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EPHESIANS

2:1-10 SAVED FROM DEATH BY GRACE



All of us love a rescue story, I think. When we looked at this story the other week we shared our own stories of rescuing and being rescued, from the person who had helped out at the scene of a car crash to the one who had got stuck in a hotel bed just a couple of nights before (!)

Perhaps the greatest modern rescue story, though, is when the 33 miners above were saved from death in a collapsing mine in Chile in 2010. They were lost. In some ways you might say they were as good as dead. Everyone knew that they were in desperate need of rescuing. When they eventually got a little narrow drill right down to them, this note came back – “the 33 of us are well in the refuge” – but that couldn’t last. They couldn’t be down there forever, and survive.

And Paul, writing to his friends in Ephesus, reminds them that that was where they once were. They were dead. In the way that they lived their lives without following God’s way, without thinking about him, they were dead. It wasn’t just the Ephesians, Paul says. It was all of us. All of us have done this, Paul says. All of us have done what our own human nature has convinced us is right. All of us have done what we want, even when we know it is not the right thing. Paul says that all of us are ‘by nature deserving of wrath.’

Please do not worry if you have got to this point, and feel sombre. This is serious stuff. But there is good news.

God simply will not leave you and me alone in our mess. He will not leave us sitting

in the mine, wondering if help will come. He will not remain up there in heaven, watching at a distance, wondering if we will find our own way out.

God loves you. He does not love you in spite of his better nature, wishing he could simply stand in judgment over you, like the religious leaders around Jesus. He loves you, he wants you, he will give you chance, after chance, after chance to turn back to him as he has turned himself towards you. His son Jesus has died and risen so you will not only die, but rise to be with him forever. Thank God that he does not have the little bit of love I so often have for other people, but *great* love. Thank God he does not have *just about enough* mercy, but is *rich* in mercy. It is something to be loved without condition.

God made us alive in Christ when we were dead in our transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

It is nothing we can do. We look at the story of the miners, and we recognise that about the *most* they could do was co-operate with the rescue effort. They just had to wait. It really wasn’t about them. It was in the gift of all those many rescuers working and working to set them free. I mean, they couldn’t just stay in the refuge. They did have to get in the capsule. But that was pretty much it.

We know what happened to the miners. The rescuers went down to them, and they brought them up to the surface. God came down to us, and, Paul says, *he raises us up with Christ*. The number of people I meet who are trying to pull themselves 2000 feet to the top, hand over hand over hand. Christ raises us up. He loves us.

And because God loves us, not so that he would love us, we do good. We are never supposed to save ourselves from sin and death. But we are always supposed to do the good which God has prepared for us. We are supposed to do good spurred on by the knowledge that God is great in love, and rich in mercy. We are supposed to show the same love and mercy God showed us in rescuing us. We don’t do good on the basis that people have done good to us, or that they could do good back, but because we are being like God, who is rich in mercy and love. Paul writes that we should not tire of doing good, because in the end we will reap a harvest if we don’t give up.

And we become part of God’s rescue plan. He is calling us to share what we have seen and heard. What if the first miner had kept it to himself? We are called not to keep God’s good news for ourselves, but share it in our own way. I meet a lot of people who say something like, “We are ok in the refuge.” “We’re fine.” But that can only last so long, can’t it? In the end people need bringing back to the surface. They couldn’t have stayed down there forever. They need God, who is rich in mercy and great in love.

Do you know in your heart that God has rescued you, and brought you from death to life?

Where do you sense God calling you to do good, whether or not you ever see anything come of it?

Who might God ask you to share the good news of his rescue with, in your own way?