

The Gospel Transforms

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 August 2017

Preacher: Sam Low

[0 : 00] church for longer. And at that particular point in my life, I wasn't as humble and godly as I have become and becoming. And so, you know, I quickly rebuked him and corrected him and explained that I was at the front, basically, and I had the Bible and, you know, so he needed to listen to me. But as I've grown and gotten a little bit wiser and a little bit more self-aware, I recognised that actually it's a really valid question. Why should he listen to me?

What basis was there that the things I was saying was something that he should actually submit his life to and take as, you know, stuff that's going to shape who he is and how he lives?

You actually need to work out on what basis are you going to listen, not just to me, but to anyone who's going to speak into you. And that's the situation for Paul with his church in churches in Galatia. He is the one who planted them. He's the one who spoke the gospel to them. He's the one who introduced them to Jesus. But what's happened is there's a group of people that have turned up at these churches in Paul's absence and have basically started questioning his authority, questioning why the Galatian churches would listen to him and his message. And, you know, obviously on the side, they had their own message that they wanted to replace it with. But the rhetoric went something like, why believe Paul? He's not even from Jerusalem, which is where, you know, the church started. And plus, his gospel sounds too good to be true. He's not even a good Jew anymore.

He's not making you do Jewish things. So you can't trust him. And I guess the question that we rightfully ask is, how do we know that Paul's gospel is the one true gospel?

I mean, why should the Galatians, as they hear these competing messages, decide to listen to Paul? Why should we, opening the Bible thousands of years later, with lots of other voices speaking to us, telling us that this is what your life is about, this is what you should do, why should we listen to this message from Paul in the Bible and say, this is the one that I'm going to trust? This is the one I'm going to submit to. I mean, Paul covered pretty clearly last week, if you missed it, there is only going to be one gospel. There's not multiple ones. So how do we know that this one is the one?

[2 : 25] Well, Paul wants to give us two reasons. First one, his gospel is not his. His gospel is not his. Have a look at verse 11 from what Deborah did out in Galatians 1.

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it. Rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. Now, this matters. This is what this section is really driving at. Paul wants the Galatians to know that this message that he's bringing, this message of grace and peace through Jesus is not something that he just made up. In fact, he wants to go a step further and say, it's not something that any human made up. Paul didn't receive it from some people who taught it to him and he's passing it on. He didn't hear it from a preacher. It was actually revealed to him.

He got direct revelation from the risen Jesus Christ. You can read about it. If you're in a community group this week, spend some time in Acts chapter 9 and Paul is travelling along the road to Damascus and all of a sudden he is physically confronted by the risen Jesus. This is after the crucifixion.

Risen Jesus presents himself physically, challenges Paul about what he's been doing and literally turns Paul's whole life around. It's a dramatic episode. And so these people who have turned up and are trying to undermine Paul's gospel, trying to undermine the trust in Paul, they thought it would serve their purpose to point out that Paul doesn't come with the authority of the other apostles.

He didn't come from Jerusalem. He's not from Peter and James and John, you know, the disciples that hung out with Jesus. He's not from there. And so you shouldn't listen to him. That was their logic. But Paul flips it. He's like, you're right. I don't come from them. But it's because my gospel

isn't from human sources. I received it directly from Jesus, the one who the gospel is about.

[4 : 36] In fact, Paul's going to go on and go out of his way to give us random details about what he did and didn't do around the time he became a Christian, just to make it really clear that his gospel, which actually lines up with the one that Peter, James and John are preaching in Jerusalem, he's going to make it clear that his gospel did not and could not have been taught to him by some human teacher. It's a divine thing that was revealed to him. Have a look at verse 16.

So this is when he's been called by, he's telling his story, he's been called by grace, God's revealed the son in him. And verse 16, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went to Arabia. Later, I returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him 15 days. Cephas is Peter, if you're not sure. I saw none of the other apostles, only James, the Lord's brother.

I assure you before God, what I'm writing you is no lie. Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report. The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. It was three years after he received the gospel, three years after he met Jesus, that Paul first made the trip up to meet some of the apostles. And when he got there, he only met two of them. And he was only with them for about two weeks. And we know that while he was there, because it says it in Acts, that he spent most of the time preaching. So he didn't actually go there for gospel classes. He didn't go there to, you know, learn some stuff and be clear on what the gospel actually was. He already had received that. That's what he got when he met Jesus on that road on the way to Damascus. Now, it's worth us just slowing down for a second here and flagging that what happened for Paul is unique. It's a unique experience for Paul because Paul was a chosen apostle. Apostle just means sent one. And so when we talk about the apostles in the Bible, we talk about the men that God chose, that God sent as direct eyewitnesses of the physically resurrected Jesus. So every one of them got to encounter Jesus physically alive after his death and resurrection. They were chosen so that they would be the baseline by which we measure the gospel. So they got to meet him in person. They got to encounter him and they delivered a message that was authoritative, that we don't get to argue with because they have that special position. Now, for us today, we encounter that message in the Bible. That's why when we read the scripture, when we come to church, when we do it in our community groups, we approach this as more than just human words and human stories. This is God speaking to us through those humans because it is that divine truth that he revealed to them. And so what Paul is doing here is he's not defending himself. He's saying that this battle is not between the credibility of these new people and me.

This battle is between the credibility of these new people and the God who gave me this message that I'm giving to you. That's who you've got to decide who you're going to trust. These people have turned up and saying, look how impressive we are. We're from Jerusalem and the God who's delivering the good news about how people like us can be forgiven and adopted into his family. The reason you can trust this gospel, the reason you can know this gospel from Paul is the genuine article is because it comes from God himself. And the proof of that, the reason you can believe what is a pretty massive claim is because of the power of this gospel. See, what Paul's doing in this little chunk of Galatians is essentially giving a mini testimony. And I'm pretty sure I've talked with you guys before about the testimony insecurity that I have. You know, when Christians talk about testimonies, they're essentially talking about their story of how they met Jesus, how their life was before and then how they became a Christian and what changed. And a lot of the famous stories or testimonies involve dramatic things like drug addictions or prison time or those sorts of things. And they are amazing stories of God's power to transform the obviously bad people into obviously apparently better people.

And that is amazing. But when I hear those stories, I can't help but feel like I need to spend some time working on my before I met Jesus story so that my testimony will be more exciting. Go on like, you know, a year bender as a Christian just to build up some, you know, some serious sin in the background. Now, you know, I've got serious sin. But you know, like the dramatic ones that you can include in a story and sound exciting. Anyway, that's a bit of a sidetrack. But you know, when you hear testimonies, that's sometimes the place we go. We compare their story to our story. But I love this story that Paul gives because this is a story that everyone can connect with. Like literally, whether or not you're the recovering drug addict or, you know, this is your first day release from

prison, in this story, you can see that the gospel has power for even you. Or if you're at the other end of the spectrum and you are nice, you're even-tempered, you're middle class, you're Sunday school educated, even there you will see in this story that you need the gospel just as much. And not just that you need it, but the gospel has power to do something with your life here. This is a story about the gospel power to reach and transform anyone. Paul gives us two halves to his life before he met

[10:48] Jesus. And they couldn't be more different. Have a look at the first half, the serious bad side from verse 13. Now, I'm going to read that verse again in just a second. We sometimes go into autopilot when we read the Bible and we just skip through, we've read that verse, what's the next verse? And we miss the gravity and the weight of what just got described. So listen carefully and try and visualize what Paul is saying he did here. You have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. Those are blood-stained words.

words. Paul's not being dramatic here saying, you know what, I really didn't like church and I've been just ragging on church on Facebook statuses for the whole time I've been on Facebook. He means persecute when he says it. He was pouring his life out to destroy the church of God through whatever means possible. He was literally traveling from town to town to try and find secret churches and get Christians arrested and even killed. He was the kind of person who would have delighted in the suffering happening to Christians around the world that we see today. In fact, in Acts chapter 8, which is just before we see him meet Jesus, there's this episode where we see Paul standing, looking on approvingly as Stephen is stoned to death for following Jesus. This is a guy who had a deep hatred for God, a deep hatred for Jesus especially and followers of Jesus and yet the gospel of grace somehow grabbed hold of him.

I can understand why some people sometimes feel unworthy of Jesus. I can understand why, you know, people use words like God couldn't love me. You don't know what I've done. I get the sentiment. It makes sense and on one level it's correct. You don't deserve to have God love you. But that's the power of the gospel.

That's the power of God's grace that even those who seem the most unlikely, who seem impossible, who you would think they could never follow Jesus, even they can be reached by grace. Paul wasn't looking for Jesus when he became a Christian. He was literally traveling to a new town so that he could arrest and kill more Christians.

[13:52] That was his agenda for that week. He was actively trying to destroy the church and that's not an exaggeration. He wanted the church done and finished and removed from existence so that he could be part of the Jewish synagogue system, so that he could have more power there. He had nothing but hatred for Jesus and anyone who followed him and yet the gospel grabbed him. The message of Jesus still managed to grab him while he was running in the opposite direction. Jesus grabbed him and completely transformed him. If you're somebody who feels beyond God's love, if there are things in your life that you think there's no way God could love that about me and no one else knows it, you need to listen to this.

The gospel, God's grace is powerful enough for you and for anything that you've done. But the crazy thing is that's not even Paul's whole story. That's one half of his before life.

Let's look at the other half. He was also one of those really religious people who didn't think they needed a gospel. Have a look at verse 14. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. See, Paul was an impressive Jew. He was in the Jewish synagogue. He was getting promotions. He was been giving opportunities to lead and to teach. He had Bible knowledge. He would have memorized huge chunks of the Old Testament and not just the catchy bits that fit well to a rap. Like he spent time memorizing, you know, the books that you skip over in your quiet time, you know, you get to Numbers and Leviticus and Deuteronomy and it's just like law after law and you, you know, survive chapter one, chapter two, and then you go back to like Matthew or, you know, one Thessalonians somewhere, you know, it's a little bit easier, easier going. He's memorized these whole books. He's invested time. I mean, he is seriously zealous about being a Jew. He's putting hard work in and even his life, he's trying hard to obey the laws of the synagogue. Now, obviously, something's got twisted in there because he was killing Christians, but he's trying very hard and to the point where he's excelling above the people around him. And so when Paul looks at himself and even when the people around him look at him, they don't think he needs a gospel. He's going, I'm good. I'm better

than most people. I'm putting effort in and gospels, good news is for people who need help, people who need rescuing. And according to Paul, that's not him. See, simultaneously, Paul was too bad and thought he was too good.

He's put up a double wall against the gospel. And yet when he finally encounters Jesus, the gospel is powerful enough to show him the depth of his sin and his need for Jesus and to show him the sufficiency of God's grace to love even somebody as evil as him. The gospel is powerful.

I mean, ironically, this second bit of being really zealous for religion, trying really hard to be holy, is what these new people who turned up in front of the Galatians were saying they should be doing. They're going, Jesus is great, but put effort in. And Paul's like, I've done it. It doesn't work.

[17 : 26] What you need, the only thing that can make a difference is the only true gospel. And that is the fact that Jesus has died for you and is risen. The power of the gospel means no one is beyond grace.

No one is too far gone, too bad that they can't be reached and loved and forgiven. And the power of the gospel means that no one is above grace. Whether people know they need Jesus or not, whether they're looking for him or not, the gospel is powerful enough to reach them, to confront them, to get their attention. And here's why it's powerful. Because when it grabs them wherever they are, it shows them Jesus. Have a look at verse 15.

When God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles. But when? This is the God intervention moment in Paul's life. He wasn't just sitting around waiting, looking for something to do. God intervened dramatically for him. And look at the power of God's grace at work in his life as he kind of stepped through these couple of things. First thing, he set me apart from my mother's womb. God chose Paul before he was born. Before he'd even had a breath, God had already decided Paul would belong to him. Paul would be used to take the gospel out to the Gentiles. In spite of everything that Paul was going to do and be in his life, God had already decided, I'm going to use him.

God had already chosen him. God even uses the fierceness and the evil that is there in his life before to become the backdrop so that we can see how dramatically powerful the gospel is to change somebody. It doesn't make it less evil, but God is powerful enough. His grace is powerful enough to take that evil and turn it and use it for good. What that means for you and me is that the stuff in your life right now that might make you question whether or not the gospel offer of forgiveness is an offer for you is actually the kind of stuff that God loves to take and use. So it shows just how powerful he is, just how gracious he can be. It could be something that causes you shame, something you try and hide, something you try and pretend never happened. That stuff can be used by God to display

[20 : 08] Jesus. That's what he did for Paul. Having set Paul apart and having patiently waited as Paul spent his life and his days trying to destroy the church, then God called him, called him by grace.

Now just sit in that for a second. Again, this is one of those moments where we can go into autopilot when we're reading the Bible and not understand how drastic this is. Remember who we're talking about. Remember who this is that God just called by grace. Remember his former way of life, bent on destroying God's church, overflowing with hatred towards God, killing God's people. And yet God calls him by grace to be forgiven, to be loved, to be brought into the family, to become a messenger of that same hope that he's just discovered. The gospel is powerful enough to dramatically punch through that wall of hatred that Paul is putting up. He's not looking for Jesus at this point. Paul's not a seeker. He's not visiting church because he's not in church because he's not in church because his wife or his girlfriend or his housemate or his parents dragged him along. If Paul's in church, he's there looking for people to kill, people to arrest. And yet God calls him. So powerfully that all of that hatred and anger and rejection of God subsides and is overwhelmed in an instant. But there's not even a progressive journey that's talked about here.

See, there is no human argument that is that powerful. There is no story that a human could make up, no human gospel powerful enough to change someone like that.

There wasn't even time for Paul to take little progressive steps, you know, to go from, I hate God to maybe he's okay. I guess I could check stuff out. I'll just dip my toe in and try and trust him a little bit. And you know what? He's really good.

[22 : 38] I'm going to follow him. And in fact, I'm going to be a missionary and I'm going to tell other people about him. There's no timeline like that. He is traveling to kill Christians and he meets Jesus and it all changes in an instant.

That is the power of the gospel. That is the power of encountering Jesus as a risen Savior. If you're in this room right now and you're here under coercion, you've been dragged along by that special someone in your life or mom or dad or brother or sister or whoever it is, I want to say that's okay. I get it. I've been there.

But what you need to understand is that if God has chosen you, and he does that before you're born, if God has chosen you, there's no point running.

His grace and his gospel is so powerful that when he calls, you're going to answer. You might not even know that he's getting ready to call you, but when he does, when he shows you just how good he is, when he gives you a chance to see how incredible he is, you're in.

Paul wasn't looking for Jesus, but the gospel call was irresistible. You might be thinking, well, maybe he didn't choose me, and so maybe I can just mind my own business and keep doing my own thing, and look, you could be right.

[24 : 07] But you're here today on a day when we're preaching the gospel.

So maybe today is your day. Maybe today is the moment when God is getting ready to call you, getting ready to invite you in to be part of his family.

Finally, the gospel call is irresistible. It was irresistible for Paul. And the reason it's irresistible is because what the gospel does is show you Jesus.

What it does is just like it did for Paul, where he was confronted physically with Jesus, when we look at the gospel message, when we look at what God has done in Jesus, we are confronted with a God who is loving and gracious and forgiving and patient and holy and just and majestic and yet chooses to invite people like us into his family.

So having set Paul apart in his mother's womb, having called him by grace, he reveals his son in him. Paul meets Jesus on the road.

[25 : 25] Paul knows about Jesus. He's heard the stories. I mean, he's traveling around killing the people who follow Jesus. He knows for a fact that Jesus was crucified. I mean, you know, that was common knowledge at this point.

And then when he sees him alive on the road in front of him, suddenly all these things that he's heard, all these bits and pieces fall into place. I mean, if Jesus is alive and he was killed, then his claim to be the Son of God is genuine.

If Jesus is alive and he's still here, then him saying that he was going to die for sins and his offer of forgiveness is genuine. Because Jesus is alive, his claim to be the rightful king over all creation and over every human life is legitimate.

Paul's life is redefined at this moment. He becomes a completely different person because he is transformed by the truth that he can no longer unsee.

Jesus is alive. That is the gospel message. The one who died to offer us forgiveness is now alive and sits on the throne. The truth of the gospel transformed Paul.

[26 : 48] The truth that by grace, God sent his son to die so that sinful people could be rescued. The truth that Jesus offers hope beyond death transformed Paul from being one of the church's fiercest opponents to one of the greatest evangelists that the world has ever seen.

He went from being a persecutor to the one being persecuted all because he met Jesus. The gospel is powerful enough to reach and transform anyone.

The measure of the genuine gospel is its power to transform. And so you've got to ask the question, what is it that's being transformed here?

Because there's a risk for us when we hear a dramatic story like we did for Paul that we focus on the details. So what's changed is before he was doing persecuting people and afterwards he's doing preaching.

And that's real. That's a genuine shift. But we've got to look deeper than that. We've got to ask the question, what shifted to make him want to stop this and start this? What made him willing to go from somebody who's exerting force on people to somebody who would choose to suffer?

[28 : 18] It's not just a, I'm going to do something else. Something deeper has changed for him. And the clue is there for us in the passage. It's at the beginning and the end.

Have a look at verse 10. Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings or of God?

Or am I trying to please people? If I was still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. See, before Paul met Jesus, his life was driven by a desire to please people. I mean, he says it explicitly just there. He says if he was still trying to please people, meaning that's what he was doing before. So his religious zeal, his effort to be a great Jew, even his persecution of the church was driven by a self-serving desire to please people. He wanted to please people not because, you know, he loved them and he wanted to serve them. He wanted to please them so that in pleasing them, he would get back the significance that he craved. Because the reality is, without Jesus, who makes it possible for us to bring praise to God and find the significance of being in his family, the only option we have when searching for significance and identity is the accolade that we can get from the people around us, from the achievements that we do, from the presence that we are in their life, from the way people talk about us and need us.

[29 : 49] That's where we will go searching for our significance in life. But Paul's heart shifts from that place. It shifts in response to being loved by grace, to the grace that God shows him in Jesus. And it shifts so far that his deepest desire is now there in verse 24. The end of his big story about his transformation is, and they praised God because of me. It's all about God now. Paul will now be somebody who will choose to bear a huge cost to himself and he'll do it because his heart's deepest desire is now that God be pleased with him, that God get praise. Instead of being someone who is seeking his own identity, looking after number one, he'll be somebody who denies himself. He'll end up in prison. There's this whole catalogue of stuff that Paul ends up going through as a follower of Jesus. And the only reason he can do that is because his heart is motivated by a desire for God to get credit, not him. His life agenda has shifted.

[31 : 07] His first question now as he negotiates life is, how do I please God with this decision? How do I put God first? He finally recognises where he fits that his God-given created purpose was to point to the one who called him to live in grace, was to point to the one who forgave him, to point to the one who satisfies him more than all the other things that he had in his life before, to point to the one who loves him in spite of all that he is and all that he's done.

And so the last question we've got to ask is, if you're following Jesus or if you're trying to decide whether or not you want to follow Jesus, the question is, how can you be sure or how can I be sure that we are trusting the only actual gospel, the one that comes from God, the one that has power, the way you'll know is to ask yourself the question, is my heart being transformed by it? Is my heart shifting from being that people-pleasing, self-serving person to being the self-denying, God-pleasing person? If the answer is no, it's possible that you've fallen for a perversion of the gospel. It's possible that whatever it is that you're trusting or following is enough to make you do religious things. I mean, you're in the room, you're at church, you may be even serving and doing other things, but maybe it's not powerful enough to actually change your heart. And if that's the case, you need to hear the gospel tonight.

[33 : 14] You need to hear the message that God invites you to receive grace from Him, to be loved even though you don't deserve it, even though your heart's inclination is to love yourself first. You need to hear the invitation that because Jesus died and rose again, God offers to love you anyway and to begin the work of transforming you to be who you were made to be. As I was writing this message, I was chatting with Sal about it last night and saying that feels like a really sharp place to stop. It feels almost a little bit offensive. And so I was trying to think of a second option. You know, if you're not being transformed to say maybe you don't have the gospel, maybe there's another softer version. And as I was thinking that through and processing that, I realised two things. The first thing was that there is no other option. The gospel transforms hearts. It's what it does. And so if our hearts are not being transformed so that we care more about pleasing God than we do about pleasing people, we have to seriously ask the question, do we know Jesus?

[34 : 32] Have we met him? Do we know his majesty and his love and his worthiness? But the second thing I realised was that my desire to soften this point was ultimately a people pleasing desire.

I want to be, you know, I want you to come and let me know afterwards how encouraging the sermon was. I want to be known as the good preacher. But that doesn't change anything about that first reflection.

It doesn't change the fact that the gospel changes hearts. But what it did do is remind me that maybe I need to keep hearing the gospel.

Reminded me that maybe I'm not a finished product yet in that journey from people pleasing to God pleasing. I'm sure that many of you guys are aware that I'm in the process of training for a half marathon.

You're probably aware because I'm always telling you how fast or slow I'm running or I'm limping as I try and get up on the platform on a Sunday. It was a whim, it was a silly decision. I was on holidays a little over ten weeks ago and my brother-in-law, he's an indigenous marathon runner.

[35 : 54] He has a slightly different body type to me and he's been doing marathon running for a while and he managed to talk me into why don't you just have a go, just run a half marathon. Why don't I?

Because I'm nearly 35 and I've never done it before is why. But I wasn't thinking logically on holidays so I committed and said yep let's do it, have a go. I signed up, I registered for the half marathon and I started training and it was fun for about a week and then now I'm about ten weeks in.

And it's interesting to watch how it goes. I have, I'm trying to think how you're reading left to right, yeah. So if this is my journey of training, I have some weeks where I'm running really fast and stuff's good and other weeks where it's slow.

But my slow weeks ten weeks into the journey are much quicker than my slow weeks week one.

The level of pain I'm experiencing in week ten, even on the painful days, is much lower than the pain I was experiencing in week one.

I'm moving in a direction. It's not a clean line of progress when it comes to my fitness and my strength and how fast I am. It's like this, but it's all moving up in the right direction.

[37 : 03] It's the same when it comes to the transformation that God is working in us. There are weeks where we will be way more selfish than we wish we were. There will be weeks where God in His grace empowers us to lovingly put Him first and serve people and seek His glory way more than we do at other times.

The issue is not are you seeking to please God more today than you did yesterday? Because we do this. We've got to step back and have a bigger look. We've got to ask ourselves the question, am I seeking to please God more now than I was a year ago?

Am I thinking of God first in my big life decisions more now than I would have when I started following Him? As I think about what job I might take or offers that are on the table, decisions I've got to make, is my first inclination, what does God want me to do here?

More so than it would have been before. As I think about being generous, is my first inclination, what does God want from me here? A year or four years ago it might have been, does God want me to be generous?

The answer is yes, just to clarify. But as you've grown slowly, as God's done work in you, now it might be, how much more does God want me to push in my generosity? See, it's a progressive thing, but we've got to be willing to still ask the question.

[38 : 31] We can't just hide from the reality because our lives sometimes do this, because the message here is that the gospel transforms us. And so if there's no transformation, and Deb was sharing this morning, and I was outside putting Huddy in, I don't know if you shared it tonight, but Deb met Jesus after serving on a Sunday school team for years.

And so it could be that you've been sitting in church, maybe even your whole life, but you've never met Jesus. And maybe tonight God is holding up this mirror to say, here's how you'll know.

If there's been no shift in your heart in that journey, then you need to meet him. But the good news is that the gospel invitation is still open to you.

That if you're sitting here feeling uncomfortable, feeling convicted that there isn't any shift in your life, that God is inviting you to meet Jesus right now.

That the gospel is powerful enough to grab you, even if you came here to make someone else happy. The gospel is powerful enough to right now, in this moment, introduce you to Jesus and start you on the journey of getting to know the greatest love that has ever been expressed.

[39 : 50] Getting to know the God who made you. It's an open invitation. Tonight could be the night that God wants to show you Jesus and begin the work of transforming you for his glory.

God, if you've never done that before, if you're sitting there going, I need to do that, I need to take the step, then just now I'm going to pray.

And if you need to, I want you to make this prayer your prayer. Just in your own head, just you can repeat the words as I go. Say amen in your head at the end, whatever you need to do to say, God, this is my prayer.

And in the Bible, God makes it clear. When we come to him and we ask for forgiveness, when we come to him and ask him to help us make Jesus the king that he's supposed to be, the answer will be yes.

So let's pray right now and maybe tonight is your night to begin this journey. Father God, we're sorry for caring more about ourselves and for seeking to please people rather than living for you.

[41 : 15] We're sorry for going through the motions sometimes of church and religion without having hearts that love you. We're sorry for replacing your gospel of free grace with effort that can never do the job.

Please forgive us and by your grace, transform us to be the kind of people who live every minute of every day for you. Thank you for sending Jesus to die in our place.

Thank you for being patient with us as we fail and we struggle on this journey. please reveal your son in us so that others might come to know this powerful, grace-filled gospel.

For your sake. Amen.