

# Portrait of Salvation

By Dr. Dan W. Cozart

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**Bible Text:** John 11:38-44

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## Grace Baptist Church

5512 Old Jacksonville HWY

Tyler, TX 75703

**Website:** [www.gracebaptisttyler.com](http://www.gracebaptisttyler.com)

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John chapter 11, reading verses 38-44. I want to speak on the subject “A Portrait of Salvation.” A portrait, not just a picture, but a portrait of salvation. In John 11:38-44, the Bible says,

“Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, you would see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”

Most of the eleventh chapter of John has to do with our Lord Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Might I remind you that this is not an allegory, it is not a fairytale and it's not one of Aesop's Fables but it is an historical event that actually took place exactly like you read it in your Bible. Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived in Bethany and they were close friends with the Lord Jesus Christ. And upon a day, their brother, Lazarus, became seriously ill and they sent word for Christ to come because they knew that he loved Lazarus. When our Lord got this bad news, he remained where he was for another two days and then he made his journey to go down to Bethany. When he got there, Lazarus had already been dead and in the grave for four days.

Martha met Christ first and she said, “Lord, if you had only been here.” Catch the humanity of Martha. “Lord, why are you so late? I mean, if you'd come a few days ago, he'd still be alive and I know you've been busy, I know you've been teaching the multitudes but why are you so late? If you'd only been here, he would not have died.” And then her sister, Mary, showed up and Mary said almost the same thing, “Lord, if thou hadst only been here, our brother would never have died.” And in the midst of that

narrative and in the midst of that story you find the shortest verse in the Bible, “Jesus wept.”

And after that he said, “Show me the tomb where you have laid him.” And they went out to the tomb and Jesus said, “Roll away the stone.” And Martha said, “Really, there is no use doing that because rigor mortis has already set in. Behold, he stinketh.” But Christ approached that tomb and gave thanks to his Father and then he uttered these words, “Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth. He was bound hand and foot and Jesus said, loose him, and let him go.”

I believe that, perhaps, this may well be the greatest of all the miracles which our Lord Jesus performed on this earth. And while this is a true story, it also provides us with a portrait of how the Lord saves sinners. Not a snapshot, but a full-blown portrait of how the Lord saves sinners.

A mule with blinders can only see the end of the row and there are many people today, I believe, and some already have made professions of faith and are Baptist in Baptist churches that go around with blinders on because they only see one perspective of Christ’s salvation and that is, “I accepted Jesus as my Savior and at the end of the tunnel, one day, I will be with him. Once saved always saved,” and they go on with their life. You’ve got blinders on. There’s more to salvation than making a decision for Christ. Are you listening? There is more to salvation than so-called just accepting Christ as one’s Savior. There’s more to salvation than just calling on the name of the Lord.

I’m not so sure but what one of the greatest mission fields in America today is a congregation of a lot of Baptist churches including this one. I firmly believe there are many, many people whose names are on the Baptist’s rolls who have never been saved by the grace of God. You say, “How do you come to that conclusion?” “By their fruits you shall know them.” No drive. No spiritual energy. No faithfulness. No commitment. Just a little tripping down a church aisle, getting their name on the church roll and you don’t see them but just once in a while, maybe at Easter, maybe at Christmas, maybe one other time. There is nothing that speaks of sold-out for the Lord or of really being saved.

What does it mean to be saved? What does it mean? I want to give you a full-blown portrait of salvation based on this experience in this story that we’ve read for you today. Salvation, as I said, is not a once and for all experience. It’s not the idea that you one time in your life trust Christ as your Savior and then you’ve taken care of all of that and you don’t have to worry about that anymore. As one man said to me one day, “Boy, I sure am glad I got that over with.” I said, “Sir, you never get that over with. You never get that over with.”

And if you’ve gotten over your salvation, you don’t have any salvation. If it all has become nothing in the world, dear ones, but form and appearance and fitting the picture of modern day Christianity, you don’t have salvation unless it measures up to the teaching of the Word of God. Not what Brother Cozart thinks about it, it’s what your Bible has to say about it.

Salvation is a process not an instantaneous thing. It's a process which covers the past and the present and the future. Would you turn, please, to a verse in Scripture that speaks of this very thing, 2 Corinthians 1:10. Now, notice it carefully: verse 9, preceding verse 10 and we will read that one, "But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who," and that pronoun "who" refers to Christ, God who raised us from the dead, "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver." You have three tenses involved in that statement, did you notice it? "Who delivered us," that's past tense. "He doth," or doeth "deliver us," that's present tense. "He will one day yet deliver us," that is future tense. Salvation is a process.

The word "deliverance" here is an Old Testament word that means "being saved." When Jonah cried out from the belly of the fish, he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." What did he mean? He meant this: that if I ever get delivered from this fish, God's going to have to do it. If I am ever saved from my present condition, God has to do it. And the Lord did that thing so that is what the word "deliverance" is. It's the same thing as salvation. He saved us, past tense; he does save us, same people, present tense; and he one day will save us, future tense. I have been saved. I am being saved. And I shall be saved; past, present and future. I have been saved from the penalty of sin. "The wages of sin is death," but I have been saved from that penalty. I am being saved from the power of sin. What is the power of sin? Doing things that we as God's people we ought not to do and when we do them, we know we shouldn't have done them. Many, many times, a lost person, will do what they do because they have to, but sometimes we Christians just simply make the wrong choice and we do it out of a lust of the flesh, the pride of life and so forth and so on. But he has saved us from the power of sin. Satan is no longer our taskmaster and yet one day he will save us from the very presence of sin. We have not been delivered from that yet, but we will be delivered from it.

In Philippians 1:6 it says the same thing only it says it a little differently, "he which hath begun a good work in you," that's past tense, "will continue it," that's present tense, "until the day of Jesus Christ," that is future tense. I'm not so much interested this morning in you telling me of what happened between you and the Lord and how God saved you 25 or 35 or 40 years ago. I am more interested in what is God doing in your life right now, right this minute. Is God saving you right now? Are you being delivered right now? I might say this: if you are not being delivered right now, you can shuck the experience that you had 35-40 years ago because the whole acid test of our justification 35 or 40 years ago, is the fact that God still works in his people today. Take an inventory, folks.

Now, when we read about Lazarus being raised from the dead, I think we see a portrait of our salvation, that is, how the Lord saves sinners. First of all, we have a portrait of total depravity; a picture of total depravity. Notice, Lazarus was sick. It states that several times. It states it in verse 1, "there was a certain man and he was sick." It states it in verse 2, "whose brother Lazarus was sick." It states it in verse 3, "behold he whom thou lovest is sick." And even the disciples said in verse 11, "he sleepeth." He's sick and he's

sleeping but notice verse 14, "Lazarus is dead," and that is the condition of every person outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are spiritually dead. They are not sleeping, they are dead. They are not sick, they are dead. They do not need an adjustment on their mental attitude. They do not need a band-aid. They don't need a psychotherapist. They need somebody who has the power to raise them from the dead and until that happens, they'll remain dead and they'll die dead.....Total depravity.

Lazarus was dead. Ephesians 2:1, "And you hath he quickened," or made alive, "who were dead." They were no longer dead, thank goodness. The Ephesians had come to know Christ as Savior. Paul is writing a letter to the church at Ephesus and he said, "And you hath he quickened. He made you alive who were dead."

A lot of discussion today, even in religious circles, about what it means to be spiritually dead.....spiritually dead. Might I mention a couple of things to you. Dead people are unconcerned about life. That is true of every corpse in the cemetery. What concerns you this morning? What is your concern? What is it that you find yourself talking about more than anything else here lately? "Boy, I sure hope Romney doesn't become President." Or, "I just wish somebody would fire Obama." And "What about the inflation?" And, "What about the gas prices?" I can assure you that the dead people in the cemetery couldn't care less because they're not concerned about life and the man who is outside of Christ, he's dead in his trespasses and sins. He's not concerned about life. He's more concerned about, "Where are we going to have our vacation this year?" He's more concerned about, "The boss said he might give me a raise at my job." He's more concerned about the things of this life but he's not concerned about spiritual life.

Let me give you a verse: John 5:40, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "you will not come to me, that you might have life." Did you know that's the only place you're going to have life and find spiritual life? It is in the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that hath the Son has life and he that hath not the Son of God has not life." And Christ is saying to those that were listening to him when he made this statement, "You will not come to me that you might have life." In other words, "You'd rather stay dead than to have spiritual life." Total depravity.

Dead people are unconcerned about life. In one of the many parables we have in the Bible, one has to do in Luke 14:16-20. The Lord said there was a king that made a banquet for his son and he sent out invitations for people to come and be a part of that ceremony and be a part of that banquet. They didn't have to pay anything, just come. And he sent his servants out with the invitations and this is the way some of the people responded: one man said, "You know, I really would like to come but I bought a piece of ground and I've just got to go out and check it out today and see what it looks like." Not too many people buy property and then go out and see what it looks like. You normally go out and see what it looks like and then you decide to buy it.

Now, you think he's dumb, here's Mr. Stupidity: the second one said, "I bought me a yoke of oxen and I've got to go out and try them." How many of you have ever bought a car without first, at least, driving it a little bit and seeing how you like it. And the third

man, the dummy of the class, but he was honest, he said, "I married a wife and I cannot come."

Notice, the first two had an excuse because they said, "pray thee have me excused," but the guy that married a wife, he didn't have an excuse. Do you know why? She told him, "We ain't goin'." Point being, they declined the invitation to the King's banquet and there are people today that are selling their soul for a yoke of oxen, for a piece of property and for a woman that doesn't know the Lord. Total depravity.

Not only are dead people unconcerned about life, they are utterly helpless. If you need some help around the house, you go down and hire some folk down at the wagon yard. You used to, I don't know where you go anymore, but you don't go to the cemetery. You're not going to find a whole lot of folk in the cemetery six feet under to say, "I sure am glad you came by. I was getting bored here and I'll come over and help you rake leaves." It won't do. They are totally helpless. Jeremiah 13:23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" He doesn't have that ability. Can a zebra change its stripes? Absolutely not. Neither can a sinner, in and of himself, change his depraved condition. He cannot do it. Christ said also in John 6:44, "no man can come to me except the Father which has sent me drawn him." Dead people are utterly helpless.

Lazarus was dead. A portrait of our salvation begins with our total depravity. The Lord did not come to save good people, he came to save sinners. You don't raise living people from the dead, you raise dead people from the dead and a man's got to come to the place of seeing himself a sinner, spiritually dead, before he'll ever be saved by the grace of God.

Not only was Lazarus dead, he was corrupted. Corrupted is a good word. In verse 39 they said, "by this time, he stinketh." I haven't checked some of the other translations there but you see, I come from North Carolina and I know what stink is. Do you? You don't have to dress it up for me. You don't have to make it more palatable to me. I'm telling you, Lazarus had begun to stink and there is an obnoxious spiritual odor that exudes from an unsaved man in the nostrils of a holy God. He can dress up on Sunday morning and look like everybody else. He can even tuck a Bible under his arm, but if he's spiritually dead, he emits an obnoxious odor in the nostrils of a holy God. That's what total depravity is all about. Have you ever wondered why you and I are devils. You say, "Moi?" Yes, moi, you. Have you ever wondered why you and I are devils? Because we were born that way.....born in trespasses and sins.

His corruption was extensive. Isaiah 1:4-6 says from the top of our head to the soles of our feet we are filled with these bruises that cannot be cured. Read it for yourself. His corruption was obnoxious. In Isaiah 64:6 says, "all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Filthy rags. Smelly rags. So, we have a portrait of depravity here. Lazarus is in sad shape. He's dead. He's dead and the sinner today is in sad shape. He's dead spiritually.

The portrait is, not only of total depravity, but the portrait of regeneration. In the very first part of verse 43, he calls his name, "Lazarus." Now, to be regenerated is an absolute

essential to salvation. Christ told Nicodemus, "Except you be born again you cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." And Nicodemus said, "Shall a person enter into his mother's womb and be born the second time? No, that's impossible." What he was saying is, you were born first time dead in sin but you're born and regenerated the second time from above by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, I think we're in perfect agreement right now on this point: if Lazarus ever gets out of the tomb, he must first be given life. L-I-F-E, life and until he gets life, he's going to stay in there on and on and on and on and on. Lazarus must be given life. The sinner must be given life before the gospel makes sense. Have you ever wondered this: if a man is spiritually dead, how can he hear? How can he hear the gospel. You say, "Well, if he hears the gospel, he can be saved." How is he going to hear the gospel? God has to give him a hearing ear. God has to give him a seeing eye. God has to give him a heart that feels spiritual things and that's regeneration. Someone has said, had he not said "Lazarus, come forth," every dead person in the cemetery would have come forth. But he wasn't there for every dead person in the cemetery. He was there for Lazarus.... A picture of regeneration.

Lazarus' call to life was particular, had his name on it, Lazarus. Lazarus' call to life was effectual. Do you know how I know..... because it worked. It got him out of the grave. Lazarus' call to life had no cooperation. He could not assist in his resurrection. There was nothing he could do. If he's to be given life, God has to do it. He cannot help Christ. Such a pathetic gospel that's being preached today by many who would have man kind of helping God out a little bit. Some of you aren't listening to me, probably are as dead as you were when you came in here this morning but you'd better listen because what I'm giving you is the Word of God and I'm trying my best to give it to you out of a heart of love because I'm concerned for anybody who is dead and they could be raised. That's important, very important. ....A picture of regeneration.

We must hasten, also a portrait of conversion. He not only said "Lazarus" he gave him a command, "Come forth." "Wait a minute, but before he can come forth, he has to have life." Right? And what is life? It is regeneration. He must be regenerated if he's going to hear the command, "Come forth," or he'll never come forth. And so, he was regenerated. The Spirit of God moved inside that tomb in Lazarus and he began to live. His eyes flicked open. He began to realize that he was no longer dead. His eyes began to take into sight that which was around him. He probably did not even know where in the world he was, but he knew this much, "I'm alive now." And do you know what his first desire was? "I want to get out of here." Or maybe he said, "You know, it's kind of comfy in here. I've enjoyed this for four days and, man, I don't have to pay rent, so I think I'll stay." That's a bunch of hogwash. That's Greek for "not worth a hill of beans." You know, when a man is moved on by the Holy Spirit of God, you won't have to beg him to come out of the tomb. He'd kick the stone out of the way to get out of the tomb.

Isn't it strange, we have to have all of these prompters today, all of these motivators today. You've heard me say, dear church, and I've been here long enough that you're probably tired of it now but let me say it one more time for today, maybe next week I'll

say it again: if I ever stop being a preacher and I don't plan on doing that because God put me in the ministry, I never put myself in it, God did. I didn't want to get into it to start off with, God put me in the ministry, but if I were not a preacher I'd be a candle maker. I would. Have you ever realized how much money you can make making candles? I mean, every service you get into, it doesn't have to be people of other denominational persuasions. Even in Baptist churches and you don't even have to go to church. You go to Huntsville, to the penitentiary and they're going to take the life of someone who needs his life taken, capital punishment, and everybody comes and they bring their candles. There is something mystical about the candle. If we can just have our people come in and lower the lights and light the candles and let's get our musician to play something real soft and weird on the organ.... woooo. And if the preacher will only tell us a little bit about Willy and moonlight on little Willy's grave and get everybody crying a little bit, we'd just have a whole lot of folks saved.

I'm not exaggerating, ladies and gentleman. I'm tell you that that junk goes on week after week after week after week. I tell you this: if God Almighty ever puts life in you, you won't need me begging you and us having to sing 15 stanzas of Almost Persuaded to drag you down the aisle. Nobody had to go to Lazarus and say, "Please, Lazarus, would you just come out for a little while. We believe you would like it out here a little bit better. Please!" He was glad to get out of there. That's the reason I say that one of the biggest mission fields we have today is in the local Baptist church and congregation. "Oh, I accepted Jesus as my Savior." So what? Get a full-blown picture of what salvation involves..... depravity, regeneration, conversion.

His location was changed. He was no longer living in that grave any more. According to Romans 6:1-2, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." We're not fair anymore. That's changed. Not only has the location changed, but our conduct changes, does it not? There's got to be a difference after Christ comes into our heart. There has to be a difference. If not, my dear friends, there is no difference between Christianity and any other godless religion in the world. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away and behold all things have become new." I hope you've been able to see a change in your life since Jesus came into your heart. I hope you can see that because it will take place if Christ comes into your life and into your heart. It's called conversion.

We have a portrait of sanctification. I know these are theological terms but we need to get acquainted with some of these theological terms in the Bible. To sanctify means to set apart.....to set apart. I've heard of musicians before who I really believe the Lord saved them and whether they were guitarists or whether they played the piano or whether they blew the trumpet, their trumpet got sanctified too because they began to play different music, and they began to use their talents to honor and glorify the Lord, not just to entertain people. To sanctify means to set apart.....To set apart.

Now, in verse 44, the Scripture says, "he that was dead came forth." He's still "bound hand and foot with," what? "Grave clothes and his face was bound about with a napkin." And, "Jesus said unto them, Loose him, and let him go." I hope you're not a believer,

today, still wrapped in these grave clothes. Huh? No joy, no happiness. Just got the gauze all over your hands and all over your face and all over your feet. Can't do anything for the Lord or anybody else. "Loose him, and let him go." Sanctification, his hands were bound, his feet were bound, his eyes were bound, his mouth was bound but he was loosed. Got anything that binds you today? Anything that restricts you today? Anything that prevents you from being what you ought to be for the Lord today? "Loose him, and let him go."

2 Corinthians 7:1 says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness." Did you get that terminology? "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Now, whenever God imputes his righteousness to the believing sinner, it is a perfect holiness but there's also a practical righteousness and a practical holiness that we're to seek after every day of our life. We know we don't do everything we ought to do. We know we make a lot of mistakes but we should strive to be perfect as he is perfect. Even though we know we can't, we ought to strive for it. We ought to strive for it. "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Isn't it strange, "Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves." Let us cleanse ourselves.

I must close. A portrait of glorification. Now, where do you get glorification out of that? By turning the page. Chapter 12 and I'm so glad there's a chapter 12 to John. "Then six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was," and underscore this, "which had been dead." Let's have an English grammar lesson: that means he's not dead anymore. It means he had been dead but he's not dead anymore. "Which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper, and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him." That's our glorification. And one day, my dear friends, we're going to be privileged as God's people to sit down at the Marriage Supper table of the Lord with him and that is our glorification.

And we'll not know that until we die or until Christ comes first. If Christ comes first, there are going to be two different kinds of people spoken of. In the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> verses of John 11, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." There are going to be people who will die and are dying even today and Christ has not come back yet. But even though we experience physical death, when he comes back, we shall live. We'll be resurrected from the dead.

Verse 26, however, says, "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." There are going to be some people that will not taste of physical death before Christ returns. What about them? They'll never have to die physically. Did you know this is treated in 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, where Paul says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep," speaking of the dead in Christ, "that you sorrow not even as others for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout," and what's going to happen? "The dead in Christ shall rise first." Though he died, he'll be raised from the dead. "Then we which are alive and have not died, shall join them as we are brought up into the presence of the Lord and so shall we ever be with the Lord." That's our glorification.

I know, and it grieves my heart, I'm not what I ought to be today. And do you know something? If you're honest, you're not what you ought to be today. But one of these days, I'm going to be everything that God planned for me to be and that's my hope and that's my glorification and it's all under this one big umbrella term, salvation. I have been saved; I am being saved; and I will be saved.

One final reference in Revelation 19 and we'll close with that reference. No more after that. In Revelation 19:6-9, "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife," is who? The church, "hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." It's called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. And, dear friends, if you've been saved by the grace of God, you're going to be there. If I've been saved by the grace of God, I'm going to be there. The folks that won't be there are still in the spiritual tomb that ever were raised from the dead.

A total portrait of our salvation. I tell you, church, it's bigger than all of us put together. I have been saved; I am being saved; and I shall be saved all by the grace of God. To God be the glory. Great things he hath done.

Would you stand with me and let's have prayer.