

Augustine and Donatus

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[0:00] about Augustine. He was remarkable for writing this spiritual autobiography, *The Confessions*.! So that's a remarkable book.

! He also wrote *On the Trinity*.! He was born in 354. In 411, he began to write about the views of Pelagius.

And I think I read to you about Pelagius from this book. I think it was this book. Anyway, I won't read it all over again.

Some of the ideas that Pelagius had to try to, I think, to stir people who said they were Christians to living a credible and holy life was to say, stop being lazy.

If God commands something, you can do it. You can obey it. And you just need to make the effort and choose to do the right thing and get on and do it and you can do it.

[1:15] And that has lots of, that idea has lots of spin-offs. I mean, can that be possibly true that whatever God commands, we are capable of doing?

I don't think that can work. Can it? Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind as your neighbour, as yourself. Yeah, that's the right thing to do.

But actually what it shows us is where we fall short, isn't it? We say, I don't do that. And therefore I need a saviour. And there is no other saviour than Jesus. And we come to him confessing our sin and trusting that what he did on the cross to deal with sin, to produce forgiveness of sin, cleansing from sin, that what he did is sufficient even for me.

And we begin to put our trust in Jesus Christ. We have faith in him. And another idea that Pelagius had was about Adam.

And he said, Adam's sin only affected Adam. It didn't affect anybody else. And each person is born really like Adam was.

[2:37] Abel, you know, Adam, before he fell he could have chosen in all directions, we presume. And everybody, when they're born, is like that.

They are free to choose God, to obey God or to not. And that idea, we talked about it a bit last week, but we didn't really explore it.

And I thought perhaps we could begin by exploring that and looking in Romans chapter 5, verse 12. And the question is, what does the Apostle Paul say about Adam and his fall into sin as it affects or doesn't affect anybody else?

So, let me read it and then I'm going to ask you to spend five minutes in your little groups saying, what do you think it does mean about Adam and about the rest of us?

So, this is Romans 5, 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 in that all sinned.

[4:08] To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given. But sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law.

Nevertheless, 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 the pattern of the one to come.

For 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?

Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin. The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

For if by the trespass of the one man death reigned through that one man, 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?

Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people.

[5:42] For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase, but where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It's quite complicated, isn't it? But let's try and break it down a little bit. Let's say he's... Let's do it this way.

So we've got Adam, one man, and he sins. And we've got Jesus, one man, and he obeys. He's talking about Jesus dying on the cross. That's his obedience. And there's an effect. Would you like to spend five minutes in your group?

[6:57] So what is the effect of this Adam, and what is the effect of Jesus? See if you can come up with something from that passage for five minutes or so.

It went like this. There's the neighbor's garden, and we had a fantastic huge leaves, and it went like that, and it turned color in the autumn.

And one day, our neighbor grew impatient with this, and just cut it there. And the whole thing died. So all the leaves fell off in our garden, and he didn't have to cut each individual leaf. He just cut it there at the root, and the whole thing died. Compare that if you would.

When you've ordered something from eBay, you get it in bubble wrap, don't you? Which poses the question, if you're ordering bubble wrap from eBay, what do they wrap it in?

[7:56] But here's lots of little bits. That had lots of leaves and things on it, but you just had to cut it there, and the whole thing died. If you want to extinguish bubble wrap, you've got to go...

... .. Each individual one like that. And the question is, how does God deal with the human race? Is it like bubble wrap, that each individual is on his own, or her own, and it works like that?

Or is there a sense in which there is a group, a connected group, and if in that one place, something happens, it affects everybody else?

Now, Pelagius would have gone for that one, and I'm just... I just found the... ..the quote, and I've just lost the quote, that..

[8:49] What did I do with it? It wasn't that one. It was... It's this one. This is Augustine telling us what Pelagius believes. Number one, Adam was created mortal, and he would have died whether he sinned or not.

Number two, Adam's sin injured himself alone, and not the human race. Number three, the law as well as the gospel leads to the kingdom of heaven. Number four, there were people without sin before Christ coming.

Number five, newborn infants are in the same condition as Adam before the fall. And number six, it is not through the death or fall of Adam that the whole human race dies, nor is it through the resurrection of Christ that the human race rises again.

Now, that is significant, isn't it? Because he says... If every... No, Adam was just one of these pieces of bubble wrap. It doesn't affect anything else. But if...

The question is, is it like this, that one act here affects everything else, and that might be Adam, which produces sin, or similarly, Christ, by one act, affects the whole tree in a positive way.

[10:14] Do you see the idea? I mean, Adam does it negatively, negatively, and Christ similarly does something positively. That's... Bubble wrap and ivy is my way of thinking about it.

Was it yours? What did you come up with concerning Adam and what happened to him and everybody else and Jesus and what happened to him and everybody else? Right.

Can I ask, Sima, have the microphone, please? The microphone is just helpful. We said in this group, we said in this group that Adam's sin affected the whole generation, so it's like the ivy.

Yeah. The whole... Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection affected everyone. It's open to everyone, but it only affects those that believe and accept his work on the cross. Okay, so you're saying there's two trees, so that's a tree of death and that includes the whole human race. [11:39] Yeah. And there's another tree, similar sort of thing, and this is one act of... one positive act. Verse 18. Okay, give us the verse.

Yeah. Should I read it then? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Verse 18. Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one... Sorry, I've lost myself. Of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. Yeah. I think we have to be just careful with this all.

It doesn't mean that... It's not universalistic, is it? It's not saying that every single human being without exception or distinction is going to be saved. It's saying everybody in this tree is affected. Now, we don't know who's in that tree. That's a bit of a mystery, but everybody who's in that tree is given... What does it say? Justification? Yeah. Yeah, and anything else?

[12:44] Life. And he says that these trees are similar in a way, but there are also distinctions. The gift is not like the trespass. Anybody? Tell us what the distinctions were, you know, the difference. Well, the difference is, as far as I know, is that you have to accept the work of Christ on the cross and I suppose it's not even you have to accept it's a gift from the Holy Spirit, isn't it?

Yeah, it does say gift, doesn't it? Yeah, it's a gift from the Holy Spirit. Salvation is a gift. And for those that have accepted that gift, then they're in that tree.

But Adam's is a gift or whatever it is, it's for all. Yeah. All have sinned. Yes, yes, the trees are not exactly the same.

This one, you belong to the tree genetically. If you're descended from Adam, you belong to that tree. A little bit like, a little bit like, if your great, great, great grandfather and great, great, great mother had emigrated to Australia, you would be, oh, you've done that one, have you?

[14:02] You would be born Australian. You wouldn't have to do anything, you'd just have to be born. This one, belonging to the tree, is a little bit more subtle. It's not, if your mum and dad were Christians, you're automatically a Christian.

It's not a genetic link, it's a spiritual link. And, yeah, I don't think Paul is, at this point, trying to tell us how that link up works.

He's just saying there is such a link. And you'd say it's sort of union with Christ. When he died on the cross, all these people, in some sense, died with him.

When he rose from the dead, in some sense, all these people rose with him. I mean, there's a lot of subtlety to that. But, the basic, that's the basic idea.

Okay, thank you very much, our Semas group. So, Steve's group, Steve or Jerome, perhaps might have something to say. I mean, one thing, we looked at the, we looked at the earlier bit, where the argument about the command, the argument about the command, because, what he says is that, those from Adam to Moses, died, even though they didn't have any command.

[15:13] Yep. So, I mean, that's presumably why Pelagius had to argue, that Adam would have died anyway. Because, otherwise, the argument wouldn't make sense, because the argument would have to say, that some people died, and some people didn't.

Could you repeat that? I got lost. If, I mean, you quoted, Augustine quotes, as Adam, saying Adam was mortal, and would die anyway, which of course opens the question, of what is meant by death here, but if you, just take it in simplistic terms, then, you would have to say, that between the time of, Adam, and the time of Moses, Yep.

when there was no explicit command, then, some people would have died, and some wouldn't. And he says, that's not the case, the fact that everybody died, from Adam to Moses.

Oh, right, you're saying that, if everybody was, in the same innocence, as Adam, then some people would have chosen, yes, and some people would have chosen, no, some people would have, sort of, eaten the fruit, and some people wouldn't, so some of them wouldn't have died, and some of them wouldn't.

Yeah, that's what he's saying, but he's saying, that's not the case, that they all died. They did die, death reigned, from Adam to Moses, even though, the ten commandments, or the ten words, hadn't

been given.

[16:27] I mean, Adam had a specific command, don't eat the fruit, but, until the law came, there was still death, death still reigned, yeah. That's the important part, of his argument, I think.

Thank you very much, yeah, that's great. Yeah, we were just talking about, how, although the law, hadn't come in terms of, on the tablets of stone, you know, there was something of the law, in the garden, in terms of, on the half, and, although it hadn't been, kind of codified, if you like, as it was in the Mosaic covenant, I mean, if you look at, you know, Abraham, and the times before, the Mosaic covenant, there was still law, there was still circumcision, there was still an element of law.

We were also talking about, how it's helpful to think about, Adam and Christ, very much as public figures, they're not private people, like you or I, they're representative, as you've said, where, you know, they're the two, kind of covenant heads, who were very public figures, so what they do, has an impact, on everyone else, rather than, if I do something, it might impact my family, and a few others, but, not on, you know, I was thinking, you know, for example, you might get a prime minister, or a president, who brings a country, or nation into war, yeah, well, the entire nation, may not be fighting in that war, but as the representative, head of that nation, the country's at war, there is now a state of war, between ourselves, and Germany, yes, yeah, that kind of thing, so, which is what you say, yeah, no, that's really helpful, the specialness of Adam, I mean, he gets called various things, sometimes gets called, a federal head, meaning, a head of a solidarity, a group of people, and Christ, also, is the head, in a very deep sense, of his people, and there's a union, between Christ, and his people, which is sort of, underlying this thought, yeah,

I was, to, I was thinking, that, that, from what you said, sort of, Adam is, is a sort of representative, if you like, of the whole human race, so you get the tree, and if you, cut it off at the bottom, you know, yeah, yeah, and Christ, is the representative, of his people, yeah, so one might go back, to the bubble wrap, and think of the bubble wrap, as the whole, human race, some bubbles, who have been, chosen, from eternity, will get popped, yeah, Christ's people, yeah, so, yeah, that's a good point, I mean, the world might look like that, but underlying it, is this, yes, yeah, yeah, that's right, when you talk about the law, it puts in mind, when we went to Venice, we went and visited, a synagogue, there was a sort of, exhibition of synagogue, and I was very struck, by one, a tapestry, I think it was, on the wall, it had people here, hmm, it had this heavenly city, you know, the final, the final Jerusalem, and in between, the, the people, and the city, to pave the way, to get them there, with the two, command, two, tablets of stone, with the law, written on them, and that sort of, Jewish idea, how do you get to heaven, from here to here, thank God for the law, and of course, that's exactly what Paul says, it isn't, isn't it, he says, you can't get to heaven, by keeping the law, no matter how hard you try, it has to be, some other way, and that's the way, through, through Jesus Christ.

[20:13] That just struck me, in terms of what you just said, that reminded me of Galatians, as well, where it says, in verse 20, now the law came in, to increase the trespass, that there was, we were talking about, how the law, there's something aggravating, about the law, it kind of highlights, our sin, doesn't it, it almost, amplifies, which Paul talks about, elsewhere, doesn't he, that he wouldn't have known, about coveting, covetousness, I can't remember, is it somewhere in Romans, he says that, if it wasn't for the law, yes, but the law highlighted, and amplified, his covetousness, whereas if the law, hadn't been given, yes, in such an explicit way, maybe he wouldn't have known that, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's right, there used to be, a sign on the road, going up to, the railway station, railway station, with a wonderful glass, roof, there used to be, a sign, on the road, going by, which says, it is prohibited, to throw stones, onto the roof, I would never have thought of that, unless, I had seen, that you weren't supposed, to do it, and the law, sort of aggravated, the sin, the question was, what did Pelagius, believe himself, yeah, well this is, you're asking somebody, who doesn't know the answer, but I can look it up, in the book,

Nick Needham's, view of Pelagius, in, at least one bit, that I read, said that he himself, was a very devout, and genuine, as far as we can tell, you know, but, when you, the things that you believe, in

your heart, aren't always the way, you say it, when you, when you express it, and so, I mean, maybe we'll meet Pelagius, in heaven, we'll be able to ask, him, you didn't get us, into a lot of trouble, Pelagius, and, but, I don't, I can't, I can't properly answer, the question, I mean, Augustine certainly, wrote to him, at one point, expressing fellowship, and appreciation, for him, yeah, it seems to me, that Pelagius, thinks very much, like a man, that Pelagius, thinks very much, like a man, yeah, I think that's, the default, human position, is, you know,

I can sort this, I can, make my own way, to heaven, who are you, to tell me, that I'm a miserable sinner, I'm different to him, yeah, well no, it was, but, it's, that was a good comment, to share, yes, it's saying, that Pelagius, just thought like, a human being, thinks, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, any other, comments, questions, well shall we, I mean time's moved on, I wanted us to look at, the Donatists, so this is, this is, Augustine's doctrine of grace, that we are, helpless sinners, that we are only saved, not even because, we were sensibly enough, to ask, but we are saved, by God's grace, completely, and, um, just to remind us, of what,

Nick Needham says, about this, um, how do Christians, actually pray, do they come before God, and say, thank you, for sending your son, to die for me, oh Lord, but as for the rest, my faith, my repentance, my conversion, my good works, my growth, my holiness, well Lord, you ought to be thanking me, um, nobody would dream, of praying like that, would we, um, even, he says, the semi-Pelagianism, that it is the first step, of faith, that we owe to ourselves, is untenable, for without that first step, none of the others, would follow, therefore our actual relation, salvation, would hinge upon ourselves, uh, and we don't, even think that, we don't even begin to, we thank God, don't we, for his grace, that he brought me, to the saviour, uh, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see, it was grace, that taught my heart, to fear, and grace, my fears relieved, how precious, did that grace appear, the hour I first believed, um, so that's, that's,

Augustine's doctrine of grace, and I think it's a great, understanding, of what it is to be a Christian, and I think it's really, strengthening, and God honouring, and, uh, uh, and really, helpful to us, okay, may we move, and just spend a little while, looking at, Donna, Donatus, so let's, move this off, let me make a bit of space, I think the story, as I understand it, goes back to a time of persecution under Diocletian.

[26:03] I hope I've spelt that correctly. And the time when the churches were interconnected and there was one sort of network of churches, by and large, and it compassed the whole of Christendom, the whole places where Christianity came, and the whole...

No, no, no, no, no. So if you take according to the whole, in Greek is kata, according to...

No, I'll write it in English, shall I? Kata. Olos, the whole. From which we get Catholic, meaning the whole, the whole thing.

Catholic. Catholic. And at that time, the church was, so we understand, connected in a happy, reasonably happy way, and it was the church.

That was what Christians belonged to, the Catholic church. Different to Roman Catholicism, but we're going way back before that happened, and Augustine would have said, what church do you belong to?

[27:22] I belong to the church everybody else belongs to. I belong to the Catholic church. It's the one across the whole world. Is that clear about the use of the word Catholic? Now then, in the time of Diocletian, so I'm reading, there was persecution.

And some of the... Yeah? Well, that's what I was wondering. If we go back in church history, things weren't like they are now.

We didn't have Baptists and Anglicans and Methodists, and you just had Christians, basically speaking. And they connected with one another, and they probably had bishops that looked after regions, and they would get together.

I hope I'm not painting an overly optimistic picture, but this is the general picture, that it was all connected up, and it was reasonably...

You know, there was one network, and because it covered the whole world, kata olos, according to the whole, that's where we get our word Catholic.

[28:40] Kat, olos, Catholic. And so this network of churches would have been referred to as the Catholic church. It was just Christians.

That was the... Correct. Not under the Pope, but just sort of networked together. Now then, during Diocletian's persecution, this had a splitting effect on the different churches.

It says, in 302, one of the deacons at Caesarea had his tongue cut out for not doing what the emperor wanted him to do in terms of sacrifices.

So that's a reason for not being a deacon, I guess. And in 303, a newly built church in Nicomedia, I didn't look up where that was, was destroyed by the emperor, the Roman emperor.

He took their Bibles and burnt them. And on the 24th of February, 303, there was an edict against Christians. So it was really powerful persecution.

[29:54] Now, under this persecution, some of the churches stood up against it very bravely. Other churches and church leaders were a bit more compromised.

Same thing was true in Nazi Germany. And different groups of churches said, well, we're not going to compromise. We're going to stand against this.

And other people... So in 331, a bishop was appointed in Carthage.

And some people said, well, we're not having this bishop. When it was the persecution, he handed over Bibles to be burnt. We're not getting on with them.

And we're splitting off. Because we want to stand for the faith. We don't want to be compromising like that. And my understanding is that Bishop Donatus was one of the ones who said, we're not compromising.

[30:59] You know, if that's the Catholic Church, we're not part of the Catholic Church. We don't do that sort of thing. So Donatus...

So this is in North Africa, along that North African coast. He stood apart from the other churches and said, you lot compromise and give in.

And we're not going to join in with that network in that sense. So there's a sort of split and a division between Donatus and his churches and the Catholic Church, in the meaning of which I just said before.

You know, the larger network. And in North Africa, where... It's in there somewhere.

Whose phone is that? Oh, really? Yes, okay. Now, you're getting really to the borders of what I know and understand.

[32:05] But let me find the page here. The churches in North West Africa were split between the Catholics and the Donatists.

See page 1664, which is where I should have gone in the first place. The last persecution under Diocletian had left the church in North West Africa bitterly divided.

Large numbers of Christians refused to recognize the new Bishop of Carthage in 311 because one of the bishops who ordained him had allegedly handed over the Bible to be burnt during Diocletian's persecution.

The result was a split. Two rival church networks came into being, each one claiming to be the true Catholic Church in North West Africa.

One was led by Sicilian and the other by Donatus. And the followers of Donatus were called Donatists. After the persecution, when buildings had been ransacked and property confiscated, they wanted to...

[33:15] The Emperor Constantine wanted to give some of this back. So he ordered that all church property which the authorities had confiscated during the persecution must be given back.

In North West Africa, the local government gave the property to Sicilian and his followers, so the Catholic bishop. And the Donatists appealed to Constantine to recognize them as the rightful owners of the property.

Does any of this sound familiar? On the grounds that they were the true Catholic Church in North West Africa. And Emperor Constantine was reluctant to decide the issue personally, but allowed various tribunals of bishops to investigate it.

And the decision finally went against the Donatists. And this provoked turmoil and religious violence among the always hot-headed Christians of North West Africa, which in turn prompted Constantine to order the African authorities to exile all Donatists and confiscate their buildings.

Constantine intended his decree to restore religious peace to the North West African Christian community, but it failed to persuade the Donatists to rejoin the Catholic, so-called the Catholic

Church network.

[34:33] Constantine acknowledged his failure and cancelled the decree, that for the next hundred years the Christians of the North West Africa would be equally and bitterly divided between Catholics and Donatists.

Constantine's intervention in the Donatist controversy meant that for the first time an emperor had used the power of the state to try to force dissenting Christians back into fellowship with the Catholic Church.

Here was the seed which soon blossomed forth into a full-blooded practice of religious persecution by a Christian state of all religious non-conformists, whether they were pagan or Christian.

Now, this is interesting because Peter Bottomley was in the Houses of Parliament just last week saying, if the Anglican Church can't agree to marry same-sex couples, Parliament was jolly well make them do this.

Now, it's interesting, isn't it, that the state trying to do what they think is right for the church, but it's not really none of their business doing that. And that was happening back then.

[35:44] Now then, let me find you what Augustine said about it. Augustine was deeply concerned for the visible unity of the church.

Augustine felt it was a wound in the body of Christ that the African Christian community was so divided. Well, I think we'd be with him that far, wouldn't we? Unity had to be restored.

Now, how did Augustine do it? He said, well, the way to restore unity is just to say, they're right, you're wrong. Unless you join them, you're not Christians.

I'm putting that very, very bluntly. Where are we? Augustine was convinced that the Catholic Church in northwest Africa was the true church because it was recognized by and in fellowship with the rest of the Catholic Church throughout the empire.

The Donatist Church, by contrast, was a local sect only found in northwest Africa. And Augustine thought that the refusal of the Donatists to belong to the Catholic Church was a sin against Christian love and an act of division which proved that the Donatists lacked the Holy Spirit.

[37:01] It's really interesting, this, isn't it? Because he's looking for an organizational unity and he's saying that this lot are in fellowship with all the rest of the world.

This is just a local North African sect. And then he reaches all sorts of negative conclusions about the Donatists.

And if you read about the Donatists, you might, if you look it up on the internet, you might find it filtered through Augustine's view of the Donatists. Because we might say, well, just like us independent Baptists, or Jess might say, just like us brethren assemblies, we don't have to fill in with the large organization.

So we might think they are heroes. But if you look in the literature, you'll probably find that they're portrayed as villains. But this idea of having to belong to the big, recognized, visible church is a really powerful idea.

And I have got, you always want to learn something when you come on a Sunday evening, don't you? So here is some more Latin for you. Extra, ecclesia, nulla, salus.

[38:23] Salus? Salus. Salus. Thank you very much. This means church. This means church, ecclesia. Extra means outside.

We still have that in English, don't we? Nulla, you'd imagine that means none. And salus is short for salus, salutis, salvation. Outside the church, there is no salvation.

This was said by Saint Cyprian of Carthage, a Christian bishop in the 3rd century.

Now then, what does this statement mean? Hmm. Well, exactly, exactly.

You could do it either way round. You could say, you could say this, if you're saved, you automatically belong to the church because you're part of the body of Christ and you are therefore, your natural habitat is to be in the community of the church.

[39:31] You've been given gifts. You to use those gifts in the body, in the church. You're part of Christ's body so you have a part to play and you should be functioning as a member of the church.

And if you're saved, that's the truth. And if that isn't the truth, you're not saved. So that's it. That's the church phone.

Let's just do this again. If you're saved, this is true of you. You're part of the church, which is the whole body of Christ.

And your natural habitat is to be in a community, functioning, being blessed, being a blessing. I think that's a great message to communicate, isn't it? It's like the Hebrews 10.25.

Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, but encourage one another. You know, Christians are not meant to be lone rangers. They're meant to be in a community and it's really sad and unhealthy if Christians are part of a community, Christian community, I mean.

[40:39] But, can you put it the other way around and say, unless you're part of the church, you can't be saved?

Can you put it the other way around? Can you say, unless you can say which church you belong to, you can't be saved? Or better still, putting it this way, to say, you know, we're the Anglican church. Well, we're not, but I mean, to say, we're the Anglican church. Unless you're Anglicans, you can't be saved. You wouldn't agree with that, would you? Or we say, well, we're Baptists. Unless you're a Baptist, you're signed up in a Baptist church, you can't be saved.

or brethren. Unless you belong to a brethren church, you can't be saved. But you can see how close we get to that, can't you?

You can see how close we get to that, but I think that was what he was aiming at. He was saying that these Donatists weren't part of the Catholic church and therefore there's something deeply unhealthy about them.

[41:47] and I mean, from what we're told, he goes as far as to say, if you have that sort of spirit, you don't have the Holy Spirit. And I suppose you're saying you're not a Christian.

So he sort of excommunicates all these people who don't want to belong to the Catholic church. Now, when you take that on through history, it becomes a really powerful and dangerous thing to say because, like Steve says, if you define the church as, you know, every Brethren Assembly or every Baptist Assembly or the Anglican Church or the Roman Catholic Church, then you really are in a you've got yourself completely in a knot, haven't you?

Pope Pius IX in his encyclical letter of 1863, which I'm sure you've all read, probably got it by your bedside table at this moment, said, well known is the Catholic teaching that no one can be saved outside the Catholic church.

This time he means the Roman Catholic Church. This refers to the belief that only those who are in full communion with the Catholic church and accept the teachings and the rulings of the church can be saved.

That was said in 1863. I believe, I'm not, I haven't followed this, but I believe since then official Catholic teaching says that we're separate, that if you're not a Catholic but you belong to some so-called church, that you could be described as separated Brethren.

[43:27] but, yeah, yeah, do, yeah. Could that be linked with their interpretation of the text where it talks about the keys of the kingdom and their interpretation of kind of apostolic succession and their sense of what the true church is and the apostolic succession coming from Peter, therefore anything outside of that isn't the true church.

And anything outside of that isn't true ministry. Yes. So I had quite a debate on a chat group with Anglicans who say, are you ordained? To which I say, what do you mean?

I had hands laid on me, I was recognised as an elder. They say, yeah, but are you ordained? I say, what does that mean then? It means that you have the keys of the kingdom. And do you remember Daniel saying that at Bishop Hammington, which was an Anglican church, he innocently said, all those who truly repent and believe are absolved of their sins and something like that, their sins are remitted, which is something in the prayer book.

And he was jumped on and somebody says, you can't say that because you're not ordained. You do not have the keys of the kingdom. You have to be ordained in the sense of having hands laid on you by an authorised bishop who had hands laid on him by an authorised bishop all the way back to Peter or whatever.

And if you're not ordained, you can't promise the promises of the gospel, which to me is crazy. It's like in Acts when they said, who are these people who haven't been for our university?

[45:15] Yeah, there's unlearned men. What is this seed picker saying? Yes. Yeah. Can we have the microphone? Thank you.

Thank you. The Greek Orthodox Church say that unless you are baptised into the Greek Orthodox Church, you're not a Christian and you will go to hell.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And they think they are the true church because they're Orthodox. Yeah. Well, it's a clue in the name, isn't there?

Extra Ecclesium Nullus Salus, except they probably say in Greek. You can't be saved outside the Greek Orthodox. Yeah. I was going to say, of course, it just reminds us that as Protestants, we tend to think that everybody was Catholic until the Reformation.

Of course, that isn't the case. There was the great schism in, was it, 1100 and something, wasn't it, when the Western Church, which became the Roman Catholic Church, split from the Eastern Church, which is now the Orthodox Church.

[46:18] Yes, yes, yes. So it didn't work even before the Reformation. Yes. The other objection, of course, is how could you possibly know if your ordination was valid? Because somewhere down that chain from St. Peter, there may have been a break.

Yeah. Somebody was a heretic or something and therefore couldn't. Yeah. It doesn't make any sense at all. Yeah. But it's fiercely contested by evangelical Anglicans.

So they were saying, well, what are you in your church then if you're not ordained? What authority do you have? And so I have the authority to preach the gospel.

But the authority to say, if you believe in Jesus, your sins will be forgiven, full stop, that authority is inherent in the message, isn't it?

It doesn't matter who says it, but the message, it's in the Word. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Well, I think, well, it's an Anglican method of argument which is partly to do with tradition.

[47:27] So if you say, is it in the Bible? Well, they say, no, it's not in the Bible, but you can extrapolate from the Bible. You can work it out from there. That the keys of the kingdom thing, so that was given to Peter and you've got to be, you've got to be similarly equipped with the keys of the kingdom.

And then they would say, how do you do that, will you, by being ordained in an Anglican church? And if you think about that, that's where a lot of discussion between Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism is about what is valid ministry.

So Roman Catholic priests are special people. Dick Lucas used to tell a joke about in a funeral place, it had three toilets, men, women, clergy, because clergy are a different group altogether from men or women.

Priests are special, you see. I forgot where I was going with that. I'm taken up by the amusement of that thought. Yeah. I mean, it's probably quite naive, but, you know, before we had the Bible and, you know, only the priests had the Bible and there was that big, huge thing about whether ordinary people could even read the Bible, you know, like Henry VIII around that era.

Yeah. You know, is this teaching just left over from that, do you think? And, you know, it's sort of there because, you know, ordinary people shouldn't read the Bible.

[49:02] Only us priests can do this and only we can do that. Do you think that's trickled down even though we can now read the Bible, but they're still holding on to some of those ideas that ordinary people can't?

Yeah. I think there's a mixture of things going on and if you ask me to understand how Anglicans think, I find it a complete mystery. But, Anglicans are divided, at least as I read it, are they priests? And others would say, well, it doesn't say you're a priest, you're a presbyter, you're an elder and you're not, you shouldn't think of yourself as being a priest. So one of the people said, could you pray for me?

I'm being priested, it's a verb, on next Saturday. And then other Anglicans jumped in and said, you're not a priest, you're a presbyter. It says it in the prayer book, you're a presbyter. So there's a confusion even there.

But I think it, once you start, well, no, I'm afraid I didn't. I didn't stop. I just read on down through the thread with increasing bafflement. I'm afraid I just read without stopping to pray sometimes.

[50:14] Well, a presbyter is but a priest writ large, isn't it?

That's what they said. The idea of a priest, I think, being that the priest can offer sacrifices and stands between people and God.

And the Protestant understanding would be we're all priests and the only priest who stands between us and God is Jesus. We don't need any other priests. And that idea of the priest controlling Scripture or withholding Scripture from the congregation, the Protestants might use the idea of priestcraft and mischievously and evilly getting between people and the Savior and controlling that and restricting people's access to Jesus.

that would be the side of Roman Catholicism that the Protestants would really object to. So, you don't have to be a priest. But, I mean, there are genuine things.

You know, when somebody stands up and preaches, you don't want just anybody doing that, do you? You want somebody who's recognized by the church in some sense. And, you don't just have anybody as elders who fancies to do it.

[51:43] There is some sort of structure within the church to recognize elders. Correct.

Yep. Correct. Well, I think that's, I think that's not what I did say. I think I said that, but not just anybody, they have to be recognized, invited, vetted, to some sense.

You know, if somebody stood up and said nonsense, we hope we wouldn't have invited them in the first place. So, there does have to be some structure and discipline. But, the way, the sort of ordination thing makes it rather mechanical.

It has to be done by a bishop and, of course, it doesn't work because some of these bishops don't believe the Bible anyway, do they? And, just because you've been ordained in the Anglican church, it doesn't guarantee nothing.

I mean, you have really people who don't believe the gospel ordained. so, that method of ordination, that method of sort of filtering and quality controlling ministry, it just doesn't work anyway.

[53:04] So, anyway, microphone. Just a story about that. When Ash, my son-in-law, was ordained, he had to have two lay sponsors.

Yeah. And the two lay sponsors, one of whom was me and the other one was a tutor who'd had it at Oak Hill who was actually an independent. And I said at the time, that makes no sense to me. Neither were some Anglicans. How can we be sponsoring you? But he seemed to think it was okay and the Anglican church didn't object and say, you know, can you prove to me when you were confirmed or whatever.

So, it just didn't make any sense to me at all. Yeah. It's a funny thing. I mean, let's just talk about lay. It comes from the Greek.

It comes from the Greek laos, which means people. So, it's used, lay is used to mean not priests.

[54:05] So, you get lay and clergy in the Anglican church and in the Roman Catholic church. But I would say that elders are part of the people, aren't they?

So, we're all part of the laos, the people of God. So, there's quite a few things going on here and I think this is an interesting discussion. It's sort of enlightening, isn't it?

It helps us to value, I don't mean offence to Anglican brothers, but I think it helps us to value the understanding that independent churches have.

I just want to backtrack a bit and say, please don't feel that I'm getting at evangelical Anglicans. have a very high regard for them and, you know, in many ways want to fight the same battles as they do.

But there are differences in understanding and, in particular, the bit that I wanted us to think of, this is an expression of Augustine's doctrine of the church and we also saw a description of Augustine's doctrine of grace.

[55:27] And in the Reformation, those two come into conflict, don't they? Is the Roman Catholic Church really a church if they don't preach the gospel?

That was the sort of Reformation question, wasn't it? If they sell indulgences, that was what Luther objected to, and say you'd be let out of purgatory if you pay this amount of money.

Can a genuine church say that? Is that really what we believe? Aren't we justified by faith? That was Martin Luther's big push, wasn't it?

And then this whole sort of, where the muddled up Catholic Church church. And the, so some of these people are genuine believers, of course, but after the Reformation, they have to decide, and you get what's left in Roman Catholicism as being hardened against the gospel to a large extent. And the people who do believe the gospel are either forced out, or come out of their own accord, and we get this split between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism.

[56:41] Can I just, this is a sort of sideline, but it's given our discussions about differences between Anglicans and independents, I do think, not necessarily now, but I do think as a church, if you think about the Sussex Gospel Partnership, which has been doing wonderful work over a number of years, and has both Anglicans and independents, I do think we should be really praying about this appointment of the new director.

Thank you very much, the new director of the Sussex Gospel Partnership. I thought you were going to say we should be praying for our Anglican brothers with the living in love and faith debates, which also we should be praying for.

I was thinking this appointment of a director for the Gospel Partnership is a really key appointment for its future.

And who could fill Nick's shoes because he did such a wonderful job? I didn't say that, but yes, quite. Okay, shall we stop? Because I don't want to trespass upon people's time.

You need the microphone. The condition of asking a question is you need the microphone. And I shall ask... Yes, that's right. Nulla microphone. I'll just say, Jerome, could you prepare your mind to close in prayer for us in a moment, please?

[58:16] So did the Donatists have any unusual... Did the Donatists have any unusual theology or beliefs that apart from their anger at the guy that burnt the Bible?

That's a very good question. And I suspect the answer is maybe they did. Okay. So I'm not going to try and paint them as shining examples and heroes.

But they weren't entirely... Yeah. There's probably a bit of both. Let's put it that way. You know, because it seems that all the splits started and it's never stopped really, has it, really, since then? Yeah. Okay. On the whole, though, they were... They believed in a pure church, didn't they? Yeah. and without going into too much detail, I believe that on this point Augustine was wrong because he...

They didn't like the preachers that are compromised. Yeah. and that was their main argument why they were separate. But Augustine argued, I think, falsely to say, well, the church is a mix.

[59:41] Yeah. You know, he referred to the parable of the... The wheat and the tares. The wheat and the tares. Yes. But I think he was wrong because that got nothing to do with the leaders. Yeah. And there are other scriptures that, you know, teach us, you know, what we should believe about leaders.

Microphone. Wasn't it many years after, you know, that event that the Donatys still wanted to be separate? So, you know, were they holding a grudge?

I don't know. I don't know. I think Jack's right. The idea of seeking a pure church, insofar as you can get that on earth, they were right on that.

And Augustine was wrong. So, with the wheat and the tares, where there's a mixture, in the parable, it says, Jesus explains, the field is the world. But he, and Augustine said, the field is the church.

And the church is full of mixture, and that's just the way it is. But I would say, and the New Testament says, okay, that might have been the case in Old Testament Israel, that there was a mixture of people.

[60:53] They were fully paid up, circumcised Jews who were not circumcised in the heart, and that's just the way it was. But you're not supposed to have baptized Christians for whom that is not a reality, and that affects sort of infant baptism then, because with infant baptism, you know you're baptizing people who have not yet professed faith.

So you're bound to have a mixed church. So I mean the pure church people would tend to be Baptists and say you need to have repentance and faith to belong to the church.

I'm getting into further deep water now, but does that make some sort of sense? Yeah. Yeah, well you can overdo it, can't you? Do you really have a pure church?

I mean there's always fuzzy edges, but the principle being that the people who are in the church have got a credible profession of faith. They have said I'm converted and they've said it in such a way you think yeah I think that's right, I think that's right, best we can tell.

Jerome's all ready to close in prayer so please carry on. Heavenly Father we thank you so much for what we've been considering this evening in many ways it saddens us Lord when we hear of schisms and splits and disunity in the church and we remember Father what your son has said that the glory that you have given me I have given to them that they may be one even as we are one I in them and you in me that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you love me yet Father we do recognize that we cannot just seek unity for unity's sake Lord it has to be grounded and based on truth as well as love Lord and help us as we consider how to work out church life who we are and our unity with other churches and other believers

[63:08] Lord that we learn to discern those issues that are primary issues Lord gospel issues and those that may be secondary or tertiary issues Father and Lord help us to be one and help us Lord as we consider and meditate upon history that that would guide and inform us to move forward as your people Lord we thank you for this day thank you for what we learned this morning and help us to remember as we go into this week our identity as elect exiles help us not to forget that this world is not where we truly belong that we are passing through and help us to set our gaze on the heavenly eternal kingdom and riches that you have set before us be with us all as we go into this week we ask and we just commit all this for Jesus sake Amen Amen