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HAVE YOU BEEN RESCUED?

The Canyon Puppy.

In 2010 a puppy was found over 350 feet down a crevice in an Arizona Canyon. Nobody knows how he got there, although it is suspected someone cruelly left him there to die. In the little cavern in which he was found there was no food, no fellowship of dogs, little space, indefinite boredom and meaninglessness, and only the light from above of any interest. Understandably, the poor thing was thin, emaciated even, could barely move or make a noise, and was sure to die.

But a man climbing adventurously down the canyon came across the puppy, let down what water and food he had, a blanket too. Unable to rescue him there and then, he left the dog overnight, but returned the next day with a small dog crate and the equipment to retrieve him. He found the puppy lying on the blanket left for him, but he was failing fast. Thankfully, the kind and able man was able to retrieve the puppy and thirty minutes later drove him to the nearest vet. "Puppy," as he was named, has thankfully returned to health. He now lives with his rescuer and has received a new name: Riley.

Our rescue from above.

What an analogy this is of the gospel message! Satan has enslaved us in a cavern down a deep abyss, with no effective or lasting hope around us. So successfully has he entrapped us that, like the puppy, we are unaware of the danger we are in. We are trapped in the sin to which he has lured us, but we are unable to climb out of it. Left to ourselves, we remain enslaved, isolated (for sin wreaks havoc with community), and



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are emaciated: lifeless within and doomed to die alone. Yet, we've been found! Help is offered from above.

Out of the goodness of his heart, God has chosen not to leave us where we are, but, through Christ, to come to our aid. The food and water we have been given—namely, the Bible and the influence of the Holy Spirit—tell us that help is near. The Holy Spirit illumines our minds to understand from the Bible and experience our plight and points us to Jesus our Savior from above. At the cross, Christ entered our dark cavern and by his resurrection raises us to new life. He supplies us with the medicine and nutrition we need, thereby setting us on the road to healing in our hearts and lives. We are brought by adoption into his Father's family, and are even given a new name, stating we no longer belong to the Devil but to God. In God's family our souls are nourished by his word and empowered by the energy of his Spirit to live freely and gratefully ever after.

While Christ is the one who rescues us from the darkness of sin's guilt, power, and presence, we can only experience this rescue if we pay attention to his directives. Riley didn't supply the food, water, or dog crate, nevertheless by heeding the encouragement to eat the food, to drink the water, and to get into the crate, he was saved. The same is true for us. We are not saved by Bible reading or works of our own, nevertheless no one is saved without heeding Christ's directive to confess our sins and to trust in him for salvation. To refuse to do so, nullifies for us Christ's entrance into this world, and into the darkness of our deep canyon. How sad it would have been had the rescuer come all the way down to Riley, only for the puppy to refuse to get into the dog crate! Yet that is what countless people do when they learn they have fallen so very far short of



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the standards of God's holiness. Instead of heeding the directives of Christ to be saved, they ignore their plight and continue in sin. What could have been the occasion of rescue, becomes certain death amid the crevice of man's fall. We have no resources to contribute to our escape from sin and its eternal consequences. We can perhaps comfort ourselves in the cavern for the while we have on earth, but we can do nothing of ourselves to procure our rescue or to forge life out of the mere existence known outside of salvation. We need Christ, every bit as much as Riley needed his kind and loving rescuer.

Will you get in the crate?

The great news is that rescue is available. It comes not by simply reading of Christ's rescue of sinners, like the five-plus million viewers of the YouTube video of Riley, lost, dying, found, saved, rescued, and living a happy and healthy life in his adopted home; nor simply among those 44,000-plus fans of his Facebook page we enjoy the Christmas story. We want to be among the 33,000 delighted to share the clip. Because the truth is, we were Riley! We are not simply telling you what Christ has done for others, but of what he has done for us! There was a day we were trapped in the deep, deep crevices of sin. Denying its reality and impact got us nowhere. Rescue only came when we owned our plight and trusted Jesus to raise us up to a new life.

Christ can rescue you too. He has come from heaven to save sinners. The question is this: will you, like Riley, get in the crate?