



# Northland Reformed

*Monthly*

*Vol. 1 – January 2018*

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith,  
and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,  
not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

## **Ephesians 2:8-9**

There is a saying “there is no such thing as a free lunch.” In other words, there is always a catch, always a string tied to every promise, and every gift is given with the expectation that somewhere down the line it will have to be repaid, maybe even with interest!

What about salvation? Is it really a gift of God? Don't we have to do something to earn it? To keep it? In chapter 2 of his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul addresses these questions. Paul explains that salvation which comes from God is the result of the undeserved and unearned love of God, freely given by grace to believers, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and received by faith in His finished work. Notice three key truths that Paul reveals in Ephesians 2:1-10. First, in verses 1 through 3, Paul explains that even if we wanted to, we could not earn salvation, because we are dead in our sins and trespasses. Then, in verses 4 through 7, he demonstrates that God's love, not our loveliness, is the source of this great salvation. Finally, in verses 8 through 10, he concludes that salvation is a gracious act of God, received by faith, not by works.

## **Salvation Is Undeserved and Unearned**

Paul lists three reasons why we cannot earn our salvation. First, we cannot earn it because we are born “dead in trespasses and sins” (v. 1). Suppose a person went to a graveyard with a suitcase full of money, set it down, and announced to all those in the graves that they could have the money. All they needed to do was walk up and take the suitcase. How many of these corpses would one expect to take the offer? None, they are dead! In the same way, the salvation of God is not something that we

can, in our own power, obtain. God, by his Holy Spirit, must perform a regenerating work in our heart before we can even see the Kingdom of God (see Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus in John chapter 3). Second, we cannot earn it because our own works disqualify us. We willingly submit to the devil and "walk according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air" (v. 2). Third, we are continually "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (v. 3) in rebellion against God.

Therefore, even if we wanted to earn salvation, we cannot, because even our best works in this life are imperfect and defiled with sin. In fact, we have earned and thus deserve the opposite, eternal death, for "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). But, Paul writes, this is not the end of the story.

### **Salvation Is Based on God's Love, Not Our Loveliness**

Paul begins verse 4 with the word "But" to demonstrate the contrast between what we have earned and deserve with what God has done for us. Despite all that the Ephesian believers were previously—dead in sin, walking in lock-step with the devil, and fulfilling the wicked desires of the flesh—God, in his great mercy, knowing this about them, still loved them enough to save them. Ephesians 1:4 states that believers were chosen "in Him before the foundation of the world." In other words, God, before He created the world, placed His love upon those who He planned to save. Thus, if a person is a Christian, the reality is that God set His love upon him or her from the beginning. There was never a time that God did not love His people!

This love of God is expressed in Jesus Christ, for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Continuing in Ephesians 2:5-7, Paul tells us how God has demonstrated His love for us in Christ Jesus. First, He "made us alive together with Christ" (v. 5). This speaks of God's regenerating work in us, implanting new life and causing us to be born again. Second, He "raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (v. 6). That is, God has not only fully paid for our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, but He accepts us as holy in His sight because of the holiness of Jesus' perfect life. We have everything we need, in Christ, for salvation and even now possess eternal life. But why has God done this? Paul informs us that He did so in order that "in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus"

(v. 7). God has redeemed a people for Himself, for His own glory, that His kindness might be displayed through us.

Therefore, we must understand that, in salvation, it is God alone who gets all the glory. He is the one who loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, rebellious against Him, and hated the things of God. He is the one who has worked faith in our hearts and He is the one who will bring us to glory. This is the kindness and mercy of God, and what a great kindness and abounding mercy it is!

### **Salvation Is Given by Grace and Received Through Faith**

If this is true, that we cannot earn nor deserve salvation and that God, in His mercy, has given us all that we need for salvation, how does salvation come to us? Summarizing his teaching so far, Paul stresses the fact that it is God's grace to us, received by faith, which brings us into fellowship with Christ and all his saving benefits. And both grace and faith are the gift of God. We cannot even believe in Jesus without God giving us the ability to do so! Therefore, if a person has faith in Christ, he must not boast about his faith, because it is also the gift of God.

Ultimately, God gives us everything we need for salvation. God paid the debt our sins deserve by sending His Son to die upon the cross. God credits us with the perfect life Jesus lived and now sees us as righteous in His sight. Truly "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). What a great comfort this is, knowing that although our consciences might daily accuse us of sin, we have an advocate in heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who proclaims, "Not guilty!"

By Rev. Christopher Campbell

## Congregational News

The year 2017 was very exciting. Below are a few of the highlights.

### Building Construction

Approval for the new building was given at our 2017 annual meeting, and construction has continued to progress.



August 4, 2017



August 10, 2017



August 30, 2017



September 27, 2017

### **Building Construction (cont.)**



October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017



January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018

### **New Members & Baptisms**

We received eight new members this year, including two baptisms.



Baptism of Everly Griess  
Mark Griess, Rev. Scott Henry, Everly Griess, and Ashley Griess (left to right)

## New Members & Baptisms (cont.)



Receiving of new members Ryan Baas, Sharon & Michael Baas, Kristen Carlson, Anna Vodden, Christian Carlson (from left to right)



Receiving of new members Katherine Barre and Nicole Adams (left to right)

## Synod 2017

The 271<sup>st</sup> annual Synod of the RCUS met in Kansas City May 15<sup>th</sup> to May 18<sup>th</sup>



## Vacation Bible School

This summer the theme for our Vacation Bible School was on the “Fruit of the Spirit.” The children enjoyed themselves as they grew in knowledge of God’s Word.



## Ordination and Installation

On October 1<sup>st</sup>, Reverend Christopher Campbell was ordained to the gospel ministry and installed as pastor at Northland Reformed. Rev. Steve Carr officiated, while Dr. Tony Curto gave the charge to Christopher and Rev. Tim Marinelli the charge to the congregation.



## January Schedule

### REGULAR MEETINGS

- Sunday Worship | Jan 7, 14, 21, 28 | 9:30AM & 5:00PM | We will continue our sermon series on the book of Galatians in the morning, and begin a new series on the book of Hosea in the evening.
- Men's Study Group | Jan 13, 27 | 7:00AM | The Men's Study Group, led by Gary Duffey, will continue to study the book *Devoted to God* by Sinclair Ferguson.
- Catechism Class | Jan 10, 17, 24, 31 | 4:30PM | During these four sessions the students will memorize Heidelberg Catechism questions 83-84 (Jan 10), 85-87 (Jan 17), 88-91 (Jan 24) and 92-93 (Jan 31).
- Friday Night Fellowship Group | Jan 12, 19, 26 | Join us for a meal and lesson as we continue to work through John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*
- Sunday School | Jan 21, 28 | 11:15AM – Sunday School will resume for all ages on Jan 21.

### SPECIAL EVENTS

- Lord's Supper | Jan 14 | 9:30AM | We will be observing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper during the morning worship service.
- Fellowship Meal | Jan 14 | After the morning service we will join with one another and share a meal. All are welcome and encouraged to bring a dish to share!
- Prayer Meeting | Jan 17 | 6:15PM | Join us as we share a meal and a time of prayer.
- Reception for Cody Cook | Jan 21 | After the morning service, we will welcome Cody Cook back from his deployment to Kuwait with a time of fellowship and light snacks. If you so desire, bring a card for Cody.
- Baby Shower for Cassie Leary | Jan 28 | After the morning service, the ladies will gather together to celebrate the upcoming birth of the new baby boy into the Leary family.
- Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) | Jan 9, 16, 23, 31 | 6:30PM | Bible Study Fellowship meets at the church, with groups for both men and women. The current study is on the book of Romans.



## Scripture Memorization

January 1	Joshua 1:9
January 8	2 Chronicles 16:9
January 15	Philippians 3:7-8
January 22	Philippians 3:9
January 29	Philippians 3:10-11