

My best mate as a kid was adopted. I'm not adopted, he was. And I saw up close someone struggle with identity.

And I know many of us in the room are adopted, and some have had incredibly loving families, and others have struggled. And even if your family is loving, we can struggle with identity.

It's very common when you've been adopted to struggle with belonging. And you know, when we put our faith in Christ, we are adopted as sons and daughters of the Most High God. We are adopted into the family.

And what I've noticed is we can have the same sense of questioning whether we belong. It's very common if you are a Christian, and maybe you're a brand new Christian, to ask the question, can I be sure? Like I've made a decision to follow Jesus.

I'm told that I'm a child of God, but can I be sure? Is there something called assurance? Well, that's what we're going to look at today.

Can I be sure of my salvation? Can I know for certain that I belong? I'm in the family for good.

So we're in the fourth week of this evangelistic series, and as a recap, I'll just race through on the screen where we've come from. In the first three sessions, we've looked at the fact that God is real, and that's a question and a statement.

God is real and he's good. He's created an incredibly beautiful world, and yet, when we think about it, there's something wrong. And we unpack the fact that the Bible says that that thing that's wrong is caused by sin.

Suffering, broken relationships, fractures all over the place. There is something wrong, and God has done something about this problem.

He sent his son, Jesus Christ, to live a perfect life, to die on a cross for the sin of the world and then rise again. And so, that was the second session where we looked at three studies, and that's the gospel.

And then last week, Ben preached on what do we do in response. And we are to have faith and repent, to confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead. The scriptures say, you will be saved.

And then after we make that confession and belief, we are changed, we are forgiven, and we are transformed from the inside out. We begin eternal life. So, now we want to just ask the question, does anyone ever question that reality?

Is there such a thing as doubt? Can I be sure? And of course, we want to say, yeah, doubt is very real, and it's okay to have questions.

But the scripture gives us a rock solid confidence, and we want to unpack some of that.

So today, we're going to see that by faith in Christ, we can receive the gift of forgiveness and reconciliation with God to become a child of God. We can receive that and know that we know we belong, and we are saved.

And then out of that place of receiving, forgiveness and a new identity, and knowing it to be true, we can grow. We can grow in our relationship with God through His Spirit.

So we're on page 66 of our books, and page 66 introduces us to that most beautiful of scriptures that Helen read for us, Ephesians 2. It is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves.

It is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. It is a gift that we receive, salvation and forgiveness. Ben often talks about the Greek language, and that's what the majority of the New Testament was written in, Aramaic and Greek.

In Greek, Paul wrote, You have been saved. Perfect tense, which describes, when you have perfect tense, this is really amazing, an action completed in the past with results that continue into the present and remain in effect. Perfect tense.

You have been saved. An action completed in the past with results that continue into the present and remain in effect. That's pretty good news, isn't it?

You have been saved. Perfect tense. But it's also passive voice, and that means the saving is done to us.

We have been saved and someone else did the saving. And he writes, and this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast.

We did not achieve salvation. It may feel like we are reiterating this, emphasising this. It was very important.

Because to have assurance of salvation, you've got to know what assures it. Amen? We did not achieve salvation.

We received salvation and the results stand. Another passage puts it this way, Titus 3 verse 4. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, He saved us.

Not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. One of the downsides of being in a local church with a pastor that you hear preach a lot is you've heard his stories a few times over.

So with that caveat, I want to tell you a classic story that happened here. That's the entrance just up the coast an hour. And we used to have holidays there a lot growing up with my family.

And we went back there one time. The kids were, I had two kids at the time. My daughter Haley was a couple of months old, and she was in one of the flats there that my parents were at, and my mum had Haley, I remember.

And we were down on the beach, and we had, my dad is a fisherman, he had a 15 foot open canoe. And so my older brother had this great idea, and we were surfers from way back, so we're comfortable in the ocean.

He said, let's take dad's canoe out and surf some of those waves, just there. And dad said, that's a bad idea, because it's an outgoing tide, and I know that canoe and I've capsized it, it's my canoe, you can't write it once it's over.

It's not a kayak, it's an open canoe. And we're like, it's all right, dad. We got this sorted.

So we jumped in there at the entrance and we started paddling out. I'm in the front and my brother's in the back. And as you get out there, obviously, the waves look bigger than they were from a distance.

Not that they were that big, they're probably about that big. And we got out the back, turned around, and I thought, okay, we're gonna be Hawaiian canoe heroes. And we took a few strokes, and I'm used to catching a wave.

I thought, this is gonna be great. It was so deflating because the wave broke over the back of us and just filled us up like that. We didn't get any momentum, we just filled up.

And this is no fun. So we jumped off, and at that stage, I've got a paddle and I'm holding onto the canoe, and I can just tippy touch the sand. But anyone know what it's like to have a full on rip coming?

Seconds later, we were gone. And we're out there, like right out in the open water, heading south. And I had this moment of realisation.

I'm thinking, you know, we're surfers, we've got this covered. And I'm like, no, we don't. I don't think we can get out of this.

And I didn't mention, it's getting dark. So, talk about stupid. Don't swim at dusk at a river mouth.

Just note to self, that's where you find sharks. So, we're at dusk at a river mouth, floating down, and I'm thinking, we're gonna go past that rock headland. This is not good.

How did we get ourselves? Murray, you did this. Anyway, we're just desperate, needing salvation.

And then, of course, who turned up? But our salvation, a orange-red rubber ducky, the life savers turned up, and they gave us a rope, and they pulled us in to safety. And it reminds me of this passage.

When the kindness and love of God, our Saviour, appeared, the life savers, they just appeared. We did nothing to earn it. In fact, we had just made mistake after mistake after mistake.

But they turned up, and they saved us.

One of the great parts of this series is we've been hearing stories. And so Daniel, who's known as Trotty, is going to come and tell us about when Jesus turned up and saved him. Thanks, mate.

Come and tell us.

Good morning, church. It's a real privilege to be able to share some of my testimony with you this morning. So thank you, Jono, for this opportunity.

As he mentioned, for those of you who don't know me, my name's Daniel, but many of you may know me as Trotty. And I've been coming to NorthernLife for the past six years now. I was brought up in a Catholic church.

My mom used to try against our wills to take me and my younger brother to church every Sunday morning. So, I knew about the Bible and I studied it, but to me, it was just a story, and I never really connected with it.

And as I grew older and older, I strayed further and further away from the church and found my own idols. And my personal idol for me was found in seeking the approval of other people.

I had to be what I thought people wanted me to be, and it was never enough. I remember many occasions during high school, I would have to lie and make up stories to my friends to make them feel sorry for me, to constantly be the center of attention.

And it was never enough. After high school, I moved on into university, and these feelings grew more and more. And I started finding a dependence on alcohol to wash away a lot of these feelings.

I remember many weekends going out partying and drinking with friends, which was considered normal in those environments. And it was encouraged to be the life of the party. And that's where I found that idol and that identity in.

On top of all of this, I was struggling with a lot behind closed doors. With that constant need for approval, I struggled to share what was really going on in my life.

I, throughout high school and moving on to university, I struggled with an intense addiction to pornography. And it fractured a lot of relationships in my life. And something that I felt unable to share.

And something that I attached a lot of guilt and shame to. I started feeling sick of not being authentic and not being able to be my true self around other people, and having this constant need for approval suffocating me.

So I ended up looking to other ways to work on myself. I sought out counselling and mentoring in my life. I picked up any personal development book that I could find.

But it still wasn't enough. There was this lingering feeling inside of me of something that hadn't been healed, something that needed to be forgiven.

A couple of months later, when I was about 21, my mentors invited me to a fellowship church service that they were running. And they had an altar call during this service.

And the song that sang over the speakers during that service was, Oh Come to the Altar, which many of us here will know. The opening lyrics to that song go, Are you hurting and broken within? Are you overwhelmed by the weight of your sin?

Jesus is calling. And I remember those words ringing around me like a bell. And all of a sudden there was this embrace of warmth that overcame my whole body and soul.

And I could hear the words of God speaking to me. And He said, I know you, I love you, and I want a relationship with you. And in my head, I'm like, hold on.

There's all this guilt and shame I've been holding on to, but there's somebody that still wants a relationship with me. And I knew I needed to find out more. And that's when I came to this church.

I had, thankfully, a friend who used to come here by the name of Tim Palmer, and he introduced me to the night service here.

And suddenly, I was in an environment of people who wanted me to lift that mask off, who wanted me to embrace those feelings of shame that I had been feeling, and to move past that.

And most importantly, I found a new identity, not in finding the approval of other people, but an identity in a God whose grace and love is enough, a God who desperately wanted a relationship with me. I'm in no way perfect.

We live in a broken world now, as we do. And I often find myself asking God for His forgiveness.

But to be in a place where I don't have to sit alone in my guilt and shame, where there is a God who's constantly there for me, and a community who's always there for me, and a God who wants that relationship with me, that's a far better place than

where I was in. And I would encourage any new Christians, or maybe people who aren't Christians in this room today, that if there's something that feels too much for you, there's that feeling of guilt or shame, or that you're not enough.

There is a God who loves you, and whose grace knows no bounds, and who wants a relationship with you.

I trust you were just super encouraged, as I am, as we hear people in just a raw, honest, courageous way tell us their stories. I said, thank you, Troy, appreciate that so much, man. What a passage this is, this verse.

It is by grace you have been saved through faith, not from yourself, it is the gift of God, not by work, so that no one can boast. Salvation is a gift, and it is available because, as Troy just said, there is a God who loves you. He loves us.

But if I have received this salvation, can you know that you know that you know you are saved? Or is it always a matter of hoping for the best? On page 68 of the book, we deal with this question of assurance.

Can I be sure of my salvation? So that's the second point of this message, that we can know that we know we are saved. We can receive the gift and we can know by the Spirit that we belong.

Romans 8 is an incredible portion of the Bible. Let me read from verse 38.

Paul writes, I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that



is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And just before that, Paul wrote, the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. I love that part of your testimony. That's exactly what you experience, isn't it?

God speaking to your spirit. Paul believes that followers of Jesus can know that they are eternally secure because the Spirit of God testifies with our spirit.

Now, just to look at the background, the original language again, what it means in Greek, what he writes here is, to bear joint witness alongside. That's what the Spirit does. The Spirit confirms together.

It's not a single voice, but a dual testimony. So what does that mean? It's a collaboration of witnesses, the Holy Spirit bearing witness together with our spirit.

It's a joint testimony. This is real. And again, present tense, this is ongoing, continual action in the active voice.

The Spirit is continually, actively testifying with our spirit. And together, they're saying to our mind, you know you belong. You've been born again.

You are one of the children of God. You have the right to be called a child of God because of faith in Christ. Christianity is a spiritual journey.

We touched on it last week, this idea of regeneration. Regeneration is to be born again. So it's not just a cerebral thing.

It's not just a decision makes sense. Something happens to us when we put our faith in Christ. We are changed, and that is because the Spirit of God, the Bible says, comes and makes His home in us.

Who's expecting that if you're a brand new Christian? That the God who made the universe is going to come and make His home in you. That's okay for Christians who are used to it, but a little bit freaky for the rest of us, I think.

What does that even mean? God will make His home in me. Well, that is the truth.

The hope of Christianity is that our stony hearts would be taken away and a heart of flesh would be put in there and that God would buy His Spirit teaches to walk according to His statutes and continually testify, you belong in the family.

So Paul says, when you put your faith in Jesus, his life at death and resurrection, verse 38 of chapter 8 of Romans, I'm convinced that neither death nor life, now that's sort of a pretty big bookend statement, isn't it?

Nothing could happen in your life and the more scary part of life, death, that could separate you from the love of God in Jesus. You can know that you know that you're saved, amen? That's what he's saying.

Neither angels nor demons. He says, there is no spiritual power. But again, it's quite scary the thought of some spiritual power that's more powerful than humans, angels and demons.

No, they cannot steal you from the Father's hands. Neither the present nor the future. There can be nothing that could happen in the future that would steal you from the love of God.

Nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Christianity, again, is not about whether you are good enough.

It is purely, was Christ good enough? And is Christ good enough? And the answer is yes.

Hallelujah. Yes, you can know that you know that you know that you know you are saved, and it's all because of something that's been done for us and witnessed to us, not something we do.

And finally, we can grow in relationship with God through His Holy Spirit.

Page 70 talks about the Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, who is God completely and is the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit. John 14 is a passage that Jesus teaches his disciples this important truth about the Spirit.

I will ask the Father and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

This is the whole goal of Christianity, that God would be able to come and live in humanity.

One truth that's often misunderstood in the Christian faith is that when Jesus, God in human flesh, lived his perfect life, died on a cross, rose again, he rose again with resurrected flesh, didn't he? He's the first born from among the dead.

When he went back to heaven, he ascended to heaven, have you ever stopped and thought, what did he do with that human body? What did he do with it?

I mean, if Philippians 2 says that he self-limited himself, God, who's omnipresent, the word of God, omnipresent, came and squished himself down into a human body, never losing his divinity, fully God, but sort of stuck there in a body.

I don't think most of us think about what happens when that stuck God in a human body was resurrected and got a new body and then went to heaven. What did he do with that new body?

Has anyone thought that, oh, he sort of peeled it off and threw it away and went, oh, now I'm loosey goosey. I mean that with all due respect, I'm back to be spirit. That's not what happens, amen.

Hebrews says that he's in heaven as the one true hero of humanity representing us before the Father. He is glorified humanity.

Stephen was about to get killed in Acts, and he looked up and said, behold, the Lamb of God at the right hand of the Father. He was recognising a human friend. So I say all that because it's very significant.

He can receive, Jesus can receive all of our prayers, all at once. But the reason he said, it's better that I go so that the Spirit can come is because the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, enables Jesus to be everywhere all at once. Are you with me?

So when we say we pray that Jesus would come into our heart, the actual Lord Jesus can't physically, with a body, get in there. But his Spirit can and his Spirit is exactly him. That's the beauty of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So we have the Spirit of Jesus in us. We have the Holy Spirit of God in us when we are born again. And he is testifying to us all the time, you know, you're right, you're right with God because Jesus did everything that was required.

And what we are meant to do is learn how to grow in that relationship, amen? It's not a set and forget.

It's the Christian world view is not understand what Jesus did to get us into heaven and then put the ticket in our back pocket and go on with life. No, eternal life is a relationship.

We are invited to continually grow in the with God life, the with God life, the life that was imagined and described in Genesis, where Adam and Eve walked with God. That's what we're meant to do.

We're meant to walk with him and we're going to talk, Lord willing, about prayer and reading of Scripture and community in weeks to come. But today is all about assurance.

Assurance, we can know that we are saved and we can grow in that understanding because we're literally getting to know the God who saved us. Amen?

Ben said it last week really well, I thought, that becoming a Christian can be a bit like jumping on a train in London. And losing track of what's going on and then all of a sudden, you're in France and faith can be like that.

You're accepting the stories of what Jesus has done, who he is, and you weren't a believer, but then over time, all of a sudden you realize in your heart, there's a testimony that the Spirit does to you that says, do you reckon this is true?

And in your heart, your spirit says, you know we believe this. He is the Lord. And you need to actually confess with your mouth, I do believe Jesus is my Saviour and Lord, and I want to get to know him.

Others, it's a very clear moment in time when you believe, but we want to acknowledge that sometimes it just happens, mysteriously, but as Trottie said, the key is that you know deep in your heart when you are saved. Amen? Because scripture says it.

How will you know with a full assurance that you are saved? Not because someone else, some other human convinces you. The living God by his spirit will speak to your spirit and go, you know what?

You belong in the family. You are born again. Let's get to know God.

Let's get to know God from a place of being a child who belongs, not someone who's trying to work their way in. Hallelujah. We belong because of what Christ has done for us.

It's a gift to be gratefully received, this gift of forgiveness and reconciliation with God and the title of being a child of God. It's a knowledge that's placed in our heart from inside by the Spirit of God. We can know it to be true.

And, you know, we can grow. We can grow in the with God life so that we get used to what his voice sounds like.

And then the more we grow like that, we can embrace this always ready life, always ready to see Christ, always ready to serve Christ, to do good.

Whenever we're given the opportunity, always ready to give an account for your faith, to do it with gentleness and respect as to share Christ, and always ready to steward Christ, to have feet fitted with the readiness of the Gospel of Peace.

So you're ready to minister in whatever way he has called you to do so. Always ready. It comes from this, being assured of my faith in Christ and my identity through the Gospel.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory for seeking and saving the lost. And I just want to stop and say thank you for Daniel's testimony and the work you're doing in his life.

We are so encouraged by his bravery, his humility. And Lord, for those of us who are still on the fence, I pray that you would draw them closer to your love. Open their eyes up.

Save. I thank you, Lord God, that in this room, we have so many complex but wonderful testimonies of lives that can relate to the story that I was talking about, about being out in the canoe. The kindness of our Saviour just appeared.

Thank you, Lord, for appearing in our lives and saving us. And together as a church, a collective, a body of Christ together with the same calling, may you continue to guide us to do good and make a difference in Jesus' name. Amen.