

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: EPHESIANS 2:1-13



Salvation is all by God's grace.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Apart from grace, men are dead in their sins. Paul makes it perfectly clear that as sinners, we were not reaching out to God. We were dead in our sins. A dead man cannot help himself. Instead of reaching out to God, we satisfied our sinful cravings and desires. This is true of all men, Gentiles and Jews alike. As a result, we were by nature objects of God's wrath. Any thought that we were seeking after God is shattered by Paul's words. Apart from God breathing life into us, we were hopelessly dead in our sin, in rebellion against God.

Salvation is by grace. After establishing that all men are dead in their sins, Paul introduces the mercy of God, which can bring a dead man back to life. While we were dead in our sins, God made us alive in Christ. We bring nothing to our salvation; it is all by grace through faith alone. No one can boast that he or she sought after God. As Christians, we are Christ's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works that God prepared for us to do.

Those who are saved are the temple of God. Since all men who are saved receive the Spirit of God, we are all members of the same family of God. We call that family the church. Christ is the cornerstone of the church, and all together we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, God dwelt in a temple made by human hands, where only the high priest had access to the presence of God. Now, all Christians, both Jew and Gentile, are filled with the Spirit of God like living stones built into a spiritual house (see 1 Peter 2:5).

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Once we were far away, but through the blood of Christ we have been brought near. That is the gospel! Paul also refers back to the gospel when he tells us in Ephesians 2:5 that God made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Jesus died on the cross for sinners – His enemies.

We were objects of God's wrath, but Jesus received the wrath of the Father in order that we, who deserved death, might be made alive in Christ! It is the work of Christ that saves us. This removes all boasting. There is nothing we can do to make ourselves perfect. We can only accept the perfect work of Jesus on the cross. As a result, it is not right to boast in our salvation, except in what Christ has done.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUEL

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 53:6

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Isaiah announces that we all have turned to our own way. All men are sinners, having rejected God and rebelled against Him. Isaiah doesn't say that some have turned away. Nor does he say that many have turned away. Isaiah tells us that each of us has turned to his own way. Paul says it like this: "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts" (Ephesians 2:3). Isaiah doesn't leave us hopeless in our sin, though. In Isaiah 53:6b, we read the good news: "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity (the sin) of us all." Jesus took the punishment for all of us who turned away. that we might be "brought near through the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

Questions for reflection:

- How does Isaiah's prophecy match what Paul is telling the Ephesians in Ephesians 2? (Isaiah is saying that all have turned away from God. Paul tells us that all are dead in their sins, following thier own desires. Isaiah tells us that we are saved by God's plan to punish Jesus in our place. Paul tells us that we were saved by the blood of Jesus.)
- What does Scripture mean when it says the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all? (Jesus took all our sins upon Himself and received the wrath of God, the punishment for our sins. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.")

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

BOASTING IN PRETZELS

Supplies:

a bag of pretzels

Have a helper come in and ask the class if they would like pretzel. He then starts boasting about the pretzels. He starts by telling the class they ought to thank him because the pretzels took a long time to make. The first thing that needed to be done was plant the wheat for the flour. Then the flour needed to be ground. The salt needed to be mined and that is hard work. He should go on bragging and boasting about everything from the baking to the packaging.

Finally, interrupt him and ask him if he planted the wheat, mined the salt, or baked the pretzels, etc. To each of these questions your helper tells you he did not. Finally ask him if he bought the pretzels. To this he should reply no, one of the other teachers gave them to me for the class.

Reprimand the teacher for boasting in something he had nothing to do with. All he did was receive the pretzels from another teacher. Tell him that a person can't boast in something he or she didn't do. Then go on to tell the class about the passage and how none of us can boast in our salvation because Jesus did all the work.



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DEAD MEANS DEAD

Supplies:

- fish bowl
- other fishbowl
- accessories such as plants and rocks etc.
- can of sardines
- can of anchovies
- pitcher of water

This short skit is designed to get across the point that when something is dead it can no longer come back to life unless God were to bring it back to life.

Memorize the following skit or just ad lib as you go.

Joe: "Hey, Bob. Can you give me a hand?"

Bob: "Sure, Joe. What do you need?"

Joe: "Can you fill up this fishbowl with water?"

Bob: "There is some water in that pitcher over there. Will that do?"

Joe: "Yeah that should be fine. Only shake it up some to get a lot of oxygen in the water."

Bob: "You look like you are setting up a fishbowl."

Joe: "You guessed it! I picked this up at a garage sale yesterday. I thought I would set it up so the kids could watch the fish swim around."

Bob: "Where did you get the fish?"

Joe: "Acme." (Use the name of your local grocery store.)

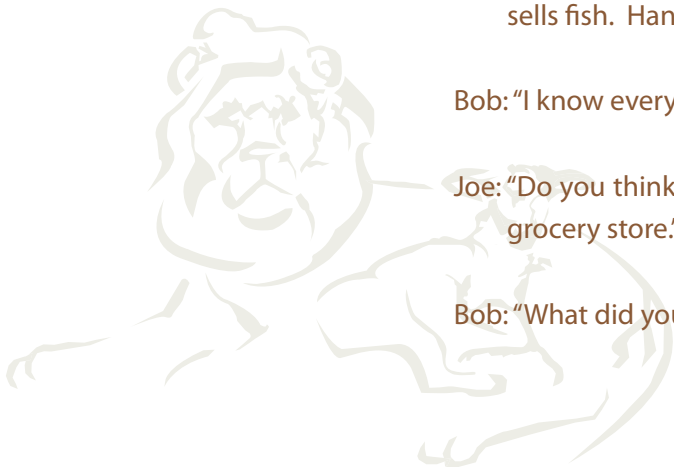
Bob: "Acme? They sell fish?"

Joe: (Starting to set up the fishbowl.) Of course they sell fish. Every grocery store sells fish. Hand me those plants."

Bob: "I know every grocery store sells fish. But not every store sells goldfish."

Joe: "Do you think I'm stupid or something? Of course you can't buy goldfish in a grocery store."

Bob: "What did you get a lobster?"



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Joe: "No, sardines." (Joe holds up a can of bristling sardines.)

Bob: "Sardines! They are dead!"

Joe: "Of course they are dead. You would be dead too if somebody stuffed you in a can for a few years."

Bob: (Says with a sarcastic condescending tone.) "So, how do you plan to bring them back to life?"

Joe: "Water, of course. Go ahead, open them up and drop them in."

Bob: "These sardines won't come back to life when you put them in the water! They are dead. "D, E, A, D, dead!" They will not swim; they will float and stink up this whole room. You are not going to put these in that bowl!"

Joe: "Gosh, I thought once they got out of the can and could stretch out a bit, you know, loosen up...I thought they would do fine swimming around."

Bob: "Listen to me, Joe. How many times do I have to tell you? They are dead. They can't stretch out. They can do nothing at all; they are dead."

Joe: "What about these anchovies? Will they swim?"

Skit ends.

Use this skit to talk about how we are dead in our sin. Apart from Christ making us alive we can do nothing to draw near to God, just like dead fish will never swim again.



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WHICH CHURCH IS THE CHURCH?

Supplies:

Take a picture of the outside of your church building and another picture of the people inside. Put them inside two envelopes.

The object of this exercise is to help the children remember the true church is not a building but the people in the building.

Pass the photo of the building around first. Have the class look at it but not tell you what they see. When everyone has had a peak, tell them that you are going to go around the room and they are to whisper to you what they saw. Record their answers down on a piece of paper. Do the same for the photo of the church members.

Tell the class that the correct answer for the first photo is a building. Tell them that the correct answer for the second photo is "the church." See if anyone can explain why the answers you gave are correct.

Read through Ephesians 2 and explain to them that the church is the new temple of God: not the building, but the people!

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

Draw a line of people holding hands. Under the line of people write "We are God's house."



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FOR THE OLDER GRADES

DEAD MEN LIE

Supplies

White board and markers

It is important that you impress the idea that all men were dead in their sin prior to God making them alive. Our youth often think they are not too far from God and that by being fairly good they can actually get to God themselves. Ask them to think of one sentence to describe what kind of person they are. Go around the room and just see what they say. Few if any of them are likely to say, "I am a sinner saved by grace". You just might find that several of them say they are a pretty good people.

Ask them on a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being evil, 5 being pretty good, and 10 being perfect) where would the place themselves. (It might be helpful to draw this up on the board.)

Tell the class that apart from the saving work of Christ, we are all evil and quite dead in our sins. Our sinful nature tries to fool us into thinking we are actually much better off than we are. We think that we can get to God without God's help.

Ask them if they can think of ways men fool themselves into believing they are Christians, when in fact, they are not. In what ways do men try to work their way to eternal life?

- They try to be good.
- They go to church.
- They pray.
- They are sorry when they hurt someone.

All these are good things but none of them can take away their deadness in sin.



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Use multiplication with zero as another illustration. Ask them to calculate the following equations:

$$3 \times 0 =$$

$$43 \times 0 =$$

$$42,368 \times 0 =$$

No matter how big of a number you multiply by zero, you get zero. We are sinners who can not become righteous no matter how many good works we try to do.

Read through Ephesians 2:1-10 and ask the following questions:

Why is the picture of a dead man a good one for describing us in our sins? (Just like a dead man, we can do nothing to save ourselves. Imagine asking a dead man to climb a flight of stairs. He cannot do it no matter how forcefully or nicely you ask. Similarly we are spiritually dead in our sins and cannot get to God by ourselves.)

If all men are dead in their sin, how are we saved? (God makes us alive in Christ, and then we are able to believe. Some think that God saves us after we believe on our own. This passage makes it clear that we come to saving faith as a result of God making us alive, not the other way around.)

How does God saving us remove all possibility for boasting? (If it is God's work alone, we cannot rightly boast that we have done anything to contribute to our salvation. Although we might have prayed to God, the Bible tells us that no one comes to Christ unless the Father draws him. Read John 6:44 and 6:65.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Living temple - The church is referred to as God's temple. All believers indwelt with the Holy Spirit are God's house. Jesus is the cornerstone of that temple. 1 Peter 2:4-5 describes it this way, "As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." In Christ, God made His dwelling place among men (see John 1:14). Now, through the Holy Spirit, God dwells with every believer. Together we all form the new temple of God. Now that we are all part of God's temple we are to live obedient lives to honor of the Spirit of God dwelling in us (see 1 Corinthians 6:19).