

IV. Salvation

9. We believe that Jesus Christ secured forgiveness for sin and the gift of perfect righteousness through his obedient life, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead.¹ We believe that those who repent² and put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ³ alone⁴ as Lord and Savior receive eternal life.⁵ Through the work of the Holy Spirit (regeneration) they are delivered from condemnation⁶ and become a new creation.⁷

Sermon Ephesians 2:1-10

Made Alive in Christ

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

¹ Romans 5:19: For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

² ¹ John 1:9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

³ John 3:16: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

⁴ Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

⁵ Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

⁶ Romans 8:1: Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

⁷ ² Corinthians 5:17: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

The unit of thought is maybe as large as all of Ephesians, but 2:1-10 is acceptable.

Subject: We were dead and made alive again by God in Christ.

Compliment: If we were truly dead and made alive again, how would we behave?

Homiletical Idea:

You were dead; you are now alive; tell others about your Salvation and Savior

Introduction:

Having a lovely, fun meal with my 14-year-old son. We're laughing, having a good time, enjoying pizza, talking about the what's on tap for the evening. I love the pizza which I've noticed, a little disappointed, is burned on the crusts. Two Amy's makes such good crust, that I think to myself, "what a shame."

I start to take bite into a burned section of the crust. As I bite, I inhale. I have actually not even taken a bite of the crust, not one piece of food is in my mouth. But as I inhale, I can feel IT (and I can even remember seeing IT – a tiny, size of a clipped pinky finger nail, piece of paper thin charcoal. It's not even dough. It's whatever is left over from burning a piece of dough. It's literally a piece of charcoal crust.

I inhale, this sliver of black crust and immediately I realize it's lodged in the back of my throat. I cannot imagine that it's blocking my passageway. I know my throat isn't that small, but I can't breath through my mouth. I go for water, but the water does nothing to help me and I am confused. I don't understand how this tiny piece of charcoal is causing this problem. Seconds later I grow terrified when I realize I cannot breath my nose either. In my mind, I am well past that point we've all been when a piece of food goes down the wrong way and we're left with a cough and watery eyes and the inability to speak a coherent sentence. I cannot cough. I am more than worried about regaining my composure and speaking again; I am immediately worried only about being able to breathe. I realize I need help. Now.

I look at my son and make hand gestures that I can't breathe. And for a second I am so happy I am with the child who doesn't ever get embarrassed and has never been shy a day in his life, because I know

he'll help me. I know that he will be the heroic catalyst who has the force of character to lead me to safety.

I hear him say, "Are you okay, Mom?" And I shake my head, "No." More hand gestures.

I think I hear him say, "My mother is choking, my mother needs help," but, in response to his call for help, I don't remember seeing anyone do anything. And I wonder how is it possible that I can't breathe and no one is heeding my son's call. He stands up, pushing his chair back and yells it this time. I look around. I cannot, I can not breathe. I don't know how long I can last without an intake of oxygen.

I make more hand gestures. I look at the two ladies and a young boy next to me. I make hand gestures. The women don't move, but I hear one say, "I think this woman needs help, I think she cannot breathe." She does not make this statement with declarative force. She doesn't stand and take command of the room. She merely makes an observation that appears only to spark interest from the woman with whom she is dining.

The women know, but they do nothing. I look back at the women. I wonder questioningly, "Are these women who notice my situation not going to help me?" I look around to see if anyone has heard the woman's comment. The room echoes and I wonder if her words were loud enough to be heard over the chatter of the other diners. I look around again and I know definitively that if I don't get someone's attention immediately, it will be too late. So, I walk away from my table and directly into the middle of the room. And, I hear some one behind me. It's you. You have jumped up to help me.

"Some one has noticed me," I think. "Someone has heard me, heard my son, seen me, understood the enormity of this, this confusing moment that shouldn't be happening."

You grab me with great authority and I turn myself over to you completely, without question. I have no doubt this is it, that this will work, that you will get me breathing again, that you will save me. I feel as if I'm a rag doll in your arms. You pump your arms into my stomach and I see my feet flail under me. Nothing happens. You do it again, and I watch my feet dangle again and think, "I'm a Raggedy Ann in this man's arms." You sink your arms into me once again and I cough. And I breathe and I cough and I realize... I know... I'm going to be okay, that you have made me okay.

I feel a second person next to me; he brings me a chair. It's your father I believe.

I grab your arm and quite honestly, I don't want to let go. This arm (and the other one) has wholly and completely saved my life. When no one else was willing, you saved me. I sit there coughing and not letting go of your arm and I don't know what to do or say. It's not that I'm embarrassed (I really don't get embarrassed that easily) and it's not that it's awkward, it's the enormity of the fact that you, a man I do not know, has just saved my life. "Thank you," is just too mundane for the situation.

Someone hands me a glass of water; your father I believe. Perhaps it's your brother. I'm told to keep coughing, that it's a good sign. And then it's over. Half the diners seem to think the "dinner show" is over, though they've hardly noticed there was a show at all.

I hug you, say my mundane thank you with a very horse voice and try not to cry. I've already made enough of a scene.

She went on to describe some email exchanges she had with the man who saved her life, and she ends with this.

Thank you. You saved a life. My life. You saved my children from being motherless. I just don't know what else to say, other than shouting what I now consider "our story," from the proverbial rooftops.

The introduction, which I previously skipped, went like this.

How does one "thank" the person who saved his/her life?

Since January 25th, 2013 I've been faced with that question - the dilemma, really. Other than buying he and his family dinner, how can I how can I thank the man who saved my life?

My conclusion... there really just is no way.

But, what I can do is make his rescue efforts newsworthy; and, in so doing, perhaps I can open up, as well, a forum in which others — you — can lay their thank-you wreaths.

Pray

What is salvation?

Preservation or deliverance from harm, ruin, or loss; this is the non-religious definition I find.

As we go through our “What We Believe” series at Cornerstone, what do we say we believe about Salvation? Let’s read it together.

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Now, let’s take the article in three pieces.

- Jesus Christ did the work
 - We have not lived a perfect life, an obedient life.
 - We did not suffer the punishment for our sins.
 - We cannot raise ourselves
- In acknowledgment and thankfulness for what Jesus has done, through God’s grace and power, we are to:
 - Repent - turn away
 - Believe - Faith, trust, confidence
 - Receive
- Remember, it is Christ and Christ alone. No other way, nothing else in addition.
 - No superstitions
 - No traditions
 - No works
- There is no condemnation

- God no longer holds our sins against us, but we have the righteousness of Christ
- We are a new creation
 - No longer are we bound by our flesh

Let's now turn to a passage of Scripture that I think really boils all of this down for us. Ephesians 2:1-10. Ephesians is a letter written by Paul to the church at Ephesus, and Paul understands what he was saved from. He wants the church to understand what Christ has done for them and what salvation means.

Ephesians 2:1-3

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

- Before Christ saved you, you were dead.
 - You weren't drowning and reached out for his hand, you didn't grab onto him, you were dead.
 - One of the things I liked about the opening illustration was that the woman admitted there was nothing she could have done to save herself
 - Think about the story of Lazarus. Jesus hears he is sick, so he waits two more days and goes when he is dead. Why? Jesus says it is so they (the disciples and others) may believe and for the glory of God. It is a real life, tangible symbol of the salvation Jesus brings to all you believe in him.
 - If he healed Lazarus as he did many others, it can be dismissed. People get better all the time.

People, however, do not get up from the dead. No one can give Lazarus the credit.

- We were following the ways of the world, the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit of disobedience, the desires of our flesh
- See how it describes the pre-Christ state:
 - Dead in our transgressions and sins
 - Bound by our flesh/sin nature and following the evil one with no real choice
 - Deserving of wrath

Ephesians 2:4-7

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

- But, God - don't miss the fact again, that we did not do any of it.
 - Made us alive
 - Raised us up with Christ
 - Seated us with him in the heavenly realms

Ephesians 2:8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- In case you missed it before, this is a gift from God by his grace. We didn't do it. We cannot take credit.
- Why?

- His great love for us
- His mercy and grace
- That he might show the incomparable riches expressed in his kindness
- For his glory
- For us to do good works
 - Bless the world around us
 - Spread his love

Recap of the pre-Christ state and the in Christ state:

- Pre-Christ:
 - Dead in our transgressions and sins
- In Christ:
 - Made alive
- Pre-Christ:
 - Bound by our flesh/sin nature and following the evil one with no real choice
- In Christ:
 - Created to do good works, which God prepared in advance
- Pre-Christ:
 - Deserving of wrath
- In Christ
 - Seated with him in the heavenly realms

There are many things we can discuss and debate when it comes to salvation theology. Limited versus unlimited atonement, predestination and freewill and how that all works, and many other things can be debated within the bounds of orthodox, biblical theology. But, Biblical

salvation is marked by a few things that we believe cannot be compromised; it is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

- Application
 - Tell others about your savior and your salvation
 - Tell others about your savior and your salvation.
 - Compare the past to the present.
 - Think about the worst person you can.
 - Have compassion & understanding for the pre-Christ.
 - Tell others about your savior and your salvation.
 - Personal stories are powerful
 - What have you been saved from?
 - How did it happen?
 - Romans Road:
 - Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
 - Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 - Romans 5:8, “but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 - Romans 10:9, “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”
 - Romans 5:1, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- Romans 8:1, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- Romans 8:38-39, “For I am 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.”

If there's one thing I can be remembered for, I want it to be constantly talking about Jesus. Today, there's an animosity that comes with talking about your faith and Jesus and anything you believe in for that matter because everyone is supposed to be right, and you're supposed to do your very best to not offend anyone, which really just means not saying anything at all.

And I have to say, I simply won't be able to go along with that. I can't go along with that.

You see, we all like to talk. We like to talk about the things we're proud of and the things that bring us the most joy. Something good happened to you yesterday? You'll be talking about it for days to come until it grows old, and then you'll wait for something new to happen that you can share.

I used to not understand how people could talk about Jesus so often. If you simply knew who He was, wouldn't you eventually run out of things to say? Doesn't He eventually become like any other person, any new friend that you come to be familiar with?

That's typically the case, but it's the complete opposite with Jesus. You see, ever since I came to know Him, really know Him, I cannot remember a day that went by without me speaking His name or realizing His presence or calling out to Him. And though others may find it repetitive or incessant, there's a simple explanation for why I will never stop talking about Jesus.

I won't stop talking about Him because Jesus gave me life. Jesus saved me from my flesh. Jesus came down and died for me and for you, even when we naturally reject and deny Him daily. Jesus invites me into His blessings, into His divine nature, into His joy and peace and grace and

mercy to be able to live every day with a purpose and a hope that is bigger and greater and more satisfying than anything that this earth can come up with. We talk about things that bring us joy, right? Jesus brings me joy. We talk about things that are a huge help in our lives, right? Jesus is my biggest help. We talk about things that have transformed our lives, right? Jesus has matured and grown and sanctified me. We talk about things that are constant, right? Right. Jesus.

There's a lot of negativity towards people who talk about their Christian faith, but if they only knew. If they only knew how I would be dead to my sin without Him. If they only knew how I would be entirely unsatisfied without Him, searching in complete darkness for answers that can't be found where I'm looking. If they only knew how I would be living with no purpose without Him, under a severe truth that when over, my life will be nothing and mean nothing. If they only knew how I would have such little joy, hope, or goodness within me. If they only knew how different I would be without Him and how different I am because of Him. But they don't know.

And maybe that's a whole reason we need to keep talking, too.

*Andy Bradshaw wrote and preached this message for the people of
Cornerstone Congregational Church*