

The Most Influential People in the World

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[0 : 00] Good morning folks, great to see you. Let me encourage you to have Romans chapter 5 open in front of you. And we're going to be dipping in and out of these verses this morning. But just to get us thinking, maybe read those verses and you think, why on earth are we going back to Genesis?

What does Romans mean? To get us on the right track this morning, I want you to turn to your neighbour for 30 seconds. And I want you to ask them who, in their opinion, is the most influential person who exists today.

Okay, not powerful, influential. Who is the most influential person in our world today? And see what you come up with, okay? Go for it. Excellent. I'd love to hear the variety of answers that people said, but in the interest of time we'll move on.

I don't know if you've ever read Time Magazine. Time Magazine is one of the most influential publications of our day. And every year Time Magazine publishes a thing which they call the Time 100.

And the Time 100 is a list of the hundred people who, in their opinion, are the greatest influencers in our world today. So let me just give you some names that have cropped up over the last few years in the Time 100.

[1 : 16] And see if these, I don't know whether they will or not, but see whether these names are some of the names that you said. So, we've got names like this. We've got Michelle Obama. Anyone say Michelle?

No? One? Yeah, Michelle Obama. Here's the next one. Tiger Woods. Tiger Woods. It's been a good year for Tiger, hasn't it? Who saw that coming? I didn't. Tiger Woods. We also have Kate Middleton. Yeah? No? No sticking Kate.

Okay. Here else we've got. We've got Mark Zuckerberg. Influential. No? Clearly we don't read Time Magazine, do we? There we go. Give me a few more. We have George Clooney.

These are influencers, remember? People who are influencing people in our culture. People who are looking to. We've got Oprah. They said Oprah. Let's see who else we've got. Queen Bee. There she is.

Beyoncé. And another one that we have. Well, we've got two more. Actually, let me give you this one. Mo Salah. Okay? Good week for Mo Salah, let me tell you. Last one that we have, and believe it or not, this individual has made it to the list.

[2 : 22] We'll see how this goes down. We have. We have Taylor Swift. So, these are the people that Time Magazine have identified as being some of the greatest influencers in our world today.

So, these are the people, according to them, are the people that influence people and who people look to and who people take their cue off. And here's what I want to say to you about Romans chapter 5 as we head into it this morning, is that in Romans chapter 5, we're going to meet two of the most influential people in the world.

The two most influential people in the world. This is Romans chapter 5. Let me introduce you to them. In the one corner, we've got Adam, the very first human being, as we'll come on to see, that God made in his image.

In the other corner, we've got Jesus. The two most influential people our world has ever seen. And so influential are these two individuals that every single human being who has ever lived or who will ever live, finds themselves in one of these two teams, finds themselves living the whole of their lives under the influence of one of these two individuals.

Now, it was Puritan Thomas Goodwin who said this. This was his observation of Romans 5. In God's sight, there are only two men, Adam and Jesus Christ. And these two men have all other

men hanging at their girdle strings.

[3 : 52] So he's identifying the fact that the whole of humanity finds themselves in one of these two teams. And what we're going to do today is we're going to think about these two men. And we're going to think about what they did.

We're going to think about the influence that they have. We're going to think about the difference that each of them makes to us. And what we'll see is that these two individuals, Adam and Jesus Christ, are the greatest influencers our world will ever know.

And if you've got Romans 5 there, verse 19, put it on the screen for us. This is kind of where the money is, right? This is the memory verse. If you're into memory verses, it's a dying art, but I love it. This is the one that's going to take us right to the heart of this message.

So let me tell you about Adam. And particularly, let me tell you about Team Adam's problem. And someone pointed out to me this week, and I heard my little girl singing it this morning, Adam's story, if you think about it, is a lot like Humpty Dumpty's.

Okay, I've not lost the plot, stick with me. Adam's song is a lot like Humpty Dumpty. So if you just take Humpty Dumpty and you replace it with the original Adam, you'll begin to see what I mean. Right, if you don't believe me, let's go and we'll see how this works.

[5 : 03] Here's how Adam's story goes. Original Adam sat on a wall, right? So things started so well for Adam, the very first human being that God made in his image.

God takes him, God creates him in the Garden of Eden, sets him there to develop, to care for the world which God made. And in the Garden of Eden, we have this glorious, harmonious relationship between creator and creation, between God and man.

Glorious harmony. And so God creates Eve, the very first woman, who together with Adam, forming this complementary team, God declares this is very good.

This is brilliant. This brings me glory. And it was, it was glorious. Yes. And as we heard earlier, there's one stipulation from God. God said, out of all the beautiful trees in the garden, there's one tree which I don't want you to eat from.

It's called the knowledge of good and evil. That's why I've called this tree. And I don't want you to eat from it. Don't want you to touch it. And here, as it were, was God saying to his dream team, Adam and Eve, here he is saying, I want you to show me that you love me.

[6 : 17] I want you to show me that you trust me because I want you to obey what I'm telling you to do. Because then I'll know. Right? And this is the heart of true biblical obedience. It stems from a true love for God, a deep love of God that's just got all of us.

And it flows from this new desire that God has given us with these new hearts that beat for him, that wants to do his will. So God says, that's how I want you to show me that you love me.

Just obey what I'm saying. And of course, along comes Satan who sows that seed of doubt in Eve's mind. And he says, did God really say that? Did God really say that?

I mean, no matter where you put the emphasis on in that verse, he's got that feeling of somebody trying to sow the seed of doubt in Eve's mind. Did God really say that? Did God really say that? Did God really say that?

Did God really say that? Did God really say that? And we see what he's doing. Can you really trust him? Is he not giving you a raw deal? Who is this God?

[7 : 17] Do you think you really know him? Because if he did, surely he wouldn't put this stipulation in your path. So here's the choice that Adam faces at this point in the story. It's the one task with taking the lead here.

Will it be God's way or will it be my way? That's the choice. Will it be God's way or will it be my way? And of course, Adam goes for my way. And original Adam had a great fall.

The two of them, they're banished from the garden. And that's what Paul means. Have you got the text there, verse 12, when he says, Through Adam and because of his disobedience, sin entered the world.

It's funny because after this point in the Bible story, As you read on after Genesis 3, we start to get words like shame, And guilt, and murder, and envy, and rage.

It's the entire world. This is what the author is trying to tell us. The entire world, not just Adam and Eve, The entire world feels the effect of this brokenness. All stemming from that broken relationship with its creator.

[8 : 21] And when you put it like that, all of a sudden, You begin to see that we're entering our world now. This is the world in which we live. And Adam's mindset, do you see it in verse 12?

It's spread to all people. This is a biblical theologians call original sin. It's spread to all people. Now, if you needed proof of that, Let me tell you about a tweet that I read this week.

From the co-op funeral directors. And apparently in 2018, for the first time ever, According to them, A hymn wasn't the most requested song to be played at a funeral.

Do you know what it was? The winner? Frank Sinatra song, I Did It My Way. That is the most played song, according to them, at their funerals.

This is what their clients want. I Did It My Way. And how tragically ironic is that? Because what this passage tells us is that the reason death so painfully exists in the first place is because we wanted it our way.

[9 : 27] And our world, doesn't it, It dresses up death in phrases like They're now sleeping with the angels. Or they are in a better place. Or aren't they looking down on us from the stars. All the while trying to dress up death as if it's natural.

And God would tell us in His Word, How loving of Him to give us His Word, That we could know this, That death is anything but natural. But you see, friends, By very nature, we're all in this team. By very nature, we are all in this team. The consequences, look at it here. Verse 16. Condemnation. Guilty before our Creator God. Hopeless.

Deserving of His judgment. That's what it says. And as a result, the destination for all of us, Verse 12, by nature, is death. Spiritual death.

Because we are separated from our God, From our Creator because of our sin. Which leads ultimately to physical death. And it's the thing that will happen to 100% of us here today.

[10 : 28] And 100% of the people who live, We rub shoulders with every day in our world. And it's the thing that causes so much pain, Tears and heartache. I remember when I worked at a law firm down south, Every month, the entire staff team, We were sent this email, And we had to vote on a charity of the month Who we wanted to support.

So they gave us a short list of five or six, And we had to vote for the one that we wanted to choose. And nine times out of ten, The charity of the month was a medical charity. Nine times out of ten, Always a medical charity.

So, Cancer Research UK, Marie Curie, Bristol Children's Hospital, Wonderful organisations, Doing wonderful work. But it's, I remember looking at it and thinking, That is so telling to me, That death is something that we feel the effects of every day, And it's a thing that we would love a cure to.

But the thing is, That left to ourselves, We have, Try as we might, And by God's common grace, We pray that there are advances in medicine, But left to ourselves, There's no answer to that question. I was speaking to a friend of mine recently, Who works in medical research, And he was telling me that, How at the minute, He's feeling greatly unenthused, About what he does.

[11 : 44] And the reason was, Because no lack of funding, Or no lack of opportunities, According to him, As he can view it, That no one's coming up, With any significant breakthroughs.

Now let's, Don't hear me wrong, I'm not talking about medical research, Being a bad thing, It's a great thing, And we pray by God's common grace, That we would, Make advances in that field. But friends, If that's where your hope is, If that's what it is, In medical research, Making a breakthrough, Then this passage would tell you, That you're looking in the wrong place.

That is Team Adam's problem, That all the king's horses, And all the king's men, Couldn't put original Adam, Together again.

And so as we reach this point, In the passage, The passage screams at us, Is there anyone, Who can put us back together again? Is there a cure, To sin and to death, And to heartache?

Is there a place? For there are no tears, There are no, There are no more pain, Because sin has been dealt with, And it's a banished memory. Well the wonderful news, Of these verses, Is that God has provided a cure, Because he's provided a person, He's provided his son, And so let me tell you about Jesus, And in particular, Let me tell you about, Team Jesus's privilege, Because follow with me, At verse 19, If Paul's drawn attention, To Adam's one act of disobedience, Do you see it?

[13 : 11] He also draws attention, To Jesus's one act of obedience, And although his whole life, Was one of obedience, Joyful obedience to the Father, The one act, That Paul's talking about here, The pinnacle of Jesus's obedience, Was his decision, His choice, As we've been singing earlier, To go to the cross, The place where he shed his blood, He counted the cost, He paid the penalty, He

took the death, That our disobedience deserved, Why?

To deal with the problem, To deal with our condemnation, To deal with the judgment, That he deserved, And to win a people for himself, And here's the key difference, Between these two men, Do you see it?

If Adam's mindset was, My way God, Not your way God, Do you see what the difference is, In terms of the mindset? Because Jesus's mindset, Is not my way God, Is your way God, Verse 17, Who's in team Jesus?

All those who would receive him by faith, Do you see that word receive? Take, It's mine, Grasping it with both hands, This is who this is for, This is who is in team Jesus, Those who would live by faith, And trust in him, Those who would take Jesus, As their saviour and their king, And what is that? Word in the passage, Beginning with G, Two G's are going to take us, To the heart of this, Okay, Here's the first one, It's a gift, Do you see that word? Four times we get it, In verses 15 to 17, It's a gift, Right?

[14:38] Christ, A gift, From God, Four times in verses 15 to 17, And you see how it's qualified, Just before it, With the word, Free, Free, I once heard somebody tell, A Englishman, Irishman, Scotsman joke, And the punchline, The question was, Why do you love grace?

And the punchline was, The Scotsman said, I love it because it's free, But we have that saying, In our culture, Don't we? That there's no such thing, As a free lunch, And it's often the case, That it's true, Because our experience, Tells us that there's always a catch, When we read about a good deal, Right?

I'll give you a couple of, I've encountered the last few months, One month's free subscription, For BT Sport, And I'm rubbing my hands, Thinking, Champions League, Here we come, What does it say? No, No, No, No, Only when you sign up, For 12 months, Do you get that month's free, Or I think about it, A free coffee, At Cafe Nero, And you're thinking, Give me some of that sweet, Sweet caffeine, And then you realise, No, But you have to collect 10 stamps, And then you get your free coffee, You think, Oh, What is the catch?

Well, Do you see God's gift, Free gift to us, Comes in Christ, And do you see the gift, It's the gift of righteousness, That status we have in Jesus, Of being right, In God's sight, Now we thought about that word last week, As we found it in verse 1 of chapter 5, Justified, Treated not simply, As if we didn't sin, But in God's sight, Because of Christ, Treated, And get this, As if we were Jesus, In God's sight, Get that, Messy me, All my baggage, Me, All my faults, Me, All my failures, Me, Perfect in God's sight, How can that be?

Well, The answer to this passage, Screams back at us, It can be true, And it is true in God's sight, Because we are in Christ, But how you say, Where's the catch?

[16:29] Where's the catch? What do I need to do? Do I need to read my Bible five times a day? Do I need to pray for ten minutes every hour? Do I need to do a hundred press-ups every day, And say Father, Son, And Spirit in between each one?

What is the catch? Get this, There's no catch. There's no catch. How? Because of that other word, That other G, That appears five times in these verses, Follow with me, You've got to see this, Twice at verse 15, Verse 20, Verse 17, Verse 21, What's the word?

It's grace. At its core, It is getting something that we, Definitely do not deserve. The undeserved favour that God shows us, And giving us Jesus, Who is the one who's described in John chapter 1, Is the one who's full of grace and truth.

And the one who holds his arms wide open, And says, Come to me, Child, Come to me, And know life, And know forgiveness. Now, With me, Today, You'll know it, And gloriously, And supremely, And fully, That day, When I take you, With me, To my glorious kingdom.

It's grace, This is the heart of this passage, It's grace. And it's why, I don't know if you've noticed it, So many of the hymns and songs, That we've sang down the years, As the church, Are all about grace.

[17:55] They're all about grace. Right? Here's a little challenge, Think about how many songs you can think of, Right now, Off the top of your head, That talk about grace. They talk about amazing grace, They talk about sufficient grace.

It's all about grace. Because what God has done for us, In his son, It should leave us ever praising him, Ever praising him, Ever singing about him. And do you see in these verses, How God's grace, That he's shown to us in Christ, Do you see how, It's not just cancelled out our sin.

Do you see him, Try and convey to us, That God's grace, Has not just matched our sin. God's grace in Christ, Has blown our sin out of the water. We are ever covered. Do you see him, Try and convey that, Verse 15 and 17.

That this grace is what, Is overflowed to us. Verse 20, What has this grace done? It has abounded to us. One of my favourite songs, That we sing here, Is that song by Matt Redman, That says, You alone can rescue.

And it, You know, Who the Lord could save themselves? I don't know if you ever, Ask yourself questions, As we sing songs, With a question mark at the end. Who the Lord could save ourselves? Well who? I couldn't. Their own soul could heal.

[19 : 05] I know it's a rhetorical question, But I'm always asking, Of course I couldn't do that. And the truth that our shame, Was deeper than the sea, And I feel that, I know that, As a Christian, As a husband, As a father, But thank you, Lord Jesus, That your grace is deeper still.

Because nothing humbles us, More than grace, Does it? Nothing humbles us, More than grace, Knowing that we've, We've contributed nothing, To our salvation, Other than our sin. Presumably this is why, Paul wrote it, You know, If this is a background here, Of a church full of Jews, And Gentiles, Each with their own baggage, Each with their own traditions, And ways of doing things, Then surely, The answer to the friction, That they're feeling, In their congregation, Is for each of them, To know what grace is.

Because we are all, Undone at the cross, If we are all, Coming to God, Because of his grace, Then none of us, Should be boasting, About a superiority complex. Surely that's the answer, To their humility.

Nothing humbles us more, Than knowing that Jesus did it all. Nothing humbles us more, But do you understand, How nothing honours Jesus more, Than saying, It's all about him. It's all about him. It's all about his free gift of grace, That he loved me, When I wasn't looking for him. He pursued me, When I was his enemy. It's all about him. This is team Jesus' privilege.

[20 : 28] Now let me just make two comments, Just as we work towards a close this morning, As we leave chapter five, And speak pastorally just for a minute, Because we've called this series, The building blocks of the Christian life, Or the Christian life.

An idea behind it, Is that because in these chapters, Five, six, seven, eight, What we get, Are some of the, Absolute foundations of our faith, That we can build upon. And the one that we get in chapter five, Is the one marked grace.

Right? Grace. This is what this is saying to us. The building block of the Christian life, Grace. Look what Paul writes, At verse three. Looked at this last week, But this kind of holds it together.

Do you see what he says? What do we do with this grace? What are we doing with this grace? We are standing on it. In other words, We're camping out here. Right? We're building our lives here. This is the foundation, Which we build upon.

And we never move on from here. Grace. You know the truth, That we are saved by grace alone, Through faith alone, And Christ alone. We never move on from that. And let me just ask you two questions, When it comes to grasping grace.

[21 : 32] Here we go. Firstly, Have you grasped it? Right? That you are not right with God, And you need to listen to what this passage is telling us. We are not right with God, Because of how we perform. Right?

Where would you and I be, If that were the case? We're not right with God, With how we perform. We are right with him, Solely because of grace. You know, Ben was telling us earlier, And I was thinking of him this week, About the changes, That are happening in his life.

Right? The new start, That he's working towards, The new challenge. And I wonder if he said that, I wonder if many of us identified with that. You know, We're at crossroads places in our lives.

You're a student, Student guys, You're going home for the summer. Maybe student guys, You're leaving, You're graduating, You're going on to a new job. Maybe you're, You're a worker, Who's starting a new job.

Maybe you're a worker, At the other end of the thing, You're thinking about retirement, What am I going to do? Young folks, Guys, Maybe you guys are starting school, Or you're finishing school, You're going to college. I don't know about you, But I've always found those moments of change in my life.

[22 : 33] Right? Those points where we hit crossroads, And everything's up in the air, Everything changes. I've always found those points in life, To be the ones that are the most emotionally, And

spiritually difficult. Every time.

Every time. And what I mean by that, Is that it is so easy for me to get distracted, By all the changes going on, That I take my eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ. And what happens is, When I fall, And I stumble, My inclination is to run towards me, Not to run towards him.

And I drift, Spiritually speaking, I drift from him. And when I stumble and fall again, The more and more I drift, And I drift, And I drift, And I drift, And because of the shame of my sin, Because of the guilt, Because I don't know what to do, I run from Jesus, Rather than towards him.

And listen friends, You might be here today, And that's exactly where you are. You're drifting, And you're drifting, And you're drifting. And each time it becomes harder, And harder, And harder. And you might come back, Because Satan is sowing that lie. The same one he sowed in Genesis 3. Did God really say that? Did God really say it was free? Did God really say it was nothing to do with you? Who are you to come before him?

[23 : 41] And you hide in your shame, And you're weighed down by your guilt, And you're left thinking, Maybe the devil is right. Who am I to represent God? Who am I to have Jesus as my saviour?

Friends, that's why it's so important, That we know the truth, That we're saved by grace alone, Through faith alone, In Christ alone. And it's so important that we know, That this is the Jesus, That we're dealing with here.

He's not like the parent, With that teenager, Who goes out late at night, Sitting by the door, Before they come in, And say, Tapping or watching, What time do you call this? Right? What time do you call this? Where were you? Care to explain yourself?

What's going on? This isn't the saviour that we have. We have one who, Says you're mine. I bought you with my precious blood, I paid for your sin.

On you, Satan cannot make your sin stick. Because I paid for it all. And every time he does that, I am there at the right hand of the Father, Jumping to your defence.

[24 : 40] Do you see how Jesus is the best defence lawyer, We can ever have? Objection my Lord, Objection my Lord, Objection my Lord, Every time. Why? Because of my blood. I paid for that sin, I paid for that sin, I paid for that sin, In his past, In his future, And in his present.

He's mine. And we are right with God, Friends, Not because of what we do, We are right because of him. And he says, Come to me, And no forgiveness, And no life, And no grace abundant, And get this, The grace that is sufficient for you, Every hour of every day.

Because we're ever dependent on the Lord Jesus, And in his grace. He's not like, And this is what happened to me in the car recently, The battery went dead, What I had to do was call a man to come out, Because I didn't have the jump leads, And he jumped it, And went cheerio.

Right? We don't have a jump lead Jesus. He doesn't come along, Get our spiritual battery started again, And now says, Cheerio, It's over to you to drive yourself home. He is not the fourth emergency service.

Right? He is there, What is the song that we sing? It's grace that has brought me safe thus far. And it's grace that what? Sees me through to 34, Nope. Sees me through to 64, Nope.

[25 : 52] It's the grace that will see me home. It will see me home. That there is never coming a day in our lives, Where we don't desperately need the Lord Jesus.

And get this, There's never coming a day in our lives, Where we don't have the Lord Jesus. Have you grasped it? And secondly, And there will be two more minutes, I promise. Secondly, Have we grasped it?

Because do you see how understanding grace, Grace, It frees us, As a church, To take the masks off, And stop pretending we have this life sussed.

Stop pretending we have it sorted. And you see how this doctrine, This truth, This individual, How it invites us to put our hands up, And say, I so desperately need Jesus.

I need him. He outed me as a failure on the cross. And I loved it how Zoe said at her baptism, You can remember that for you, Whenever that was, Is that September? I don't know. She said, I can never out sin the cross.

[26 : 53] Sam Albury, Anglican minister down south, Puts it like this, I don't need to look good, So that Jesus can look good. I need to be honest, About my colossal spiritual need, So that he can look all sufficient.

Friends, This is the kind of community, That we want to be, Isn't it? It is. A community of grace, Where we're real with one another, And we share life's burdens with one another. You know, I don't know about you, But as I've reflected on it this week, My fear for us as a church, And my fear for myself as your pastor, Is that, We get to the finishing line of life, And we find out, From our obituaries, That some of us were, Bearing burdens, And suffering from scars, Our entire lives, And we never knew, Because we've shared a building together, For tons of years, Many years, But we never shared life, And this call this morning, Is to come to Jesus, And give him masks off, All the glory, And to walk side by side, With one another, Carrying burdens, Sharing life, Rejoicing when we're rejoicing, And weeping when we're weeping, And to help each other walk home, All the while, Pointing one another to Jesus, Every time, Look at him, Look at him, Don't look at yourself, Look at him, Because he is the all loving, All knowing, All sufficient, Shepherd of his sheep, That is team Jesus, His privilege, We have him, So friends, Here are the two, Most individual, Two most influential, Individuals, There's a tongue twister, Influential individuals, The world has ever known, And that the world will ever know, In one corner, We've got team Adam, Death, Condemnation, Judgment, And on the other hand, We have team Jesus, Grace, Gift, Life, And if you've not given your life, To the Lord Jesus Christ, This morning, Then feel his hand, Outstretched to you, In these verses, In Romans chapter 5, And saying, Come to me child, Come to me, And if you want to pray, About anything friends, Prayer should be, The most natural thing, We do as Christians, This should be the atmosphere, That we live in, It's just prayer, So maybe you want to do, As we respond to this, As you reflect in your own heart, Maybe you just want to ask, The person next to you, Really simply, How can I help? How can I pray for you this week? And be amazed, The answers you'll get back, Because this is the community, We want to be, Isn't it?

[29 : 32] A community, Of grace, So friends, Let me ask you, Last line, Promise, Which team are you in? Which team are you in? So let's just have a minute of silence, And then I'll pray, And then we'll close our service.

Oh to grace, How great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be, Let that grace now, Like a fetter, Bind my wand, Wandering heart to thee, Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love, Here's my heart, Oh take and seal it, Seal it for thy courts above, Lord Jesus, We love you, And Lord I pray that you would turn Our wandering hearts back to you this morning, And find in you Our all in all, Would you help us, Heavenly Father, To stand in this grace, And help us to know you more, And we ask this in the Lord Jesus' Precious and worthy name, Amen.

That's right, Amen. Good day. K forgiveness, I love you, I love you.

Hello You