

# Who is Your Head

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- [ 0 : 00 ]     let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you speak to us by your spirit, through your word, the Bible.
- Where we are foolish, we pray that you would give us wisdom. Where we are in error, you would correct us with your truth. Where we need challenge, you would give us the humility to accept it.
- Where we are in doubt, you would strengthen us in faith. And where we are suffering, you would give us comfort. We pray these things in Jesus' name.
- Amen. Well, we've seen the pictures on our buses and on billboards all over Glasgow. The question that everyone's asking, do you want to be a vegan?
- A picture of an animal, this is just around the corner from here on Great Western Road. Being vegan is about recognizing I'm someone, not something. That's what the sheep says.
- [ 1 : 03 ]     Now, there might well be lots of good reasons to be vegan. If you've become a vegan, you're very welcome here. There might be environmental reasons to be vegan, animal welfare reasons, health reasons, personal health reasons.
- But the adverts there say that we need to see animals as somebodies, as persons. What does that mean, though? Does it mean that sheep and cows are the same as us?
- I read a newspaper article over Christmas where a vegan said, for me, eating a lamb chop is no different from eating a human limb. Well, what does that say about what it means to be human?
- What do we think humans are? And if a sheep or a cow is a person, as a human being as a person, then why not a plant as well? Why not every living thing?
- And we give humans responsibilities as well as rights. So if the cameramen filming a BBC wildlife series see animals fighting each other, if we see them as someone and not something, do we need to arrest them?
- [ 2 : 15 ]     Do we need to intervene and stop the cruelty to one another? Well, I guess we'd agree not. So certainly there are differences between animals and us.
- They don't spend their time watching wildlife programs about us. But on the other side of this, it makes you think, well, what actually does it really mean to be human? Why are we different from other animals?
- What is it to be a human? Now the answer that's, well, the Bible's answer to that, and really the answer that shaped our Western views about that, is that God revealed in His Word that He made humanity in His image.
- That's where human rights have come from in the Western world, that humanity is special to God. So we treat every human being with dignity, with special value, but also with special responsibilities.
- Because God sets us apart as in His image, we are to live our lives for His glory, enjoying knowing Him, and we're to look after the world and each other.

[ 3 : 15 ] We're responsible to God for that. And being made in the image of God, that explains why when you look at humans all over the world, even humans who have nothing to do with God, they are capable of the most incredible feats and acts of kindness, extraordinary achievements that we see in humanity, because we're made in God's image.

But in our passage this morning, we see another aspect of being human. The big idea, really, in this section of Romans 5 is about the gift, understanding the gift that God has given us.

But first of all, we have to see why we needed that gift. So for humanity, our desperate need for the free gift, then the astonishing power of the free gift, and finally, the unshakable fruit of the free gift.

So first of all, our desperate need for the free gift. I think it's probably hard to find a more important verse in the Bible than verse 12 of chapter 5. But it is a brutal truth in verse 12.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way, death came to all people because all sinned.

[ 4 : 34 ] So we'd all agree that everyone dies. We're all dying. And hopefully, most of us would be willing to admit that our behavior is not what it should be, that when you think about bad behavior, it's not something that we only see in other people.

We know that the world would be a better place if all of us only did good things all the time, but we would have to admit we don't do that ourselves. Why don't we do that?

Why aren't we good all the time if we can see that the world would be better if everyone was good all the time? Well, it's because we don't want to be. And that desire to do what we know is wrong means there is something terribly wrong with the human race.

And Paul tells us why. He tells us how it all started. It started with the very first man. So when we read the first three chapters of Genesis, there may well be elements of the account of creation and the fall of man that are symbolic.

The talking serpent, the tree of life, the tree of knowledge, the fruit. I'm not clear in my own mind how much of that is symbolically telling us a story of what really happened.

[ 5 : 43 ] We're not sure. But for Paul's argument to work here, I take it that Adam himself, as the first man, must be historical. The first Adam was a man who knew God and he was given a command from God that he disobeyed.

It's perhaps worth saying, I think that biologists generally agree with that today, that we're all descended from one first human being. But what's also clear here from Romans 5 is that whatever was going on with the rest of creation as God made that first man in his image, at that point in history, humanity was not made to die.

Our basic building blocks might be the same as other animals, but if Adam had been a righteous man, if he had obeyed God, he would not have died and the human race would not have died.

And so in verse 12, he reads, sin entered the world through one man and death through sin. Death here is both physical and spiritual because we're spiritually dead when we're separated from God.

Adam's act of disobedience, his sin, was totally catastrophic. And here's the key. It's that Adam represented all of us when God set him apart in his image.

[ 7 : 02 ] So when he sinned, we were all implicated. Verse 12 again, sin entered the world through one man and death through sin. And in this way, death came to all people because all sinned.

That truth comes again. Verse 17, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man. Verse 18, the result of, the result just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all men.

And in verse 19, he says, through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners. It's very clear. God looks at humanity together and when our first father rejected God, he counted that as all of us rejecting God.

And since then, we live in a world where sin and death reign. They're like the two towers in the Lord of the Rings. If you know the Lord of the Rings story, on Middle Earth, a great darkness has fallen because the two sources of evil, Sauron and Saruman, are reigning from two towers of Isengard and Mordor.

Well, in our world, there is a deep darkness because we are ruled, we are overpowered by the tyranny of sin and death. We boast that we have free will and yet none of us can stop sinning.

[ 8 : 24 ] We just cannot stop sinning. I think that's what Paul means in verse 12 when he says, death came to all men because all sinned. He could simply mean there, we all sinned in Adam.

We all sinned when Adam sinned. I think that's true. Clearly that's true. We get that from verses 18 and 19. But I think he's also pointing out here that since Adam sinned, we have all sinned personally as well.

We've become sinful in our very nature because Adam sinned. We're corrupted in our desires because Adam made us corrupt when he sinned.

And it's always been the case, even before God gave his ten commandments and his good law. If you look at verse 13, Paul makes that point. He just clarifies, for before the law was given, sin was in the world before the law was given.

But sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. He's just explaining, you don't think of sin in the same way. You don't mark it off against the commandments of God, but it's still going on. And so because it's going on, verse 14, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

[ 9 : 39 ] So in other words, even before Moses went up Mount Sinai and got the ten commandments, clearly people were sinning because death ruled over us like a king, like a tyrant.

And so it goes on today. Death rules. None of us can stop dying. All we can do is make the process take longer. We can delay it. We live under the power of sin and death.

And that's because of what Adam did. I don't know what you think about that, but for us to be held responsible for what someone else did might sound unfair in our individualistic culture.

But in lots of cultures, if a member of your family does something wrong, you yourself would naturally feel the shame of that. You would feel, well, of course, we're a family.

What that person has done taints all of us. You didn't do it, but you're connected to them. Or back in November, Scotland got a big football win against Israel.

[ 10 : 39 ] They won this playoff. They got a playoff place in Euro 2020. And they got Nations League promotion. It was quite an unusual thing for Scotland. And it was a dramatic thing.

So what happened when James Forrest scored his hat trick for Scotland? Scotland fans shouted together as one, we've scored. And when the final whistle went, they said, we've won.

In fact, if I said, if I'd been with fellow Scottish, Scotland fans, and I'd said, we won, I think they would have looked at me and said, no, you didn't win. You're not Scottish.

We won. And I could have said, no, you didn't win either. It was the guys on the pitch who won. But they represented Scotland that day. And so if they win, we win.

Scots, if they lose, we lose. And so it is with Adam as the first human being, it's not unfair on us because he is one of us and he represents us before God.

[ 11 : 35 ] And the truth is, if we'd been there, we'd have done exactly the same thing. We are chips off the old block. So that if we think God would be treating us unfairly by the way he treats us as in Adam, it's worth asking yourself, would my fate be any different if God judged me by my own behavior instead of by Adam's?

So friends, every single one of us is in Adam. We are born in Adam by being human and so we are under the power of sin, condemnation and death.

And remember, one of the reasons Paul writes Romans is because he is trying to fire up this church for mission. He is going to go to Spain where no one has heard of Jesus and he wants the Roman church to support him.

And when you read these verses, you can see why Paul was willing to cross the pain barrier to tell the gospel to people. It must have been days when Paul got up and thought, I'm going to retire.

When he'd been shipwrecked four times, when he'd been given the 39 lashings in different places, when he was fleeing for his life, living in poverty, arrested, despised.

[ 12 : 45 ] But he crossed the pain barrier because he believed this truth. He knew this truth about humanity. And it's why we need to push ourselves today to cross the pain barrier.

Hopefully we won't get flogged in Scotland, but we cross the pain barrier to invite friends to our Life Explored course that's on tonight. We cross the pain barrier when we tell our friend we're a Christian, when we invite them to open the Bible with us, to come to a guest event, when we speak up for Jesus among friends.

We might look to cross the pain barrier with our finances, to pay, to train up more workers, to plant churches in places like Clivebank and Denniston and Postle.

It's why, as Mike Parker said in the interview, that SIM are praying that people would be willing to cross the pain barrier and move their whole families or their whole lives to the Middle East to tell people about Jesus because humanity is in desperate need.

And of course, it's our need as well. Adam was our ancestor. We've all sinned and we're all dying. So that's our first point, our desperate need for a free gift.

[ 13 : 59 ] But wonderfully, that free gift has now come. Our second point is the astonishing power of the free gift. The glorious news that God has sent a second Adam into the world.

At the end of verse 14, he describes Jesus as, well, he describes Adam as a pattern of the one to come. So in verses 15 to 17, he contrasts the trespass of Adam and the free gift of Jesus Christ.

Have a look at verse 15. But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many?

Then he brings out how much greater the gift is again. Verse 16. If you have a look. The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

Then in verses 18 and 19, the language changes from contrasting Adam and Christ to comparing Adam and Christ. The point is that Adam's terrible trespass is more than matched by the free gift of Christ.

[ 15 : 18 ] Verse 18. There are two acts. Can you see them? One trespass that results in condemnation for all people and then one act of righteousness, that is Christ living his life of perfect obedience to God.

Through that, in verse 18, he brings life for all people. That is all kinds of people, not all without exception, but all kinds of people, everyone who receives him.

Then in verse 19, Adam's disobedience means the many are made sinners, but through Christ's obedience the many are made righteous.

And then we see why we needed this free gift in verse 20 and that someone might say, well, I can see that's true for some people, but what about those of us who try and just keep God's law? What about religion, religious people?

So, verse 20, the law, that is God's commands, was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

[ 16 : 21 ] God's commandments don't save us, in fact, they show us how bad we really are. But then his grace is magnified as our sin is exposed by the law. And he finishes there, grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Where Paul says there about, he says, where sin increased, grace increased all the more. And he literally says, grace super abounded. It's very expressive. God's gift to us in Jesus overflowed.

It burst its banks. It engulfed and consumed everything, that gift. So this is the superpower of God's free gift to us in Jesus. It's as though, if you imagine Adam's one sin as like a match that lights and starts this massive bushfire, a forest fire that's completely out of control.

And then the gift of God is like a tremendous flood, an ocean of water that deluges in and completely overwhelms the fire. Or I don't know if you've seen a solar eclipse.

Solar eclipses, there's a lot of fuss about them and then they don't last very long. They only actually last a very short time. There's just a few minutes when the darkness falls because the moon seems as powerful as the sun and just after a few minutes this powerful crescent of sunlight appears from behind the moon and it's light again as the sun bursts out.

[ 17 : 51 ] Well, here in Romans 5 it's as though in Adam a guilty verdict fell on all of us like the darkness from a solar eclipse. but the gift of Christ's obedience showering on us all the benefits we need it's like that powerful red hot sun so many thousands of times stronger than the darkness and after just moments it has burst out from behind and lit up everything in glorious sunshine and heat.

And it's all because of the greatness of one man. Adam failed in the garden but Jesus Christ came and took on sin and death in an epic battle he faced them without flinching in his garden the garden of Gethsemane as he peered over the next day into the agony he would face dying a sin-bearing death but he stuck with it he suffered at their hands on the cross and on Easter morning he smashed them to bits with his indestructible life so that now all that's left for him is to come and claim what is already his to come in glory and put the world right and reign forever and for anyone who will receive him receive that gift the benefits are incredible so that's our third point we've heard the desperate need for the free gift the astonishing power of the free gift and thirdly the unshakable benefits of the free gift if you're a Christian you've been transported into this completely new realm a new humanity with a new head a new representative before God the second Adam

Jesus Christ and in that new realm where you stand and live we get grace that overflows in verse 15 it says God's grace overflows to the many we stand in grace enjoying riches that we never earned and we don't deserve in verse 16 we get approval we couldn't earn that is that word justified we are justified that verdict in the courtroom of God of him not just saying I'll pardon you as a sinner but he says I'm delighted with you because he sees us in Christ who was perfect and he approves of you God approves of you in him righteous in God's sight in verse 18 we get life with God forever it says in verse 15 justification and life for all people now that life has got a future feel to it in verse 21 it's eternal life life that lasts forever when we get our new bodies resurrection bodies but that future has broken into the present because spiritually death and life are about whether or not you know God and we have life now in Christ because we have a relationship with God to enjoy communion with him and look at who reigns in the realm of grace and life in verse 17 for if by the trespass of the one man death reigned through that one man that's the old realm how much more will those who receive

God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ we reign in Christ just as in Narnia in the line the witch and the wardrobe as Aslan crowns the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve and they're going to reign on thrones so it is in the reign of Jesus the tyranny of death has gone and we reign with him and it does us good to reflect on what assurance that should give us if our faith is in Jesus today when I was at school you could be put on report I don't know whether any of you had this at school it was where if you were put on report every lesson you went to the teacher had to sign about how you'd behaved that was what it meant to be on report so it was kind of you're in the last chance saloon when you're on report well I don't know if lots of us in the battle against sin in our Christian lives it's as though we drift into feeling that we live our lives on report with God and if we slip up he's going to mark it on our card and we'll be expelled excluded from him so we might if we imagine ourselves as a guy convicted Carl sorry if you called Carl convicted Carl he comes to church on a Sunday and he feels good real good really good good teaching good songs and he feels he would do anything for Jesus he watches this the S.A.M. video he's almost signed up straight away but on Monday night he goes out with some guys from the office and he knows he should stop but he just can't stop drinking just going with the rounds yeah I'll have another one he eyes up the women in the bar like objects he lets off some steam by slagging off his supervisor and he wakes up on Tuesday with a steaming hangover and he's on the train to work thinking what was I thinking on Sunday this is just the same old me how could God possibly want anything to do with me how could I possibly be on God's team that's the kind of concern that Paul is addressing here in Romans 5 he said in the first 11 verses of chapter 5 that the most extraordinary change has happened for the Christian we've got peace with God in verse 1 assurance of our future forever with him in verse 2 awareness of how much he loves us in verse 8 while we were still sinners

Christ died for us and it sounds like this amazing transformation but then you crash back into real life and we still sin we keep sinning all the time so we think have these things really happened to me and what does God say thanks to the free gift he has given us in Christ our standing before God has nothing to do with what we do it is all about what Christ has done he is our head our representative before God so because he was righteous it gives us justification life and grace people talk about falling from grace you hear it in songs the idea that if you do something particularly defiant against God or something particularly bad maybe you fall out of favour with him and you'd have to kind of earn your way back into his good books doing some kind of penance that is not a biblical idea it is not true the only reference

[ 24 : 29 ] I can find in the bible to falling from grace is in Galatians and it talks about stopping believing in Jesus and relying on your own works instead that's how you fall from grace as long as you trust him and his work as your head you can't fall from grace but what happens if you go out from church today and you sin really badly you do something terrible what happens you don't go back into the other realm the realm of Adam it's a bit like if you imagine you were in prison being held hostage in a different country there's nothing you can do about it you are trapped there's no way out and one night you hear the sound of helicopter blades outside and they get louder and closer and the next thing you know the wall gets smashed in and an SAS soldier has grabbed you and hauled you out and you're in the helicopter and you're transported back to Scotland to a safe place you're in a different realm now and nothing you do now changes where you are and if when you hear that you think but that can't be true because if that was true we could just carry on sinning that's exactly what we should think if we've understood

Romans 5 because if you read verse 1 of chapter 6 it's the very next thing that Paul is going to talk to us about all we have to do is receive this gift and if we do it we get transported into that realm where all the benefits of Christ belong to us and if you'd never received that could I ask you would you receive that today we were born into the realm of Adam we can't help that but if you put your faith in Jesus Christ you can be rescued from it would you turn back to God today and accept that gift today would be a great day to do that and for those of us who have done that let your heart be lifted be encouraged be warmed as you think on the benefits to you of this free gift Charles Wesley looked at the cross and he said this in his hymn the reign of sin and death is done and all may live from sin set free Satan and his pretended throne are swallowed up in victory death, hell and sin are now subdued all grace is now to sinners given and so I plead the atoning blood and claim the title deeds of heaven let's pray together just a moment of quiet to reflect gracious and loving heavenly father we praise you for your mercy to us that you provided

Jesus Christ as a second Adam we praise you for your wisdom in sending him and thank you that the result of his one act of righteousness his perfect life was justification that brings life for all people and so we pray that even as we live in a world that bears the scars of Adam's sin even as we live lives where we are faced with our own sin and death that you will enable us to be people of joy rejoicing in the peace we have with you the hope we have of glory and the joy of knowing you now in Jesus name we pray Amen Amen Amen