

Rescue

Richard Dawson 29 September 2013

Romans 3¹⁹⁻²⁶ Matthew 11²⁵⁻³⁰

There's an old story about a godly farmer called Fred who received a phone call one day from a friend down the road to say that floods were coming and that he needed to get out while he could. But Fred was unsure about leaving all his farm and the animals behind and besides he wanted to hear God on the matter so he told his friend he would be OK by himself.

Half an hour later his friend knocked on the door and told him it was confirmed that the flood protection scheme further up river had failed and that he needed to move now. But Fred was sure that God would look after him so he dismissed his friend again and he stayed put. An hour later the waters came and Fred found himself putting valuables in the ceiling while the water sloshed around the house. After doing this for a while a boat appeared outside his front door with some rescuers in it who told him to get in because more was coming but Fred was sure by this time that God would save him and that he didn't need to panic so he sent them on their way. 2 hours later Fred was on the roof and the water was still rising. A helicopter appeared above him with some more rescuers who begged him to get in but Fred was so sure God was soon hear his prayers and step in that he sent them on their way too. An hour later

the floods engulfed the whole house and Fred drowned and in heaven Fred, deeply disappointed, asked God why he didn't save him. God scratched his head and said to Fred, 'Look I had your friend ring and visit, I sent a boat and a helicopter – what more did you want me to do!!?'

Rescue requires two things from people who need rescuing. One, they must believe they need to be rescued and two, they need to receive the rescue that is offered. God is in the business of rescue – that's why salvation is such a big word in the NT. Many people refuse to believe they need rescuing so they never reach out to God for the rescue which is available. Others believe but they don't receive the help God is offering. They want something else. They want another sort of rescue – they want it in another form, they want it on their terms. God's rescue is free...

Romans 6²³ says

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But the free think doesn't make it a simple thing. One of the issues I have is that I don't recognise the help God sends me. I'm often looking for solutions in one area of life when God has provided solutions already from another quarter. I imagine that in order for it to be really God, really spiritual, really biblical, things have to look a certain way so and it means that I miss

God's solution. And even I fail to recognise it when it comes or I refuse to accept the help because it does look like what I expected.

We're in the business of rescue in this church because we're in the salvation business and we're in the salvation business because God is in the salvation business. Everything we do starts from this assumption – the world, which means us, needs saving. A flood is coming and the hour is late – we need saving. But rescue relies on two things which always precede it. Firstly, people who need rescuing must **believe** they need rescue and, secondly, they must then **receive** the rescue which is provided. **Believe and receive, believe and receive.** This is the nature of salvation. This is the nature of God's rescue.

You are here largely because you believe you need help as am I. And if you don't completely believe it you suspect it. You may also be here because you've received help and you now know that that help is real and effective. **You have believed and received.**

If you're anything like me you've had problems both with believing you need help and receiving that help. The great issue with the Church today is not that we don't believe in Jesus – it's that we don't understand that belief is just the start and that it's simply not just mental assent. Belief doesn't change things unless it is applied. I can't come to Church and believe and then leave my belief at the door of the church and expect my life to

work well. Belief only works in application – as I apply what I believe to my life – to the way I live – to the circumstances of my world. The Christian word for this application is ‘Faith.’ Faith is belief applied. I am tempted to say Faith is Belief in Action but sometimes faith calls for inaction such as when we refuse to retaliate or refuse to take offense. So Faith can be the opposite of action. It can be saying ‘No’ to something.

If we believe we must also receive. Fred believed he needed help but he simply didn’t want to **receive** what was offered. Receiving is an act. It’s the act of saying yes to something – of taking it to oneself. To receive something I usually have to physically reach out – I have to take it. We’re good at doing this when we want what is offered. But when what is offered requires some kind of confession that we need help then receiving becomes a real issue with us.

The Christian Church is the gathering of those who continually confess their need of God’s help and who reach out to receive it. Indeed, we do more. We make it a habit to admit our need of God’s help and we intentionally place ourselves into situations where God’s help is required. But this is a habit which is not easily formed.

I like to think that I can make my own travel plans myself rather than get other people to book it for me even though often this service is supplied free. I’ll never forget the first time I turned up at the airport after refusing to let the Church main office in

Wellington book a flight there. I happened to get a ride to the airport with then then Moderator of the General Assembly who is kind of like the big cheese in our Church. As he watched I handed over my ticket booked by myself on the same flight as him. As I smiled at the man behind the counter he gave me this sick kind of look like I was trying to have him on and he handed me back the ticket and said – something like ‘You’re joking aren’t you?’ As a deep deflating feeling started in the pit of my stomach I said ‘No, of course not.’ At this he handed me the ticket with now a look of ‘Who is this twit?’ on his face and said well that’s for June and today is July! Yes I don’t just make mistakes but I make them in front of really important people. The Moderator was gracious and arranged for me to fly with him and twice the cost anyway and was glad to receive his help! The issue started, however, back at the point where I refused to receive the help offered and I wonder whether that isn’t a key issue for we who are Christians. Yes we believe but are we willing to receive? Are we willing to take the help Jesus offers? Are we will to enter into His rest? Are we willing to give Jesus our heavy load or do we think this will make us look silly and perhaps weak?

And this is a huge issue for us friends because in order to truly follow God we are going to have to go places where our own strength is really just not enough. In order to grow as Christians we’re going to have to develop the habit of asking for God’s

help all the time; we're going to have to become honest with God about who we are and what we feel so that we can truly receive.

We've tended to turn belief into a set of academic professions when it's really about being real with God about who we are and we have to get to this place before we can receive.

Salvation is the art of **believing and receiving**. Where are you in that dynamic? Have you struggled to believe recently? Believe that you really need God's help; that you really need to seek God for all things; that you really need to lay your big and little decisions before God; that you really need to hear God?

Or perhaps you're struggling at the receiving end? You do believe but you just want to go it alone – you don't want to admit you need God's help; you really want to do life the way you want to do it – do the things that you really want to do. You're a talented person and you know how to run your life – no doubt about it. The question is, is it the life God has for you or is it your life?

Scott Rigsby is a Christian who had to come to terms with a tragic accident which left him a double amputee. Listen to him as he talks about how he dealt with this. [Video]

If you know you need help with believing or receiving I want you to stand today because I want to pray for you. I know I need

help too but I want to pray for you now – that you will believe and that you will receive from God.

Prayer.

Amen.