

A Short History of the World

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[0 : 0 0] let's pray lord our god by your holy spirit we ask that tonight you would help us to have your word living in our heart fill our lives with greater joy from what we learn tonight help us by your spirit to delight ourselves in you because of these deep truths lord may your praise always be on our lips as we see the greatness and the goodness of the gift of righteousness in christ tonight give us a new song as we leave here that we might always bless you for your grace amen sorry who would have thought that this one word would come to symbolize so much in our recent political history sorry the prime minister refused to say it midnight oil put it on their t-shirts at the closing ceremony of the sydney olympic games a couple of groups tried to get a day named after it national sorry day sorry should one generation apologize for the acts of previous generations in this case actions by white australians that had caused so much damage to indigenous australians particularly those of the stolen generation and even if they should say sorry could they actually do so in any meaningful way well i've no doubt that john howard's reasons for refusing to say sorry to australian aboriginal people were many and complex and this is not a sermon about the politics of racial reconciliation i understand there were concerns about potential claims of compensation and that john howard did in fact eventually express personal regret but it seems to me that a big part of the reasoning behind the continual refusal to say sorry was an understanding that the government of this generation could not apologize for something that was done by previous generations sorry is a word of personal responsibility and we're not responsible are we we're independent entities we're individuals we're not connected connected but how independent are we really is the rugged individualism that we in the west have valued so highly for so long actually a reflection of reality or a distortion of it are we connected to those around us or those who have gone before us in any meaningful way or when it comes down to it even in our relationship with god is every man or woman an island whether we're conscious of it or not each of us will have individualism stamped all over our world view and it will affect the way that we come to the gospel the good news about jesus christ parts of it will be easier for us to comprehend as those focused on ourselves

as individual independent entities for example romans 3 23 i think all have sinned and fall short of the glory of god yeah we can see how that charge could be laid against me individually for the times i have failed for the things that i have done in my own life that fail to live up to the standard or the measure that god has for me but our individualism will also make parts of the gospel difficult for us to understand for me for me one of those parts is how possible is it really for jesus to take my place as the guilty one as the guilty one under god's wrath i think of that illustration that preachers including myself often use of the courtroom where god switches the truly guilty one me for himself in christ or his son and i think hang on a second yes payment is being made but if that happened in a real courtroom justice certainly would not have been served the person who did the crime must do the time and how can the one who is innocent or righteous give that innocence to another individual how can someone else take my place how can i as an individual be justified by someone else's merits and yet i'm desperate to know the answer because as we saw last week in the first half of chapter 5 the benefits of justification are so great when we're justified by faith we have peace with god we stand in grace we boast in the hope of sharing in the glory of god god's love has been poured into our hearts by the holy spirit we are saved we are reconciled to god and this is by god's grace by christ's merits his blood his obedience his death on our behalf but how how can christ's merits become ours how can one individual affect another individual can one man really have such an amazing impact upon the eternal destiny of so many the apostle paul's inspired answer to me and to all of us tonight is yes yes we can be confident that the actions of one man can change can change the standing of other men women children before god in fact we've seen it happen before one man has already affected the eternal destiny of all humanity and his name was adam look with

me if you will at romans chapter 5 verses 18 and 19 you'll really benefit from having the text open before you tonight so if you can get that out get the bible out and have a look romans chapter 5 that'd be great

romans chapter 5 verses 18 and 19 therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all for just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous adam the first man the one through whom sin and death entered the world and the events of genesis 2 and 3 if you're not sure about that come and speak to us afterwards we'll point you where to read those things adam was designed by god to be the father of humanity the one ancestor that's how paul describes him in act 17 from whom every human being in every place and in every time is descended he's like the head of the family of humanity and as the head of humanity his action his trespass or a kind of a direct disobedience to the command of god his trespass had consequences for every human being who would be descended from him all of us in adam we are all sinners and we're all condemned that's the way our connectedness works but as the first head of humanity adam is a pattern or a type of jesus christ this is what paul says at the end of verse 14 in chapter 5 have a look with me verse 14 adam who is a type of the one who was to come a type is an old testament person or event that god designed to prefigure or foreshadow or picture or point towards jesus or some aspect of the kingdom that jesus would bring for example the ram caught in the thicket that abraham used as the sacrifice instead of isaac was a picture or a prefiguring of the gift or the provision of god's son as our sacrifice the exodus from captivity in egypt for the israelites is like a type or a prefiguring or a picture of our escape from the slavery or bondage to sin and death so by looking at adam as the head of humanity and and as a type of christ paul's argument goes as follows just as this one man adam affected every individual human being who was born after him in that through him we became sinners at our core and stood condemned so also jesus christ the one man sent by god to be the head of a new humanity can affect every individual who is born again in him by giving them the righteousness that god requires let me say that again just as this one man adam affected every individual human being who was born after him in that through him we became sinners at our core and stood condemned so also jesus christ the one man sent by god to be the head of a new humanity can and will affect every individual who is born again in him by giving them a right standing before god one man can make a difference and when it comes to these two men which one you belong to makes all the difference in eternity if we are in adam and every human being is then we are sinners and we stand condemned and will suffer eternal death that is the extent of the problem of sin it is universal every single person who descended from the one ancestor is a sinner standing condemned to suffer eternal death but if we are in christ which we are if we have faith in him then we are justified we are counted righteous before god we have eternal life so that is the point of this section in a nutshell as it flows on from the first half of the chapter it's not really that complicated if you just take this as the summary argument yes you and

I and many can be justified and receive all those wonderful benefits of salvation described in the first half of the chapter by the actions of one man it is possible because god has designed the world that way and you've seen it already in Adam now trying to get your head around it as someone who's soaked in a culture of individualism is hard and if you're like I don't know what you've just said in the last five minutes I think Paul and I think God would say to you just let this truth that one man can be the head of your new humanity soak into your heart and you will have the greatest assurance you will know yes Jesus can be your substitute yes he can be your sacrifice yes he can be your saviour because

[14 : 55] Jesus Christ is your new Adam you know about the one ancestor back back back way back when you know about that you know we're descended from him but in Christ the new Adam you have a new ancestor as a Christian you no longer have sinful selfish Adam as your ancestor you have the obedient kind loving gracious powerful sinless wise selfless pure Jesus Christ as your ancestor and you will start to see the family likeness very soon what a glorious gift that truth is to our individualistic soaked brains and if you meditate on only one truth from tonight's passage meditate on that that you can be connected to a new humanity in

Christ we could keep on going further into the transforming implications of being in Christ by continuing on into chapter 6 and it goes on 7 8 and Wayne will do that for us next Sunday night Easter Sunday but because of the way that Paul has used this typological this pattern this just as so

also argument about Adam and Christ here we are actually confronted with some very deep and challenging truths that we need to explore and Paul wants his readers to explore before he moves on to the rest of what he's going to be saying the outworkings of the powerful gospel of God in chapter 6 and following and so that's why I started in verses 18 and 19 because that's when Paul kind of repeats what he started out to say that's his summary of his argument but you'll see if we go back to verse 12 that he actually breaks off in the middle of starting to say that he's starting with this just as so also and so we read in

Romans 5 verse 12 therefore just as sin came into the world through one man and death came through sin and so death spread to all because all have sinned or is the rest he's broken off because he knows that in this argument there are some things that could be confusing could be misleading and so he first of all wants to make crystal clear the relationship between our individual acts of sin and our standing in the sin of Adam that's what he goes on to talk about in verses 13 and 14 and secondly he needs to make sure people don't misunderstand the way he's using the comparison between Adam and Christ and so he gives us a number of not likes and so much more than to make sure that his precious

Christ is seen in all his glory and that's verses 15 to 17 but let's have a look at the first section first therefore just as sin came into the world through one man and death came through sin and so death spread to all because all have sinned sin was indeed law but sin is not reckoned when there is no law yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam who is a type of the one who was to come it is Paul's Holy Spirit inspired belief that Adam's disobedience to God's command was not simply an example that every human being chose to follow thereafter that we kind of looked at him and went oh that was a good idea or yes this is kind of what humans do isn't it

I'm getting into it I'm rebelling Adam's sin somehow put every human under God's judgment right from the beginning of our lives we were born already under this original sin this first sin if you like look at the first half of verse 15 many died through the one man's trespass and the first half of verse 16 the effects of one man's sin judgment following one trespass brought condemnation and the first half of verse 17 because of the one man's trespass death exercised dominion through that one Paul is saying all through this passage as Adam's descendants we sit under Adam's condemnation that he received following that first trespass when he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that

[20 : 34] God had commanded him not to do but as he begins his argument it is possible to get the wrong idea isn't it because he says in the second half of verse 12 death spread to all because all sinned I was listening to Romans on a CD in my car and I heard that bit and I thought hang on a minute Paul which is it am I responsible for my own death because all have sinned or is it because I'm in Adam like he goes on to say in the rest of the passage well certainly Paul has already made clear that every human has chosen to live as their own ruler as their own king despite the fact that God's majestic kingship is on plain sight in creation for all to see so that people are without excuse and he said that God's wrath is rightly exercised against us because of our individual choice to sin but

Paul wants to show that our problem is even deeper than that yes we all sin but in fact we are already all condemned because we are in Adam's family he has really stuffed us up our problem is far beyond our individual human acts of sin if it was just that then maybe just maybe our individual acts of righteousness could get us there but no we are fully through and through condemned as Adam's children and his evidence Paul's evidence is this sin was indeed in the world before the law but sin is not reckoned when there is no law yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of

Adam in in between Adam and Moses the first man and then the man who through whom God gave the law humans clearly did wrong against God and against each other I think of Cain and Abel that awful guy Lamech the people of Noah's day the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah even the patriarchs the great guys the heroes Abraham Isaac Jacob they all fell short of God's standards yet because there was no revealed and explicit law that amazing revelation that God gave through Moses until he gave the commandments Paul tells us that God did not specifically charge people's sins against their individual account yes sin was still wrongdoing and against

God and worthy of punishment but individuals did not have it charged to their specific account because they were not breaking a revealed law transgressing against something that God had told

them not to do like Adam had done Adam did transgress against a command he was told don't eat he ate and yet with the people who weren't given commands like that they still died they still received the penalty for sin even though sin wasn't being charged against their individual account they still died as Adam's children under Adam's condemnation but if you know anything about Romans this letter that Paul is writing you would think maybe that doesn't conclude the matter because

Paul himself said back in chapter 2 that even people who don't have the law kind of have the law written on their hearts in their conscience they kind of know what God demands of them and certainly they know that there's a God that they should be seeking and worshipping if they kind of know that and they're without excuse then perhaps this still really is talking about individual sin leading to individual punishment death but what what about those who never had their conscience pricked who could never observe God around them in creation infants those with a severe mental disability they died between the time of Adam and Moses those young ones those people died never having actively committed any obvious wrongdoing why

[26 : 11] Paul's answer is that all in Adam are under condemnation we all receive the penalty for Adam's sin because Adam is the head of our family humanity for all of us especially with our individualism that's a bit hard to take and some theologians have very helpfully tried to explain it in ways that bring in other parts of the New Testament revelation to make it just a bit more logical for us Calvin most helpfully talked about this us being in Adam as inheriting a corrupt nature that we're born sinners that we're not like

Adam in that we could choose to sin or not to sin we can't choose that anymore we're born spiritually dead deaf to God's commands we are born with sin his word is depravity right through our souls we're completely corrupt now this idea I think is helpful to us we need to know that we're not born with any ability to make our own righteousness before God we are born under condemnation and it's not that language of total depravity or this corrupt nature that we've inherited from Adam that makes us sin that's not really the language of this passage but it is helpful to us to get our heads around how we link being in Adam but also being individual sinners we don't have time to go into that more and more tonight but the key point of what

Paul is teaching in this passage is that our problem is incalculably great it's very very very very very great when we are in Adam we are not only individual sinners we are born to condemnation and death and for those Jews reading it going yeah but what about the law what about when Moses came well the situation is no different before or after in fact it's actually worse after that's what Paul says in verse 20 but law came in with the result that the trespass multiplied then when the law came you see there was something for us actually to break and so sin in us our corrupt nature our tendency towards it our deafness to

God's right way just came out all the more it's been bad news hasn't it why would God allow humanity to be in this predicament create things in this way connect us in this way well part of the reason is given to us in the second half of verse 20 verse 21 but where sin increased grace abounded all the more so that just as sin exercised dominion in death so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord earlier on in Romans when we realised that we are all individually sinners the gift of Christ's righteousness for our sinfulness looked amazing but now when we see that we're not only individual sinners but we are condemned in the family of

Adam we have a corrupt nature we are completely unable ever ever to be saved by anything we've done then the gracious gift of justification through Jesus Christ our Lord is absolutely mind blowing it is mind blowing our God is so so so so good in setting up humanity in this way that we are all connected to Adam and then his sinfulness God has actually enabled us now to be connected to Christ and his righteousness to be inheritors no longer of a sinful nature or condemnation but inheritors of eternal life and he sums it up with this fantastic phrase the gift is not like the trespass the gift is not like the trespass

[31 : 45] Adam's sin and what he has brought upon us you think that's like a minus 100 Jesus death for us his gift of righteousness is not a positive 100 so that it equals out in the middle and we're kind of left back where we started the gift is not like the trespass Jesus gift is you know 10,000 a million infinity on the positive side so that all that we lost in Adam all that condemnation is just completely wiped clean wiped out and we have this vision for what God has in store for us and that's why Paul makes sure in verses 15 to 17 that despite his comparing Adam and Christ we

ought to know that there's no comparison between

Adam and Christ between what they've done and so we end with this looking first at two not likes then at a surprise much more surely verses 15 and 16 but the free gift is not like the trespass for if the many died through the one man's trespass much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man Jesus Christ abounded for the many and the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin for the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification what Jesus gift of righteousness has done for us cannot be compared to Adam's trespass and what it did to us in contrast to Adam's selfish act in going his own way Jesus Christ laid down his life in selfless sacrifice and then if we look at the history of the world so many have died because of Adam's trespass yet even more will eventually live because of God's gracious gift of righteousness through Christ sometimes I think we can think especially when we look at how messed up our world is that heaven will be kind of like our small group in winter you know us four and no more but it won't be that heaven will be a huge further than the eye can see greater than the mind can comprehend gathering of the redeemed thousands upon thousands upon millions will be saved through the grace of the one man Jesus Christ and the effect of the two actions of the two men is so different judgment followed the trespass and brought condemnation a natural fitting right response to disobedience that's justice but what followed many and that's ind fehl the response to