

Are You Saved?

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[0 : 00] There are some people in our lives that we meet and we form relationships with and we might be very close with for a season and then we lose touch with them.

There are those who will be with the young ones in school that they'll be very close to and playing football with every day but in 20 years time there may be no longer much in correspondence. There are those that we meet in university and we spend every moment with and we're close with and we share everything with but fast forward 10 years life has moved on and we wonder years later, I wonder what became of them and even in terms of the media there can be people that we see dominating the front pages of the papers, there can be people that we see on the news every night and they're the ones that the camera is drawn to for a season and then everything goes quiet and five years later you think.

I wonder what happened to that guy who was on the centre pages in the match of the day annual but I wonder what happened to that girl who won X Factor that was on all the TV shows in 2022 and we wonder where are they now?

And Peter is one of these characters that as we go through the Gospels we were drawn to him. Now as we go through the Gospels our focus is always on Jesus but as we see Jesus minister and as we listen to all that he says we see the disciples around him and we get to know these disciples and probably the disciple that we feel we know best and the one that we may feel that we've got most in common with is Peter. And as you come to the end of the Gospels, as we've been going through Luke's Gospel for quite a while and we've just come to the end of it and as you get towards the end of Luke's Gospel and all the Gospels really and as we see the disciples and as we see Peter in particular he's not having the easiest time. He lets Jesus down. He denies Jesus three times in spite of all that he protested that he would be faithful. He lets Jesus down. He struggles to believe the resurrection when the news breaks and John at the end of his Gospel tells us that Peter in John 21 he goes back to fishing but he can't even catch any fish anymore.

And so if all we had was the Gospels we might wonder, I wonder what will become of Peter. You know he had so much promise, he had so much enthusiasm but as the Gospels come to an end we might wonder, I wonder what's going to happen with Peter. Will he keep on keeping on? Will he get back to a close walk with the Lord? And the good news is that he does.

[3 : 31] And we see the beginnings of that and the end of John's Gospel in John 21. But what I want to do tonight just for a wee while is listen to what Peter says himself because this letter that we have in front of us is a letter from Peter. The date of it is about 8060 which is about 30 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And in this letter we get an insight into the Christian life of Peter. We get an insight into what it looked like to be a disciple going forward. It's like an instruction manual for us today. You know in the same way that you get a manual with your new washing machine or you get a manual in the glove box of your new car. First Peter is like a discipleship manual. It's like a guide from a man of great experience on how we follow Jesus. And the great theme of the letter and the note on which Peter begins this letter is the note of salvation.

Peter begins with this glorious truth that we all cherish if we are disciples of Jesus and that is that we are saved. That we have a sure and certain hope. We are saved. And I want to ask that question just by way of opening up the case. Are you saved? And I know some faces here. I don't know all the faces here. But let me put that very direct straight forward personal question to you. Are you saved? It's a straightforward question but it's one that people find very hard to answer and as we prepare to go to the Lord's table. It's quite possible that some even in this room are wrestling with this question.

Am I saved? And on the Lord's day should I be sitting at that table? Or should I be there? And so Peter gives us some help in the opening verses and knowing how to answer that question. Peter gives us some help and how to recognise these marks of salvation.

I want to look at three of them. To be saved is to be first of all chosen by God the Father.

And secondly to be saved is to be cleansed by God the Son. And thirdly to be saved is to be changed by God the Holy Spirit. And so the first thing we see here is that for those who are saved we are chosen by God the Father. And starting right at the very beginning in verse one the letter begins with these words Peter and Apostle of Jesus Christ. And when I was preparing and reading through this I was just trying to imagine Peter, certain that is desk and writing that introduction. And I can just picture a smile breaking out over his face as he writes in these opening words that his identity was that he belonged to Jesus. He was an apostle of Jesus Christ. After all the years, after all the ups and downs he is able to sit down and write. It is Peter that is writing to you. Who am I?

[7 : 50] I am an apostle, a sent one of Jesus Christ. And Peter was an apostle and not because one day he had a brain wave and he suddenly decided that his career choice was to be an apostle.

Peter was an apostle because he was chosen, he was elected by Jesus. And we could go back to the beginning of the Gospels where we have the account of Peter being called and we can remember the scene where Peter is fishing. He is intent with his fishing and he has no word of Jesus and Jesus very abruptly seems to break into the scene and he calls him to follow and Peter heard the call and Peter immediately dropped the nets and he responded.

And he followed Jesus. But it is because Jesus chose to call him. The initiative was with Jesus and that was true of all the disciples. Jesus chose to call them and they followed.

Remember in the upper room in John chapter 15, as Jesus prepared to go in the direction of the cross, he made clear to his disciples, you did not choose me, but I chose you. And for the disciples, a lot of water passed under the bridge and for Peter and for all those who followed Jesus alongside him, there had been good days and there had been bad days, there had been days when things had gone well and Jesus had said well done to them. And there had been some days when they had not been faithful. They had made a mess of things and they were rebuked. There had been days, there had even been weeks when they walked away from Jesus. And we see Peter out in the fishing boat again after the denial. But today in 8060, wherever, as Peter writes, he is able to say, I am still an apostle of Jesus Christ because he was chosen by God. He was chosen, he was elected according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, which was an amazing thing. That God, the Father would choose him in spite of all that Peter would be. I remember once owning a car, it was a car that I longed for and when I bought it, I loved it. It was an Audi A4 all road 2.5 V6 Quattro. And it was a disaster. And it was never done breaking down. It looked nice, it sounded nice, it drove nice when it was on the road, but it was never on the road. It was always in the garage and every time someone was wrong with it, whether it was wind-skiing wipers or head gaskets, it cost £1,000. The car just about broke me. And if I had known beforehand what kind of car it would be, I would never, ever, ever have chosen it. And yet God, the

Father, knew beforehand exactly the kind of apostle Peter would be. None of Peter's falls, none of Peter's failures were a surprise to God, the Father. And yet they did not stop him choosing Peter. And that was through all the other disciples. Those that Peter writes to in Pontus and Galatia and Cappadocia and Asia and Bithynia, it's modern-day Turkey.

[12:14] And Peter says to them that we are God's elect. God has chosen us. And what a comfort and what an assurance that must have been to them and brought them as they thought about these words, to know that God had chosen them. And not chosen them blindly, but he'd chosen them with the foreknowledge of all they would be, all their sin, past, present, future. And yet God chose them. And how amazing it is tonight as we open this letter that's being written to them, but it was intended also for us, from Cappadocia to Carlyle. And we have the same truth to take hold of, God has chosen us. He's chosen us to trust him and to follow

Jesus. And I know that in some places people will wring their hands and get into a huge degree of stress as they say, how do I know if I'm in the elect? How do I know if God is choosing me? How can I be so sure? But even tonight as we think about it, we're here.

And that's no coincidence. The sovereign God has either given us the desire to be here and put us in one of these seats, or he's ordered our lives in such a way that even without a desire, maybe with some degree of reluctance for some, we're planted in one of these seats. And it's God's doing. He's put us here. And tonight if you and I see our sin, and if we see that Jesus is the Savior, if we recognize the cross is that place where the work of salvation was done, that's because God, the Holy Spirit, is choosing to show us these things so that we will come to Jesus, so that we will trust Him, so that we will know God as our Father. Peter says, I'm an apostle of Jesus Christ. Peter says to these disciples, we are the elect, we are the chosen ones of God, even though we're a mess. Even though we're looking at the mirror and we see all our falls and our failures, God has chosen us. He's chosen to show us His Son. He's chosen to show us our need. He's chosen to call us to come to Him. So if you're a Christian tonight, then let's take the encouragement and the assurance and the blessing that flows from that. And if you're not a Christian here tonight, then give thanks for the fact that today you are hearing His voice. You're hearing the voice of God through the word of God saying, come to me. So as Psalm 95 says, don't harden your heart, but come to Him. We're chosen by God the Father. The second thing Peter says is that if we are those who are saved, we are cleansed by God the Son, because that's what we see. That's what happens when we come to the Father. We sometimes sing the hymn in Haris, we'll come to the Father through Jesus the Son. Give Him the glory, great things

He has done. This is what happens when we come to the Father. This is what happens when we come to Jesus, when we change direction, when we repent and when we come to the Lord.

We are cleansed. Our hearts are sinful. We are people who are in need. And when we come to the Lord, He helps us and He cleanses us. I had a half an hour on the phone this morning to Apple. I was giving some of these AirPods about 14 months ago. And they worked perfectly until two days ago. And now they're useless. So I phoned up Apple. I spent half an hour on the phone and I got nowhere. It was a waste of time. You know, my cries for help were spurned. I was pushed back. I was told, if you want these things fixed, it will cost you £196, but it only costs £100 to buy them. So that's a waste of time. No help. And we've all had that experience where we've been in need of help and we've come to someone for help and we've been dismissed, we've been swept aside, we've been turned away. But when we come to Jesus, as it says in John 6, He does not drive anyone away, but He cleanses us. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Peter writes to the believers about, in verse 2, the sprinkling with His blood that we are in need of. And that reference that the believers in these places were reading would have taken them immediately back to

[18 : 54] Exodus 12 and the picture that they have of the Passover. Remember in Exodus 12 and the Passover. The blood was sprinkled over these houses in Egypt and where the blood was sprinkled over the houses, there was salvation. Death was passed over. There was life. And there's a picture that points us forward to the salvation that we have through Jesus' blood. If the blood of Jesus is sprinkled by faith over our lives, we are cleansed from sin. And that's what we need. I don't need any more air pods, really. I quite like some, but I don't need them. I don't need an Audi all-road. We don't need to be in some elite university. We don't need to be the number one person in our workplace. We don't need to have a massive house. But we need, every one of us needs to be cleansed from our sin. And we are cleansed from our sin. If we come in faith to Jesus, confessing our sin and asking Him for help, saying to

Him as the publican said, have mercy on me. A sinner. 1 John 1, verses 7 to 9 says, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. And the blood of Jesus, the Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Imagine, an amazing promise. If having heard the call of God, we come in faith to Jesus, asking for that cleansing, for that sprinkling with His blood, we are given that cleansing. And we are given grace and peace and abundance first to multiply to you, says Peter. No small portion, no frugality on the part of God. When we come to Him seeking cleansing, we are cleansed, we are given grace, we are given peace, multiplied many times over. And Peter knew that because

Peter took his sins to Jesus not once or twice, but many times. And Peter didn't come to Jesus for cleansing of just little, hidden sins. They were big sins, they were public sins, they were disgraceful sins. And yet Peter was cleansed from his sin and he enjoyed grace and peace. As he wrote this letter. And it's such a thrilling truth that we are called to meditate upon as we come back to the Lord's table. We see the wine, we see the bread and we are reminded of the body and the blood of Jesus. And the cleansing that is ours if we come to Him. Think of the words of the hymn, what can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. No other fountain I know. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Or there's the other hymn, there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins and sinners plunged beneath that flood. Lose all their guilty stains. So let me ask you another Peter like question in application, a blunt personal question.

Have you and I come to Jesus and asked to be sprinkled or to be cleansed by His blood?

[23 : 55] Because we won't have that if we don't ask for that. We won't know the Savior if we don't call upon His name. We can't be cleansed unless we ask for that cleansing. So have we asked for that sprinkling with His blood? We can't be saved whilst we hold on to our sin. Our sin needs to be washed away and only Jesus can wash away. So what is a Christian? Who are those who are saved? Those who are chosen by God the Father? We hear the voice of God calling us to come to Jesus and we are those who are cleansed by God the Son. And finally and briefly we are those who are being changed by God the Holy Spirit. Now probably the best illustration of this is all around us in the church here because this is a church which we can see as being changed. You've got these great chairs that you're sitting on now. They're so comfortable. Some of you will be fighting the temptation not to go to sleep. And yet we can see that there's work still to be done. I don't think this is how the floors are meant to look in 12 months time. I can look up on the balcony and I can see a whole lot of things that suggest to me that the job is not finished yet. It's a work in progress. And we are a work in progress. Christians are a work in progress. And I think that a failure to realise that is often the thing that holds people back from either coming to Jesus or professing faith in Jesus. Now there is this fear that I so often hear of when I speak to people who are hesitating from trust in Christ or coming to the table. And what they say is I fear that I won't be able to keep on keeping on. I fear that I'm going to come forward and I'm going to ask Jesus to commit my life or I'm going to stand and take profession of faith vows. And there's going to be no change in my life. In three weeks time I'm going to be just the same person. I'm just going to go back to the way I used to be.

That's the fear that holds so many people back. But that's to misunderstand what it means to be saved. See when we come to Jesus, when we are saved, he doesn't just cleanse us from sin and then send us off in our own strength to get on with our own Christian lives. No, when we become Christians we are given the Holy Spirit and God the Holy Spirit He comes into our lives, He starts a work in us. And He is the one who gives us the strength to keep on keeping on. Peter talks about in verse 2 the sanctification of the Spirit, the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ. Young ones at the back, I'm going to teach you a word that you can take into the playground next week. Sanctification.

You know how many people on your playground will know the word sanctification. Do you know what it means? No? Well sanctification is a big word but what it means is that God is making us holy. Do you know what that means? What does it mean to be made holy? Short answer, it means that God is working on us to make us more like Jesus. So as God sanctifies me, He makes me less like the old sinful David and more like Jesus. And it's a work in progress and there is a million things still to be done in my life. But God has promised that He will keep on working. And I will keep on keeping on because God the Holy Spirit has promised that. Verse 15 and 16 we read it says just as He who called you is holy so be holy in all you do for it is written be holy because I am holy. Now that's a work that's impossible for us but it's the work of the Holy Spirit. And it's a work that that He the Holy Spirit will do. From the moment that we believe to the moment that we pass into eternity the Holy Spirit is working in us and He's working on us to make us more like Jesus. To make us more obedient to Jesus. Now there's lots of projects that we start and we never finish. We have great intentions with our gardens, we have great intentions in the shed. But there's many many jobs that we start and we just lose focus.

We don't finish them. But God the Holy Spirit never gives up on any of us. Philippians chapter 1 we have a reminder that He who began a good work on you will see it through to completion on the day of Christ Jesus. And Peter could testify to that in his life. Peter tried to give up. He went back to the fishing boat and yet we see him in that almost comedic scene in John 21 when he's grafting away doing what he's a professional in. He can't catch any fish and Jesus says just try here. There's 153 fish in the net they're bursting. See

Peter could recall a season in his life where he let go of Jesus. But Jesus didn't let go of Peter. And he won't let go of any of us if we truly trust him. It was Spurgeon who said it is not your hold of Christ that saves you but his hold of you. Those who are Christians, those who are saved are being changed by God the Holy Spirit. And Peter is keeping on keeping on in 8060 because God the Holy Spirit was still at work in him. And if you and I come to Jesus and if you seek that cleansing from sin, God the Holy Spirit will come in and he will begin a work of making us less like the old us and more like Jesus. And yes there are times when we resist him, there are times when we grieve him. But the amazing thing is that God does not give up on us just as he didn't give up on Peter. Our salvation is secure because it's God's work, it's not ours. We are chosen by God the Father. We are cleansed by God the Son. And we are being changed by God the Holy Spirit. The whole of the Trinity, fully involved in the work of saving us. And that's why our salvation is so secure. So are you saved? It's a question we finish with. Are you saved? Or will you be saved? Will you come to the Father through Jesus the Son? Don't hesitate tonight because you can think back to the times that you've sinned in the past and you fear that you may fall and fail in the future. Remember God the Father knows more about you than you do.

[33 : 47] He's still calling you to trust him. He's choosing to reach out to you through the gospel. So don't hold back. Don't hesitate tonight because you feel so unworthy. You feel the weight of your sin and you feel that your heart seems so dark. Remember the blood of Jesus is powerful. He's able to cleanse us from every sin. All unrighteousness. And don't hesitate tonight because you fear you cannot keep on keeping on as a Christian. The truth is you can't. In your strength and neither can I and mine. But God the Holy Spirit will make sure that you do keep on keeping on if you truly trust in Christ. So let's tonight listen to the word of God through Peter. He's an apostle of Jesus Christ. He has all the marks and the scars of past failures and he says to us. Will you not come to the Jesus and be saved? For those who are saved. Will you not tell people about your Savior? And the table is the place you can go to tell people that he is your Savior.