

# Rescue

# Mission

By Joseph Tkach

**F**or weeks, the miners trapped underground in Chile captured the hearts and imagination of people around the world. Utterly helpless to do anything about their plight themselves, they had no choice but to rely on the efforts of others who worked day and night to rescue them.

In many ways, the plight of the miners is an allegory of the spiritual condition of all humanity. Spiritually speaking, all of humanity has been trapped in a life-threatening environment. The Bible calls it 'sin and death'. Like the miners, we are utterly helpless and unable to do anything about our dire predicament. Just as the cave-in cut off the miners from the outside world, sin is a barrier, keeping people from the life God created them to have. But there is good news—a rescue is under way!

I am sure that as they waited for rescue, the miners carefully explored their options. They had picks, shovels, and some quite sophisticated mining equipment. Could they dig their own way out? Perhaps they tried. But the reality was that no amount of work on their part would have been enough. They were in too deep. For them, the only hope was help from above from those who cared.

All humans are in the same condition spiritually. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. We can't dig our way out of the deep pit of sin and alienation from God that we're in. But God can, and has, reached down to us in our plight and rescued us though Jesus Christ.

What a great relief it must have been for the miners when, after seventeen days cut off from

everything, that first narrow borehole broke through. Although it was not large enough to get them out, it was a means by which food, air, and news could reach them, as well as a source of hope and encouragement through the long months of waiting. As I thought about it, I realised that each of those boreholes was like the gospel—a conduit through which God sends us the good news of our rescue from sin and death, together with sound spiritual nourishment and hope.

Sadly, the gospel is often misused to spread a negative message of condemnation, fear, and spiritual intimidation. It is like sending the trapped miners a steady stream of information about what was going wrong and how bad their situation was, demanding evidence that they fully understood their plight, that they really wanted to be rescued, and even that they start living as though they are already on the surface before the rescue could proceed.

But Jesus didn't wait until humans proved anything. He died for us while we were still sinners, as Paul tells us twice in Romans 5.

Wouldn't it have been wonderful if a survival expert could have projected himself through one of the slim boreholes, to wait with the miners, to pray with them and to reassure them of the reality of their rescue? That would have been an act of great sacrifice—to leave the world of light and fresh air to share the dim, narrow world of the trapped miners. And that is exactly what Jesus did for our world of sin, leaving the glory he shared with the Father to come and share with us the trials of human existence.

Those who believe that good news—the gospel—can see past the gloom of the moment and know that the joy of rescue is ahead. The gospel is good news, not bad news. It's all about grace and truth and hope, not fear and worry and uncertainty.

After all, that's why the angel told the shepherds, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord'.

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