**WORDS OF SALVATION (#1)**

***Saved In The Nick of Time***

Lost!

I can’t think of a word that scares me more than “LOST!” Depending on the circumstances, it’s terrifying.

Oh, I am used to being told I “lost” when playing board games or card games. That’s par for the course for me (I hate cards and board games!). And I’m also used to the word “lost” when it comes to my car keys, glasses or wallet when I leave the house each morning. My disorganizational skills are the stuff of legend to my family. Benita is used to “saving” me from my “lost” possessions. I’ve told her a gazillion times that I have to die first or I will be perpetually lost for the rest of my life.

But to be personally “lost” is a feeling of dread we all should relate to with personal examples. For instance, physically I have been lost so many times in the pre-GPS era that I actually now include my “smartphone” as one of my thanksgivings in my prayers to God. My sense of direction (or lack thereof) is yet another legendary item of my life’s biography. I used to wander like the Israelites in the Sinai wilderness before I bought my first Garmin, then later my first iPhone. I saved enough money in wasted gasoline to pay for those amazing gadgets twice over! Seriously, I could be looking at the rising sun and claim I was driving west! Oh how I hated being lost.

I once toured the catacombs outside Rome. I got separated from the guide and other tourists and found myself wandering through this underground graveyard where Jews and Christians buried their brethren from the second to the fourth century A.D. It’s so eerie and scary to be lost surrounded by the dead in an underground tomb.

Spiritually speaking, we too often avoid thinking of the word “LOST” as if it were the Bubonic plague. But we desperately need to think of it, either consciously or subconsciously, every day of our life. It should scare us to death (literally) to think of being “*without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world*” (Eph. 2:12). I shutter just thinking of Jesus looking me in the eye on the Day of Judgment and saying these paralyzing words, “*Depart from Me you who practice lawlessness*!” and “*Depart from Me you cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 7:23; 25:41). Being lost and without hope of rescue has to be as chilling and frightening as any thought I can imagine.

It is little wonder Paul constantly reminded his readers of what it is like to feel lost. Over and over again he tells his conversion story (Acts 9, 22, 26), reminding us that he was Exhibit A in God’s prosecution of the condemned world of sinners. Again and again he tells us he was “*the chief of sinners*” (I Tim. 1:15), and “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death*?” (Rom. 7:24). Jesus made it a point to repeatedly describe the feeling of being lost with this message from hell:

“*The sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 8:12)

“*The Son of Man will send out His angels and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 13:41; 22:13, 30).

“*If your hand… foot… eye… causes you to sin, cut it off… pluck it out… and cast it from you, for it is better for you to enter into life with one hand… foot… eye… than to be cast into hell fire*… *where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched*” (Matt. 18:8-9; Mk. 9:43-48).

Peter, who had heard the rooster crow and felt the full impact of being lost by his denials and betrayal, ‘*went out and wept bitterly’* (Matt. 26:75). Thirty years later he felt that feeling of lostness when he reminded his readers that God “*reserved the blackness of darkness forever*” for those who turn back into the world of sin (2 Pet. 2:17-22).

There is no feeling of being lost like “*the blackness of darkness forever*.” I was once in the Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico and when we were 1,027 feet below ground (like taking an elevator the size of the Empire State Building down 102 stories). They warned us to stand still and then turned out the lights. I thought of hell (without the fire, for it stays a consistent 56 degrees).

I hope I have sufficiently explained the meaning of being LOST. Until you feel it, deep in your bones, down to your soul, you will never appreciate the meaning of Salvation. What I mean is the parables of Jesus in Luke 15 of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son(s) are written for us to see ourselves as God saw us B.C. (Before Christ). Read Luke 15 and ponder it long and hard. “Feel” it. “Experience” it. “See” it as you before Christ, then after Christ. Grasp how truly “*dead in sins*” you were, and how He “*made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been* ***saved***” (Rom. 2:1-6).

Salvation. That word means more, far more, than just being saved from the wrath to come (I Thess. 1:10). It is a deliverance, a divine rescue, when we sent out an SOS while drowning in the Sea of Sin. With Satan’s sharks encircling us and seemingly all hope of survival gone, we cried out to God, “Save me!” He did. In what seems like a miracle to us now God saw us perishing at sea and came to the rescue. Isn’t that what Paul meant when he wrote “*For when we were still without strength, in due time* (i.e. in the nick of time, at just the right time) *Christ died for the ungodly … Much more then having now been justified by His blood we shall be* ***SAVED*** *from wrath through Him… having been reconciled we shall be* ***SAVED*** *by His life!*” (Rom. 5:6-10).

Election. Adoption. Justification. Sanctification. Redemption. Propitiation. Reconciliation. Don’t “shun” these “tion” words, but instead let’s talk about them together, for they just might make you think of the “*so great a* ***salvation***” God has given to you (Heb. 2:3).

Because of Calvary I was saved in the nick of time. – Rick