

Saved says it all.

“Saved” says it all - rescued, redeemed, bailed out, clean slate, second chance, new life, fresh start, forgiveness, significance, meaning, love, joy and peace, right with God. Saved. Before 3.16 (as in John 3.16) we, as in the human race, were in mortal peril, dangling over eternity by a thread with no hope, no help, no solutions.

Our predicament.

Leave this planet with no changes from where we began our journey and where we are now, and whoosh, next thing we know, we find ourselves in outer darkness, lost forever, a fragility of life that would and should terrify us if we grasp even a fraction of the significance of our vapor-like, God-defying experience here on Earth. Granted, that on average we have seventy years to work out our problem, but tomorrow is not guaranteed.

An anecdotal detour ...

Our first home when I was a pastor was an old farm house in rural, northern Indiana. I got up in the middle of the night once to shut the back screen door as it was flapping in the brisk wind. This was not a storm door but a wood-framed screen door, as we called them back in the day, which allowed us to open up the enclosed porch/dining room to the evening breeze. Stumbling to the back porch and opening the main door, I discovered not only a strong wind but also a significant snowfall. I reached for the handle just as a west wind caught the door, and the next thing I knew I was lying flat on my back in the snow; no pain suffered except the embarrassment of lying in the back yard in the snow at 2 a.m. in my pajamas. Reminiscent of a scene from “Gunsmoke,” I probably looked like I had been thrown through the swinging doors of Miss Kitty’s bar onto the streets of Dodge City, just waiting for Marshall Dillon and Festus to come around the corner of the house to cart me off to jail to sleep it off.

Here, then gone!

One instant I was in the house; the next instant I was gone. Here, then gone! Whoosh!

Next thing you know.

And that is what the transition from this life to the next will be like. Whoosh, and next thing you know, life on the slippery slope of oblivion brings you to the edge of the dark valley with only yourself to consult, only your own strength to rely on. No help, no hope, no Savior here. You insisted on traveling the universe without God’s input, on doing what seemed right to you, making your own choices, life as you thought it should be, and now you have it.

But suddenly you now realize that the pictures in the brochure were very misleading. Now, completely alone, you discover that this isn’t at all what you wanted, but there is no God to help

because that is what you insisted on your entire life. God gave you what you wanted; he gave you over to yourself and said, "Have it your way."

God said, in effect, "If that's what you want, that's what you get." It wasn't long before they were living in a pigpen, smeared with filth, filthy inside and out. And all this because they traded the true God for a fake god, and worshiped the god they made instead of the God who made them - the God we bless, the God who blesses us. Oh, yes (Romans 1:24-25 MSG)!

They chose their impression of God over the original portrait. But it doesn't have to be that way. God sent his Son to save us. But the key is that access to this saving help for walking through the dark valley is only available on this side of the valley. God the Father sent Jesus his Son so that if you accept his help now, if you acknowledge your need and believe in Jesus the Savior now, then when you die, next thing you know ... you are with God.

One day you will be in a situation entirely out of your control - you will be dead, and the only help available will have been determined through a decision prior to your death. Unless your help was prearranged with God before your death, then no one can or will help you. It is too late. All the good options needed to be exercised before you died. Let me help you sort through them. This is really pretty easy, takes about a minute as there is only one option for heaven, only one person who can help, only one name - Jesus Christ - which you can depend on to keep you from this untenable crisis.

Believe now in Jesus Christ and be saved.