

Series: Building the Bridge

April 29, 2018

Title: Saved!

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Text: Acts 2:37-41

“What shall we do?”

Roy “Wrong Way” Riegels:

On January 1, 1929, half way through the second quarter of the Rose Bowl game, a player named Roy Riegels made a play that would never be forgotten. Forever after, he would be known as Roy “Wrong Way” Riegels.

Riegels was playing defense for the University of California when Georgia Tech fumbled the ball. Riegel scooped it up and started running. What happened next remained a mystery to Riegels for the rest of his life. In his own words:

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“I was running toward the sidelines when I picked up the ball. I started to turn to my left toward Tech’s goal. Somebody shoved me and I bounded right off into a tackler. In pivoting to get away from him, I completely lost my bearings.”

Lost them alright. He ran 69 yards in the wrong direction. His teammates screamed for him to turn around, but he evidently thought they were just cheering him on. A teammate finally caught up with him at the 3 yard line and tried to turn him around, but he was tackled on the 1. California attempted a punt, but Georgia Tech blocked it for a safety, giving them a 2-0 lead. At game’s end, Georgia Tech led 8-7. Roy Riegels’ wrong way run gave them the national championship.

“Wrong way” crowd:

The crowd listening to Peter’s message on the Day of Pentecost was in the same situation as Roy Riegels when he scooped up the ball and started running. They were running as hard as they could, trying to demonstrate to God that they were faithful covenant partners. Surely God would see how

zealous and committed they were and would finally come through on His end of the bargain!

Hadn't they just recently ridded Israel of the false prophet named Jesus of Nazareth? One more pretender who came into town pretending to be God's King. Didn't God's Word tell them what to do with false prophets?

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Deuteronomy 13:5 NIV

That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the LORD your God...."

So they had done their religious duty and Jesus ended up just where he belonged: on a Roman cross.

"What shall we do?"

But now, as Peter finished his message, it suddenly dawned on them that they had been running the wrong way:

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Acts 2:37 NIV

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Certainly, many of the people in the crowd had been present when the Roman governor Pilate declared that Jesus was innocent of all charges and that he was going to set him free. In response, the crowd demanded not once, but three times, that Jesus be put to death and that a known murderer and insurrectionist be freed in his place.

Now, they could see that they had gotten the whole thing wrong. Even Pilate, a pagan, could see that they were running the wrong way. But they hadn't listened. They had put the Messiah to death! Did that mean there was no further hope for them? Or could there possibly be one more chance to turn around?

Saved from:

Repent:

Peter's answer was short and right to the point:

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Acts 2:38a NIV

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

When Suzanne and I went to Scotland I had the wonderful opportunity of driving on the left side of the road. I did okay all week long, but on the way to the airport, while it was still dark, I had to merge into yet another traffic circle. My old instincts kicked in and I took a little ramp that went right. The cars around me stopped in their tracks! I hit the brakes, backed up, and went the other way. That's called repenting.

Be baptized:

Peter challenged his listeners to demonstrate their radical change of direction by being baptized. They were familiar with baptism: this is what John the Baptist had challenged Israel to do. He immersed those who repented in the Jordan River, acting out the beginning of a New Exodus in the desert.

This baptism was like that of John's, only this time it was to be "in the name of Jesus Christ." To be baptized in Jesus' Name meant to become a follower of Jesus. Paul explains that it meant a radical and complete identification with Jesus in *both His death and his resurrection*.

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Romans 6:3-4 NIV

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

The act of being baptized by one's own choice defines us as followers of Jesus.

Saved from:

Repenting and being baptized meant that there *was* a second chance! Peter told the crowd to “repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.” Choosing to identify with Jesus instead of writing Him off as a false prophet meant that in His death, they also died to the crime of putting Him to death. Instead of living under condemnation and a burden of guilt, they now could finally gain the good standing with God that they longed for.

Our failures are never too big for God! No matter how long and how far we run in the wrong direction, God has made a way back to Him. All we need to do is make the choice to turn around.

Saved *for*:

The Gift:

Turning round means more than being saved *from* our sins; it means being saved *for* a brand new life. In Peter’s words:

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Acts 2:38b-39 NIV

“And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Peter’s listeners had been looking for the day when the Lord would come in power and establish His Kingdom here on earth. They believed that when God did come as King, He would once again dwell in the Temple in all His glory.

Now Peter tells them that when they repent and are baptized, not only are their sins forgiven, but God has promised to come live inside them. They become the true Temple – God’s earthly Home. The covenant between God and His people is not temporarily renewed. It has become everything it was always meant to be: Immanuel, God with us.

Times of refreshing:

God with us means *new life, new creation*. In a later message, Peter says:

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Acts 3:19 NIV

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,"

"Times of refreshing" means that we experience God's New Creation right now in our lives. It means that we experience healing and wholeness in a broken world. It means that we are empowered to join God in His renewal project for this world.

Jesus paid the price for our sins. He ushered in God's New Creation when the Holy Spirit raised Him from death. But it's up to you and me to do what Peter's audience was challenged to do: Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins!

Saved:

That's what it means to be "saved." It means to be rescued from going the wrong way, with all the terrible consequences. It means to have our sins wiped out, scrubbed from God's hard drive once and for all. And better yet, it means having God's own Holy Spirit come and make His home in us. We become God's dwelling, God's Temple.

When that happens, our deserts become God's garden. Our failures become God's victories. Our weakness becomes God's strength.

But only if we turn around!