When Death Lies Behind Us

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[0:00] Father, we give you thanks and praise that you have created us, that you sustain us, that you are sovereign over the entire universe, that you will bring all things to their proper end according to your direction and your command and your good and perfect will.

We confess before you, Father, that we have a hard time remembering and acting as if we are creatures with a creator. We ask, Father, that you would gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us so that your word might come deeply into our lives, that we might know that you are God, that we are your creature, that we are redeemed and reconciled to you by Jesus, and that we might live free and whole for your glory in Jesus.
And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. So some of you might be a tiny bit gobsmacked that it seems as if the Bible teaches that if you're baptized, you go right away to heaven.
You know, it's very funny, even in, you know, there's often a bit of a misconception, you know, maybe it's not a misconception, but often we talk as if Baptists and Pentecostal and Brethren types really know the Bible, and Anglican types don't know the Bible, but it's surprising how often people are, I can remember the first time somebody who believes that if you're baptized, you go right away to heaven, and they showed me this verse in the Bible, and I, like, when they told me that it was a Bible idea that if you're baptized, you go to heaven, I didn't believe them.
And then when they showed me the verse, I was gobsmacked, as the Irish say, or used to say, maybe they still do, it just completely and utterly surprised me. In fact, for many of us, it's such a surprise that we actually almost don't hear the rest of the text, and the actual thing that most of the text is interested in, because it just sounds like good grief, if you get baptized, you go to heaven.
[2:01] Is that what it says? And this, by the way, is a common belief by many people. I'm not sure if it's, somebody asked me if it was official Catholic dogma, and I never looked it up to see if it was official Catholic dogma.

I know that in the church, the denomination I used to be part of, that many clergy in the Anglican Church of Canada believed that if you're baptized, you go to heaven. And, in fact, I remember I was in one meeting with other clergy, and they were talking about this, and they were also talking about the fact that they didn't want to just have people come to have their children baptized who'd never been to church.
And I said to them, well, if you think that if baptism means to go to heaven, like, why would you stop, why wouldn't you baptize every child? And, in fact, actually, if you really believe that, why wouldn't you at the Red Blacks game get, like, a water plane, and as you fly over it, pour out the water on the crowd, saying, I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, because you're all going to go to heaven.
Like, why wouldn't you do that if that's true? I don't know if they didn't really have an answer. I thought they had some type of answer, because they're clergy, they all have lots of degrees, and they gave me some type of an answer, and I wasn't going to pursue it.
But let's look at the text. Is that what the Bible says? Does the Bible teach that if you're baptized, you go to heaven? So the text is Romans chapter 6, and I think for a crowd like us, we've got to look at this text before we actually see what it is that Romans 6 is really concerned about.
[3:29] And it goes like this, Romans chapter 6, verses 1 to 4. And I'll just read the first and the other verses around it, and if you listen to it more carefully, you'll see that at least at first glance, that it maybe does seem to teach this.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means. How can we who die to sin still live in it?

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Now we get to the interesting part. Well, it's all interesting, but now you know what I mean. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
So, Andrew, if you could put up the first point. There we go. There you go, my first point. The Bible does not teach that being baptized means you go to heaven.
The Bible does not teach that being baptized means you go to heaven. And there's two reasons for this, and it's not just because I don't like it or I don't agree with it or I'm an evangelical and therefore it can't be true or anything like that.
[4:42] There's actually, from a literary point of view and a text point of view, there's two reasons why that isn't what this text means. And the first one is if you just actually read Romans 1 up until this part.

So, every week in the bulletin, I have a little, in the bulletin, I have a section. I think I've, there it is. And in the bulletin, there's a separate page. And I always, on one side of the page, Shirley types out two things. One's called Growing in Grace, and the other one's called Going Deeper.
And in Going Deeper, sometimes people ask me, George, why don't you give lots, like some people when they preach, you know, they're all saying, look up Malachi, look at this, look at this, look at this, look at this. And you spend the whole sermon like racing around the Bible, looking at like a whole pile of different texts.
Why do I not do that? Well, I, part of the reason is I don't, I think we need to actually sort of camp in a Bible text and try to dwell in it. So, usually what I do is I put other background texts, interesting things, in the part called Going Deeper.
[5:51] And it's written in a way so that you could do it as a small group Bible study, or you could just do it with another person, or you could do it by yourself. So, there's usually a question that says, getting to know me.

Then there's a section, getting into the Bible, and then getting real. And in the getting into the Bible, I often provide that other type of context, some of the other verses you can look at. And so, the way the book of Romans is written, because it's a book, is that I think it's the first seven verses, Paul just sort of says the sort of normal types of greetings and gives a bit of an outline about some of the things he's going to, like who he is.
And then, I think it's verses 8 to 15. He just goes a little bit more, you know, I'm traveling here, I'm traveling there, hope to see you soon, have the spare guest room ready. And then, as those of you who have been here other weeks, in verses 16 and 17, he does something which is almost like a university abstract today.
In verses 16 and 17, he gives in an abstract, like in a tiny little compressed form, what he's going to spend the rest of the book explaining. And then in chapter 1, verse 18 to chapter 320, if we were using modern business language, he sells the problem.
Right? That's often what business people do, it's often what consultants do, they sell the problem. And if you don't understand that there's a problem, you're not interested in solutions, so often you have to sell the problem.
[7:12] And that's what Paul does. From 118 to 320, he sells the problem. And then from 321, the rest of the book, he shows how the gospel is the answer to the problem.

So if you just, a bit of a long aside, but if you follow this going deeper, and just as an exercise, you just start reading in chapter 1, verse 1, up until chapter 5 at the end.
And maybe if you print out the Bible text on paper, and just underline every single time it says that you need to have faith, or you need to believe, to receive the gospel.
And I actually, in going deeper, I was going to start to write that. But I stopped, because it's virtually every second verse. Like, it must be 40 or 50 times before you get to chapter 6, that Paul says, you need to have faith to receive what God does for you in Jesus.
You need to have faith, you need to believe. He says, it must be, I didn't count it, it would have been too long just to keep counting it. That's why I just ask you just to read it, and mark it every time. And so just purely from a literary point of view, it makes no sense from a literary point of view to think that for five chapters, 40 or 50 times, or 30 times, he'd say you have to have faith, and then all of a sudden, I don't know, boom, something happens to his head, and he just says, no, no, you don't have to have faith, you just have to be baptized.

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[8:38] It makes no sense, especially if, and I didn't do this in the going deeper, if you then immediately go and look at all the times afterwards, and see that once again, it's like all the time, he's saying you have to have the faith in Jesus, faith in Jesus, faith in Jesus.

So it can't, baptism can't mean, those two verses can't mean that if you just have somebody dunk you or pour water over your head, that automatically you go to heaven.
It can't be what it means. The second thing is actually, if you look at the text very carefully, and look again at verse three. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized, these screens are really close this week, I'm going to fall off the stage.
Maybe people don't like me wondering. I was in a philosophy class once, this is a really cruel thing, and I discovered at the end of the term that the girls in the class had all gotten together, it was a small class, this is like 100 million years ago when you had classes like of 30, and they'd all gotten together because they'd noticed that the professor always wore the exact same sweater.
He did a lot of other things that were very irritating. So what they did, just like as an experiment, is that whenever he stood at one part of the room, they'd all look up and pay attention, and whenever he stood at another part of the room, they'd all look like they weren't paying attention, and by the end of the term, they'd start to laugh at the end of the class because he'd spent almost the entire class at the spot where they'd pay attention, the girls would pay attention.
[10:05] And anyway, because I asked them once why they were all laughing every time they left from this boring philosophy class, and that's because they were doing a psychology experiment on the professor. Anyway, I don't know if that's what's happening here.

I don't want George wandering anymore. We'll just keep moving the screens farther and farther and farther. Anyway, sorry, I've lost my place. Oh, yes, okay, so chapter 6, verse 3.
I don't know if you noticed it, but look at it again carefully. Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into water... No, it doesn't say in water. It doesn't mention water at all. It says baptized into Christ Jesus and baptized into his death and baptism into death.
It doesn't talk about water. And so there's this another meaning. There's like, it's part of the basic fundamental meaning of the word baptized, which is translated as baptized, that in other literature, it can mean, so, you know, it's not just a Christian word, it's a Greek word.
And in the Greek word, it puts the full in full immersion because it's how you refer to some, a ship that sunk or a person that drowned.
[11:21] And as I said, that really puts full in full immersion. That if you have the ship that's up on the top and it's floating and then it sinks, and now not only is it underneath or in the water, but the water is completely in it.

A person who drowns, the water is now in their lungs and everything like that. The water enters into their body. It's being immersed in water to the point of death. Fully immersed.
And so, Andrew, if you could put the second point up, here's what the Bible is saying. When I put my faith in Jesus, I am immersed to the point of death in Jesus and his death.
When I put my faith in Jesus, I am immersed to the point of death in Jesus and his death. That's what it's saying here.
It's a very, very, and I'm going to explain to you in a moment why this is such an important type of image and why it's going to be important to understand the question that the text is primarily interested in.
[12:31] And I'm going to say this thing. Andrew, if you could put the A up. I'm going to say this over and over again. And it's going to be this week and next week because chapter 6 is really posing us a question.

How shall we then live when death lies behind us and resurrection waits before us? How shall we then live when death lies behind us and resurrection waits before us?
Now, some of you might say, okay, George, well, that's very interesting, but you've actually made it worse because it seems as if the Bible has, Paul has asked a really good question.
It's a question that I have. Is that, isn't, if, if, George, are you saying that if, like all these other weeks that you've been talking, you seem to talk as if, God doesn't care about your good works.
Your good works don't add, in a sense, any value to you before God. That we all deserve, we are already separate from God and we deserve to be separate from God and have, you know, his, you know, his punishment upon us.

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[13:39] And you keep saying every week that if you put your faith and trust in Jesus, then you are made right with God. And you're made right with God because God makes you right, not because of anything you do.

And doesn't that, George, if that's true, doesn't that lead to moral anarchy? Like, if that's true, then why do you do good at all?
Like, why don't you just do evil all the time? I, you know, two examples of this. This is an imaginary question. I don't know, maybe eight or nine or ten years ago, I bumped into a fellow that I had gone to, that had gone to the same Baptist church in Ottawa that I had gone to when I was a teenager. And, you know, I bumped into him and we got into a brief conversation and I sort of asked him if he still went to the church. He said, no, I don't go to church, I go to bars. And, you know, and then he, you know, talked a little bit about his life and he's having a lot of fun and all that type of stuff.
And then he said to me, George, you know, the thing I really got out of my Baptist background is I'm just going to really live a really, really fun life and then I just know that like just before I die, I'm just going to say, Jesus, can you be my Savior and my Lord and I get to go to heaven?
[14:54] Like, he told me this. That's what he said with a completely straight face. I don't know him well enough to know if he was joking or whatever, but that was his completely straight face that I learned, I got the different lesson from everybody else in the Baptist church.

I think this is a spectacular thing. I believe the Bible. And I'm just going to say the sinner's prayer as close to death as I possibly can and then I go to heaven. And in the meantime, I get to go to bars. Have lots of fun. Sleep with different women. You know, make lots of money. Not have to give any of it away. In the Anglican Church of Canada, when I was still part of it, I was involved in a controversy as to whether the church should say that God blesses same-sex marriages.
And I'm not going to get into that topic other than to say that one person in a public forum said that people like me, he didn't understand people like me because he said that according to the logic of people like, he didn't say George, he used another word for a group that I was part of.
He said, according to their logic, God just forgives all your sins. So even if they view it as sinful, like, why does it matter?
[16:10] Because of grace and you put your faith in Jesus, you just go to heaven. So like, why are they worked up about it? They should just accept it. Move on with life according to their logic.

So is it the case that if you put your faith in Jesus and God is the one that makes you right with himself and it's not your good works, it's not going to church, it's not knowing the creed, it's not doing anything like that, that you automatically just go to heaven.
And if that's the case, why bother doing anything good? That's a real question for some people. And if you look again, that's exactly the question that the Bible asks.
Paul had raised the question very briefly in chapter 3. It's one of the ways he writes the book, but now he's actually going to look at it in some greater depth because he realizes that it's an easy thing, especially because we are more used to religion and spirituality, which basically always tells us that the good things matter, that it's doing good things, whatever it is.
You know, if you're a Roman Catholic, maybe it's saying the rosary. You know, if you're an old-style traditional Anglican and it's using the book of common prayer. You know, if it's, you know, it's going to church, it's tithing, it's, I don't know, singing praise songs if you're Pentecostal.
[17:23] I don't know. You know, and if you're a Buddhist, it's this. If you're a Muslim, it's this. But whatever it is, if it's your own spiritual religion, I don't know, like, you know, maybe if, you know, spirituality of Bridgehead, it's voting green and not liking Harper.

Like, whatever it is, if you do the right things, you're going to end up in heaven. And the Bible is completely and utterly contrary to that and so it's very natural for us that are accustomed to religion and spirituality to think that the Bible actually doesn't make any sense and that it will lead to people living immoral lives.
Look again at what it says in verses 1 to 4. What shall we say then? He's following up on, you know, where grace abounded, where sin abounded, grace abounded even more.
Like, he's just finished giving a powerful explanation about how grace leads to you being able to be in God, so that God makes you right. Verse 1 of chapter 6.
What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? Are we to sleep with as many women as we can, make as much money as we can, give away as little as we can, get drunk as much as we can, and just say the sinner's prayer one minute, if you time it really well before you

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lose consciousness and then die, and then you go to heaven?
[18:42] So the quick answer is, by no means. If you don't get anything else, in fact, in the original Greek, it's very infat. It's like, no way, completely wrong, got it wrong, wrong.

That's the quick answer. And then you might say, okay, okay, come on, you know, are you just saying that because, in fact, this is a regular feature of most human beings are better than their philosophy.
I mean, it's one of the problems that you have, like if you witness to somebody who's, you know, maybe taken a more Hindu point of worldview, like according to a more Hindu worldview, at the end of the day, everything just becomes one.
And a Hindu and a Buddhist worldview, like the perception of difference is actually part of the problem. At the end of the day, everything becomes one. At the end of the day, there's ultimately no distinction between good and evil.
But fortunately, Buddhists and Hindus don't live that way. Like in Muslim doctrine, it's written on the baby as they're born, whether or not they're going to go to heaven or not, regardless of what they end up doing with their life.
[19:51] But fortunately, most Muslims don't live like that. And, you know, we can argue with relativists that say that all morality is relative and we can try to give them examples of, okay, how about raping babies or how about Auschwitz?

And they can maybe try to give some convoluted answers to why that just only appears to be evil to you and it's not really evil. But the fact the matter is is that many people who are moral relativists, you would love to have them as your neighbors.
And so the question is, is that what's going on here in the Bible? That you can't just say, no way, because, you know, the fact that the logic of the gospel seems to imply that you can live a completely and utterly immoral life and, George, are you just, you know, basically say, no way, and then you give some blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, woof, woof, woof, and then, you know, but really it's just fortunately to our neighbors we don't live as bad as our doctrine encourages us to live.
Is it just the same? So in verse 2 he says, by no way, by no means. And then, in a nutshell, he's going to give what he's going to unfold.
How can we who died to sin still live in it? How can we who died to sin still live in it?
[21:11] Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, we are immersed in Jesus almost to the point of death.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death. That's this image of immersion. Which, by the way, when we say the Nicene Creed and we say, I believe, in one baptism for the remission of sins, it's thinking of Romans 6.3.
I've had so many Baptist and Pentecostal types not like that part of the creed because they think it teaches that baptism saves you. The creed is thinking of Romans 6.3.
That we are to be, when we come to faith in Jesus, and I'm going to explain it more in a moment, it's as if we're completely and utterly immersed in Jesus and his death.
And it's Jesus and his death for us that leads to a remission of sins and our salvation. It's referring to Romans 6.3. That's what the creed's referring to. Verse 4, we were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.
[22:36] Now, here I'm going to have to do something. Actually, Andrew, could you put up the third point for me, please? Paul here is developing an analogy that he used last week that is just before this in chapter 5, and I preached on this last week.

And if this was a university lecture, I'd say, okay, students, if you just look at your notes that you took last week, you can sort of understand covenant head because I explained it last week. This is in a university class or a high school class or an elementary school class or kindergarten class or anything like that.
And so it's a bit of an awkward point here. But here's the third point. When Jesus becomes my covenant head, I am with him as he enters death and dies.
That's the image and the logic behind this. It's what, just in chapter 5 before this, it's what Paul develops. That how we go from Adam being our covenant head to Jesus being our covenant head.

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So I'm just going to hint at something, but if you're confused by this, you can go online and you can listen to last week's sermon in my attempt to explain this idea which is foreign to Canadians but is deeply biblical.
[23:52] And here he's saying when Jesus becomes my covenant head, I am with him as he enters death and dies. And it's, see one of the things that's going on in a lot of this text is that Paul understands, he's going to try to explain what salvation means if we understand what it means that there really is a God that does exist, who's really our creator, and that we are actually creatures.

And if you understand that we're actually creatures, not gods, that we're creatures with a creator, then many things, even spiritual disciplines and other things flow from the fact, the nature of what it means to be human.
It's funny that in our culture we often, Canadian culture, the way it views Christianity is as if the Christian faith is somehow contrary to nature. It's an arbitrariness against what's nature.
nature, but it's contrary to the fall and to evil, but it's actually rooted in a deep, wise perception of what it means to be human, what it means to be a creature who has a creator.
And so the idea that was developed last week, that you can go and listen to how I explain it and maybe argue for why it's a reasonable and insightful and wise idea, is that this idea that when Adam sinned by doing what he shouldn't do, when he decided that he wanted to be like God, and so as a way to become like God, he directly disobeyed God.
[25:25] And that part of what it means to be human is that I and every other human being, in a sense, as Adam did that act of disobedience and rebellion, I was doing it too, and so were you.

And I explained that as to why that might be reasonable and how it might make sense. I talked about that last week. But the big thing that came out of that is that Paul develops this explanation to bring home something very important to Christians.
In chapter 3, verse 21, up until the first half of chapter 5, most of the images of what, an explanation for what Jesus does for us on the cross, is our negative images or images of removal.
So it's that when Jesus dies on the cross, the bad things that we've done are taken away, they're dealt with. That when Jesus dies for us on the cross, the debt that we owe God and the created order is removed.
That when God, Jesus dies on the cross, in a sense, the legal punishment that awaits us is removed. When Jesus dies on the cross, the fact that we are, in a sense, slaves, that status is removed.
[26:46] And there's a whole range of different images trying to capture what Jesus does on the cross to remove things. But if you think about it for a second, and this is actually really, really important to living the Christian life, negative images or removal images, if that's all that Jesus does for us on the cross, it actually creates a sense of anxiety within us.

Maybe not at first, but as that solely having images of removal, if that's all we hear, it creates anxiety. To give you an illustration, maybe many of you have watched movies where somebody gets out of jail, and what often happens in some of them, they have their drunken, drug-smoking buddy pick them up in a ratty old van or car.
But apart from those types of things, you come out of jail, you've dealt with your, you've paid your penalty, and you come out of jail, and all you have is the clothes on your back, a few bucks in your pocket, you have no family, no friends, no job, no money, no prospects, but your debt's taken away.
Well, that's not very helpful. And in many movies, that's often then how the bad guy, or the guy who's going out of jail, gets involved in crime again, right? Because he wants to have buddies, he wants to have some money, and he wants to be able to live his life.
And so if all we hear are images of things being removed, it's a little bit like, get out of jail, and then nothing. And so our image of the Christian life is, okay, every week I've done more bad things, so I come to church and I confess my sins because they can all be taken away.
[28:26] Oh, dang, I did more bad things than last week. I have to come to church, all my sins are taken away. And Paul uses this very powerful image of a covenant head that in a sense the way human beings actually are is that there is a connection between human beings.

On one hand it's at a DNA level, but it's more than that, that there's an actual connection between human beings, and that human beings have a covenant head. And Adam, when Adam sinned, it was as if I sinned.

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And Paul then flips that on its head and says that God provides a true and greater Adam. Adam was but a type. Jesus is that which the type pointed to.
And Jesus lived a life, rather than Adam desiring to be like God, and in other words to try to exalt himself and to be able to look down his nose at other people and look down his nose at God, that Jesus practiced the complete opposite trajectory.
That Jesus left his unending love of the Father and him, and he set aside his glory and divine prerogatives and his splendor and his power as God. He left all those things aside, but still remaining God.
[29:47] He took into himself our human nature. He entered into Mary's womb. He was born in a lower working class home of the people who were not the imperial force, but a subject people in a remote part of the Roman empire, and he lived and he had to nurse.

The hands that formed the stars couldn't reach his mother's nose. And he takes the path of lowliness, and he lives amongst us, and he lives a sinless life, and he lives a life that's good, that good teaching, wise teaching, and kind, and compassionate, as we just saw in the gospel story in John 6, and that he performs miracles, and his descent of lowliness continues even to the point of being willing to enter death, and take upon himself the wrath that is due us, and the debt that we can't pay, and the penalty that we can't pay, and the punishment that we can't pay, and he takes all of that upon himself, and he becomes even lower still because you can't be poorer than dead.
you can't be poorer than dead, and he enters into death, and then he rises from the dead, and what Paul develops is that the same sense that when Adam took the fruit and rebelled against God, in a sense I did, when I by faith recognize my need for rescue and call out for the true and greater Adam to be my covenant head, that somehow by the mystery of what it means to be human, and the mystery of God's grace, Jesus' obedience is my obedience, and all the way through here Paul is going to develop and say, Jesus' life is now your life, Jesus' freedom is your freedom, Jesus' standing with God is your standing with God, that the cross is not just about removal, but it is about removal, it's also about bestowal of giving, and so
Paul is saying here, when Jesus becomes my covenant head, I am with him as he enters death and dies, Andrew, if you could put up A again, how shall we then live when death lies behind us and resurrection waits before us?
How shall we then live when death lies behind us and resurrection waits before us? Some of you might say, George, doesn't this still actually lead to moral anarchy?
[32:37] Haven't you actually just made it worse? Haven't you actually just made it worse? if heaven's guaranteed?

Let's go back to the friend that I bumped into some ten years ago. We'll call him Bob. So Bob had this idea from reading the Bible that you know, gosh, don't want to do that, don't want to do that, don't want to do that, don't want to do that, don't want to do that.
This is boring, this is stupid, this is embarrassing, this is uncomfortable, but oh, I like this bit that if I just, in Romans 10, 9 and 10, that if I just say the sinner's prayer, I go to heaven.
I like that part. Now, here's the thing about this. Has Bob actually understood the gospel? Paul would say no.
Paul would say that all that Bob has done is that Bob is still encaptured, still in love with being like God.
[33:47] Only he thinks he's found a loophole so that God will guarantee him heaven. And in a sense, in the back of his mind, imagine for a second that you want to fly somewhere in a year, and then for some weird reason, if you book your ticket right now, a year in advance, it's going to cost you $100,000 for the ticket.

But somebody like Bob comes up beside you and said, George, if you just buy the ticket one minute before the plane takes off, it only costs you $2,000, a toonie.
Only a Reuben a fool pays $100,000 when you can buy the ticket a minute before the end and get on the plane for a toonie. And that's all that Bob thinks he's done.
He is still completely and utterly wanting to be like Adam, wanting to be like God, wanting to be able to determine what's right and wrong, wanting to do what he, like he pleases, and he just actually now thinks he's figured out a way to have God serve him and gives him what he wants.
And that's all that Bob has done. But you see, what you're going to see here in the rest of the text is flowing from this idea that when Jesus becomes my covenant head, that in a sense I become, Adam is my covenant head just by being born.

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[35:10] But Jesus becomes my covenant head when I ask Jesus to become my Savior and my Lord. Andrew, if you could put up the next point please. Every Christian is a refugee.

Every Christian is a refugee. Every Christian is a refugee. refugee. If you look at the refugee crisis, you're seeing conversion.
In a sense, it's an image of conversion. But this idea of Jesus becoming my covenant head in conversion, I am taken from, I want to be a God land, and don't get too excited, you Elvis fans, and am brought as a refugee to be a citizen in God's grace land.
First I said grace land and I thought that might be too weird for the Elvis fans in the room. So, in conversion, I am taken from, I want to be a God land, and am brought as a refugee to be a citizen in God's grace land.
Since the Bible says that every human being we meet has one of two passports, a passport that says you're a citizen of, I am, sorry, I've lost my place, I want to be a God land, or a passport that says God's grace land.
[36:33] Every human being has one of those two passports. None of us are born into God's grace land. We enter it when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, and we enter it as a refugee.

As a refugee. I know it's a switching imagery a little bit, but if you have any of you who have seen World War Z, and I hope this isn't a spoiler alert for those of you who have, a spoiler alert for those of you who haven't seen it, close your ears, but in World War Z, as the zombie infection spreads, how is it that Brad Pitt and his wife and kids, they become like refugees, the helicopter plucks them off the top of the building, right?
Zombies come. In a sense, that's an image of conversion. Powerless against what's going on. Call for help, and you're rescued. So if you understand that every single Christian is a refugee, that we're a refugee from the land where I want to be like God, and we're now citizens of God's grace land, then the rest of this text makes sense.
Because, you know, one of the problems that people have often when they come to a country as a refugee is, I mean, they don't speak the language of the new land often.
And they don't know the laws, and they don't know the customs, and it's very easy for them to still interpret things from the country that they came from. It might be easy if they see a member of our Canadian Armed Forces coming to them.
[38:15] Well, if you're in Syria and you see a member of Assad's army coming from you, you don't, you want to hide from the soldier, and it must puzzle them that Canadians don't run when they see a soldier coming.

Or maybe if the police officer is just going to either try to rob you or get a bribe from you, you see a police officer, you expect that that's what's going to happen. You're still living within the mindset and the expectations of your former land, and you haven't learned the culture and the laws and the customs of your new land.
And so conversion is on one hand when you are plucked and become a refugee and Christ rescues you, and sanctification is learning that you live in a new land now with a new king, with new best practices, and new values, and new longings, and new hopes, and you're trying to learn what it means to live in this new land.
And if you listen to that from that perspective, listen to how the rest of chapter 6 sounds beginning at verse 5. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.
Our hope isn't that we will somehow become like God's, but that we will share in Jesus' resurrection, and that's a certain hope for a Christian. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.
[39:52] Sin here is pictured as that. Sin is, I want to be God land, and that is actually a form of slavery. And what happens to Jesus isn't that Jesus enters into death and then returns to this side of death only to have to die again, so that sin, which causes death, and death itself is always over us and looming over us, is that we believe that when Jesus truly historically died, he enters death, but he truly historically comes out on the other side of death, having defeated death, not resuscitated, but resurrected.

And he has defeated death, and he has defeated that which has caused death, which is sin. He stands on the far side of death in resurrection, and that is the Christian's certain hope.

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hope. That is the Christian's certain hope. Not because we believe in butterflies, or we believe in spring, and crocuses, but because we believe that Jesus really died and really rose again, and that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, he becomes our covenant head, and his triumph over death somehow becomes ours, and that is what our future is in Christ.
In body of sin, he's just sitting in a little idea that's going to talk about more in the rest of chapter 6 and chapter 7 about moral struggle, but it doesn't mean that the body's evil. And then verse 7, for one who has died has been set free from sin.
In other words, sin, which is viewed as a land, you're free from it. You're a refugee from there. You no longer live in Syria. Syria. You've been set free from Syria.
[41:36] You've been set free from ISIS. Now, if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We have a new country with a new king.

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died, he died to sin once for all.
But the life he lives, he lives to God. This is my life. This is my death. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.
Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions. Every Christian in conversion is a refugee taken from I want to be God land and brought as a refugee to be a citizen in God's grace land.
Andrew, if you could put up the A. How shall we then live when death lies behind us and resurrection waits before us? How shall we then live day by day when death lies behind us and resurrection waits before us?
[42:50] My time is gone. I'll just very briefly, I have to say, the part that's really brought, been home to me, on my very first day of looking at sex on Monday, I had this instant image of verse 13 and it's been an image which has transformed my week.

It's an image that's transformed my week. And it's a second way of understanding why it is that when we have Jesus as our covenant head that it doesn't lead to moral anarchy.
And it's an image as if you show up at a job site. Listen to what it says in verse 13 and 14. It might not jump out at you at first, but here, listen to verse 13. Do not present your members, and the word members can also be translated as weapons or tools.
It could be said, do not present your tools or your weapons to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, refugees, and your tools or weapons to God as tools or instruments or weapons for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law, but under grace. Andrew, if you could put up the point, every day, every human being shows up at a job site.
[44:11] The Bible text, and I'm asking you, is whose job site did you show up at this morning? Whose job site do you show up to every day? That's the image here behind it.

And it's, it means that whether, you know, whether you're a retired person, whether you're same-sex attracted, whether you've never had same-sex attraction issues, whether you, whether you're very rich, whether you're very poor, whether you're well-educated, whether you're, you know, Asian or African or European or Middle Eastern, Native American, you know, Inuit, it doesn't matter. Every single human being, in a sense, they wake up and they report to a job site. And that's the image. And you can just sort of picture, I'm not very handy.
Some of you have heard before that when I try to do something in my house, handy-wise, the house value of every house in the street goes down because I'm so completely incompetent with things like that. But if you could just imagine, you know, those working men or women with the tool belts and all the stuff, all the tools fitting around and their basket, one hand, there's their basket of other tools, the other hand, there's their big basket, their big cooler for their lunch, and they trudge over to the job site.
In a sense, the Bible says every day you show up at a job site, some job site. You show up at a place, and that place is the place that helps you to understand, like, what it means to be human and what gives worth to you and what gives value to you and what you want to accomplish and how you understand your day, and every human being shows up at a job site, and you can actually visualize it.
[45:47] And so the question is, do you show up at a job site that is all devoted to your ego? Do you show up at a job site devoted to maybe you have the idols of Eros and Aphrodite, that what really motivates you and gives you meaning is some involvement with sexual fantasies.

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Maybe what you do is you're actually worshiping mammon, that it's money that gives you your worth and your value. Maybe it's educational attainment, the fact that you're really, really smart, and every day it's your smartness and your confidence that gives you value, a sense of worth, a sense of identity, a sense of purpose.
Is it just that you just want to be the best, that you want to be over everybody? Is it your anger? Is it your wounds? Is it your addiction to risk? But you show up every day when you wake up and you get out of bed and you put on your tool belt and you show up to work at a job site.
And the problem for us as Christians, we keep showing up at the wrong job site. Jesus is my covenant head.
I have a new CEO. I have a new foreman. And this company has a different set of values. They have a different set of best practices. They have a different type of building that they're trying to build.
[47:07] They have a different way of understanding how you work. And so Jesus is saying that every day you wake up, you go to a job site. Realize that you now are in Jesus, that you are now in grace land.

So take your strength and your mind and your creativity and your educational attainment and your musical ability and your finances and take all that your sexuality and put that all in a sense on your tool belt and show up at Jesus' job site.
For him to be your foreman and to show how to build and how to bless the city and how to bless the world and how to bless where you work and how to bless your church and how to bless your family. Stop showing up at the wrong job site. That's stuck with me. That image has stuck with me all week. I confess to you, every day now when I wake up, I've been saying to myself, Jesus, I want to give you the best I have.
I'm putting on my tool belt with my best tools and I want to show up at your job site today. I want you to be my foreman. I know it sounds corny. I'm often corny in the inside of my head. But that's what I do.
[48:22] It's really helped me. Andrew, if you could put up the A. How shall we then live when death lies behind us and resurrection waits before us?

Whose job site are we going to show up at? When death lies behind us and resurrection waits before us. Could you all stand, please? Andrew, could you put up Romans 1, 16 to 17?
Could you folks all read this for me? You see, as every week, you can start now to see why is it that Romans 1, 16 to 17, why is it that it sort of makes sense of the whole book?
Now you have a different sense of what it means for the power of God and what righteousness means and what it means to live from faith to faith. That our life is always by faith. That Jesus, Paul is saying, consider these things.
Think about these things. Be gripped by these things. That's what he says. Consider. Reckon. Be gripped by these truths. And as we're gripped by it, there's a power of God that comes into us to live our lives.
[49:27] Could you say this with me? For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. And Andrew, do you have the prayer to put up for our final prayer?
This is actually the prayer. Every week in Growing in Grace, I write a prayer from the Bible text. And this is a version of the prayer I pray now every morning. I'm going to invite you to pray it with me today for the rest of our day.
To help bring Romans 6 home to you. It's in your bulletin if it's helpful to you. And as the Holy Spirit leads you, would you pray this prayer with me?
Lord, thank you for the gift of this new day. I come to you ready to work for you and under your direction. I bring the best of who I am and all of who I am.
[50:30] I bring my mind, body, time, money, creativity, sexuality, influence, job, and life. I am here to work for you.

Please guide, direct, and strengthen me to do what you would have me do. Please free me so I work for your glory and not my own.
In Jesus' name, amen. Father, may this prayer be the prayer of our heart. Inform how we live. In Jesus' name, amen.

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