57 ] Or the elders or the church officers or the Sunday school teachers. They're all important people, aren't they? So God is for them, but I'm an unimportant person. I'm a nobody. But again, Jesus made much of the seemingly unimportant people of his day.

He especially went out of his way to exalt women who in his day and for a long time since then were classed as second class citizens. He went out of his way again and again to exalt those who were the invisible people.

He saw the invisible people in the temple when he saw the widow who put her two tiny, almost worthless coins into the offering and he exalted her above the people who went with their bags of gold.

Nobody else saw her but Jesus saw her and was for her. He was the one who went out of his way and left the country of Israel so that he could go into the area of Tyre and Sidon to find a widow whose daughter was severely ill so that he could heal her and cure her.

A woman who was a Gentile not a Jew. A woman who was considered even in her own words a dog. He was the one who went and sat by the well in Samaria to approach a woman who felt so bad about herself and because of her failed marriages that she couldn't even face the other women of the village by drawing water in the morning but had to go at midday and he assured her that God was for her.

[ 34 : 38 ] When no one was for them not even themselves God was for them. There's one more group one more type of person perhaps that we feel ourselves to be so that we can we struggle with accepting this promise of God that he is for us.

And those people who would say to this God is not for me because I am too much of a failure. I'm too much of a failure. You don't know how many times I have failed God.

How many times I have let him down. How I have sinned. How I have gone away from him. How I have not loved him. How I have not in my life I am just a failure and I feel a failure.

And I look upon myself as a failure. The reality as we know is that every one of us fails God. There is not one person here. There's not one person who's ever lived who has ever lived the life which has been fully obedient faithful to God.

We are all those who fail in our doubts. We fail in our laziness our worldliness our prayerlessness. Dear friends the church is not for the successful it's for failures.

[ 35 : 58 ] countless times we know that we are not the people God wants us to be. But perhaps you have failed God in a way that you perceive is so big.

You've failed God in a way which seems to be to you to be almost an unforgivable failure an unforgivable sin. you feel that you've let him down and let others down and you're convinced that though God sort of has forgiven me he's not for me.

Not in the same way he was before. Not before I failed in that terrible way. He was with me then and for me then but I failed so dreadfully. He can't be for me now.

There's one great example to really counter that way of thinking. One great example that really undoes totally that attitude that says God can't be for me in the way he was before.

And it's of course the Apostle Peter. Apostle Peter in many ways was Jesus' right hand man. He was one who had been with him for three and a half years. He was the one who had first recognized that Jesus is the Christ God's Son come into the world.

[ 37 : 17 ] But Peter is the one who failed the Lord Jesus in the most terrible way. On the night that Jesus was to be tried Peter denies even knowing Jesus.

Not once not twice three times Peter fails Jesus publicly before others and denies knowing him.

And he is so ashamed of his failure that just moments later after he realizes what he has done and what a terrible thing he has done he breaks down and he cries his eyes out.

For several days Peter must have thought there's no way now that Jesus is for me. There's no way that Jesus will ever want me to live for him or serve him or to follow him.

But on the beach on a beach in Galilee after he had been fishing all night Jesus goes particularly and especially and takes Peter aside to assure him and reassure him not only of his full forgiveness for him but that he is for him and wants to work in and through him for his own glory and praise.

[ 38 : 31 ] He says to Peter do you love me take care of my sheep. He commissions him to serve him. This man who had failed him and let him down. This man who he had looked to in his greatest hour of need and Peter wasn't there.

He looked after his own skin and his own reputation. I wonder dear friends do you fit in any of those categories?

Do you feel yourself to be so sinful that God can't be for you? Or so weak? Or unimportant?

Or is there that skeleton in the cupboard that keeps on popping its head out the door telling you that you have failed God and God surely cannot ever be for you again?

Then let me say this to you dear friends. The same Jesus who walked this earth, the same Jesus who met with the weak and the helpless and the sinful and the failures is the same Jesus today.

[ 39 : 42 ] The Bible makes that very clear. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. And that's why I think Paul goes on to say very briefly there in verse 34, he is at the right hand of God who is also interceding for us.

What does that mean? It means that Jesus is for us today although he has risen from the dead and though he has ascended to the Father's right hand, though he has returned to his home in heaven and is there in glory and power, he is still the one who is for us and is working for us and acting for us.

Interceding means he's acting on our behalf. Even there from heaven he's providing us the grace that we need, the help that we need, the strength that we need.

He never stops actively being engaged in your life dear Christian and mine for our good, for our blessing, for our salvation. And he never will stop doing that.

The writer to Hebrews tells us this, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to intercede for them. There's not one moment of the day and the night when the Lord Jesus Christ who we see practically engaging with people in this world is still practically and visibly engaging in your life and mine.

[ 41 : 07 ] Whoever you are, whoever we are, God is for us. Who can be against us? God is to be God is God is for us.

However, when we read the life of Jesus, it's clear that there are some people that he is not for. Though he's for the sinful and though he's for the lame and the weak and the unimportant and the despised and the failures, there are some people he is not for.

And there's no mistaking this fact that he is not for them because he very clearly in words tells them how he feels about them. In Matthew in chapter 23.

Just listen for a moment, don't need to turn there for a moment, but this is what Jesus says, Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites. Woe to you teachers of the law, verse 15, you Pharisees, you hypocrites.

Woe to you blind guides. Woe to you teachers of the law, you hypocrites. Woe to you, you are whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside but inside full of bones of the dead and everything unclean.

[ 42 : 24 ] Why was Jesus so strongly against these people? Why did he speak as he does these words that speak against them? The reason is this, they considered themselves too good.

They didn't consider themselves too sinful or too weak or too unimportant or too much of failure but they considered themselves too good. Jesus reserved his most stinging rebukes for those who never accepted that they were sinners.

They never accepted that they were weak, never accepted that they were useless. They believed that they had completely pleased God in their lives and done everything right that they were the bee's knees.

In 21st century language they were up themselves. They thought themselves better than everybody else. They took it for granted that God must be for them.

Jesus told a parable about them, about really the whole of humanity Pharisee, being divided into two very separate and very plain groups of people.

[ 43 : 31 ] This is what we read in Luke 18 verse 9, to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else. In other words, they thought they were so good.

Jesus told this parable. Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, that's a religious man, the other a tax collector like Zacchaeus we spoke about before.

the Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, God, I thank you that I'm not like other people, or even like this tax collector, not like robber or evildoers or adulterers.

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven but beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled. Those who humble themselves will be exalted.

[ 44 : 31 ] Let me put it before you this morning, dear friends, as we close. Which are you? If you're like the tax collector who prays God, have mercy on me, a sinner, then you have God's word, God's promise, and God's assurance.

He is for you. That you are justified, that you are accepted, that you are beloved by him. No matter what you or anyone else has to say, all the words that are contrary to this are fake news.

God is for us. And if, dear friends, you do not know that, then God wants you to know that.

And if you are one of those, sadly, who thinks that you are too good for God, let me urge you, urge you, urge you, to pray that simple prayer of the tax collector with sincerity.

God, have mercy on me, a sinner. And he will. And he does. Let's pray together. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 45 : 40 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. think we are to others or how much we failed in the past oh lord we thank you that you are for us not because of anything in us but because you are the god of grace because of jesus who came into this world for us to bear our sin to suffer in our place to rise again and even today in heaven pour out his goodness into our lives we pray oh lord again that you would grant to us that assurance that confidence that certainty that in spite of all that's going on around about us and in our lives in our hearts that you are for us and for those of us lord whose hearts are still oh lord closed to you who think that we do not need you that we are too good please oh lord in your mercy just give us a glimpse show us just what great danger we're in give to us oh lord a glimpse of christ our savior that we may come to him and receive from him grace that covers all our sins oh lord make us your people and help us to live in the light and the truth of who we are today and in the week ahead we ask it in jesus name amen