

4 Steps to the new life

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Date: 29 May 2022

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[0 : 00] Exciting to see what you guys are doing. I always like to hear from Nick or from Dylan what's going on. And this series, Transform Living Our New Life, and looking at some of the practical aspects thereof in the fellowship groups, the growth groups, is a great idea.

So I'm going to be talking about this transformed new life. It's part of, as we've seen, our little series of what we're doing. And over the years, as I've been in the ministry, I remember many folk coming to me and saying, Mark, you know, we hear about Christianity, we hear about life, we hear about all these other terms, becoming a Christian.

Some people talk about being born again. I just get confused by all of those ideas. What I really need, and I haven't really found it wherever I've been. I haven't found it. What I want to know is how do I find this life that you Christians talk about?

How do I find it? How do I meet up with somebody who will just very simply, no complications, show me, take me by the hand, show me, how do I find this life?

How do I get born again? How do I find eternal life? How do I go to heaven when I die? I've been going to church, I don't know, for a long time. There's a lot of helpful things I've learned in church, but this is the one thing that I just feel I'm not quite clear about in my mind.

[1 : 25] Well, the good news is that's exactly what I'm going to do with you today. As we look at life, as we look at the Christian life, eternal life, we look at our transformed life, living out this new life.

Today our topic is how do I find those steps to eternal life? I'm actually going to deal with four steps. So I'm going to take you through four steps today in which we're going to see how we can reach that point where the Lord Jesus would say to us, today will be with me in paradise.

So with that in mind, let's have our Bibles open in Luke chapter 23. And we have those read out to us, but we're going to focus mostly on 39 to 43. And we're going to be looking at these two criminals.

We know the story, most of us do. Two criminals crucified on each side of Jesus. And we're going to learn something about their story in order to trace out four steps, four steps to a transformed new life.

That can be our title. Four steps to a transformed new life. Now, one of the things you'll observe when you look at this particular account and one or two others in the Bible of Jesus dying on the cross is the absolute ignorance of people.

[2 : 51] People in this account walk by, they look at what's going on in front of them on the cross, but they don't know what the significance of the cross is.

For example, look at Luke 23.34. Jesus actually prays to the Father, forgive them because of their ignorance. I mean, that's how serious the situation is.

Herod, the big shot, the guy who's supposed to, at least in theory, know everything. He's the guy with all the power. 23.11. Him and his soldiers, the power mongers, the guys who are running the society, they don't know what's going on either.

Pontius Pilate, 23.25. Well, Pilate is pretty clueless in the way he interacts with Jesus, the way he talks to Jesus. It's clear that although he's a powerful guy, he's a rich guy, he's got an influential position, he doesn't know what's going on really either.

And then, of course, you've got the religious leaders. Well, they must know, Mark. Surely they know what's going on. Verse 18, not at all. The Jewish leaders, the church leaders, the rulers of the Jewish people, they don't understand either.

[4 : 08] Wow. It's quite a shocking picture that is being portrayed for us. The Roman soldiers, again, verse 36, they don't understand.

And, of course, one of the criminals, let's call him criminal number one, he doesn't understand either. And I don't need to point out to you that that is really the case today, probably, isn't it? I mean, we go out into the streets of Plumstead or Tokai or Steenberg or Claremont, Weinberg. It doesn't matter where we're going. We stop five or six people and we say, well, what is the meaning of the cross?

What is a Christian? We'll probably get five or six answers that are probably quite different. Many of them will probably not even agree with each other.

And this criminal, well, number one, criminal number one, he is pretty much ignorant as well. But the big surprise, as we cast our eye over the Bible story, our big surprise is that there is just one.

[5 : 15] It's all this group of people, rich and poor, powerful, famous. There is one individual, you wouldn't believe it unless it was there, who did understand.

Now, that is the story for Luke. That is what Luke wants us to think through. He wants us to think about this one guy who did understand.

Can you see him there? Well, of course, he's prisoner number two, verse 40 to 42. He is the second of the two criminals crucified together with Jesus.

Can you believe it? He understood. He was different. But my question to you is, why? What made this man different?

That is the question. As we look at eternal life, as we look at this new life for Christ, this theme that we're looking at at the church at the moment, what makes him different?

[6 : 13] And I believe that he is different because he took, in his thinking, in his outlook on life, he took four steps. In his thought processes, he was dying on the cross next to Jesus.

As he took into account what was happening before him, he took four steps up until that point where Jesus said, Today, I tell you, you'll be with me in paradise.

Now, I believe that if you want to be with him in paradise, you've got to take the same four steps.

That's my point. I'm not saying you've got to take the same four steps in the same precise way that he did at the same time.

Some of us take a little bit longer. I'm not saying that you've got to take those four steps only at the end of your life. That's silly. I think you'll see you've got to do it now. But my point is that for all of us, we've got to take those four steps in our own lives if we want to encounter this new life, this eternal life, what everybody is talking about in the church.

We want to go to heaven one day and be with the Lord Jesus for eternity. I believe, yes, we've got to take these four steps. And I'm going to go through these four steps as we look at the passage.

[7 : 42] And my question to you is, as we go through the four steps, have you taken those steps? Simple as that. So what is the gospel? What is Christianity?

How do I go to heaven? Four steps. And we're going to look at criminal number two. Now let's look at the first step. Let's look at our passage.

What is the first step on the road to a transformed new life in Jesus? Answer, he rejected the opinions around him by deciding to take God seriously.

We see that all the way from verse 39 to verse 41. There's no doubt about it. That, my friend, is the first step for him. And I can assure you it's the first step for you. You'll notice in the story, we're not asking you whether or not you're religious.

We're not asking you whether or not you go to church. In fact, I'm not even necessarily asking you whether or not you believe in God. I hope you do and I hope you are religious and I hope you go to church.

[8 : 51] But that is not the point. Very interesting how these four steps don't always apply to a lot of people who go to church. Who think they're Christians but they're not.

So, first step. He rejected the opinions of others around him by deciding to take God seriously.

Now, we all know about peer pressure. We're living in a society today.

We're living in a politically correct society where you are and I'm put under a lot of pressure to do what everybody else does. I agree with Jesus when he came and he looked at the people around him and he said, you know, people are like sheep without guidance, without a shepherd.

We're living in a society today where we are frowned on if we take a stand on something that is against the general popular beliefs of society.

Which, of course, for the most part is unbelieving. But what strikes us is that this man had made a decision to reject the opinions of other people.

[9 : 56] And I know that's tough, but I want you to know that if you want to become a Christian, a true Christian, and find the key to eternal life, the first thing you've got to do is learn to reject the opinions often of the vast majority of people with whom you deal every day.

Obviously, we're talking about non-Christians. People who reject God's existence. We know about those people. They are the people we rub shoulders with in the business environment.

Sometimes they are people in our family. Now, this man, I believe, probably for the first time, that's our first step, took a stand right there and then, realizing that the time had come for him to start thinking for himself and to reject the nonsense.

The nonsense that other people believed about God and that he would have to do it himself. What I love about the story is that it's a personal journey of one man.

It's a relational thing. He had to start taking the claims of Jesus Christ, the claims of the gospel, seriously for himself.

[11 : 08] He looked around him. He no doubt cast his memory back over his life. And he realized that his contemporaries were wrong. The politically correct society in which he lived was, for the most part, wrong in rejecting Christ.

And that Jesus stood for what was right. And he realized that the time had come, or to be too late, that he would have to make up his own mind about Jesus and reject the opinions of unbelievers. And he knew that he'd have to stop delaying. He had to stop just going along with the crowd. That's what we tend to do, don't we, in our society?

We'd always like to admit it. It's quite ironic that the social media are always telling us, be yourself, follow your own dreams. But in reality, we actually are just following all the same dream, for the most part, money and fame and fortune.

But this man realizes, I've actually got to go along with the gospel. And he realizes that he's got to stop going along with the cynicism of the other criminal.

[12 : 22] I really find that helpful. He's got to stop going along with the cynicism of the other criminal in the crowds. We're living in a cynical age, aren't we, guys?

It's an age where people, to get attention, to get power, to become wealthy or whatever, to get so many hits, 50,000 hits on YouTube, people are becoming famous by stepping on everybody else. Have you observed that about our society? You find fame and fortune in controversy. And you find fame and fortune in cynicism.

We're living in a cynical age. Now, what I love about the story is this man realizes that cynicism gets you nowhere. Cynicism gets you to hell. And we see that with his conversation with his fellow thief on the cross.

And by the way, notice what the other thief is doing. Number one, what is he doing? It's important to notice that because he's doing what many people do today. Maybe you've done it from time to time. Maybe as an unbeliever in the service here today, you know whether or not you're an unbeliever.

[13 : 31] Maybe you like criminal number one. Not criminal number two. Criminal number one, what are you doing? Well, you do what the criminal is doing, number one. Blame God for my problem. Complaining to God.

That's what he's doing. Look at verse 39 in your Bible. What is he doing? Well, he's complaining to God. He's blaming God for his plight, isn't he? I think we've probably got here the most common complaint addressed to God down the ages.

One preacher points this out looking at the passage. Dick Lucas, whom I've borrowed from extensively for today. He's right. He points out that this is probably just about the most common complaint that millions of people make about God down the ages.

They don't believe in God until they've got a problem. Then all of a sudden they believe in God enough to blame them for their problem. Okay? What's the complaint? Essentially goes something like this.

I'll believe you if you do what I want. You heard that one before? I will believe in you if you get me out of my troubles. You can be my God. Fair enough. Provided it's on my own terms.

[14 : 38] Now may I say to you that this kind of argument or excuse is really just not to take God seriously. I mean, we don't even do that with people, do we? I mean, how many of us as men would get away with going to our wives and saying, I'll continue to be your husband and take the rubbish out at night if you do what I want.

Gentlemen, try that at home and see how far that gets you. It's not going to get you very far. It's really not to take the other person seriously. Now this is what criminal number one does, doesn't he?

He says, well, you know, it's all God's fault. But this other guy really, really fascinates me. He is a remarkable individual because he realizes at the end of his life that he can't carry on like this. He can't carry on taking the silly view of God any longer. And that's the first step, guys. Ladies and gentlemen, that is the first step. Brothers and sisters, that is the first step.

And it's easy for us to say, well, you know, I'm a Christian and thanks, it's a good sermon, but I really don't have to think through these four steps because I'm a Christian. Don't be too quick to think that you've really taken these four steps.

[15:44] It's easy to fool yourself. What a powerful first step that is. This criminal is unique. Criminal number two, he realizes at the end of his life he can't take the silly view of God anymore.

He's got to start taking God seriously. And it might mean that he's got to do it alone. That's the tough part of it, isn't it? He realizes that he might have to start enduring the criticisms and the ridicule of others if he makes a commitment.

He realizes that. But he realizes you've got to make a choice. Do you know that's true for all of us every morning when you wake up? You've got to make a choice. Am I going to be a man of God, a woman of the gospel?

Or am I going to be a man of the world? It's a choice that we all make every day. This man realizes now he's got to take a stance for the gospel, even if it means he's got to do it alone.

I can't just go along with the status quo anymore. I can't be like all those different ostriches out there that just bury their head in the sand and don't want to face eternal realities. I don't just want to go with a flow like everybody else.

[16:54] I'm on my way to hell. I've got to start doing something about it. That's the first step. It's taking the gospel. It's taking the claims of Christ seriously and realizing if I'm going to have to say yes to Jesus, I'm going to have to say no to other things.

I'm going to have to say no to the status quo. That's our first step. Question is, have you done it? Again, I'm not asking you whether or not you're religious or go to church or even believe in God. Have you really taken that first step? Well, let's have a look at step number two. Let's look at our Bible. Let's look at our fascinating story. Verse 40 to verse 41.

Becoming a Christian, finding this new life, eternal life in Christ. What does it look like? What's the second step? Look at your passage. Well, I see the second step as follows.

He realizes that he's guilty. What an important step that is. He realizes that he's got to accept his guilt.

[17:59] 40 to 41. Now, I don't know how this man came to see that Jesus was innocent. I don't know. I mean, Jesus is dying on the cross. Jesus' face is distorted in agony.

How is it possible that this man can come with great conviction to see that Jesus is the Son of God? What a wonderful insight he had.

I believe the insight was given to him by the Holy Spirit. I think it was the simple, overwhelming majesty, the glory, and the authority with the way in which Jesus conducted himself, even when he was dying on the cross for our sins, that overwhelmed that man's heart and soul.

He was overwhelmed by the spectacle that was overflowing, that was flowing out, that was revealing itself in front of him. And he realized that although Jesus was innocent.

He and his fellow criminal were not innocent. That they were getting the punishment that they deserved. And Jesus was innocent.

[19:10] Because, you see, to really encounter the gospel, to truly encounter the God of the Bible, any son Jesus Christ, is to acknowledge one's own sinfulness.

I'm reminded on that landmark occasion when Peter met up with Jesus and said, Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinner.

And as I said in the 830 service, friend, that is spiritual revival. Not all the funny things that people do today in the name of spiritual revival. Spiritual revival, well, is these four steps.

And the second step is an overwhelming sense that I'm wrong. That I'm stubborn. That I'm wicked. And that I'm running away from acknowledging who I really am before God.

Of course, you know who you are before the Lord. I don't need to tell you. But not only that, it is to come to the Lord and say, I am sorry. I am deeply sorry.

[20 : 19] I need to turn around my life. You know, repentance means turning around. That's all it means. In the original language, repentance means, stepping out into Plumstead Main Road on a Saturday morning, looking to your right and seeing a truck bearing down on you at 150 kilometers an hour.

What do you do? Do you think about it? Do you reflect on it? Do you say, oh, guess what? Here comes a problem. What do you do? You turn around very, very quickly and you go off in precisely the opposite direction.

That's repentance. Repentance is acknowledging guilt and making radical change. But sometimes, as we know, in the 21st century in our society, what is the hardest thing for most people to do? In my experience, often, to say I'm sorry. You notice that? Maybe you're one of those people. I never apologize. Have you heard that before? Never apologize.

Always blame the other guy. That amazes me about our contemporary environment today. Somebody else does something wrong and they blame you. You notice that? Nobody wants to confess anything.

[21 : 29] The hardest thing to do is to say, I'm sorry. I remember one couple came to me for counseling. And I remember they're saying to me, I've been married to the man for 35 years.

He's never, ever said sorry about anything. Well, they've got a problem. You see, perhaps you're one of those people. You know, pride is a terrible, terrible thing.

And if you're not willing to come to the Lord broken, acknowledging your true heart, your sinfulness, your rebellious wickedness, well, you can never, ever be a Christian.

You see, without sorrow, without really turning around when that truck of God's anger and judgment comes down the road, without real repentance of sin, I don't think you'll ever become a Christian.

Whatever you do on Sundays. You might even teach Sunday school. I don't think you'll ever come near to God. I don't think you'll ever be a Christian. That second step is so important.

Acknowledging guilt.

[22 : 34] You notice that criminal. Notice our hero. Criminal number two. What a remarkable guy. What remarkable insights. Everybody else is saying, what a loser to Jesus.

You'll observe. What I really find ironic is some of the guys are saying, if you are the son of God, hey, show us, show us. Come off the cross. Well, I thank God every day that he didn't come off the cross.

What a bunch of nutters. What a bunch of ignorant people. And yet there is this one criminal who confesses and he says, Jesus has done nothing wrong, but we deserve God's displeasure as well as the government for what we've done.

In other words, I think for the first time, this criminal, number two, stops running away. Stops running away from God. Perhaps living a life that was just hypocritical.

And a lot of people like Atacota Church, very, very righteous on a Sunday. Put on their Sunday best. But like the Pharisees, as Jesus says, under this whitewashed exterior, there's a lot of rottenness and deadness inside their hearts.

[23 : 40] Maybe you're one of those people. Well, not this man. Maybe that's the most difficult step of all in our four steps this morning. It's to admit that before God, I am a sinner and that by nature, I'm God's enemy and I've got to start doing some serious heart searching and confessing.

And I need to be deeply sorry about it. Let me ask you, step number two. Have you done it? You know, folk have often said to me down the years, yeah, well, you know, the minister does that side of it for me.

Have you heard that one as well before? The minister says, sorry, the minister does all the ritualistic weird stuff at the front of the church to get me into heaven. That's why I go to church, by the way. I go to church so that the leadership in the church sort out all the stuff, all the kind of stuff, the debts I owe to God.

I just come to church on Sunday and I have a real good time from Saturday to the next Sunday.

Can you see that's not the story here? This is not about church. This is about this man's personal life.

This is about a personal thing. It's a personal decision. I'm guilty. That's step number two. Have you done it? Right, let's have a look at step number three, verse 42.

[24 : 56] Very important as well. A remarkable step. Watch that. Have a look at your Bible. What is step number three? Here it comes. He accepted the fact that Jesus is the real king and savior.

There it is. Not only does he take God seriously for the first time, I believe, in his life. Not only, secondly, does he realize that he's accountable to God for his sins, but now he realizes that in Jesus alone there's hope.

In Jesus alone there's a king. No other king. In Jesus alone there's a savior and he is the only savior. He's not just one of 35 options. Oh, I've got my options open, somebody said to me about 20 years ago.

I'm looking at all the religions and they've all got something to offer. I'm not sure which one I'm going to go for in the end, pastor. I'll probably take a little bit of everything. Ha, ha, ha. Not this man. This man realized there's only one savior.

There's only one king. There's only one lord and that's Jesus Christ. There is no other theory. There is no other model. There is no other psychotherapeutic model that can save me from hell.

[25 : 59] There is no other philosopher. There is no other public speaker. There is no other path to wisdom. Motorcycle and what? Zen. Motorcycle.

The art of motorcycle maintenance and zen. Whatever it is, this guy realizes that there is nobody else. There are no other options for salvation, for eternal life and that's Jesus Christ.

He realizes in the twinkling of an eye. I think this is just remarkable. He realizes in the twinkling of an eye that Jesus has the power to save him from his life, his sins, his mistakes, his mess.

Even now as he faces death. And more significantly as he sees Jesus facing death.

I mean, you've got the Son of God dying on the cross, as I said a few minutes earlier. You've got somebody whose whole body is distorted in agony.

[26 : 58] And this guy with the insight divinely given by the Holy Spirit looks at the dying Jesus Christ and says, You're the only guy in the history of the creation and the universe that can bring me eternal life.

Wow. Who else in the history of the world looked at a dying man and said, You're the guy. You're the only king.

You're the savior. You have got a kingdom. A kingdom so mighty and so awesome in power that even the death of its king can't destroy the power of this kingdom.

This, the criminal instinctively realizes, is a kingdom that endures after death itself. That is remarkable. It's amazing.

What about the rest of the world? The rest of Plumstead or the rest of Steenberg or the rest of Claremont that walk past the cross? If indeed there were folk from our city there. What about the rest of the world?

[28 : 01] What are they doing when they walk past the cross? They're all sniggering and sneering, wondering what's on TV tonight, Netflix. What are we going to make for lunch?

What are we going to eat for lunch? Pizza, Mar. We want pizza tonight. But who's this loser?

Everybody walks past ignorant, but not this guy.

Others thought Jesus is nothing but a loser, a common criminal. But this man, we need to ask God that he gives us the heart of this man. This man saw things very differently.

And so must you and I, if you want to become a Christian, if you want to find this transforming life, you've got to be different. A real saviour.

A real king who had a kingdom that endured even after death. And notice he opens his mouth right in front of everybody else and he confesses, Jesus, remember me.

[29 : 05] He doesn't go to his pastor and say, Pastor, please negotiate for me. I'm in trouble here. No, he goes straight to the Lord Jesus and he says, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Remember me. That's step three. Only one king, only one hope for the world, only one saviour, Jesus Christ.

Have you really come to see that? Be honest with yourself. Don't just answer and say, well, I go to church and I'm a good guy and I tithe. I think the devil hangs out sometimes at church on Sunday.

He certainly did so in Jesus' day. You know that? Jesus went to worship in the local church in Capernaum in Mark's gospel. Guess who were hanging out there taking a smoke break? The devil and the demons.

Devil's very, very, very good at putting on appearances. Okay? Wow, what a third step that is.

Jesus is the only true king. Irrespective of where I live or even where I worship.

[30 : 11] Step number four. Final step. Look at your passage. What is the final step? He had to take his opportunity and make the decision.

You see how important that step is? You take all the other steps you like. Oh, yes. Well, Mark, that's very interesting. And I wrote that down, Mark. I wrote that down. I'm not going to tell my husband about that.

I wrote that down. I wrote that down. Good for you. And I love step number two. Oh, yes. I agree with you. Now, I could tell you a thing or two about step number two. And step number three. Well, you know. Well, I mean. I mean. I've never had a problem with step number three. Good for you. I'm going to go tell my husband about step number three. You go do that. Good for you. But have you taken step number four, you see?

I love what Bishop Rateef says. He crossed over the line. See how important the fourth step is? [31 : 15] No more talking or delaying. I wonder how many of us here today are procrastinators. Delayers. Yes, well, you know.

I've got to think about it. Don't, don't, don't rush me. You heard that one? I've got to sort out. So many people have said this to me. I've got to sort out all of my problems. And when I sort out all of my problems, I'll come to Jesus.

And I've been working on my problems for the last 35 years. And I don't think there's much hope. But I want to keep on working on them. I want to keep on working on all my problems. And maybe before I die, maybe not, I'll give my life to Jesus. Can you see how silly that is?

That's the devil's excuse. Because you can't fix your problems. That's why you need Jesus and his forgiveness in the first place. So easy to become a procrastinator.

But not this man. Not anymore. Not anymore. He's not going to delay accepting the lordship of Christ in his life. Not anymore. He's not going to wait any longer. He's not going to wait for his friends. Now you might expect him to say, hey you, Johnny, Johnny.

[32 : 16] On the other side of the cross. Criminal number two calls out to criminal number one. Hey Johnny, I'm going to make a commitment, please. Man, I feel alone here. Can't you help me out?

You make a commitment first. I'll make a commitment second. The crowd doesn't have to know about it. He's not going to wait for Johnny. No waiting for Johnny. He's going to do it himself. He's going to do it now.

Before it's too late. He's not going to wait for anybody else. Sometimes that's lonely. The day of judgment, you're going to have to appear before the lord. Your wife's not going to be there to hold your hand.

Your husband's not going to be there to hold your hand. Nor all your buddies that you hang out in the mall with on a Friday night. They're not going to be there to hold your hand on the day of judgment. For him, it's now or never. Have you reached that stage?

You really reach that stage where your salvation is more important than anything else in the whole world. You reach that stage? Over the years, I've come to realize that it is only when taking the side of the gospel and acknowledging the lordship of Christ becomes the most important thing to you in your life.

[33 : 29] Even if it means losing all my friends and family. God forbid. It's only then that you can become a Christian. It's only when you feel the pressure. It's only when you feel everything else pales into insignificance, says the hymn, in the light of his grace, his glory, the gospel.

Everything else in my life, all the stuff I've got lined up to do this week, everything else pales into insignificance about this one thing. There's one thing I've got to do. I'm going to do it now.

And it's the most important thing in the whole of my universe. And I'm not going to do anything else until I've done that one thing. That's what I mean about step four. I've got to do it now. I've got to make right with Christ now.

I'm going to turn around and step away from that bus right now. I'm not going to sit and debate. Because then I'll be just squashed. I'll be dead. I'll be in hell. Do you have a sense of urgency about it?

Can you feel the urgency? We don't have that anymore, do we, in the church? Not really. Ah, tomorrow. I'm a religious guy, preacher. Get on my back.

[34 : 33] Give me time. I need my options open. Can you see that those are all the lies of the devil? You've got to take the step four. Two things about Jesus' answer.

What does Jesus say today? Lord, remember me. Confesses his sin. Makes it known publicly. What does Jesus say? I tell you the truth.

That's how serious this stuff is. Jesus is not messing around. Jesus knows the stakes. I tell you the truth. Today you'll be with me in paradise. Two things about that answer. Number one.

Forgiveness. The power of this eternal life. This life transforming existence. Can be yours right now, today. Isn't that wonderful? The benefits of becoming a believer don't only become real when you go to heaven.

As wonderful as that is. You have, you can have the power now if you're not right with God. You can come to him now. You can submit your heart and your life to him now and you'll be saved. You will know the transforming power of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit now in your life.

[35 : 37] And unlike this guy, God willing, you're not going to die in 20 minutes or an hour's time. Unlike this guy, you give your life to Jesus Christ. You've got the rest of your life to live something new.

To live this new hope and to change the whole world. That's what those home groups are all about at St. Mark's. That's why this series on a transformed life is so important. It's a benefit, it's a power that can be yours now in this life.

It is real. It is not just a fairy tale as I tell my students. Christianity is real. It's powerful. It's new life. It's real life.

The second thing about Jesus' answer to this man is that it is the forgiveness of God, the life that God gives is so much greater than my personal circumstances. If Larry King of CNN or CBS ran up to this poor criminal number two after Jesus had said, today you'll be in paradise.

And if criminal number two is there and if Larry King ran up to him with a microphone and said, hey, I hear you've been given forgiveness. How are you feeling? He would have said, I'm suffering terribly.

[36 : 48] But I think the point is that whatever you're going through this afternoon, whatever struggles you're going through, whatever kind of difficulties you've got in your life, illness, financial issues, we're all here with issues. We're all here, aren't we, with struggles and anxieties.

The point is that if you submit your life to Christ, if you follow over those four steps and you cross the line, the power of God's forgiveness is yours now. Irrespective of where you live or what your salary is or what your struggles and your anxieties are, that's what makes the gospel so wonderful. It's not something that you've got to earn, it's yours. You've just got to trust in him. So let me close. Four steps. You've taken the four steps.

Don't say yes. Think about it. In a few minutes the service is going to close. And we're going to be on our way and we're going to have a great Sunday, I hope. Have a great day.

Maybe you have got to make two or three or four of those steps before you go. I don't want you to go home without chatting to Dylan or to one of our other leaders.

[38 : 02] We know who our leaders are. They'll be available after the service. Maybe you want to know precisely how to cross that line, how to pray, because that's all you've got to do. Maybe you want someone to hold you by the hand, help you to pray.

Great stuff. The last step. You've got to cross over the line, I think, before you go home today. Because next week might be too late.

Would you do that? Step number one. Decided for the first time he's got to start taking the gospel and the claims of Jesus seriously. Step number two.

I've got to accept that I'm guilty, that I'm wicked, that I need help. I need forgiveness. I'm a rebel against the things of God. Step number three.

He came to see that there is nobody else. He came to see that there is no other king. There is no other savior. There's nobody else that can heal the brokenness of my life, my marriage, my relationships, my financial issues that I've gotten myself into, my brokenness, my anxieties.

[39 : 08] There is nobody else who can help me except Jesus Christ. The only savior, the only king. And then finally, it was urgent. You see. It was urgent.

I've got to do it now. I've got to step over the line today because it is the most important thing in my life. There's nothing else that's more important than that. And he crossed over the line.

Came to Jesus and said, Lord, it's now. Lord, it's today. Lord, remember me. Remember me. You do that?

As bow as we pray. Father, thank you for the power of the gospel. Thank you for its beauty, its simplicity. Thank you for a remarkable passage.

What a man. Criminal number two was. Lord, make us like him. Lord, there are a couple of folk here today who haven't taken those four steps. You know who they are. They know who they are.

[40 : 04] Lord, convince them. Convict them. To cross over the line today. Not to leave here until they've spoken to Dylan or one of the leaders and come to you and said, Lord, I need help.

I need to turn around before the truck hits me. Lord, remember me. Amen.