

The one through whom we have life

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning on this good Friday. Well, I wonder how lockdown is going for you. What, we're, what, 15 days into it now? It's not easy, I must admit.

Lockdown is pretty difficult, whether or not you're working. Most people are still trying to do the work if they've still got a job. Lots of people don't have work, and so it's really difficult for them. And there's a lot of challenges that we're facing as a church. There's a lot of challenges we're facing. Obviously, lockdown is difficult, but it is essential. And we realize that we must do it to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

But what we also have to do during this time of a pandemic is not expect our lockdown to solve the problem. That's a mistake that people could make, thinking, okay, 21 days of lockdown, we're done. The virus is gone. But that's not the case. Even the best lockdowns can only ever slow the spread of a virus like the coronavirus. They can't destroy it.

[1 : 02] They can't get rid of the virus. And we need to realize that. For that, getting rid of the virus, we actually need a cure, a vaccine, which can create antibodies.

Now, if you don't know, antibodies are really cool. I looked them up the other day, just how antibodies work. And basically, boys and girls, if you want to understand antibodies, they're basically like little tiny soldiers that your body produces to hunt down and destroy a particular virus that it finds.

And they're programmed to hunt down a certain virus. It's amazing how they work, how God has designed our bodies to fight viruses. And that's, of course, what vaccines help to produce, these antibodies.

And that's also why billions of dollars are being invested in finding a vaccine that works, that produces the right antibodies, and finding this elusive cure that we all so desperately are looking for.

And everybody around the world, I mean, this is a pandemic. It covers the whole world. So everybody around the world is waiting and watching, eagerly hoping that this vaccine, a cure for the coronavirus, will come soon.

[2 : 15] But then I was thinking, as a pastor, and I was thinking, imagine we were as eager to find a cure for sin. Because the Bible tells us the reason that we're in this position in the first place, the reason the world is not working properly, the reason the world is broken and we have viruses and things at all, is because of our sin against our Creator.

That's what the Bible teaches us. And yet, I think a lot of people still don't understand just what that means, what sin and what it means to sin against our Creator actually is, and how sin works.

You know, you've probably heard the word sin before, to describe doing naughty things. But sin is actually much more than just doing a few naughty things.

And sin is what I want to talk to you about today, because it's only when we really understand sin and how it works, that we can really understand the importance of today, Easter, Good Friday especially.

And in our passage from Romans that was read for us earlier, the Apostle Paul teaches us some very important lessons about sin. And in doing so, he reveals a shocking truth about what sin really is.

[3 : 31] And that is that sin is a global pandemic, and it is fatal. Now, everybody's rightly concerned about the coronavirus, the current global pandemic, because it kills people.

I think over 90,000 people now have died from it since January. So it's a serious virus. Lots of people die from it.

And we're right to be concerned. Although, by that same logic, we should be far more concerned about sin. Because sin kills roughly 150,000 people every day.

You see, because look at what the Bible says. Romans 5 verse 12. Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin.

And in this way, death came to all people. So, irrespective of how we die, whether it's a car crash or a heart attack or whatever, the reason we die at all, the Bible reveals to us, is because of our sin.

[4 : 37] Because what sin is, according to the Bible, is not just doing a few naughty things. It's actually going against the design of our Creator. It's breaking God's laws and His instructions for life and for His creation.

His intent for how His creatures should live. That's what the word trespass actually means. You know the Lord's Prayer, we say, forgive us our trespasses. And it's there in verse 18 as well. It talks about sin as a trespass. You know, trespass means crossing a boundary. Going somewhere where you shouldn't. Well, it's the same with sin, except the trespass is we've crossed the boundary of God's standard, the Creator standard of right and wrong.

We've broken God's laws. Now, of course, there are lots of laws that we have to deal with in our life. Some are more important than others. So, you get the laws of the land, the laws of the country. You get laws of language, for example. You get laws of physics. And they all have different consequences for breaking them or ignoring them. Some greater than others.

[5 : 44] So, if you ignore the laws of your country, you might end up with a hefty fine or maybe even jail time. If you ignore the laws of language, you might just embarrass yourself or confuse someone else.

If you ignore the laws of physics, that might be serious. If you, for example, ignore gravity and step off a cliff, that could have serious consequences. But this passage, which Paul actually has, the Apostle Paul has been talking a lot about God's law in the preceding chapters.

The law that he's talking about is another law. It's the law of God, the law of our Creator. Which is the most important law there actually is. Because it tells us the intent of our Creator.

It's literally the purpose for which we exist. And so, it also has, because it's that serious and that important, it also has the most serious consequences of any law if we ignore it.

Because if we don't live as our Creator intends for us to live and made us to live, well, there's really no reason for Him to keep us around in His world, is there? And that, the Bible teaches us, is the reason we actually die.

[6 : 57] Because of sin. Which makes sin the deadliest virus, actually, that mankind has ever seen. But this passage goes on, and it also teaches us something that we need to know about sin.

And that is that it's a virus that we already have, all of us. We're already infected. It's not just something we catch at some point in our lives. Sin is not just something we fall into.

It's something we're infected with from the moment we're born. Have a look with me at 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, because all sin. But look at that. Look at how it starts. Sin entered the world through one man. It's a crazy thought.

But it's saying this infection, this fatal disease that eventually kills all of us, came into the world because of one man. Now that man it's talking about is the man Adam.

[7 : 58] The first human. We can read about that in Genesis. And we can see what he did and how he fell into sin. Adam was essentially patient zero in the sin pandemic.

And technically him and his wife Eve. But it's because they sinned. And Adam is the head of that couple. That sin entered into the world and infected everyone else who is their offspring.

It's the Bible doctrine known as original sin. That because they broke God's law, our ancestors, that couple, that first human couple.

And because they ignored what God wanted for them, all of their children and their children's children and their children's children automatically are also born into that state. Into that predisposition.

It's like if your parent has a particular health problem. Often you will inherit that health problem.

We've inherited the worst health problem, the worst virus that is known.

[8 : 57] And that is sin. From Adam and Eve. Now I know that sounds a bit unfair. This doctrine of original sin. Often people have a big problem with it. It does sound unfair.

But it's firstly what the Bible clearly teaches. And secondly, you've already proven that it's true when you sin. Look at verse 12 again.

Sin entered the world through one man. But death spread to all people because all sinned. And so it's not like we're being blamed for something that we haven't actually done.

That we haven't proven that is truly in us. Because we've all sinned. You're to blame because you've sinned. I'm to blame because I've sinned. But what we need to realize is that we inherited that tendency, that sin from Adam.

And we're in the situation we're in today because of what he did. Unfair as that might sound. It's something we need to accept as true. It's something we need to realize about the human condition.

[9 : 58] It's inherited. And it's just like we need to accept the truth that the world has the coronavirus. Because one person apparently ate an undercooked bat.

Even if it wasn't that. It still started with one person. Patient zero. Whoever that one person might be. And that person's actions has now affected the lives of millions and billions of people.

Well that's how sin works too. As verse 19 puts it. Have a look. Through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners. And so this is a teaching that Paul is emphasizing.

That he has been revealed by God to teach us through this letter. And it's a really difficult teaching to accept. And yet it's so true and it's so vital to understand.

If we're going to understand the rest of the Bible. And it's an essential idea to understanding the human problem. You see we need to realize we don't become sinners when we sin.

[10 : 58] It's actually the other way around. We sin because we were born sinners. It's a natural disposition. You know it's why you don't have to teach a child how to lie and how to be selfish.

Why? Because that's their natural disposition. What you do have to teach them is how to tell the truth. And how to share and how to be nice. Now many people, especially religious people of various religions, have realized that about the human condition.

And so they try hard to make up for it and do good and avoid doing sin. They have a strict ethical code. Essentially they go into ethical lockdown if you like.

But the thing is just like a lockdown from a virus. Good as that may be. It'll never actually solve the root problem. It'll never really kill the virus. It'll only slow it down.

But it won't deal with the cause. For that, we need a cure. We need something that actually gets rid of the virus.

[12 : 03] Well it turns out that's exactly what Jesus, the Son of God, came into this world to give us. A cure for our root problem of sin.

And it's why today we remember what he did on the cross on Good Friday when he paid the price for sins in the place of other human beings. Because it was that one act that can actually undo the one act of Adam that's affected your life and affected my life.

Look at verse 19. 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.

And that is the amazing thing about what Jesus did. What he achieved. And just like Adam's sin made you a sinner before you actually sinned at all.

So in the same way this verse is saying, Jesus' righteous act on the cross makes you righteous in God's sight. In the sight of your creator before you even do anything right.

[13 : 14] It's an amazing concept. You can't make this stuff up. But it's what the Bible teaches about how to be made righteous with God. Not through having an ethical lockdown and trying to improve our own behavior.

But through what Jesus did on the cross. That is as effective, actually more effective on our lives than what Adam did to make us sinners. And that's the mind-blowing truth of what we celebrate at Easter.

It's what the Bible calls grace. It means being counted as righteous without doing anything to deserve it. It's what the Psalm talks about. The deepest desire of the human heart is depicted here.

Psalm 32 verse 1 to 2 that was read for us earlier. It starts like this. Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven. Whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them. I mean to know that you are forgiven by your creator.

[14 : 20] To know that he doesn't count your sins against you. To know that you've received his grace. There is nothing more important in this life than knowing that.

And Jesus has made that grace available to you because of what he willingly did on the cross for human sins. And then the passage goes on to teach us something more. The last thing I want to mention.

And that is that that grace, once you have it, will always overrule and be more powerful than the sin that you've inherited from Adam.

It's what verse 20 means when it says these words. Where sin increased, grace increased all the more. The literal word is it's super abounded.

Where sin abounded, grace super abounded. It overrode it. It overruled it. Grace always beats sin is what it's saying. In the life of a Christian. It's a hugely effective antidote.

[15 : 20] Right? Just like when your body produces antibodies designed to kill a virus. Once those antibodies are in your system, the virus has no chance. Even if it comes back again, the antibodies will just hone in on it and kill it before it can do anything.

The antibody always beats the virus. And in the same way, once you have received God's grace, no matter what sins you've done in your life or will do in the future, the one act of Jesus on the cross covers them all every time.

It is more powerful to save you than your sin will ever be to condemn you. But it's grace that must be received. Have a look from verse 17.

For if by the trespass of the one man death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who, notice this, receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

And so what Jesus achieved on the cross, we read here, only applies to those who actually receive it, who respond to it. It's like a vaccine applies to you only if you receive it.

[16 : 35] Now, if a coronavirus vaccine is developed and exists in the future, which we all hope and pray that it will, unless you actually receive it, it'll do nothing for you just by existing.

Well, the grace of God, too, is something that must be responded to. It must be received. And this verse says, for those who don't receive it, death will reign. It will continue to reign.

Because if the penalty for your sins has not been paid by Jesus, it must be paid by you on the day that you stand before your creator, which the Bible says you will.

But for those who have received God's grace, his free gift that he's made available through his son, Jesus Christ, by trusting in Jesus and by being baptized into him and born again under him.

Moving away from being under Adam and the result of his one act and moving into being under Jesus and the result of his one act through trusting in him and repenting and being baptized.

[17 : 36] Those people, they don't have death reigning over them. And the Bible says here, they actually reign over death because eternal life in the new creation has been given to them through resurrection, which is as sure as the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

That life that God has always intended for his creatures to experience is made available to those whose sins are covered. And that's why the psalmist says they are truly blessed because they know that this life actually is only the beginning.

That death no longer reigns over them because the penalty for their sins has been taken already.

And so, in closing, the question I have for you, no matter who you are, as long as you're a descendant of Adam, this applies to you.

The question I have for you is, have you yet accepted and received God's grace which undoes the effect of Adam's sin in your life?

Or have you not yet? It's one of the most important questions you can ever be asked if you're a descendant of Adam and if you're a sinner. Because as I've said, sin is by far the deadliest thing you can face in your life.

[18 : 54] But there is a cure that God has made available in his son Jesus. And maybe for the first time this Easter, while the world is going crazy around us, just maybe through his word and by his spirit, God is speaking to you this morning.

Maybe God is calling you to come to him, to receive his grace and to enter into the eternal life that he actually made for you to live.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you reveal the truth in your word. We thank you that you reveal that you are a just judge, that you don't sweep sin under the carpet, that you are the most just judge in the universe.

Thank you that you reveal the truth about the human condition to us, that we are sinners. But thank you, Lord, for your great mercy in sending Jesus to give us the ultimate cure for original sin, the sin that is inside us, the human condition that we're all under.

Thank you, Lord, that you've given us a way out through Jesus. I do pray for all those who are listening to this or watching online. I pray, Lord, that you would work in them what is pleasing to you through your word now, that those who have not yet received your grace would seriously consider why they haven't.

[20 : 19] Lord, I pray that you would cause them by your sovereign will to come to you, to submit to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and to enter into the eternal life that you made them to live.

And so, I pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.