

Being Human - Made by God with Desires

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[0 : 00] First from Romans, Paul's letter to the Romans, it's chapter 1 and verse 18 and you'll find it on page 1128 in the Church Bibles.

Paul writes, The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God, nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being, and birds, and animals, and reptiles.

[1 : 29] Therefore, God gave them over, in the sinful desires of their hearts, to sexual impurity, for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things, rather than the Creator, who is forever praised. Amen.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. And now in Psalm 84, which you'll find on page 595 in the Church Bibles. Psalm 84.

Psalm 84. Psalm 84. Psalm 84. Psalm 84. Psalm 84. Psalm 84. Psalm 84. Psalm 84.

How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord.

[2 : 35] My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young, a place near your altar.

Lord Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house. They are ever praising you.

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs.

The autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.

Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty. Listen to me, God of Jacob. Look on our shield, O God. Look with favour on your anointed one.

[3 : 50] Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord bestows favour and honour. No good thing does he withhold from those whose way of life is blameless.

Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you. Amen. Amen.

Thank you so much, Michael, for reading that. And if we've not met before, my name is Martin Ayres. I'm the lead pastor here. So it's my privilege to be taking us through this time in God's word this morning.

Our normal practice as a church is that we work through books of the Bible. And we just work through them week by week, chapter by chapter, so that we let God set the agenda.

[4 : 57] And at the same time, from time to time, it can be helpful to just look at what the whole Bible says about a particular topic. And that's what we're doing at the moment with the theme of being human.

What does it mean to be human? So to try and help you through that as we navigate it, we've got a second sheet that you should have got on the way in, which you will find has got bits of scripture and the sermon points on it.

So that's what you need to have to hand as we look at this together. Let's pray and ask for God's help as we turn to his word. So in Isaiah chapter 26, there is a prophecy of what the people of God will say as they trust God's promises to receive.

And we're going to hear from you who you are and who you tell us that we are. So we ask, may the words of my mouth and the thoughts and reflections of all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight.

Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen. So in Isaiah chapter 26, there is a prophecy of what the people of God will say as they trust God's promises to rescue them.

[6 : 03] And it's a prophecy that was fulfilled as they believed that promise in the time. But principally, because Isaiah 26 starts promising a rescue through the Messiah, it's a prophecy that's fulfilled by the people of God today.

It's language that we would use if we're trusting God and his promises. And it goes like this, Isaiah 26 verse 8, Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you.

Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts. I was encouraged to memorize that verse when I was a young Christian. And it always, I always found it such a striking verse to learn.

Because of the connection in the verse between our desires, our loves, our wills, and how we live on the outside. What we do and think and say.

Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you. Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts. And we're thinking this morning about desire.

[7 : 10] We're in our sermon series, as I said, about being human. Asking the big questions of our time. Who am I? What does it mean to be a person, a human being? And we've already heard in week one, this is week three, in week one, who am I?

You are royalty. You are made by God in his image. It's true of every human being. That we are royal. We are royal. Made to rule God's creation on his behalf, under him.

And to relate to one another and to God. Made male and female in the image of God. And when we don't listen to our Creator, we have to find somewhere else we go to for our understanding of who we are.

And in our time, the place that people go in the Western world is we fill the gap from not listening to God with our desires. Who am I?

You are your desires. There's a real you deep inside you. And the greatest good that you can do, the thing that can save you and the heroic thing to do in your life, is live out who you are on the inside.

[8 : 18] So you are defined by what you desire. You do you. And this is the air we breathe all around us. Lots of the time, you take it for granted in the same way that a fish doesn't give much thought to the water that they're swimming in.

But how did we get here? It's really good for us to understand this better. But if you find this bit heavy in the talk, if you think this is a bit heavy, and you switch off for the next five minutes, don't worry.

And don't leave. Just tune back in when we get back to the Bible. Okay? But in recent years, there's some Christians have written books for Christians to help us understand why we think the way that we do in the world today.

And one helpful recent book is Strange New World by Carl Truman, who is now a professor in America, but grew up in Hull. And he wrote a major book, The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self. And barely any of us could get through it. So he's written a smaller book that's the same book called Strange New World. And he explains that the reason we think the way we do, which is a weird way to think in our time and in our place, is because we're living downstream from the influence of some major thinkers, some philosophers.

[9 : 37] And the first step towards where we are today was that our identity was internalized, thanks to the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. We've got a picture of him, I think.

And he's a massive influence today. He had five children himself, and he took each of them and left them at the door of a founding hospital, an orphanage in Paris.

And Rousseau's big idea that caught on like wildfire was that humans, we are innately good. We are intrinsically good on the inside.

And when we do bad things, it's not because of anything in us. It's because we get corrupted by things around us, the world around us. That makes us behave in destructive ways.

He famously said this, Man is born free, yet everywhere he is in chains. That's the idea that everyone around you and your social environment is a potential threat to you living out your natural desires.

[10 : 42] And the challenge to you is to listen to your inner voice that's inside you. Don't let anyone else tell you what's right and wrong. Just listen to that inner voice, the voice of nature. And there you'll find goodness and truth, your moral compass.

Don't let yourself be corrupted. If we think of an example in our times, this is connected along the line to why today, if someone is transgender and they decide to make changes to their body, to fit what they feel inside that their gender is, in Scotland today that would be seen as right, as a kind of heroic thing to do.

Listen to the voice inside. It's this inward turn. My desires inside me, they are the trump card. They make me who I am. And as Christians, there is something that we would affirm here in that the Bible is very concerned about our inner life.

The Bible talks about how our hearts are really important. And it means by our hearts, our desires and our wants and our loves on the inside. But we can see already that, I mean, if you're here thinking, hang on a minute, this idea that I am perfectly good on the inside and corrupted only by other people, that is just obviously wrong.

Like, it is obviously wrong. OK? Because an idea is wrong doesn't mean that it doesn't catch on. This is spread like wildfire. OK? But we move on now. You see that there was a difference.

[12 : 15] Rousseau essentially thought that what we feel on the inside, there is an inherent goodness. But we move on now to the next step, which is that our identity was sexualized.

And for that we go to Sigmund Freud. So he didn't believe there was any inherent good or bad. What he believed was there is only pleasure and pain.

And that what really drives us is pleasure. So sexual desire has now become the key category that people now use to understand our identity.

In ancient times, sex was something that people did. Today, sex is something that you are. So if you ask someone to describe themselves, they might well say very early on, as they are describing themselves to you, I'm gay or I'm straight.

And the ever-growing letters and colours for the LGBTQI plus movement show how strongly this idea is now believed in our culture. We've got LGBT Pride Month every year in June, LGBT Pride History Month every year in February.

[13 : 27] So there are now in Scotland two months of every year where you are seen as morally suspect if you are judged not to be celebrating loudly enough that people are their sexual identity, their sexual desires.

How did we get here? Well, a key Western belief is that everyone has the right to pursue happiness. And to understand how this landed with sexual desire, we get to Sigmund Freud. Sigmund Freud believed that what gives you the greatest form of human pleasure is sexual pleasure. So he said this, sexual love is the strongest experience of satisfaction and the prototype of all happiness.

So that even our instinctive nature about things like what is beautiful in the world around us, Freud said it's just all about sex. It just all comes back to sexual desire.

And so because what he was saying that we need in life is to pursue happiness, he was saying you've got to fight for the right to live for sexual pleasure.

[14 : 37] Any morality that says here are some rights and wrongs about what sex is for is like shackles that you need to break. Including, of course, what God says in the Bible.

The Bible tells us that God is a lover who loves his people faithfully, dependably, unconditionally, permanently. And he created marriage, it was his idea, as a relationship between a man and a woman where that love could be reflected.

And sex is God's good idea for marriage between a man and a woman where that faithful, committed, unconditional love is displayed. In the first century that view was seen as radical, subversive, weird.

And today it's seen as radical, subversive, weird, immoral to hold that view. Because Freud and his followers said that will make people unhappy because it puts restraints on the free pursuit of sexual

pleasure.

So our identity was internalized, then it was sexualized, and then the next thing that happened is it was politicized. It became political. And that's thanks to Karl Marx, whose followers said that essentially everything is about power.

[15:57] And his message, you know, Karl Marx, if you know anything about him, he's speaking principally about economic power. And he talked about how there's like a ruling class who have the wealth, they've got the property.

And what they're going to do is they're going to abuse that power by keeping the working classes limited. They're going to make them weak. And so, socially, you've got to fight back against that imbalance of power.

So a student of Freud, Wilhelm Reich, took Freud's thinking about sexual desire and Marx's thinking about how everything is about power or politics, in his book, *The Sex Revolution*, to argue this.

He said, we've got a next slide. He's amazing hair, by the way. Just look at Wilhelm Reich.

Incredible barnet. But he said, all compulsory morality is life negating.

In other words, whenever you meet any social or legal pressure to behave in a certain way, that is an abuse of power. It's designed to hurt you and benefit someone else.

[17:02] And you've got to fight it. That's where we live now. That is the culture that we live in. Identity politics. It's all about who I am, which is all about my desires. I have to express them.

Culture wars. Don't let anyone tell you what's right and wrong because of tradition or their background. We've got to overthrow the whole thing. That's what's going on in our world. It shapes sex education in schools. Let's take sexual morality from parents. Let's teach it in schools. And let's say you are defined by your sexuality. Now, already you can see that puts the Christian in a very difficult situation.

Because God in the Bible calls us to walk in the way of his laws, his commands. And we will be naturally now in our world, we will be inclined not to see that as the loving commands of a good and generous and wise heavenly father.

And instead to think, this is a call from a powerful being, not just to restrict what I desire, but actually to deny who I really am.

[18:10] You see that? That's the problem for us. So this morning, we've thought about what the world says about our desires. And now we're just going to think, what does God say about our desires?

What does God say? He made us. He made us with desires. And we were made above all to desire him, to treasure him for who he is, as our glorious, holy, good, majestic creator.

So our first point on the sheets then, in the booklets, is we have fallen desires. And we heard about that in Romans chapter 1. That though we were made to desire God, we reject him and we suppress the truth about him.

So let me just read that again from verse 18. It's printed on the sheets, or you could look it up in the Bibles. He says in verse 18, The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. And we hear in verse 20, how God has done that. How has God made it plain to us that he is there and he's not silent?

[19:21] Verse 20, For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

So this is confusing for us in somewhere like Scotland, because people around us will say, well I look at the world around me, and I don't think there's a creator.

And yet, what the Bible is correcting for us is it's saying that at the level of how we think as a society, we are suppressing the truth. That when we ask the question, how is there all this, when once there was nothing, how did we get something rather than nothing, it cries out to us, there's a maker.

He has eternal power and a divine nature. And it's continually revealing that to us. And we are continually suppressing it. A bit like if you pack the car to go on holiday and you've got loads of stuff and you stick it in your boot and it doesn't quite fit, and you have to push down on the boot to get it shut.

Or if you've ever played the game where you go swimming in the sea and you've got a beach ball with you and you push it under the water, and you might sit on it and you're trying to keep it under the water. But as soon as you let go, it will come out from the water and be visible again.

[20 : 40] That's what the revelation of God in creation is like for us. But we say there is no God.

Why do we say that? Well, it's because our desire is to get away from him, to be autonomous from him. And we see that in verse 21. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God, nor gave thanks to him.

But their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened. And so we replace God with something else. Verse 22. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

And when we turn from God and replace him with other things, it leads to broken desires, including broken sexual desires. And we see that in verse 24.

Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and worshipped and worshiped and served created things rather than the creator who is forever praised.

[21 : 54] Amen. And this is true for all of us in our humanity. That our desires are no longer innately good. If we follow them, we head off towards destruction.

A destructive way of life. That at the top of this reading, verse 18, he says in itself is a revelation of God's wrath. That we are under the judgment of God. We experience his settled, controlled hostility against us as humanity because we've turned against him.

We experience that hostility through the way that we are broken in our desires. And that leaves us alienated from God.

And it also leaves us dissatisfied. It leaves us thirsty. Because the things that we desire instead of God were never made to satisfy us.

So that's our second point. We have frustrated desires. And for that, we're just going to look on the sheets at what Jeremiah, the prophet, said about this. Where God speaks through Jeremiah to his people about how they've treated him.

[23 : 00] And he says, My people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols. Be appalled at this, you heavens, and shudder with great horror, declares the Lord.

My people have committed two sins. They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns, that cannot hold water.

So how is God described there? He is the spring of living water. We go to him and we never thirst. But what have we done instead? We have turned to broken cisterns.

In other words, we have substituted God and we're thirsty. We're not satisfied. And we see that all around us. The actor Matthew Perry, who died last year, tragically.

But before he died, I read his autobiography. And he talked about how he prayed as a young actor this prayer. God, you can do anything you want to me.

[24 : 02] Just please make me famous. Days later, he got cast as Chandler and Friends. And he reflected afterwards in his autobiography.

He said, I believe God answered that prayer to show me that being famous would not satisfy me. He thought his whole life that's what he needed.

He said, I mean, when he was at the high point of Friends, Matthew Perry was being paid a million dollars an episode. He had women everywhere offering themselves to him.

He was immensely popular. He was loved by fans all around the world. And he was thirsty. He was deeply dissatisfied. And Matthew Haidt, in his book, *The Anxious Generation*, he is an atheist psychologist writer.

Right? This is the third week we've done on *Being Human*. It's the third week I've talked about this book. I realize that. I am reading other things as well. But this is extraordinary, right? Matthew Haidt's book, *The Anxious Generation*, I picked it up because he's writing about the crisis among young people through social media.

[25 : 09] And how it's rewiring people's brains. But extraordinarily, as you get on in the book, Matthew Haidt says, one of our problems is we've all got a God-shaped hole.

Every human being has a God-shaped hole. He's an atheist. He says, what you've got to do in life is you've got to find some way of filling that God-shaped hole in your life.

And it's amazing how close he gets. He says to his students, the young people who learn under him in New York, you need to experience awe to fill that God-shaped hole in your life.

And there are different ways you can experience awe. One way is you can experience something that's so much bigger than you, it seems transcendent.

So go for a walk in nature. Look at the night sky for an experience of awe. Another way he says you can experience awe is through discovering something that your mind understands in a new way for the first time.

[26 : 15] You can have this sense of awe when you say, oh, I get it. Another way you can experience awe, Matthew Haidt says, is through an experience of moral beauty. Something that is courageously, wonderfully good.

And you read it and you think as a Christian, oh man, if only you could find those things in one place. If only there was this being who isn't just as awe-inspiring as the night sky.

He made the cosmos. And who isn't just an example of an act of moral beauty. He is moral perfection. And who has revealed himself so that as you come to him and his revelation of himself in Jesus, you discover cognitively who he is and who you are in new ways.

And then Matthew Haidt even adds, the best way to experience awe is with other people. A bit like worshipers do in church. Thirsty.

People are thirsty. And we get to our third point. It's that Jesus offers to satisfy our desires. Jesus meets a woman at a well in John chapter 4.

[27 : 25] We learn that she's been married six times. And the man that she's now with is, she's been married five times. And the man that she's now with is not her husband. And so we just get this glimpse of a woman who may well have been treated badly, mistreated, maybe abused.

And Jesus asks her for a drink from the well. And then he says to her in John chapter 4 verse 13, Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again.

But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed the water I give them will become in them a spring of water, welling up to eternal life. Jesus comes with the gift of the Spirit to renew and reform our desires, so that we're moved to desire God again in him and be satisfied as we come to him.

How can he do that? Well only through his self-giving love at the cross. We see that in the prophet Isaiah. And we're just going to turn there now to see that 700 years before Jesus came.

Isaiah chapter 53, which is on page 742. 742 in the church Bibles.

[28 : 48] And Isaiah 53, there's probably no more significant passage of the Old Testament on explaining in a prophecy what God's Son Jesus will do for his people at the cross.

So in verse 4 of Isaiah 53, it says, He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him and afflicted.

And then verse 5, So there is the work of Jesus being prophesied 700 BC by Isaiah.

And look at what happens next in the book of Isaiah as that work is accomplished at the cross. In chapter 55, just over the page, the world is invited to come and drink.

But chapter 55, verse 1, So what's being described in this invitation to come and drink and eat?

[30 : 18] Well, verse 6, it's that we turn back to God. Verse 6, seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near. And we saw this as a staff team.

We went away two years ago on a kind of staff retreat with a guy, Mark Pickles. And he showed us this, how Isaiah 55 is this kind of playing out of the implications of what Jesus has done for us.

And then he said this to us. He said, if you were doing a presentation to somebody and you had something that was really, you felt, was so important, you were really desperate for them to remember it.

What would you do? What might you do to help them remember? Is one thing you might do to repeat it at the end. Like as you're summing up what you wanted to say, you might repeat that really important thing, mightn't you?

To say, look, I really want you to go away with this. And then just turn to the last chapter of the whole Bible. Revelation 22. We just flick there.

[31 : 24] Revelation 22. It's pitch 1250. And when we read about the bride in Revelation, we're reading about the church, the people of God.

And when we read about the Spirit, we're hearing about the Holy Spirit. Revelation chapter 22, verse 17. The Spirit and the bride say, come.

And let the one who hears say, come. Let the one who is thirsty come. And let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

So Jesus says to us this morning, don't think I've come to deprive you of what you desire. I've come to renew your desires, to redirect them to where true satisfaction is found.

Come to me and drink living water. Behold the glory of God in me and you'll be satisfied. And we start when we want to see the beauty of God with the cross.

[32 : 35] Where the beauty of God was displayed to us. As Jesus had to cry out, I thirst. And he went thirsty, cut off from God. To open up the way for us to come back to God.

And have our desires satisfied. And the Spirit works in our lives to grow that desire in us powerfully. So that it changes us. That's our final point. The Spirit works to renew our desires.

That's a theme throughout the New Testament. As the letters are written to help us understand how we live now waiting for Jesus' return. And Ephesians chapter 4. Again, it's on the sheets.

Look at the use of the... Look at how the Apostle Paul treats our desires here. He says about how we've come to know Christ. And it says, You were taught with regard to your former way of life.

To put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires. To be made new in the attitude of your minds. And to put on the new self. Created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

[33 : 42] So you see the idea that our desires have become corrupted and deceive us. But that's not who we are anymore. When you come to Christ, you're given a new mind. And you are to put on the new self in light of that new mind.

And this is how real change comes in the Christian life. As the Holy Spirit recalibrates our hearts. John Piper has written a lot about this.

He is a Christian writer in America. And the first time I ever heard about John Piper. It was someone saying to me, He's a Christian hedonist. And I thought, as a young Christian. That that must mean that he'd come to this idea that you could be a Christian.

And still live for all the worldly pleasure you want. To be a Christian hedonist. Not realizing that what he means is. That actually Christianity is the ultimate form of hedonism. In the sense that when you desire God.

And you go to him for satisfaction. You do find the highest pleasure. So John Piper says this. Behold your God is the most gracious command and best gift of the gospel.

[34 : 51] The ultimate good of the gospel. Is that we would see and savor the beauty of God. And just as we finish. We're going to see an example of that from the Psalms.

In Psalm 84. Which we had read for us. So you can just turn there. Or it's on the sheets. Psalm 84. Which is on page 595. So the verses I refer to will be on the sheets.

You can see there in verse 2. That he says. My soul yearns. Even faints. For the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh cry out. For the living God.

You see the thirst there. He's thirsty. And he knows that thirst will only be satisfied with God. And he knows that from a previous experience of what God is like.

So in verse 10. He picks it up with these two contrasts. If you look at verse 10. Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God.

[35 : 57] Than dwell in the tents of the wicked. The writer is thinking here about royal tents. He's saying. I look at life. That's the best the world could offer without God. Life with the finest wealth.

And comfort. And pleasure. Dwelling in the tents of those who don't know God. And even if all that God was willing to offer me. Was the most burdensome lowly service.

A doorkeeper in his house. I would gladly take that burden on. Or that I would just get another glimpse. Of his glory.

To write that. He is liberated. From his desires for worldly things. And the truth he shares about God.

He shares in verse 11. Can recalibrate our hearts. Towards God. If you just look at verse 11. He says. The Lord God is above you.

[36 : 54] A sun. Lighting your path. The Lord God is before you. A shield. Protecting you. The Lord God is for you. Dignifying. He bestows favor and honor.

And the Lord God is generous towards you. No good thing does he withhold. And for us. We know that all of these blessings. From God.

Display his costly sacrificial love. In the Lord Jesus. God is for us a sun. To lighten our lives.

Because Jesus endured darkness.

When he went to the cross. To deal with our sin. The Lord God is for us a shield. Because Jesus had no shield. As he bore the wrath of God.

Against our sin at the cross. The Lord God dignifies us. Bestowing favor and honor on us. Because Jesus bore shame. When he died for our sin.

[37 : 50] In that shameful death at the cross. God is for us. And he's for us a shield. And he's for us a shield. So when we ask God to reshape our desires. And direct them towards him. He will satisfy them. And give us delight.

And one way to help us with that. Is to use prayers from the psalm. In which writers of the psalms. Have asked God to help them with that. And John Piper again. Has taken four prayers from the psalms.

That he calls his IOUs. And he uses them day by day. Before he turns to the Bible. We've just printed them on the sheets. That he prays to God. The I. Incline my heart to your testimonies.

Or. Open my eyes to see wonderful things. You. Unite my heart to fear your name. S. Satisfy me in the morning. With your steadfast love.

And as God moves us to grow in this. We can say. As Isaiah promised we would say. Yes Lord. Walking in the way of your laws. We wait for you.

[38 : 50] Your name and renown. Are the desire of our hearts. Let's pray together. Mighty and gracious God.

Who alone can satisfy the desires you have placed within us. We praise you for your holiness. Your power. Your goodness. And your glorious grace.

And we ask that by your spirit. You will move us. To earnestly desire what you promise. And to love what you command. So that our desires are directed to the place where true joy is found.

For we ask in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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

Amen.