

Two Humanities (Part 2)

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[0 : 0 0] Well, as I mentioned during the reading, we are turning back to the second half of Romans chapter 5 today. We started studying this passage two weeks ago and we are going to look at the rest of it together this morning. We will look at verses 12 to 21 as a whole, but we can read again from verse 18. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous. Now, the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more. So that as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now, this is one of the passages that we have in the letter to the Romans that's full of wonderful teaching, but at the same time, it's a wee bit hard to understand. You're reading through a passage like this and it can be a wee bit, it can seem complicated and it can seem hard to know what Paul is saying. And so I want us just to go through it together slowly and to try and bring out the main points that Paul is making. And as I said when we were reading, the main emphasis of this passage is a comparison between Adam on the one hand and Christ on the other. And at the heart of Paul's argument is the fact that humanity is divided into two categories. We said this last time, this is something that we often do, we divide humanity into two. So in terms of economics, we talk about the rich and we talk about the poor. In terms of politics, we have the right and the left. In terms of race, we talk about black and white. We very often put people into different categories.

We very often separate humanity. Paul is reminding us in these verses that in God's eyes, there is ultimately only one categorization that can be applied to the human race. You are either in Adam or you are in Christ. And Paul is telling us that there are ultimately two categories. There's the humanity that is fallen in Adam and we are all initially members of that humanity. But then there is also the other humanity that is being rescued and restored in Christ. And of that humanity, we can all become members through faith in Jesus Christ.

And every other categorization, every other distinction, every other separation is ultimately going to be totally irrelevant, totally irrelevant compared to which side of this divide we stand on. Because economic differences have no eternal consequences. Political opinions have no relevance whatsoever to eternity. Race is not a category that is applied in heaven or hell. Ultimately, all that matters is this. Are you in Adam or are you in Christ? That's the great distinction that Paul is making. And that's the great emphasis of these verses. And in order to study these verses, we looked at two headings. Two weeks ago, we looked at how Adam and Christ are similar. Because Paul says that Adam is a type of Christ. So in one sense, Paul is saying that Adam and Christ are the same. But at the same time, he highlights the fact that

Adam and Christ are different. And that's what we're going to focus on primarily today. But before we do that, we're just going to spend two minutes reminding ourselves how Adam and Christ are similar. How it is that these two correspond. You may remember from two weeks ago, we said that the similarity between Adam and Christ is in terms of what we call federal headship. Now, don't worry if you've never heard of that before. The word federal is the same, means the same as the word covenant. And it's emphasising the fact that Adam is a covenant head or a federal head of a larger group. And so too is Jesus, a federal head or a covenant head of a larger group. So you've got these two humanities and each of them has one who is at the head. At the head of one is Adam as representative.

[4 : 49] At the head of other is Christ as representative. Both Adam and Christ function as federal heads. That means that in terms of how they stand before God, Adam and Christ do not stand as isolated individuals. They are representatives of much larger groups. And you'll remember we used the illustration of the fact that this is very common even in the modern day.

We said how politically we have people who represent us as federal heads. So when Theresa May signs the document to bring Britain out of the European Union, it's not just Theresa May who comes out. It's all of us because she is representing us as a federal head.

So in terms of our relationship with God, when God entered into a covenant relationship with Adam, it wasn't simply with him. It was with all humanity who descend from him. And in the same way, Christ's covenant dealings with Adam, Christ's covenant dealings with God don't just affect Christ, they affect all those who are united to him. Adam and Christ are both federal heads. In their dealings with God, they represent others. And Paul's great point is that the whole of humanity is in one category or the other. You're either in Adam or you're in Christ. There's no middle ground. There's no third alternative. We are one or the other. And as we highlighted last time, this is of immense relevance to us all because we are all initially under Adam's federal headship. And the consequences of that are serious because Adam's federal status is not good. If Adam is your representative, he is a bad one because Adam's status before God in terms of a covenant relationship is not good. Adam has disobeyed God. Adam has rebelled against God and Adam's realm has been ruined by sin and death. And we are all caught up in that. We are caught up in the guilt of Adam's first sin. We now lack the original righteousness that we're supposed to have. Our whole nature has been corrupted, which is summarized by the term original sin, which is inherited in us all. And from that original sin, all actual transgressions proceed from us in an abundance of different ways. Adam's humanity has been ruined. And we are all caught up in that. We are all affected by the damage that his sin has caused. And the proof of that is everywhere. If you look at the world, is it good? No. If you look at humanity's behavior, is it perfect? No. But if you look at the world, do people do awful things to each other? Yes, they do. Do awful things happen? Yes, they do. Do people behave in a way that seems utterly inhumane? Yes, they do. It's all because of the effect of Adam's first sin. And so Paul is highlighting the fact that initially we are all in Adam and the consequences of that are desperate. But alongside that, Paul is giving us an amazing message of hope. Because although there are similarities between Adam and Christ and that they are both federal heads, there are also massive and wonderful differences between the headship of Adam and the headship of Christ. And that's what I want us to look at today, just for a wee while, to see how Adam and Christ are different. Now, in order to do that, we're going to go through the passage together. But this is probably going to sound a wee bit strange. We're going to work our way backwards. So we're going to start at the end of the passage and we're going to work our way back in order just to highlight some of the key points that Paul makes in regard to the differences between Adam's realm and Christ's realm. There's two humanities, but there's big differences between the two.

And we're going to highlight four or five of these. So first of all, in each of these humanities, there is a difference in terms of the ruling principle. There's a difference in terms of what's in charge in terms of the dominant ruling principle. And so Paul tells us in verse 21. And in order to highlight the difference, the statements that apply to Adam's realm are in red and the statements that apply to Christ's are in blue. So what's the ruling principle in each realm? Well, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness. So in Adam, what's in charge? What's reigning? Sin reigns. But in Christ, grace reigns. In other words, in Adam's realm, sin is dominant. That's why there's lawlessness, pain, misery, and chaos in the world. But in Christ's realm, grace is dominant. The chaos and lawlessness of sin has no power over Christ whatsoever. So that's the dominant principle. Under Adam, sin is in charge. Under Christ, grace is the one who reigns. And so there's a difference in ruling principle. Okay, we'll go back a wee bit further in the passage now to verse 18 and 19, where we see that there's a difference in terms of our status. Because both of these principles, the dominant principle of sin and the dominant principle of grace, both have effect on how we stand before God. And so verse 18 and 19 highlight this. Sin has led to condemnation. As one trespass led to condemnation for all men. Grace, on the other hand, has the opposite effect. So one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. So the difference is very clear. In Adam, our status is condemned, just like a criminal pronounced guilty condemned.

But in Christ, our status is we are justified. Before God, we are not condemned, we are pronounced righteous. Sin leads to condemnation. So in Adam, our status before God is guilty. But grace leads to justification. In Christ, our status before God is righteous. There's a difference in status. Now we'll come back and summarize all this in the end. So don't worry if it's a bit fast. We'll go through it quickly and then we'll summarize it all together in a moment. So difference in ruling principle under Adam's sin reigns, under Christ's grace reigns. Difference in status. The people who are in Adam are condemned. The people who are in Christ are justified. In each humanity, there's also a difference in terms of transaction. And what do I mean by that? Well, let's read verses 15 to 17. The free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more of the grace of God. And the free gift by that grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, are bounded for many. The free gift is not like the result of one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation. But the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if because of one man's trespass death reign through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Now the big difference there is between judgment on the one hand and a free gift on the other. So under Adam, sin reigns. That means that all sinners are under the power of the law and we stand condemned by the law. And so we are judged. Simple logic. We sin. We've broken the law. The sentence we deserve is condemnation and the judgment is pronounced according to the terms of all that the law and the covenant says. It's simple logic. We sin, we're condemned, we stand judged.

[13:58] And it's all logical. But in Christ, it's different. The transaction works in a different way. Grace reigns. So we are justified not because we deserve it, but because we are given it. And so rather than being dished out the wage that we deserve, which is condemnation, we are given something that we don't deserve. We are given righteousness. It's freely given. So the condemnation of sin is transacted as a judgment. It's what we deserve. But the justification of grace is transacted as a gift. It's freely given and it's abounding in its scope. And all of that leads on to the fourth point, that in each humanity there is a difference in the result. On the one hand, under Adam, sin results in death. And that's the great point that Paul makes in verses 12 to 14. We're going backwards a wee bit more in the passage. Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, so death spread to all men, because all sinned. Sin has come into the world. And Paul is proving the reality of that fact. And here Paul says that even before the law came, sin was still in the world. Look at what he says. Sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.

Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who sinning was not like the translation of Adam, who was the type of the one to come. Here we have to remember the whole chronology of events that came through the Old Testament. You have Adam at the very beginning who sinned and then it's many, many, many years later before the law is given to Moses. So Genesis chapter three, Adam sinned, but the law doesn't come until Exodus chapter 20, which is many generations later. And so Paul is saying, does that mean that until the law came, there was no sin in the world? Because ultimately, how do you know what sin is? Because of the law, the law diagnosis sin. Paul is saying, was there no sin in the world during that period? And he says, no, there was. How do we know there was sin in the world in that period? Because people still died. So even though they didn't have the law, which clearly diagnoses their sin, yet the effect of sin was still there because death reigned from

Adam to Moses, even over those who didn't sin in exactly the same way as Adam, the effect of sin was still upon them because they still died. And this is highlighting a vital point that we must never forget, that sin and death are inseparable. And you can see that when you read through the passage here, Paul uses the terms almost interchangeably. He talks about sin reigning. He talks about death reigning. He talks about sin coming into the world.

He talks about death coming into the world. And he's reminding us of the fact that sin will always, always result in death. That was God's warning at the very beginning, wasn't it? He didn't say to Adam, if you eat the fruit, you will become a sinner. He said, if you eat the fruit, you will die. And so even people who did not sin in exactly the same way that Adam did, even though they lived before the law came to provide further details of what God's requirements were and were not, yet they are still affected by Adam's sin because they're still under the power of death. And that's Paul's great point, that through Adam, sin has come into the world and that has affected every single one of us because sin is a reality in our nature and death has spread to everyone. And Paul is basically reminding us that the reason we die is because we have a sinful nature. We are so familiar with death, it's so much a part of reality, we forget that it is an unwanted intrusion into God's creation. If we did not have a sinful nature, we would not die. And therefore the fact that we die proves that we are all sinners. We have all inherited Adam's sinful nature. If we didn't have a sinful nature, we wouldn't die. Adam would never have died had he not sinned against God. You have to be a sinner in order to die. Now, you might well be saying, hang on Thomas, how is that true? Because Jesus died, but of course Jesus was not a sinner. Well, that's exactly right. Jesus was not a sinner. And that is why in order to die, Jesus had to lay down his life of his own accord, because sin did not have the power to take it from him in the way that it has power over us. That's why Jesus said in John 10, no one takes it from me, that no one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down. And I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my father. The reason we die is because we have a sinful nature. Sin results in death. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15, in Adam all die. And so under Adam's humanity, the end result is death. But Christ's humanity is completely different because just as sin leads to death, grace leads to life. Here's the contrast. Sin spread to death, spread to all men because all sinned. Sin reigned in death, but grace also might reign through righteousness, leading to eternal life through

Jesus Christ, our Lord. That's God's great goal to give us life. And that of course makes absolutely perfect sense. God is the creator. God is the giver of life. His plan for us is to have life. God did not create us to die. God created us to live. And sin has ruined that by making death a reality in our experience. Sin was never part, death was never part of God's plan for us. Death is the most awful, horrible enemy that we ever face, which is why it's the most painful thing that we ever go through when we lose somebody and when death comes into our experience. God never intended death to be part of our experience because God's plan for us was to live, not to die. And so God has come to put everything right. God has come to give us the very thing that sin has taken away. God has come to give us life. And of course that is why what is the one thing that lies at the heart of the

[22 : 18] Christian Gospel and that makes it different to everything else? The resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Christian message because the resurrection is life overcoming death. God's great goal is to bring us life. So let's just summarise all the differences between these two humanities so far. In Adam, in Christ, in terms of ruling principle, in Adam Paul tells us that sin reigns, but in Christ grace reigns. In terms of status, in Adam we stand condemned, but in Christ we are justified, we are pronounced righteous. In Adam our condemnation is transacted as a judgement that we deserve. But in Christ our justification is a free gift that's poured out upon us abundantly. And the result is two opposite extremes. In Adam the result is death. In Christ the result is life. And so even though Adam and Christ are similar in that they are both federal heads, there are massive differences between the two. One leads to death, the other leads to life. And when we look at that we might see ourselves, well what makes the difference? Why is it that they are so different? Well the answer is in verse 19, it says, for by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, that's Adam. So by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. That's the big difference. Federal head Adam disobeyed. Federal head

Christ obeyed. And if we are in Adam we are bound up in his disobedience. But if we are in Christ we are united to his perfect obedience. And that's why it is absolutely vital that every single one of us has our faith in Jesus Christ. It only needs to be a childlike faith, a simple faith and even if you don't understand everything that Paul is saying here because it is a wee bit of a complicated passage, that doesn't really matter. As long as you understand this, that you need to be in Christ and that the way we get into Christ is by trusting in him. Because at the end of the day these are the only two humanities that exist. You're either in Adam or in Christ. And you just have to ask yourself which one is it going to be? But at this point we can often hit a problem. Because you look at these two humanities. You look at Adam and if you go back one slide, you look at Adam it's awful.

Sin reigns, you're condemned, you get a judgment you deserve that's ultimately going to lead to death. There's no hope there whatsoever. But you look at Christ it's brilliant. Grace reigns, we're justified. You don't earn it, you don't pay for it, it's a free gift and the end result is life and life that lasts forever and ever. And so if you look at those two humanities you think well it's an absolute no-brainer which one we want to be in. We want to be in Christ. But here we can find ourselves crippled by the fact that we feel that we're too weak or we feel that we are too broken to get from one to the other. And so you think to yourself I know I'm in Adam and I know I need to be in Christ but I can't do it. I'm stuck in Adam. I'm not good enough to be in Christ. And maybe you feel like that.

Maybe you feel like sin's reign is too strong. Well if you feel like that you need to see that there is one more crucial difference between the federal headship of Adam and the federal headship of Christ that's highlighted by Paul in these verses. In Adam and in Christ there is a difference in quantity. Now I'll explain what I mean. Paul is highlighting in these verses that sin is a massive problem. It has spread to all of humanity. But Paul's main point is not that sin is big. Paul's main point is that grace is bigger. And so no matter how powerful sin is, no matter how much you have been caught up in its web, no matter how far short you have fallen, no matter how much sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. And one sin had a devastating effect leading to death for many. But the free gift is big enough not just to fix the sin of the one man Adam but it is big enough to abound over many, many transgressions. And that's why if you look at the timeline of history across the Bible, Adam sinned and then eventually Christ came to put right what Adam went wrong.

But he didn't just solve Adam's problem, he solved the problem of everybody who came and descended after Adam. Even when the law came to diagnose sin and to highlight it all the more so that people who had not heard the law before then heard it and realised we are breaking far more of God's commandments than we ever realised. Their sin increased, the diagnosis became clearer, the condition became more and more serious. Sin seemed to abound but grace responds by abounding all the more because where sin increased, grace abounded all the more as verse 20 tells us. And that's really the main point that Paul is making. He's saying that there's two humanities, one has been wrecked by sin but the other has been restored by grace. One is on a highway to death, the other is on a path to life and the vital point is that the federal head of humanity, the federal head of the humanity that leads to life is far bigger and far stronger and far more powerful than the federal head of the humanity that is leading to death. That means that whatever damage has been done to you because of your connection to Adam, Jesus has abundantly more than enough grace to save you and to bring you under his headship because under Adam sin spreads but under Christ grace abounds. So whatever sin does, Jesus has got enough grace to save you. There's a huge difference in quantity. No matter how far your sin spreads into your heart, into your mind, into your life, pouring out into all sorts of different things, affecting your behaviour, affecting your relationship, wrecking your home, spoiling your work, bringing you grief and problems and worries and troubles, no matter how big it might seem grace is bigger and no matter how lost you may seem grace is big enough to find you. Paul is saying that

[30 : 40] Jesus has enough grace for you. His grace is big enough for you. His grace is big enough to take your sin onto his shoulders no matter how many mistakes you've made in your life.

His grace is big enough to forgive and to totally forget every single stupid thing that you and I have done in our lives. His grace is big enough to heal every wound and every scar in your heart.

His grace is big enough to bring you back no matter how far away from him you may have wandered. His grace is big enough to catch you every single time you stumble. His grace is big enough so that his strength is made perfect in all of your weakness. So in other words, the devil might try to accuse you and say you've done this, this, this, this, this, this, and this.

You've made this mistake, that mistake, this mistake, that mistake. You've done this wrong, that wrong, everything else wrong, but no matter how long his list is, supposing it goes to the moon and back, Jesus says I have got abundantly enough grace to deal with it all. Because if you trust in Jesus, his grace will never, ever run out. Grace abounds. And this is where we see just how astonishing the grace of God in Jesus Christ really is. Humanity in Adam is rebellious, broken, and wretched. But Jesus has grace that is big enough to put it all right. It's big enough for you. Now just as an aside for two minutes, that raises a vital question for us as a church.

Because when we see just how big Jesus's grace is, we have to ask ourselves, how big is our grace? Are we ready to forgive the people who really hurt us?

[33 : 15] Are we ready to totally forget the hurt that other people have caused us, the mistakes that people have made? Are we ready to constantly push away the temptation to criticize, to hold a grudge, and to see the worst in people? Because as a church, our default position should always be to show grace. Always. And if we are wrong, then we can rest in the knowledge that God is ultimately judge. But always remember that as an individual and as a church or whatever you're involved in, if you're ever faced in the consequences of somebody doing something wrong, somebody making a mistake, things going badly, people getting hurt, always, always, always default to grace. Because that is what Jesus did. And that is the example that he has shown to us, always default to grace. If Jesus has grace that will never run out, then as a church we have no excuse to ever be different. So that's Paul's point and I really hope that we've seen it clearly, that ultimately there's two humanities under two federal heads. But the difference between them is huge. In Adam we face death, but in Christ we have life and all the other privileges of being under Christ's headship. And here we see the fact that theology and life go hand in hand.

Because we study all of this and I suppose in many ways a lot of this is maybe more technical theological study because we're looking at concepts of headship, we're dividing humanity into two categories, all these terms here, rule and status, transaction, result, quantity, it can all seem quite, I suppose, technical. But I really hope that you can see that the headship of Christ, the federal headship of Christ, is not just a fascinating theological topic. It is a fascinating theological topic and it's something that we could go into much more detail on if we had time.

But it's not just interesting theology. Because in reality all of this is telling you that Christ is your head if you trust in him. That means that he is your defender. It means that he's your protector, your captain, your leader, you are on his team, you are under his guard, you are under his watch and he is utterly loyal and he is uncompromisingly committed to you as a Christian and to everybody else who puts their trust in him and comes under his headship. It's not just a theological topic, it's about the fact that Christ has given everything for you because he wants to save you. And ultimately this is the category that will divide humanity.

So what's it going to be? Are you staying in Adam or are you joining Christ? Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you for all that your Word teaches us and for the great contrast that these verses have said before us between those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ. And we just, we acknowledge Lord that we, every one of us was in Adam and were it not for your grace we would all still be there. But we pray Lord that for every one of us that the headship of Adam would not be the place that we are, it would become the place where we were so that all of us would be able to say by the grace of God I am in Christ. And so please draw us to yourself, help us to see the simplicity of the gospel while at the same time marvelling at all the wonderful details that you have brought together for our salvation. We acknowledge that you are an amazing God and this is an amazing gospel. Help us all to see that. In Jesus' name, amen.