



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Lessons from a Chilean Copper Mine

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What an enjoyable time we've had so far in our weekly Bible study for legislative aides. All in the capitol community are welcome to these meetings and I hope that in the weeks to come, it will be a source of encouragement and blessing for those who attend.

By the way, due to Labor Day next week and the Primary Elections on September 14, we will not be meeting for our Bible study for the next two Tuesdays (September 7 and 14). We'll plan to resume on Tuesday, September 21.

One of the leading international news items in the past week has been the situation in Chile. A copper mine collapsed on August 5, and 33 men are trapped about ½ mile underground. Praise the Lord that they are all alive and plans are underway for their rescue. But as I thought of this incredible story in the lives of these miners and their families, parallels emerged to our spiritual lives as well. In our study this week, I would like to take a look at several selected Scripture verses that have come to mind and spiritual principles we can learn from this earthly circumstance.

1. SIN SEPARATES US FROM GOD

Romans 3:10, 11, 23 There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Even though these miners are isolated from the outside world, rescuers have drilled three 6-inch holes for air, food, entertainment items and communication. The leader of the miners, Luis Urzua, sent up this description of the aftermath of the collapsed mine: "For about four or five hours, we couldn't see a thing. After that we saw that we were trapped by an enormous rock that filled the entire passage of the tunnel."

Just like that boulder in the tunnel, sin (which we are all naturally drawn to and have all committed) separates us spiritually from God. That is the basic problem of every person ever born. We come into this world with a nature that seeks things other than God. Finding the one solution to this most basic spiritual problem is the most important realization for any human being.

2. LIFE IS AT STAKE

Ephesians 1:4, 5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

Why are rescuers working so feverishly to safely release the trapped miners? Obviously, they cannot stay there and live. The conditions can sustain them for a short time, but for them to enjoy true life they must get out.

The good news is that there is a way God has made for the problem of sin we saw in lesson #1. Our very spiritual lives are at stake. Spiritually, we are born dead (Ephesians 2:1), but there is a way to be made alive in our spirits. From these verses we clearly see that Jesus is the solution, through the mercy and love of God.

3. RESCUE FROM SPIRITUAL DEATH DEPENDS ON ANOTHER

Romans 5:6, 8 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

These miners are helpless. Unless others with the knowhow and right tools dig them out, they are goners. Can you imagine the feeling of dependence these men have, knowing that their trust is fully in others to rescue them?

Actually, we should be able to imagine the feeling, because we're in the same boat spiritually. The Bible describes us as helpless and ungodly before we trust Christ alone to save us from spiritual disaster. We should feel utter dependence on God for our salvation.

4. WE HUMANS CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES

Ephesians 2:8, 9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Another way of stating lesson #3 is that the miners have no way to save themselves. They can't produce food or water or playing cards or video greetings or any of the many things the rescuers are making possible for them. Their resources are zero.

BIBLE STUDY

LEGISLATIVE AIDES (DURING INTERIM): TUESDAYS @ 11:30AM, HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING (ROOM 218)

Maryland

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That's what we bring to God – nothing. That's why grace is so important. The only way to salvation is by grace through faith. We have no capability of earning God's favor, so we are dependent on grace.

What if the miners could dig themselves out? How would they feel? Probably very proud. Surely, they would not be as grateful to the rescuers if they had to do the work to be freed. In the same way, we would be boasting if we could get to heaven by our works. Since God's grace alone saves us, we return all our gratitude to Him and give Him the glory for saving us.

5. THERE IS HOPE

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This rescue could take thirty days or four months, depending on the expert interviewed. But at least these men know there's a plan and have a line of communication to those digging them out.

For mankind, there is a plan. There is a way of salvation. And from these verses we see that the future holds a massive, imminent hope of being with the Lord, again made possible by the grace of God.

6. WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABANDONED

Hebrews 13:5b, 6 ... for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," so that we may confidently say, "The Lord is my Helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?"

When asked what they needed the shift foreman wrote, "That you rescue us as quickly as possible, and that you don't abandon us." The president of Chile responded that the whole country is with them. What a comfort those words must be.

God knows our situation and in His mercy has made a way to have life with Him. Even in our sinfulness, God does not leave us and is our ultimate Provider if we just trust Him and not ourselves.

7. WE HAVE INCOMPLETE INFORMATION

1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

Did you know the rescuers are not sharing all of the details with the miners? They are telling them what is best to know, but they are purposefully withholding information, such as how long this will take.

God does this as well. Scripture does not answer every question, but that is where faith, trust and hope take over. In His design, God works according to His will and timing. Another comforting verse and reason for trusting God is:

Isaiah 55:9 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are My ways your ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

8. WE MUST COOPERATE WITH WHAT GOD HAS REVEALED

Romans 14:12 So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

The miners are being told to have some fun, exercise, rest and eat, but for a good reason. To get through the 26-inch wide rescue tunnel, each miner's waist must be 35 inches or less. So there has to be some cooperation on the miners' part to get through.

All people are accountable to God, too. We saw in previous verses that our works do not save us – we could never be good enough – but our works do matter. God has revealed how we are to think, behave, treat others, handle family life, approach work and finances along with many other commands.

We will all give an account someday, whether we believe in Christ or not. That should impact decisions we make every day.

Please pray for the Chilean miners and their families in the meantime. But as we think of them, let's also be aware of what their situation teaches us about ultimate salvation – the salvation of our souls and how God has shown us it must happen.