

THE GOOD NEWS

OF RESCUE





On August 5, 2010, the San Jose, Chile gold and copper mine collapsed. It was feared that all were lost. But 17 days later through a last ditch effort to find survivors, a drill that was sent to probe an unexamined area discovered that the 33 men who were initially trapped had moved from the collapsed area to an emergency shelter section of the mine. The survivors sent a message back to the surface, “We are fine in the refuge, the 33.”

From there food, medical supplies and letters of encouragement were sent to the miners. Later, a video feed showed them safe and surprisingly well. But the clock was ticking. An all-out effort was made to rescue the men.

Engineers from all over the world collaborated to find a quick, efficient and safe way to bring them to safety. On October 13, 2010, the last of 33 miners trapped nearly half a mile underground for more than two months was rescued. Amazingly, the miners survived longer than anyone else trapped underground in recorded history.

After they had been treated, the miners shared inspiring stories about how they survived through ingenuity and mutual encouragement. What was unknown to the public was that right before the drill broke through the men were running out of supplies and hope. In their desperate condition they had even considered cannibalism and suicide. Without timely help from the outside they would have not survived.¹

¹ <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/chilean-miners-are-rescued-after-69-days-underground>

DO WE NEED RESCUE?

Like the previous example, the story of Christianity is about rescue. It begins with creation when our original parents lived in a perfect world. Then, when they doubted God's goodness and chose a path of rebellion they became separated from the one, who in great wisdom and love made them. As a result, they were thrust into an existence of futility, heartache and ultimately death. Since that time, the history of mankind reflects this corporate darkened state and personal pursuit of sin.

The Bible describes it this way:

"Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned"
(Romans 5:12).



Now, it is not unusual for any of us to declare out of our own pride that we don't need rescuing. We don't like anyone telling us that there is something wrong with us. Like the patient who is given a startling diagnosis, we look for multiple alternatives that are less serious. We try our own home remedies or seek to adopt quick-fix fads that deflect us away from the sobering truth that there is something fundamentally wrong with us. All the while, we are not making a discernible dent in the malady that is continually dogging us.



LIKE THE AFOREMENTIONED MINERS,
WE NEED HELP OUTSIDE OF OURSELVES
TO DELIVER US.

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So how do we get the help we need? The Bible encapsulates this rescue effort with the word “Gospel.” Unfortunately, there is much confusion about what this expression means.

For some, it involves practical advice on how you can live your best life. In this case, to be a Christian means that you are a person who is totally self-actualized and in control of your destiny. Not unlike the plethora of self-help books you might find in a bookstore, it can be compared to a menu of ideas you can pick and choose from to fashion the kind of life you would like to have.

For others, it refers to a system of beliefs and behaviors designed to make you into a more moral or spiritual person. Similar to practical advice, a system of beliefs and behaviors involves steps to move you from being a bad person to a being a good person. Unlike practical advice, there are requirements you have to fulfill and even maintain in order for you to be in the right group.

The focus with both of these examples is is on what we do or don't do. But the word Gospel means something very different. It literally means good news. What kind of good news? Well, in the ancient world it primarily referred to two things. The first was before the advent of newspapers, the phone, the TV, the computer or social media, news traveled slowly through people coming into your town and making an announcement. When a person brought this kind of news it was not unusual for the whole town to show up for the event. From there the news spread like wildfire from village to village until a whole region was saturated with what had been shared.

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The second example occurred when a king or general won a great victory. As he approached a city a person would go before him and declare to the people his great exploits in battle. What followed was a train of people, animals, incredible treasure and finally, the victor mounted on a great white steed. The people gathered in the city, both great and small, and cheered on this conqueror, laying down garments and flowers before him. This didn't happen often so it was a big deal and history has different examples of these epic occurrences.

In the Christian meaning the Gospel is not about what people think or do, but solely upon what Jesus Christ has done. What does this look like? When the movement got off the ground, Peter, who lived with Jesus, heard him teach, and saw him perform miracles, said this:

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it” (Acts 2:22-24).



The Gospel is the announcement that Jesus came onto the stage of human history, doing and saying things that no one had ever done before him. It was God's plan to let him die a criminal's death at the hands of lawless people, and it was his resurrection proved that he had power over both sin and death.

Paul, who was a later convert to Christ, complemented Peter's message by reflecting on the comprehensive and cosmic nature of God's rescue of people by saying:

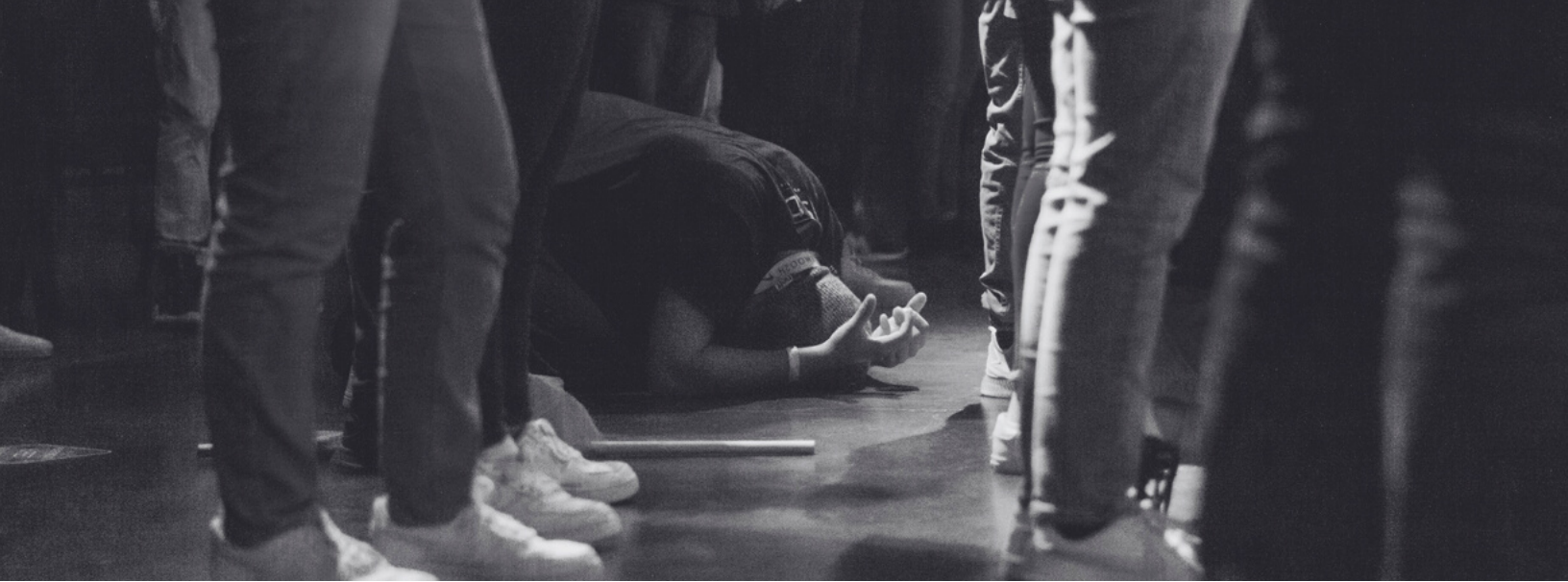
"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, and you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him" (Colossians 1:13-15).

Here the Gospel is not only an announcement of what Jesus did but also a declaration of the effects of what Jesus' victorious actions bring. To summarize, Paul was describing the facts that through Jesus God,

- Delivered us from being dominated by darkness to being liberated to live to and for God
- Made us spiritually alive
- Totally forgave our sins
- Triumphed over evil in all its forms through the cross

The announcement of who Jesus is and what he did, coupled with the jaw-dropping declaration of what all of these things mean makes it good news indeed. It covers all that we will ever need to live now and in the future.





OUR RESPONSE

Once we clear up what the simple, but powerful meaning of what the Gospel is, we are left with a decision: do we reject or receive it? To receive this message is to believe in who Jesus is and accept what he has done on our behalf. Jesus describes it this way:

"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

Jesus is the doorway to life that never ends. Because he is God, he can make that audacious claim. This is not some kind of pie-in-the-sky wish for better days. It is not avoiding the hard truths of life like suffering and death. Jesus acknowledges that everyone will experience an earthly death.

Because he has resurrected from the dead and is resurrection personified, he can bring people from spiritual death into spiritual life. While the authority and power of Jesus provides the assurance of salvation, belief in Jesus allows us access to this unbelievable gift. Paul echoes this same simple truth when he says about saving faith:

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart, one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved" (Romans 10:9-10).

Saving faith involves belief in who Jesus is and what he has done. It encompasses all that we are, both intellect and will. This means that all of who we are leans upon Jesus for all that his rescuing work encompasses. He is the focus of what we believe and the power by which we believe it.

The real question here is:

**DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE YOU
NEED RESCUING?**

If you do, then Jesus is the only one that can deliver you from sin and death.



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questions



1.

What about the story of the miners inspired or intrigued you? Why do you think you feel that way?

What wrong ideas have you had about the Gospel? Why is the true Gospel really good news?

2.



3.

What does it mean that the Gospel is both an announcement and a declaration?

How does faith play a role in obtaining the rescue that Jesus came to give?

4.

