

Peter: A man changed

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[0 : 00] Now, the thing about being transformed, you know, it can sound so sort of comprehensive, so otherworldly, and maybe a little bit, you know, not a bit spiritual, but very spiritual. Even the word transformed, we don't walk around talking to each other and say, hmm, you're looking transformed today.

You know, it just means change, but there is a deeper meaning to it as well. Remember, I'm sort of tracking off what we've been doing in our last series with Nick, Romans 12, where it ends up by saying you must be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

And that word, the Greek word is metamorphosis. You've got to literally be, it's what we see when a caterpillar changes, right? The process of metamorphosis, changing inside and out. And so, if we have to think through being transformed, maybe it's a little bit out of our reach.

You know, for ordinary, everyday Christians, it's like, yes, we must be transformed, that sounds great, but you know, I need to get supper ready. I need to get the kids to school. You know, I need to get that report from my boss done.

I'm dealing with a mess in my family. You know, being transformed, that's almost a luxury beyond where I am at the moment. Who has time to think about being transformed when I'm just trying to make it through the day?

[1 : 17] But I think we misunderstand what being transformed is all about if we divorce it from everyday living. I think it's important that we must realize that God is wanting us to be transformed so that our ordinary, everyday lives look and feel different.

Yes, it is taking us from one level to another, but it's in the ordinary, everyday messiness of our lives that God is busy changing us. And for that reason, a great place to start our series is looking at one of the very ordinary, very human heroes in the Bible, Peter.

What changed Peter? In our passage today, Peter is on fire. He's standing in front of the full gathering of the Jewish Sanhedrin, the highest authority of the land.

They would have all been seated there, almost a hundred of them, in their robes and looking majestic and strong and powerful. And there's Peter and John standing at the bottom.

They would have been seated around him like this. Now tell us what's going on here. You know that feeling of being called to the principal's office? Imagine having a whole host of principals there. Or like being in court.

[2 : 28] You know, you always feel like, ooh, okay, wondering how you're going to answer these things. But Peter is on fire. He doesn't back down when told to keep quiet.

And he skillfully and boldly talks about the power and authority of Jesus. What's remarkable is that it's Peter that's doing this. Because we've been tracking through the Gospel of Mark recently.

Do you remember the last time we met Peter? We just saw his back. As he ran away, when a little slave girl asked him, hey, do you know Jesus? No, no. No, no.

I don't know this guy. So this is a stunning change from what happened just over 40 days previously. Or just over 50 days previously. Pentecost has just happened.

Pentecost is 50 days after the Passover. Judging from Peter's track record in the Gospel of Mark, he will either say something totally inappropriate in that kind of setting. Remember when Jesus, in Mark chapter 8, where Jesus finally reveals to him that he's the Messiah, and he's got to go to Jerusalem and die, and Peter's like, no, you don't have to do that.

[3 : 37] Totally inappropriate. I don't know what he's saying. Imagine what he's going to blurt out in this setting. He's with the Apostle John. I wonder what John was thinking at that point. I wonder what's going to happen here if Peter opens his mouth.

Or, he would have shrunk back and denied everything like he did in Mark. No. Tell us about this healing. No, healing.

What healing? I don't know anything about healing. John, do you know anything about this healing? No, no. John's standing there going, is Peter going to do a runner on me again? So the Peter we meet in Acts 4 is a changed man.

He's a man transformed. You know, even the Sanhedrin is astonished at Peter's abilities. If you've got your Bibles, keep it there in Acts 4. But have a look at verse 13.

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished. And they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

[4 : 43] So I hope you agree with me that it will be worthwhile to spend a bit of time looking at what changed Peter and then see what lessons we can learn from that for our lives. When we follow the story of Peter from the Gospels to Acts, we see three causes of his transformation.

And those three things that change him are the same three things that will change us. And so as we start our series, we're just going to uncover the cause of our change, the cause of our transformation, the thing that actually starts this whole process.

I think that will be worthwhile because we're going to spend a bit of time over the next few weeks actually unpacking the things that we're going to find out today. The first and most important source of Peter's change was the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

Everything else that changed Peter flows downhill from those two events. Although they form a matrix of the same event really, but it's the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

It was the resurrection that changed everything for him. Let's turn back to Acts chapter 1. Jesus is busy talking to the apostles and he says this, after his suffering, in Acts chapter 1 verse 3, after his sufferings, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.

[6 : 10] He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God. So you've got, in Acts 1, you've got a picture of a dead man sitting with Peter and the other apostles and speaking to them over 40 days, telling them about how his death and resurrection fits into the kingdom of God, God's great plan to renew the world.

It must have been a mind-blowing experience for them. For Peter, Jesus returning from the dead changes everything. That's why Peter makes the resurrection and ascension the focal point of his preaching in Acts.

A very interesting exercise is to go through the book of Acts and just go through the speeches, the gospel messages in Acts, because that tells us what the gospel is all about. Have a look at Acts chapter 2 verse 31.

Peter's in the middle of his first sermon, the sermon that starts everything off in the New Testament. Peter says this, seeing what was to come.

He's talking about the prophet, sorry, David, writing in the Psalms. He says, seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

[7 : 40] God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of it. He says, exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Talking about what happened at Pentecost. And he ends off by saying, therefore, let all Israel be assured of this, God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

It is this message and this reality of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus that starts the church. It's programmatic for the whole of the book of Acts, which means it's programmatic for the church, which means it's programmatic for history, which means it's programmatic for us.

Do you understand what I mean by programmatic? It tells us, it lays the tracks, the foundations in which, okay, if you believe this, this is what's going to happen to you.

The things that happen to the people in Acts, the thing that God makes things happen in people's lives, this is the message that makes it happen. It defines what the content of the gospel message is.

[8 : 53] And at the heart of the message is the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, which proves that he is now the exalted Lord of heaven and earth. There's another sermon in Acts chapter 3, which Peter is giving in a reply to in Acts chapter 4.

In Acts chapter 3, there's a cripple. He cries out to Peter for help. Peter helps him, not by his own strength, but in the name of Jesus, he says to him, get up and walk.

And everyone says, how the heck? What? And that guy had been standing, he'd been crippled for 40 years at the gate of the temple. Everyone knew this guy. He's walking around. They say, how does this happen?

And Peter tells him, because of the resurrection of Christ. He gives the same answer in Acts chapter 4. Just have a look at from verse 10. The Sanhedrin is demanding an account.

Peter's answer, now know this, you and all the people of Israel, it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.

[10 : 02] Further, he doesn't just stop there, Jesus is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone. What's interesting thing that Peter's doing there, is that he's interjecting that little word, you, from our quote in Psalm 118.

The quote in Psalm 118 is, the stone the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone. And Peter's like, well, yes, you are the guys that buried him. God is the one that raised him.

And that is why, he goes on to say in verse 12, salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven, given to mankind, by which we may be saved.

So the resurrection and ascension, is God's vindication of Jesus, of who he is, exalting him to rule in heaven, but to have an effect on earth, to rule over earth, to be the king of earth.

The only person that can now bring salvation, is this person that's died and rose again. You say, okay, well, why is that the case? Well, do you know anyone who's died and come back from the dead? And if they did, don't you think that would be, a very important person to listen to?

[11 : 09] That's why they sat with Jesus, for 40 days, listening to him telling them about the kingdom. Now, you guys have got to listen to me and Nick, because, we're standing here talking to you.

It's our appointed place to do that. And, I bet you anything, you would pay far more attention, not that you don't, but, far more attention, if you had known that I was dead, and came back to life again.

It's just one of those things. You just, you would just listen to us, to, well, to us, if both of us died, and came back from the dead. But, it's just one of those things. Here in Acts 4, Peter launches a direct attack, on the illegitimate authority, of the Sanhedrin.

They've become God's enemies, by killing Jesus, but God has vindicated him, by raising him from the dead, and putting him in the highest place in heaven. He's, the corner, the cornerstone, is now the most important person, in God's plan, to grow his kingdom.

That's what the cornerstone there means. Now, we've looked at this in the past, but, just to remind ourselves, the cornerstone, is the stone that holds, the whole building together. We don't, really think about it these days.

[12 : 24] We even think of an arch, it's that sort of centerpiece, in, in that particular part of the building. And that's what the cornerstone does.

It stops the whole thing, from falling apart. If Jesus is the cornerstone, of God's plan for the world, it means he must be, the cornerstone, in our lives. Each person needs Jesus, as the cornerstone, so that their lives can, stay together, and not just, fall apart, when difficult times come.

You can only do that, if you have Jesus, as the cornerstone, in your life. Well, the resurrection is so powerful, for Peter.

So it forms his, his preaching and acts, but, you know, it forms a central part, of his thinking, even years later. It's just, it never left Peter, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ.

In his letter, 1 Peter, we don't have to turn, I've got it up on the screen for us, Peter writes this, blessed be, the God and Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy, has caused us, to be born again, to a living hope, through, the resurrection, of Jesus Christ, from the dead.

[13 : 42] So the thing that causes, people to change, is Christ's resurrection. You got that? The thing that happened to Jesus, giving him life, giving him eternal, eternal life, that lasts long, and eternal life, sort of an eternal power, eternally powerful life, power is just flowing, out of Jesus.

The same thing that Jesus has, he puts into his people. It's the same thing, that changes them. We have been born again, we've been given new life, we are being renewed, we are being new lived, all the time.

What does living hope here mean? It's a hope that's active, in the life of the person who has it. It's just a Hebrew way of saying, something that's doing something. So you might remember in the Bible, you often hear this thing of living waters, you know many churches call it, living waters ministries.

To be alive in the Bible, is to be active. Living water does this, it goes, it's like a stream that's flowing. A lake is, it's not dead water, but it isn't doing much, okay? So living water is active.

So living hope, is a hope that's busy inside you, turning around, doing things. The new life that believers have, is linked by Peter, to the new life that Jesus has, and gives to us, because of his resurrection.

[15 : 08] The same power, that brought Jesus back from the dead, is working in all believers. Now, just stop and think about that for a minute. If I have the same divine power, that raised Jesus from the dead, renewing me, what should that do for my fears, and anxieties?

It should make them disappear. What actually is there for me to fear, or worry about?

My safety is as secure as it can ever be. Nothing, can take this life away from me. It's given by God, and held in trust by Jesus. There's simply no power, in heaven or earth, that can change that reality.

It should do that, but does it in our lives. I would say, the extent that it doesn't, help us with our fears and anxieties, is the extent to which we don't, latch on to this, resurrection power, that's working in our lives.

We basically just, forget it, that it's there. I guess it's a bit like, these weightlifters.

[16 : 24] Imagine Arnold Schwarzenegger, back in the day, when he was really, really buff, you know, from the 1970s and 80s. And he's worked out, he's got all this power, and then someone asks him to do something, oh, can you just help us move this chair, or maybe a pew, you know, Arnie could pick up a whole pew, and move it.

And he's like, and he said, oh no, I can't, and he's like, but dude, your muscles, just pick it up. No, he forgets that he's strong. He's not latching on to his powers.

He doesn't think he can do it, if he doesn't know that he's got, that he's got all these muscles. If he thinks of himself as, before he got all this power and strength, he's not going to go and do the things that he knows he can actually do.

If he, you know, so got amnesia or something. But this holding of our life together, is, Peter continues to talk about that.

In fact, he makes the same point in the next few verses in 1 Peter. It should be up on the screen for us. He says this, we've been born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and on top of that, you get an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

[17 : 43] This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, meaning it's the most secure place it can be. who through faith are shielded by God's power. You are being shielded by the power of God until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

That, we've already been saved, but this coming salvation is the culmination of the plan of God. So even Peter is saying, just compare what you're going through, the difficulties of life, with what you've got, and that should help minimize them.

Does that make sense? It is Jesus' resurrection and ascension that gives us the power to handle difficult situations on earth.

It is a power that changed Peter from running away when trials came his way to standing up to them, knowing that they can never take away the inheritance that is held in total safety by Jesus in heaven. The resurrection doesn't just guarantee our future life, but has an impact on how we live now.

In terms of the plan of God for this world, the death and resurrection of Christ is the start of the revolution that changes everything. So the first thing that transforms us is the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

[19 : 11] The second thing that transforms us is the Holy Spirit. The second source of transformation is the Holy Spirit, which Peter receives at Pentecost. Of course, the resurrection and ascension and the reception of the Holy Spirit are all connected.

They're not disconnected. They actually form part of the whole plan of God. As we've already seen in Acts 2, where Peter explains in his sermon back in Acts 2, that Jesus, exalted to the right hand of God, has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has poured out what you now see and hear.

When Peter receives the Holy Spirit, he immediately is endowed with this miraculous power and starts speaking about God, and God uses his words to extend his kingdom.

In our passage in Acts 4, in verse 8, it says that Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit when he gives the answer. He's in front of the Sanhedrin, verse 7.

They brought Peter and John before them, in Acts 4, verse 7, and began to question them, by what power or what name did you do this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, rulers and elders, and he gives this amazing answer.

[20 : 29] By being filled with the Spirit, Peter is able to speak boldly to those in authority, so much so that it astonishes them. They're taken aback.

How did this guy get to speak like this? He's just a fisherman from Galilee. Peter is able to outmaneuver them. He turns the table on them completely.

And then they recognize this ability and can only wonder what caused it. All they can see are illiterate and unskilled backcountry fisherfolk from Galilee. And these unskilled, untrained fishermen from the backwaters of Galilee totally outstrip the rulers of God's people because they've got the Holy Spirit and the power of Christ in them.

They're stripped of their position, their power, and their prestige because Jesus is the one. Peter reminds them that Jesus is the one that is now the cornerstone, meaning that they have got to change and listen to what Peter has to say.

Because Peter has the Holy Spirit, they can speak with skill and boldness, not being afraid of what the outcomes will be. This is what gives Peter the power to remain true to Jesus at the crisis point of our passage.

[21 : 55] Just a bit further on, the Sanhedrin is deliberating. They say, send Peter and John out. What are we going to do with these guys? They call them back in and they threaten them.

Be quiet or else. It's not just a, please don't talk about this anymore thing. It's a threat. Stop speaking about Jesus, Peter.

Here's the decision point for Peter. He could have fallen back into his old behavior and we couldn't have blamed him if he just decided, listen, John, let's, let's. No problem.

No problem. Good point. Sorry to bother you. We'll come back another day. Let's hike it. Who could have blamed him? He remembers what the last time the Sanhedrin was gathered together.

We met them in Mark. And what did they do to Jesus then? Totally innocent and has way more ability to persuade people than Peter. Well, they crucified him. Peter doesn't know what's going on.

[22 : 54] He doesn't know the future. He's got no guarantee that they won't do the same to him. And his answer? Verse 19.

Peter and John replied, Judge for yourselves whether it's right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

They can't comply. They can't keep quiet. They've seen. They've met with. They've eaten with. They've talked to a dead man come back from the dead for 40 days as we've seen.

He has explained to them what all this meant for the kingdom and for the nations. They had communally experienced the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. And now a lifelong cripple was standing with them.

The proof of everything they've been saying is standing right there. How can you not say something? Why would you not want to? I think it's this combination of the ordinariness of Peter and his previous failures that connects us with him.

[24 : 08] We are mostly unskilled and untrained in the things of God. Us here together. So we have a bit more training but that thing goes on and on in our lives.

We have to learn this Christian thing as we go along. And we have still so much to learn. But we know Jesus and we have the Holy Spirit.

That's enough for us to talk to anyone about him. And like Peter we've also failed Jesus and ourselves at some point. Just like Peter did in the Gospels.

But just as Jesus restored Peter he does the same with us. Jesus doesn't let our failures and fears define us and neither must we. And that gives us hope that if God can do that with the likes of Peter well then he can and does do the same with the likes of us.

And then just quickly as we draw to a close here so we've seen that the resurrection and ascension of Christ lays a foundation for transformation. The Holy Spirit continues that work in us.

[25 : 19] And there's one other thing that changes Peter's life and it's really easy to overlook but it plays a central role in how Peter at last got what Jesus was all about. And that's the Word of God. The Scriptures.

The Scriptures play a very important role in our transformation. When Jesus met with his disciples after his resurrection he basically gave them a 40 day Bible study in how the Bible is all about him.

Wouldn't that have been quite a Bible study to attend? You know at university in English you study books and you try and find out what the author was trying to say. Here for Peter over those 40 days the author of the very Word of God himself is talking to them.

Of course what he's showing them is not little inspirational Bible verses for the day. He's explaining to them how the whole thing works. How the whole story of the Bible the plan of God fits together and culminates in this person in Jesus and the events his death his resurrection his ascension the pouring out of the Holy Spirit the start of the church.

Now that's important for us to get hold of because too much Christianity is based on inspirational Bible verses for the day. You know you get those little things in your WhatsApp surrounded by butterflies and flowers and rainbows that's not going to give lasting change.

[26 : 49] We need to know the big picture of how the Bible works the story of God because that brings out the majesty and the power and the might of God and tells us the most important things to get about Jesus is precisely what we've been saying that he is to die but be raised again and exalted to God's right hand.

Turn with me to Luke chapter 24 so Luke and Acts form is written by the same guy by Luke as the gospel of Luke ends it sort of spills over into the book of Acts and Acts starts it pulls a little bit of a story from Luke in In Luke 24 Jesus has risen and he's called his disciples together and he needs to tell them some important things about him and about God and he's got to teach them before he leaves and goes to heaven.

So Luke chapter 24 from verse 44 He said to them this is what I told you while I was still with you everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses the prophets and the Psalms and he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures just notice everything in the Moses the prophets and the Psalms is written about is about Jesus he's he's the high point of over 2000 years of God's dealing with mankind what is it that Jesus wants his disciples to know what the scriptures say about him what is it about this plan what's the culmination of this plan the next verse tells you verse 46 he told them this is what is written the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will preach in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem and we've seen that's exactly what Peter told others about Jesus whenever he got the chance hey guys this

Jesus died and everyone knows this because you killed him okay they were all there he can say that in the first part of Acts because he's talking to people that were there 40 days they were the ones that put Jesus to death but I'm telling you this man is alive you know they've got to reckon with that now by having a deep understanding of the Bible Peter was able to know just how powerful and special Jesus is and that totally changed how he acted when faced with difficulties in his life because he's got the word of God he understands how the scriptures work when you're sick you need to take medicine to get better to change from low energy state if you luckily just have been sort of sick with COVID and stuff low effectiveness not being able to do anything and to be restored to normality you need to have medicine where you've got energy and you can be effective again but having the medicine in the bottle is useless unless you follow the doctor's orders and actually take it and use it so in order to receive this transforming power that the

Bible speaks about we need to spend time with the things the Bible says changes us like Peter and the apostles we need to spend time with Jesus we get to do that by spending time in his word that changes us we do that by spending time in prayer that changes us when we do that the Holy Spirit speaks to us and does his work in us that changes us change and the thing is transformation happens in a very unglamorous way it happens in the middle of the chaos of life as I choose to bring the power of the risen Christ to change how I respond to what the world throws at me ordinary everyday change doesn't always happen alone though so we're very good at 10 people go read your Bible go spend time in prayer but that's not quite how the Bible says change happens it does happen like that and you do need to do that but there's more to it than that it happens in the context of community it happens in the context of church and that's what we'll look at next week as we dig deeper into how we can live lives transformed by the living

[31 : 17] Christ let's pray dear Lord Jesus we can't really comprehend how important and vital it is that you came back to life and on our seat that it goes right hand and have poured out the Holy Spirit and have changed the world we're just so glad that we get to be part of that process Lord you've started that process in us this process of change of being your people we ask Lord that you would be gracious and continue to work in our lives all the days of our life so we can reflect you more that we can understand the importance of the resurrection and ascension more that we have the Holy Spirit working in us so we can speak about you more and that we will study your word better and that your word would change us and help us know how to live in Jesus name Amen Amen