

Christ's death and resurrection

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Preacher: Rev Roger Simpson

[0 : 00] Psalm 68 and we're singing verses 18 and 19 of the psalm. Psalm 68 and that's verses 18 and 19.

These stanzas, I'll read these out and then we will remain seated to sing the psalm. Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious, ascended up on high, and in thy triumph victorious led captive captivity.

Thou hast received gifts for men, for such as did rebel, yea, even for them, that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell. Blessed be the Lord, who is to us of our salvation God, who daily with his benefits us plenteously doth load.

Psalm 68 verses 18 and 19. We remain seated to sing to God's praise. Psalm 68 and 19. We remain seated.

Psalm 68 and 19. We remain seated.

[1 : 57] Psalm 68 and 19. We remain seated.

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CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Our Heavenly Father we thank you for the words of scripture that we have been able to sing.

We thank you for these psalms which express the songs of our hearts. And we thank you for these psalms where we are given these words of prayer.

Words often that we cannot find ourselves or gifted to us in the scriptures. And Lord we praise you for the last stanza that we sang there.

Blessed be the God who is to us of our salvation God. Who daily with his benefits us plenteously doth load.

[6 : 50] Lord we thank you for who you are and all you have done for us in Christ. And all you continue to do for us in Christ day by day. We confess Lord as we have prayed already that we are sinners.

You search us and you know us and you know Lord in our hearts and in our minds. The things that we say and the things that we leave unsaid and the things that we do.

The things that we leave undone. They are evidences to us of the sin that is in us. And we acknowledge Lord that that sin is an offence to you. That sin is deserving of punishment.

The wages of sin is death we are told. And so Lord we are those who are much in need of salvation. But we thank you that you are the God who saves.

We thank you that you are the God who has loved us when we did not love you. You are the God who loved us and who sought us and who saved us when we were still sinners.

[7 : 57] We thank you for the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ. We thank you Father for the depth of your love.

That you would send your only son to make wretches like us your treasure. We thank you for the cross which we are pointed forward to in the psalm that we will come on to sin.

We thank you for that place that Jesus so willingly went. To drink the cup of God's wrath. To drain it. So that we would not have to take it up ourselves.

We thank you that he who knew no sin became sin. So that we who are sinners could become righteous in and through him. And we thank you that this evening we can bow in your presence.

The God of all creation. The God who is almighty. The God who is holy. The awesome, omnipotent God. And we can call you our God.

[9 : 04] And our Father. We thank you that we can come to you. In reverence. And yet with a holy confidence. Knowing that because we come in the name of Jesus.

Because we come. Not with anything in our hands. But simply clinging to the cross of Christ. We are assured that when we come in that manner. We will be received.

We thank you for the assurance of salvation. That we took some time exploring this morning. We thank you that there is no one. And there is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ.

And we praise you Lord. That when we are in Christ. We are absolutely and eternally secure. When we ask for that forgiveness of sin. When we repent of our sin.

And believe in Jesus. We thank you that we are saved. Our past sins. Our present sins. Our future sins. Are saved.

[10 : 09] And although many things change. In terms of time. We thank you that our salvation. That stands secure. We thank you that although. Many things change in our providence.

And the experience of life. That we go through. Our salvation remains secure. We thank you that although. We find that we are attacked.

From many different quarters. We are victorious. When we are in Christ. So enable us we pray.

Even as we cast our minds back. To that passage from this morning. To rejoice. In the gospel. And the promises that are ours. In Christ. We pray for anyone here this evening.

Who is not yet in Christ. We ask Lord that you would open. Their eyes. That they would see. Their sin. And their great need of Jesus. We pray that you would open.

[11 : 07] Their eyes. That they may see the glory. And the sufficiency of Christ. That they may see. The purpose for which he came. And lived and died. And we ask Lord that.

There would be no one. Who walks out of this door tonight. Who would not. Yet have received Christ. How shall we escape. We are asked if we neglect.

Such great salvation. And Lord we know that there is no escape. And so we pray. That we would be found. As those who come in faith. To receive. The amazing grace.

That has offered. Been offered to us in Christ. We pray Lord. For the work. Of the gospel. We pray Lord. For the young people here tonight.

For those at the camp. In Scalladale. And we ask. That the ministry. That they have been under. Over this weekend. That you would bring it. To bear. Upon the hearts.

[12 : 03] Of each one. And the power of the Holy Spirit. We ask Lord. That young. Lives may be saved. And those who are saved. May be sanctified Lord.

That they. And that we. May be made more. And more like Jesus. We pray. For those who have been ministering. To us over this weekend. We pray again. For David.

And for Annabelle. We thank you. For their ministry. In Dundee. Over. These many years. And we pray. That as they make preparations. To. To head to Australia. That they would. Know your presence.

Going before them. And going with them. We ask Lord. That you would use them. In a mighty way. Overseas. And that you would bless them. And that they may know.

Your presence. We thank you. For this psalm. That says. Even though we go. To the far side of the sea. Yet. You are there with us. You. You hold us Lord. And we pray. That they may know that.

[12 : 57] We ask Lord. For Roger. And for Paul. And for all. Those who. Accompany them in ministry. Where they are. That you would bless them Lord. And that you would use them. We thank you.

For the truth of. Your word. Over this weekend. Yes. We live in a world. That. Is broken. And sinful. We are. Conscious of a culture. That is far from. You. And Lord.

As we see. The reality. Of what we live in. Our hearts. Grieve. But we thank you. That we have good news. In Christ. And we pray.

That we may take hold. Of that good news. And Lord. That we may share. That good news. In this community. Across this nation. And across all nations.

As you give us opportunity. So hear our prayers. Lord. Be with those. Who can't be present tonight. We think of those. Who are sick. We think of some. Who are grieving.

[13 : 52] For loved ones. Past. And. In recent days. In recent months. And. In recent years. We ask. Lord. That they may know. Your comfort. That they may know.

Your upholding. We pray. For those. Lord. Who are troubled. In their minds. We pray for those. Who battle. With addictions. We pray for those. Who have many.

Troubles. And many struggles. And we ask. That they may know. God. As their refuge. And their strength. And that they may know. That they are remembered. Even. Though they may be absent. From the gathering.

Here this evening. So bless us. Lord. We pray. Bless all. Who meet. As we do. Other denominations. Other congregations. Here. Across these islands.

And across the world. Whatever. Christ crucified. Us preached. We ask. Lord. That you would add your blessing. And that you would build your church. Hear our prayers. Take away our sin.

[14 : 46] And lead us by your spirit. We pray these things. In Jesus name. Amen. We will sing. To God's praise. Have we got the screens back working?

We'll sing Psalm 22. And the first. Eight verses. Of the psalm. Psalm 22. Verses 1. To verse 8.

And we'll stand to sing. God's praise. Amen. My God.

My God. Why hast thou me forsaken? Why so far?

Art thou from helping me? And from my worst but truly life?

[15 : 54] All day, my Lord, to thee I cry. Yet thou come, Lord, turn by thee.

And in the season of the night, I cannot silent be.

But thou art holy, thou thou dost. In how good is rest grace.

Our Father's hope, in thee, O. leave thine.

And thou have dést oncentned by, So yay. home, and thou getst onct revealed, Aufgab Film, in the Son of Man, and the Son of Man, and the Son of Man, and the Son of Man, and Elearing. When unto thee they send their cry, To let them deliver us round, to step on, do And give us through us King.

[17 : 21] Because they proved their trust in thee, they were not good to shame.

But does for me a word thine, and does no plan and prize?

Reproach of men I am unbind, the people I'm despised.

All that peace in a way to storm, should not go there today.

They know and shame their heads at me, and walk in thus to save.

[18 : 49] This mounted trust in God that he would be heard by his might.

Let him deliver him, said thee, adding in such delight.

I'm now going to ask Roger to come up just for a moment. He's going to read the scriptures for us. But maybe just before you do, you can just say a little word about who you are and where you're from.

But we'll start with that. Yeah, okay. So you can probably tell I'm from England. I live down near a place called Chipping Norton. Have any of you been to Chipping Norton?

I'd be interested. It's near Oxford. But I've been coming to the Hebrides since I was about 17. I've been many times. I absolutely love the Outer Hebrides.

[20 : 09] So it's a terrific privilege for me to be with you. And the last 14 years, I've worked as a vicar in York at a church called...

Have any of you been to York? A church called St. Michael the Belfry, where David Watson was the vicar. And so I worked there.

And I've been working the last few years. I also worked in a church in the middle of Edinburgh, an Episcopal church called St. Paul's and St. George's, where we, by God's grace, had a great revival.

We started with about 20 people and we ended up with about 800. And it was a real, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. So it was a wonderful time for me.

That was my first church I'd ever led. And I now work for the Archbishop of York, who's an amazing man. He's a Ugandan called John Sentamu. You've probably seen him on the television.

[21 : 07] He's from, he's African. And I work as his evangelist to the north of England. And so I only have 18 million people to reach. Pretty much shame here.

No. It's lovely to have you. You're a crofter. Is that true? Well, yes. Well, yeah. I heard a rumour. An old friend of mine from the islands, who now lives in Vancouver.

I also worked in Vancouver. He's called John, Donald John McLennan. And he comes from the village of Ariruach. Is that right? Have I said that right? Almost. And so he basically has asked me to look after his croft.

Well, I mean, I just look after the cottage. I don't look after the croft. Well, it's lovely to have you. It's great to be here. I'm going to invite you now to read the scriptures. And then is it the message after that?

Or, no, you have a song, don't you? Yeah. So, if you've got your Bibles, can you turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15? And we're going to look at a wonderful text.

[22 : 20] And we're going to read from chapter 15, verses 1 to 8. And these are Paul's words to the church in Corinth.

And he says this. And he says this. Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.

By this gospel you are saved. By this gospel you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve.

And after that he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

[23 : 31] Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, he appeared to me also as to one abnormally born.

This is the word of the Lord. Okay, let's just bow our heads and ask that the Lord will speak to us tonight.

Lord Jesus, thank you so much that we can gather here together with friends and we can look together at your word.

Thank you that you love us. And thank you that you've gone to such great lengths to give us your word, to teach us, to encourage us, and to strengthen us.

And we pray, Heavenly Father, by your Holy Spirit, you will come and do all those things for us tonight, that you'll stir us in our minds and in our hearts and in our wills.

[24 : 31] And help us, Lord, to grasp how wide and deep and high and long your love is for us. And the wonderful gift of salvation that you've given to us, and which you offer to us freely through your Son, Jesus Christ.

So we commit this time into your hands, Lord, and I'd like to thank you for the great privilege of being able to bring your word here tonight. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Now, I came across a book called The Death of Christian Britain. It's written by a man called Callum Brown. And he writes this.

He said, This book is about the death of Christian Britain, the demise of a nation's core religious identity. It took several centuries, in what historians call the Dark Ages, to convert Britain to Christianity.

But it has taken less than 40 years for the country to forsake it. And we all know the headlines, don't we?

[25 : 42] And I think the headlines are similar in Scotland to what they are in England. We see them regularly in the newspapers. Dramatic decline in church attendance.

Or church attendance figures fall again. So here, this is in England. I don't know the figures in Scotland. So over a 10-year period in England, the attendance in church on a Sunday dropped by 17% from 3.5 million to 2 million.

60% of people now in England no longer go to church. Now, these are the really shocking figures.

75% of people between the ages of 15 and 29 no longer go to church. And 80% of people under the age of 15 no longer go to church.

And that's in England. And I don't know, it's probably not quite so bad in Scotland, but it's probably not very far behind, I wouldn't think. And at the same time as we're seeing in the country a decline of people who are in the churches, we also see the results of a society that is attempting to shut God out.

[27 : 10] So for example, every day in the... And some of these are shocking statistics. Every day in the United Kingdom, over 312 couples get divorced.

That's every day. Someone calls the Samaritans in Britain every five seconds. The pornographic industry in the UK is worth over 1 billion pounds annually.

There are over 30,000 Christian clergy of all types in Britain, but there are more than 80,000 registered witches and fortune tellers.

So Britain is in trouble. Scotland is in trouble. And there are many other nations in this world that are also going through times of trouble.

You only have to think of the Yemen or the Sudan or Venezuela or North Korea. And as well as national troubles, all of us in this church tonight, as well as people on these islands, all of us are likely at some point to face times of trouble in our own personal lives.

[28 : 41] Troubles with our health, troubles in our marriage and family, troubles with our relationships or lack of relationships, with our jobs or our lack of a job or other work issues, as well as some sin or temptation or addiction or fear or loneliness or discouragement or debt.

Do you know, in Chipping Norton, where I live, we've just established recently what's called a CAP Centre. It's a Christians Against Poverty. Do you know that the average family in Britain is in debt by over £15,000?

That's the average. The average person in Britain is in debt by £8,000. So the question is, how do we respond to this?

Or to put it another way, and I'm going to quote a businessman called Stephen Covey, how do we keep the main thing the main thing? How do we keep the main thing the main thing?

And what is the main thing? So I want to suggest that the main thing is in our text. So if you've got your Bible, have a look with me at verses 3 and 4.

[30 : 04] And Paul says this, Now you probably know the context.

The Apostle Paul had been preaching in Athens, and he arrives in Corinth. It's a huge city. It was a bustling port. It was well known for its immorality.

And he'd written earlier on in his letter that he'd come in weakness and trembling. I wonder when you last felt weak and where you trembled about speaking about Christ.

I was at York University last week on the way down here. Sorry, up here. And we had a big tent. This is a secular university with about 8,000 students.

We put a big tent up in the middle of the university. This was the Christian Union. And Paul and I and a team were out there every day. We did lunch bars. We had 200 seats in the tent.

[31 : 18] So were we going to fill it? Because it cost a lot of money to put a tent up. Were we going to fill it? Were we going to get the students in? And then we had evening meetings as well. So we were out fishing.

I don't know when you last did some fishing for people to try and draw them in. And we had a little leaflet saying it was called One. And we were looking at different issues. And going up to students.

And initially I had to sort of, I've done this hundreds of times. But every time I have to breathe in. And off we go and we do it. And we were speaking to them. Hey, do you know what's happening today at lunchtime?

We've got a tent. Oh yeah, I see the tent. Do you know what's going on in the tent? We've got a lunch bar. We've got some free lunches. We're looking at some big issues. It's organised by the Christian Union.

Then I expected everybody to go, oh no, I'm not interested. But they, yeah, tell us about it. And we hooked many of them in. So we were full each lunchtime. But we went in fear and tremble.

[32 : 15] My oldest son was in the Royal Marines. After he went to Cambridge, then he joined the Royal Marines. And I was asked to go and speak at the Royal Marine Base in Limston in Devon.

I don't know why they asked me. The commandant sort of thought, well, we'll get Tom's dad. My son, if I may brag, he won the Sword of Honour as the toughest Marine. He's a Christian.

And they said, would you come and speak to all the Royal Marines with their fathers? It was called a Fathers and Sons. I was absolutely terrified. I was probably more frightened that I would let Tom down in front of all of his soul.

I wanted to talk about Jesus, but I didn't want to be too cringy or embarrassing. So I know what it is to feel fear and trembling.

And here's Paul. He's in Corinth. And he's about to tell them about an entirely new faith that they'd never heard of. Christianity. They didn't know anything about Christianity.

[33 : 16] And here he is in a city that's a byword for immorality. Now, what I want you to notice is what does he tell them?

What does he tell them as of first importance? Now, have a look at the text. What's the main thing that he tells them?

He says, for what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance. Now, here's the first thing he told them, that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures.

And the second thing he told them, which was of first importance, was that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures.

And these two facts, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he preached everywhere. If you go through the New Testament, you'll find wherever he went, whether he was in Ephesus or in Thessalonica or in Athens or in Philippi or in Rome, he preached to them that Jesus Christ had died and that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead.

[34 : 29] Now, because they were, as of first importance, they were the main thing. So I just want to have a look at them. First of all, he told them about the death of Jesus Christ.

Now, I find it very interesting that he doesn't begin with the life of Jesus Christ. He could have told them all about the marvellous life of Christ or the great miracles that Jesus performed in his life or his healings.

But he focuses instead on the death of Jesus Christ. He says, I delivered to you, as of first importance, that Jesus Christ died.

Now, he probably reminded them of the awful events that surrounded the death of Jesus Christ. The arrest while he was in Gethsemane.

The trial by the Sanhedrin at night, though it was illegal. And then that terrible beating where Jesus was punched by the people who were trying him from the religious council.

[35 : 37] It's unbelievable to think that that happened in a court of law. And then the handing over to Pilate, who could find nothing wrong with him. And then the flogging, that awful, terrible moment when they tied his hands up onto a post.

And then a Roman soldier flogged him with what was called a flagellum, a leather whip with bits of bone and metal in the end of it, so that his back, even after three or four lashings, would have been absolutely torn to shreds.

Some people went insane under the flogging. Some died of a flogging. And then the mocking and the humiliation in front of all those soldiers, 600 of them in the Praetorium Guard.

And then the crown of thorns, not a neat crown, but a clump of thorns which would have been rammed onto his head so his face was covered in blood. And then a bulrush that they put in his hand.

And then the beating again and the blind. I mean, imagine being blindfolded and then being punched. Just out of the blue, different people punching him and saying, well, you prophesy to us, you who say that you're the king of the Jews.

[36 : 54] And the purple cloak on his back. And then the crucifixion, the terrible pain of nails being driven through his wrists and his feet. And then dropping the cross into the hole in the ground.

And all the top part of his bone, all the sockets, the joints being pulled out of their sockets. Terrible pain. And then the darkness from nine o'clock, from 12 o'clock until three o'clock.

And that awful cry of dereliction. My God, my God, why have you forsaken? Which we sung tonight in the psalm. And then the shout of victory.

It is finished. Now, he may have told them all that. But the weight of the New Testament does not focus actually on the physical pain of the cross, but on the spiritual significance of it.

Why was the death of Christ so important? Well, Paul tells us, if you look at the text again, five words. Christ died for our sins.

[38 : 04] And the reason that the cross was so important was that Jesus Christ died for our sins. In other words, he died for you and he died for me.

He died for us. He died instead of us. He died in our place. If you like, he died our death. He paid our penalty.

And he took all of our pain and our brokenness and our sin into himself. Now, about two weeks ago, I got a phone call from the archbishop or his chief of staff saying, Roger, I want you to meet a man called Neil Obard.

Will you go and meet him? He lives in over in Lincoln. So I met halfway and I met this chap. He's not very big. He's probably a little bit, little bit bigger than me, taller than me.

And this chap was a sniper with the SAS. So he could kill a man at a thousand yards.

[39 : 14] He'd worked for the British Army in Bosnia. He'd worked for the British Army in Afghanistan and in Iraq. And he told me his story.

It was an extraordinary story. He'd been adopted as a boy and looked after by some foster parents in Liverpool who'd abused him.

And so he grew up with a lot of anger and bitterness and resentment. And he was constantly in fights at school, even though he wasn't that big.

And then he started to build up his muscles and then eventually went into the army. And then he was fighting in the army a lot. And they threw him out. Then he got back in again.

And then I said to him, so how did you become a Christian? And he said the most extraordinary thing to me. There's a group in England called the Mother's Union.

[40 : 12] Have you heard of the Mother's Union? I don't know what the equivalent is up here. But the Mother's Union is basically usually elderly ladies in the Church of England who run tea parties and things like that.

And he said, I became a Christian on a Mother's Union house party. I said, pardon? And he'd gone with his wife and two little ones.

They didn't have enough money to go on holiday. So the Mother's Union had given them a holiday with a whole lot of other people at this coastal resort. And he said, I found my way into the chapel.

He never went anywhere near church, anywhere near chapel. And as he went in, they were all given a rock. It was about that big. And they put the rock in their hand.

And the rock really represented their life. And they were invited in the course of the meeting, if they wanted to, to bring their life to the foot of the cross.

[41 : 19] There was a cross. And they could lay the stone which represented their life at the foot of the cross. And he said the most remarkable thing to me. He's a big chap.

He said, I couldn't carry the stone. It was too heavy for me. It was about that big.

And he said, somehow I staggered with this stone, which represented all the pain, all the sadness, all the brokenness in his life.

He staggered with it and he put it at the foot of the cross. And as he laid it at the foot of the cross, he was released. And all this pain and sadness and unforgiveness and anger was released as he brought it to Jesus Christ.

And he's been an evangelist. I'm going to take him with me. He's written a book called One Shot, One Kill, One Mission. So for him, the fact that Christ had died on the cross for him suddenly became a living reality in his life.

[42 : 41] The second thing that Paul told them about was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just look again at the text. He said that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the scripture.

So he not only told them about the death of Christ for our sins, but he also tells them that Christ was raised on the third day. And the New Testament has the most beautiful simplicity as it describes the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And you can read it for yourself in the Gospels. Now, can I say that the preaching of these two truths, that Jesus had died and that Jesus had risen, and they were the main thing, by keeping the main thing the main thing, the preaching of those truths all over the ancient world changed the ancient world.

So it was the preaching of the death and the resurrection of Christ that stopped gladiators fighting in the rings. It led to churches being planted all over the Middle East.

It led to hospitals and schools being started. It led to women and children being honoured in society. It led to humility and purity being virtues that people wanted.

[44 : 07] It led to marriages being honoured. And can I say it is exactly the same today. The thing that will change our country, that will change our communities, that will change our streets, change our towns and our villages, is the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

People are not changed by being told to be better or to be good or going on self-help courses. That will not change anyone. But the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ does change people.

I have seen hundreds of people changed by the death and the resurrection of Christ. Tough people. In a minute you're going to hear from one of them.

Now I want to just ask why. So it's not a religion. And we were saying to the students at York University, this is not a religious meeting.

It's not for religious people, this tent meeting. It's for ordinary people like you and me. I was saying to the people, would you like to come? And it's not a religion, it's a relationship.

[45 : 21] It's not a person, it's not a philosophy, but a person, a living person. And the living person is Jesus Christ. Now why are these two facts, the death and the resurrection of Christ, so important today?

Now I've been very privileged. I've worked in lots of different places. I started life as a curate in the West End of London. So I worked in a church right next to the BBC.

You see it actually on the news regularly. A place called All Souls Langham Place. Then I went to Edinburgh and we worked in a church in the middle of Edinburgh, just off Princes Street, in Queen Street, up the top of Broughton Street.

And we saw this great outpouring of the Holy Spirit and hundreds of people coming to Christ. Then I went to Vancouver to work in Vancouver, in downtown Vancouver near Granville Market.

Then I came back and I worked in St Michael the Belfry in York. Now I have found that wherever you go, it doesn't matter where you go, people basically have the same needs, wherever.

[46 : 33] Now what are these needs? First of all, I find most people, if they're honest, have an inward sense of failure.

Most of us struggle with feelings of failure. A failure to achieve all that we'd hoped to achieve in life.

Many of us, particularly when we get older, there are many things that we wanted to achieve, but which we haven't been able to achieve. Or a failure to come up to our own standards.

Never mind God's standards. And the Bible calls this failure sin. And sin is basically independence. It's going our way, rather than God's way.

Doing what we want to do, rather than what God wants. It's a failure, in its essence, it's a failure to love God with all of our heart, and to love other people as much as we love ourselves.

[47 : 36] It's breaking God's laws. It's being selfish, or lazy, or greedy, or lustful, or proud. And we all struggle with it. I struggle with all these things.

And it leads inside to shame and to guilt. And what is the answer to shame and to guilt?

The answer is a person. And that person is Jesus Christ. And actually what we all need, is we need forgiveness.

And because of the death of Jesus Christ, we can come to him, and we can find forgiveness. As the rapper Lee Craymore said, I'm not a Christian because I'm strong, and I have it all together.

I'm a Christian because I'm weak, and I admit that I need a saviour. The second thing I've found with people is what I call the emptiness of life without God.

[48 : 38] Now I don't normally read Cosmopolitan magazine, but occasionally if I'm in the dentist, I have been known to read it. Just a confession there. And I read, several years ago, but I read a very interesting article about Freddie Mercury, the lead singer of the band called Queen.

They've just produced a film about them recently. And as you possibly know, Freddie Mercury died in 1991 of AIDS. And he said this in the interview, and it really caught my eye.

He said, you can have everything in the world and still be the loneliest man. And then he said this, success, world idolisation, and millions of pounds have prevented me from having something which we all need, a loving, ongoing relationship.

relationship. Now there is only one relationship which is completely loving and ongoing, for which we were all created, and that is with God who made us and loves us.

And Jesus Christ, because of his death and resurrection, offers us this relationship. relationship. And the last thing I want to just say before I bring up Paul, is this.

[49 : 59] I call it the inevitability of death. Now we don't think about this when we're young, but we are all going to die. One friend of mine in York, as he's getting older, he said, Roger, I feel I'm moving to the front of the queue.

A lot of his friends have died, and he's getting near the front. Now what is going to happen to us when we die?

Well we're told in the Bible that we must all stand before God, our creator, and we must give an account to God for our life. And one man put it like this to me.

He said, imagine that when you were born you had a little tape put on the back of your neck, and it played for all the years that you were alive on earth. And it recorded all your words and all your thoughts and also all your actions.

So your life was being recorded on this little tape. And then eventually you got to the age of 70 or 80, and then you died. And the tape of your life was, it's only an illustration, was placed in a projector.

[51 : 13] And everybody that you had known in your life was invited to a showing of your life. So can you imagine that? So everybody that you knew, and you were in a big room with a big screen, and your life, all your thoughts and your actions and your words went up on the screen.

Now how would you feel about that? I wouldn't even want you to know what I've been thinking in the last week. And I'm sure you're the same as me, actually.

All the things that I say. And yet we're told in Scripture that God notices everything that we say. He records it. He records all our actions and all our deeds.

There wouldn't be one single person in this church who would not feel deeply ashamed of their life. Isn't that true? Now the wonderful thing is because Jesus died on the cross, C.S. Lewis put it like this.

He said, it's like a tape recording of your life wiped clean. Wouldn't that be wonderful? If the whole of your life, all that shame and guilt and things that we've done and said that were wrong were wiped clean.

[52 : 34] And that's the promise that we have in Jesus Christ because of his death and resurrection. That's why he said as he hung on the cross, it is finished.

Now I'm going to bring my friend Paul up. Paul and I have been working together now for several years around the place. So do I keep this on David?

Yeah. I'll talk loudly. Okay. So Paul, first of all, just tell us just a bit about yourself. Where do you come from?

Okay. I'm from Leeds in Yorkshire. I now live in York. My mother was a nurse. She was practicing Roman Catholic.

I've got a younger brother. And my father was a very troubled man for a period. He worked in a munitions factory in Leeds building chieftain tanks.

[53 : 36] But he seemed to spend most of his time in the pub is my earliest recollections of him. So it was a difficult time growing up. It was a difficult time, yeah.

I remember my father not being around very much. In fact, I shared with you on the way up we were talking about some stuff and I don't ever remember my father telling me that he loved me.

I don't remember him ever displaying any affection. And in fact, I don't ever remember at school we had some religious education in the sense I remember reading a few parables.

But I don't ever remember anybody telling me that God made me. I don't remember anybody telling me that God loved me. And I don't remember anybody telling me that God desired a personal relationship with me.

So I turned away from that. And you went off to music college? I did, yeah, because I wanted to be a Beatle. That was my desire in life. I wanted fame, fortune, all the glamour.

[54 : 36] The drums looked fantastic. There were girls screaming at them. There was lots of money. And we didn't have very much money. And I remember Roger when I was about 14 making a vow. I said, when I grow up, I'm going to have everything that I want.

And that's very much how I lived my life until 2010. And you did actually have everything you want, didn't you? You made quite a lot of money.

I did, yeah. I went to music college. I studied to be a professional musician for five years. I went when I was 16. My father was an alcoholic.

I used to come home from school and find him in terrible states. We lived in fear because you never knew. He was unpredictable. Sometimes he'd go for long periods of time without drinking and then all of a sudden he'd have some money and he'd go out and he'd drink 15, 18 pints of beer at lunchtime and then he'd go out in the evening and drink a lot of whiskey.

And he was very unpredictable, very abusive. I remember in those days from the age of, I don't know, 12 to, even when I was at music college, I used to go, every morning, I'd retch on the way to school or to college because of the fear that you'd never know what was going to happen.

[55 : 48] And you went, and then you started drinking at a young age? I started drinking, interesting enough, at 16. You'd probably think after what I was seeing, the damage that it was causing to my mother, to our family, to my brother, to myself, that I would never have started drinking but I did.

Several reasons. I started drinking at 16 because it was illegal, there was a rebellious nature in me. You know, I mean, I'd made a decision that nobody's going to tell me what to do, Roger. I'm going to be the king of my life.

I know what's best for me. And I really thought by drinking, it would make me popular with girls. I thought it'd make me a better drummer. I thought it'd give me a badge of honour because at the music college most of the people were older than me.

There was a heavy drinking culture in the music business. But I have to say, I'm not using any of these as excuses. I had a choice within that and I made a lot of bad choices.

And you got married young and then you hit the music circuit. Well, I got married for the first time at 25 and that only lasted two years because, like my father, when I'd had a drink, my character was unpredictable and there were certain aspects of that marriage that were suitable for me that weren't satisfying to me.

[57 : 11] So we live in a disposable society and I thought, well, I'll find somebody else. you know, there was always that, you were talking about that sense of failure as well, you know, and I was thinking about that, Roger, in the sense that all of my life up to there was driven by performance.

You know, as a musician, you're only as good as the last note you've played, you know. And with my father, I said, he never displayed any affection but I had to earn his love, I had to earn his affirmation, I had to earn his acceptance, you know.

So it was always purpose-driven and so, yeah, that really spurred me on, you know, like, I need to perform well, I need to be successful.

I remember, actually, I've never told her this but I remember thinking if I'm not a famous musician and wealthy by 30, I'll do something else. But I met a girl who was born to sing and we travelled up and down the land, we came up here, did a lot of work in the lowlands between Edinburgh and Scotland in the days when we'd play in clubs and pubs, cabaret and you could work for 14 shows in a row, 14 nights in Scotland and then we could go to the West End of London and play 14 nights in the clubs down there and then we could go to South Yorkshire and play in the Workman's Club for 14 nights and then it got, in the mid-80s, it got really difficult to make a living.

We'd be doing one night Edinburgh, one night Brighton, one night Barrow-in-Furness, one night Leeds and Jan, my wife, said there's got to be something better than this so we secured a job on cruise ships, great way to go, you know, you can indulge yourself, you know, drink was very inexpensive, it was expected for musicians to behave a little bit differently from everybody else, we were getting paid to see the world in great style, we're travelling around the world doing what we love but for me there's this backdrop of getting drunk every day, you know, unconscious, drinking myself into oblivion.

[59 : 20] And that went on for quite a while. That went on, it did Roger. And then that marriage broke up. It did, yes. I think what I would say is in those years of 25 to being 54, that if you'd have said to me, what's the meaning of life, I'd have said the pursuit of my happiness and pleasure, which is hedonism.

And being successful in music, you know, we had big house, car, we were collecting stuff, we were buying, going to the best restaurants, buying the most expensive wines, you know, smart suits, that collection of stuff is called materialism.

And that dependency that was coming into my life on alcohol, that's called alcoholism. Interesting, those three things, you know, materialism, hedonism, alcoholism, the all-ending ism, ISM.

And I say that stands for I, self, and me. You might think, Roger, that by this time I'd have recognised that I needed some help. 2004, whilst we're working for the premium, smallest, luxury cruise line in the world, and we've got lots of celebrity friends, Jan announces in Saint-Tropez that she too wanted a divorce.

And I was shocked. I didn't see, I went, we've made so much money, we've got all these celebrity friends, we've never had a better job. And she said to me, I'm just tired of watching you drink yourself unconscious with a litre of cognac every day.

[60 : 46] So you actually came to York, didn't you, and you were going to finish things off? Yeah. I'd come up with a plan. My father committed suicide on my 21st birthday. And, I had an emptiness of life that you talked about.

I was trying to fill it, you know, with success, with money, with relationships, with booze, everything I could, I didn't know that we're actually all made to be worshippers.

And if you're not worshipping God, you'll worship something else. And I worshipped everything else. But this emptiness, I was making actually the hole bigger and bigger, digging myself into a deeper pit. And my father, as I said, committed suicide.

And I started to think about the inevitability of death that you talked about. And I thought, maybe my destiny was like my father. He committed suicide when I was 54. I thought, maybe that might be my destiny, like father, like son.

So I went on this binge from 2004 to 2010, thinking that I'll just go out and I'll just party.

[61 : 49] I'll meet as many girls as I can, spend all my money on fine restaurants. And when that money runs out, then I'll kill myself. I know that's not normal thinking, but that was my state of my mental health at that time.

So you checked into a hotel, it got very bad, didn't it? Yeah, I actually got married again for the third time. I thought she could save me, but clearly she couldn't.

And the money ran out in 2010. By this time, I've got, I'm £75,000 in debt. I've got no career. I've got no house.

But more importantly than that, I'm completely lost. I walked by a plate glass window in the pouring rain one Sunday morning in York. I'm shaking like Magnus, I need a drink.

I knew a place where I could get a cognac at 10 o'clock in the morning. I looked in this plate glass window, Roger, and I went, who's that? And it was me. I didn't even recognise myself. I was so lost.

[62 : 47] But I was terrified, I was bewildered, I was full of fear. How could my life have turned out like this? I wanted to be a beetle. So I booked into this hotel and I thought I'd been there three days.

I'd actually been there three weeks just drinking round and round and round. And in the hotel room was a book very similar to this that had been placed there by the Gideons.

and I've said for several years now, I like the feel of the paper, it gave me some comfort. I used to read some of that, but I just wanted to escape.

I wanted peace. My whole life was chaotic. And I thought the only way to do that would be to take my own life. So I've collected lots of tablets and round about the mid of April 2010, I remember this Wednesday afternoon taking all these tablets and laying down and thinking finally, some peace.

That's all I wanted was peace, the end to the chaos. But I walked up three hours later and there was silence in that room. And the Bible talks about hearing God in a still small voice, a whisper.

[63 : 57] I heard that voice, that still small whisper deep within me. And it called me by name and said, Paul, there's another way, there's another solution. And Roger, I didn't know that at that time, but I know now that the Lord Jesus came into that room because the moment I heard that voice, I felt peace.

I felt purpose. I knew there was a reason to live. I'm in a massive hole that I've dug myself into, but I knew that everything was going to be okay. I had no idea how I was going to get out of that.

And it's interesting, as we're talking, I just had a thought I've never had before. I wanted to die. I actually got my wish. I did die. Just, I'm a new creation.

I've got a new life. God gave me Jesus Christ, gave me a new life, wiped the slate clean, a new start, took out the old heart rebellion, gave me a heart that would honour him, gave me a hunger for his word, a hunger for a relationship.

And here I am now, talking about the main thing around the world, giving glory to Jesus Christ for it. I can't stop telling people about this amazing God who can rescue you, who can deliver you, it's just, I could go on forever about it because it's so incredible.

[65 : 12] And so my message to anybody today is that if you don't know that God made you, that God loves you, that God designs a personal relationship with you, it doesn't matter how far down you think you've gone, he's a rescuer, he's a redeemer, he's a saviour.

And you don't have to go that far down. No, definitely not. I have to say, you don't have to become an alcoholic or a drug addict to meet Jesus. I want to work with that very clear. I work with lots of young people and I find there's a real hunger there but they recognise there's an emptiness, they recognise...

And tell them about the chap that you chatted with last week, you chatted to a young man and he was worried about what he'd have to give up. Yeah, yeah, it was very interesting. He was at this lunch bar and he was saying, I'd like to become a Christian but he said, I'm worried about the things I'll have to give up.

And I said, can I tell you, that was my feeling. I thought, when I was a child, I thought that God was a spoil spot. And I said, so I did all the things I wanted to do but I said, what I learnt was that God is the best father.

I said, I kept trying to put my hand into the fire and God kept trying to take it out and say, no, that will harm you and I kept going, no, no, no, what's best for me? I said, so anything that you feel you're going to have to give up is not the best for you.

[66 : 28] And I explained to him that God is love. So 100% of God's choices for you and for me are born out of love and love always chooses the best for you. And the best for you and me is to be in relationship and be like Jesus Christ.

And that young man became a Christian at the end of the week. He became a Christian, yeah, it was fantastic. Well, look, I think that's great. Let's give Paul an express, let's express our thanks. Thank you, Paul. It was really good. So I'm going to finish now and I just want to suggest you all bow your heads.

Can you bow your heads? And what I'm going to do, I don't know, but there might be someone here tonight who doesn't know this Jesus Christ that Paul has been speaking about.

And you've maybe been coming along here, but you don't know Christ. Christ. And you'd like to know him. You want to know him.

You want to have this relationship that he offers. Now, I got to this point and I needed to do something. Christ had died for me. Christ had risen.

[67 : 36] Christ was alive. But I had to respond to him personally. It doesn't happen automatically. And I didn't know what to do. And then a friend explained it to me.

And I, at the age of nearly 19, gave my life to Jesus Christ. And this is what I did. I said, first of all, sorry to him.

Now, while we're praying, while we're just in an attitude of prayer, can I ask you, are you willing to say sorry to Jesus Christ? And to ask God to forgive you for the things that you've done wrong in your life?

And also, and this is difficult, but God will help you. Are you willing to turn from everything which you know is wrong in your life?

This is what the Bible means when it uses the word repentance. Can you do that? Can you say sorry? The second thing I had to do was I had to say thank you. We believe that Jesus died for us on the cross.

[68 : 42] But you need to thank him for dying for you. He died for you. And he offers you, because of his death and resurrection, he offers you a free gift, just as he offered Paul that night in the hotel room.

And the gift is forgiveness and freedom and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the third thing I had to do was to say please, because God never forces his way into a person's life.

I have to accept him, accept his gift and invite him to come and live within me by his Holy Spirit. Now, can you do that? Would you like to do that tonight?

tonight? Now, here's a prayer. I've prayed this with many, many people over the years, and it's very similar to the prayer that the minister led me in all those years ago in the church in London, where I prayed this prayer to Jesus Christ.

And you can pray with me. So I'll pray it slowly and carefully, and you can just echo it in your heart tonight. If you're not sure about this, or if you've not done this and you want to be sure, then this is a chance for you to do it.

[70 : 06] Take this simple step. If you're not ready, then I urge you not to take this step, but you will know in your heart, you probably know that this is true, and that Jesus Christ is speaking to you tonight.

So here's the prayer. Lord Jesus Christ, you can echo this in your heart. I am sorry for the things that I have done wrong in my life.

You might want to just take a moment to ask his forgiveness for anything particular that is on your conscience. Please, Lord, will you forgive me?

I now turn from everything which I know is wrong. Thank you that you died on the cross for me so that I could be forgiven and set free.

Thank you that you offer me forgiveness and the gift of your spirit. I now receive that gift. Please come into my life by your Holy Spirit to be with me forever.

[71 : 36] Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen. And we pray, Lord, for any, any tonight who've taken that simple step.

Give them assurance that you've accepted them, that you love them, that you've forgiven them and give them an assurance in their heart that they are yours.

Now, when I did this, at the end of the service, the vicar said, I'll be standing at the front of the church as the people go out, but I'd like to meet you, he said, so come and meet me.

And he said, you'll have to push your way against the crowds as they leave. And I remember with my heart thudding away, I pushed my way against the crowds, and he said, you might as well learn that now, because it will be like that for the rest of your life.

And he was absolutely right. So if you prayed with me for the first time in that sort of a way tonight, come and have a chat with me, and Paul will be up here, and I'd love to give you a little booklet to help you.

[72 : 45] So thank you, Lord Jesus, thank you for your death and your resurrection. Thank you that you can meet us and change us and transform us by your Holy Spirit.

In Jesus' name. Father, we thank you for your grace, we thank you for God's riches, that forgiveness, that blessing, that promise of salvation procured for us at Christ's expense.

We thank you for the main thing that we have been directed to once more this evening, the fact that Jesus, your son, died and rose so that we could be saved.

And we ask, Lord, that you would help us to see that and to hear that and help us, we pray, in our hearts to respond to that offer of the gospel. And now we pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be with us all, both now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[74 : 05] Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.