

## Salvation Matters Most

**1 Timothy 1:15**, “Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” **Ephesians 2:8**, “For by grace you have been saved.” **1 Timothy 2:3-4**, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.”

**Salvation** matters! And it matters most to sinners. In the Old Testament the word “salvation” refers to; *deliverance from danger; deliverance of the weak from an oppressor; the healing of sickness and disease; and deliverance from guilt and its consequences*. It may also refer to national deliverance from military threat or the release from captivity. But **salvation** finds its deepest meaning in the spiritual realm. Mankind’s universal need for **salvation** is one of the clearest teachings in the whole Bible. The need for salvation goes back to the removal of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. After the *Fall*, the lives of people were marked by strife and difficulty. Increasingly, corruption and violence dominated the earth. When God destroyed the world with the *Flood*. He also performed the first act of salvation by saving Noah and his family. However, the central Old Testament experience of **salvation** was the exodus from Egypt. When God brought the Israelites out from tyranny in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land.

Later, a new exodus emerged with the expectation of a realisation of the **rule of God** - that one day God would overpower all His enemies and perfect the life of His people. This hope is expressed through the biblical concept of the “day of the Lord.” But such an expectation also focused the people on the role of the Anointed King and the coming of the Messiah (the Christ).

However, even Israel’s return from captivity failed to fulfil all their hopes. So a new understanding arose; the full realisation of God’s purpose of **salvation** would involve the coming of a completely new age. This doctrine of salvation reached its fulfilment in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus’ mission was to **save** the world from sin and the wrath of God. And during His earthly ministry, **salvation** was brought to people by His presence and the power of faith. But now, our salvation is based on His death and resurrection.

The **salvation** that comes through Christ may be described in three tenses; *past, present and future*. When you believe in Christ, you are saved. But you are also in the process of being saved from the power of sin. Finally, you shall be saved from the very presence of death and sin. God has released into your life today the power of Christ’s resurrection and this gives you a foretaste of your future life as a child of God. Your experience of **salvation** will only be complete when Christ returns and the kingdom of God is fully revealed. Until then, you are able to experience heaven here on earth!

Someone once said, “Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.” Jesus does more than this. He considers Himself your closest friend, and in turn, He has promised never to leave you or forsake you. Consequently, He leaves divine footprints on every aspect of your life – daily! And He also gives you a brand new heart. Jesus places in you the very same heart that He has – a heart that’s full of unconditional love; a heart that’s ever yearning to meet the needs of others. This “*change of heart*” was conspicuous in the disciple Peter when he preached the most important sermon of his life on the Day of Pentecost.

From denying Jesus three times, and never quite getting his life right, Peter is totally transformed by the power of God’s Spirit. Peter had a “change of heart” experience – His **salvation** had finally become real to him. Peter was obviously the spokesperson of the disciples; He was bold and very direct, quoting a well-known passage of scripture to the people present. Then, he closes the quotation from Joel with the promise that whoever calls on the name of the Lord **shall be saved**. This is the good news for all of mankind. That salvation is offered to all people on the principle of **faith** in the Lord.

The name of the Lord is an expression that includes all that the Lord is. Therefore, to call on His name is to call on “*all that He is.*” The Lord Himself is the true object of our faith and the only way of **salvation**.

But who is ‘*the Lord*’ Peter is speaking of? He next announces the startling news that Jesus whom they had just crucified is both Lord and Christ. Can you imagine the crowd's response? And if they had any illusions that Jesus was still in a Judean tomb, Peter was soon to disillusion their minds! They were told clearly and directly that the One they had murdered is in heaven, and they must still be judged by Him. Later Peter repeats the announcement that must have shocked his Jewish audience even further. The Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth and God had raised Him from among the dead, and the apostles could testify of this because they were all eyewitnesses to His resurrection. Following His resurrection, the Lord Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God, and now the Holy Spirit has been sent. This was Peter's explanation of what had happened earlier in the day.

Peter doesn't stop there! He then courageously calls upon his audience to change their opinion concerning the Christ and publicly acknowledge that they had accepted Jesus as Lord. Peter makes a lionhearted appeal for the salvation of every man, woman and child present. “*Then those who gladly embraced his word received the gift of the Holy Spirit and that day about three thousand souls were added to them*” (verse 41).

This day meant something to these three thousand souls – it meant that they were finally “right” with God. They were truly **saved**, and then **filled** with the Holy Spirit as well! But this day also meant a lot to Peter. It was the day that he moved from being a “big mouth” to being a “big man!” He had a change of heart, and this change of heart was due to a complete realisation of his **salvation** in Christ. What a difference salvation makes!

Peter was the first apostle to be called by Jesus, and he became the first apostle to step into the fullness of what God had made him to be. He was the first apostle to recognise Jesus as the Messiah, and the first to witness the resurrection. He was the first to inspire the writing of a Gospel, but more importantly, Peter was the first apostle to proclaim **salvation** to the gentiles.

Salvation does matter – it matters most! But the big question is this, “*Is your salvation conspicuous? Have you really had a change of heart?*”