

THE REASON
FOR MY HOPE

THE REASON
FOR MY HOPE
Salvation

BILLY GRAHAM



W PUBLISHING GROUP

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ISBN 978-0-8499-2204-6 (IE)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Graham, Billy, 1918-

The reason for my hope : salvation / Billy Graham.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8499-4761-2

1. Salvation--Christianity. 2. Hope--Religious aspects--Christianity. I. Title.

BT751.3.G725 2013

234'.25--dc23

2013007539

Printed in the United States of America

13 14 15 16 17 18 RRD 6 5 4 3 2 1

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ONE OF THE GREATEST PRIVILEGES OF MY LIFE HAS been the opportunity to associate with numerous men and women throughout the years whom God has used to shape my life and sharpen my understanding of His Word, the Bible. In this book I have attempted to summarize the Good News I have preached during my ministry, and I thank God for the contribution these countless individuals have made to my life—and thus to this volume.

I am especially grateful to my son Franklin for his vision for this project and for his constant encouragement during its writing. I am very thankful also for my longtime colleague Dr. David Bruce, who gave invaluable assistance to this project by coordinating its development and publication. As they have done on previous projects, my editors at Thomas Nelson—David Moberg and Matt Baugher—have given unstintingly of their time and wisdom in this endeavor.

My special thanks to Donna Lee Toney, whose research skills enabled me to include a number of contemporary illustrations that will, I believe, make the timeless message of the Bible come alive for a new generation of readers. Of even greater importance, however, was her diligence in working closely with me to shape the manuscript into its final form. Without her dedication, unique knowledge of Scripture, and writing skills, this book would not have been possible.

—Billy Graham
Montreat, North Carolina
May 2013

INTRODUCTION

HOPE IS A GIFT. Have you ever taken hold of such a prize that leads you out of uncertainty into profound assurance? If so, you have possessed hope. When it arrives, despair departs. An old Scottish proverb says, “Were it not for hope, the heart would break.” What is your heart’s condition?

Mankind is barraged with news about uncertainty in the world. Hearts are paralyzed with fear about the unknown. In an article published by World Trends Research regarding our fast-paced and high-tech society, Van Wishard wrote, “The next three decades loom as the most decisive 30-year period in history.”¹ Indeed, we live in tumultuous times.

Uncertainty is so widespread that the latest fad in the greeting-card industry offers encouragement through designer e-cards that pop up on user screens. One reads, “In the face of uncertainty there is nothing wrong with hope.” Another card simply shows a street sign: HOPE Avenue with a placard pasted below pointing ONE WAY.

Indeed, there is only one way that leads to such certainty for today and for the future, and this is the message I want to share with you in the pages of this book. In times like these, we need a sure hope.

What is hope? Some equate it as a fanciful wish. But the word explodes with confidence to believe in something greater than ourselves, and it is not found in science, medicine, government, or technology. It is a grand gift that does not drain us of life but infuses us with lasting benefits that spring forth from its seemingly veiled treasures. If you doubt my thesis, consider these truths.

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Hope is the breath of nature that surrounds us every day.

Hope is seen in a sprig that shoots up from the crevasse of a sun-dried rock, proving the water of life within.

Hope is the first ray of sunshine that peeks above the horizon—without fail—every morning with blazing truth, telling us we can make it through.

Hope is dispatched when the moon rises in the dark night, foreshadowing that a new day will dawn.

Hope swells within a sea-weary drifter when he spots a distant speck of a ship that grows larger with each passing wave.

Hope headlines commencement addresses, inspiring graduates as they embark on the new life that lies ahead, as they step out on the pathway strewn with possibilities.

Hope is the cry of a newborn baby once bound, now free.

Have you glimpsed the glow of hope? Strike a match and burn a candle. You will discover that the whisper of its flame brings life to a room, making the candle useful. Is your flame alive and making a difference in the world? You see, HOPE PIERCES THE DARKNESS.

It is the absolute assurance that there is life after death. For those who have lost loved ones—and we all have—HOPE BRINGS COMFORT to our aching souls. It perseveres, persuades, prevails.

A GIFT TO THE WORLD

For decades the world has marveled at a once crown jewel—the Hope Diamond—the dazzling, blue 45-carat gem with an estimated value of \$250 million.² Its last owner donated the historic treasure to the Smithsonian Museum as “a gift to the world.”³ Solitary, it sits encased by thick bulletproof glass.

What hope does this rare stone bring to the peoples of the world? While it is grand in glory, it is untouchable; valuable but not priceless; a gift *to* the world but protected *from* the world, locked for safekeeping.

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Is hope for you locked up, inaccessible, untouchable?

Maybe you are longing for hope and cannot find it. In these pages we will see ourselves in this pursuit of hope that brings certainty if we embrace it. You see, it is not kept from you, locked away in a museum. It is made available and comes to you as hope from above. It is not a futuristic aspiration; it is a faith builder.

A NEW DOCUMENT

A contemporary philosopher, the late Richard Rorty, claimed that hope placed in the promise of Jesus Christ returning to earth has failed because He has not returned. This philosopher believed a new document of promise is needed for hope to exist again.⁴

My friend, there is a document of promise that has never grown old. It is new every morning.

The Bible says that Jesus Christ is the very hope that lies within. He is Earth's only hope. He came to unlock the door of your soul to bring the light of salvation into your life. "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is [His] faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22–23). This is *the reason for my hope*, found in God's *salvation*.

The psalmist said, "My flesh also will rest in hope" (Psalm 16:9). Are you resting in such a promise? Hope is an unseen commodity that pays dividends while we still live.

Hope will accompany us through our uncertain tomorrows if we will receive, by faith, the God of hope.

DON'T GIVE UP

There is a saying, "When the world tells us to 'Give up,' hope whispers, 'Try it.'"

When the tsunami wiped out villages along the Indian Ocean, some

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said that all hope was gone; yet a mother, standing in the rubble, heard the whisper of hope as she held her newborn son close. That new life had come during a catastrophic earthquake and flood, in the midst of despair.⁵

Perhaps the greatest psychological, physical, and spiritual need all people have is the need for hope that builds our faith and points us beyond our problems.

We don't see the water in the rock, but nature proves it is there.

We don't see what is along our future's pathway, but we follow its lead.

THE GIVER OF HOPE

When families felt the violent grip of loss in Newtown, Connecticut, they rightly directed their cries to the Giver of hope.

The "Gift to the world" is not on display, locked away under glass in a museum. The Gift to the world came in the form of a personal Savior who paid for our freedom with His priceless life. His Spirit remains with us today, bringing salvation to all who will take hold. This hope is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.

The message of this book is *my hope* for you. And my prayer is that you will be filled with the dividends of joy and peace in believing that you can be rescued from all that hinders, bringing you into a **LIVING HOPE OF SALVATION**.

—Billy Graham
Montreat, North Carolina
May 2013

CHAPTER ONE

RESCUED FOR SOMETHING

*Be ready always to give an answer to every man that
asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.*

—1 PETER 3:15 KJV

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SAVED? I have.
Many years ago I was in a plane crash that could have taken my life and the lives of others on board. It was early in my ministry, and I had traveled to western Canada to speak at a conference. Back in those days much of the air travel was aboard small planes. As I settled into my seat on a Lockheed Lodestar for the final leg of my journey, the plane ascended smoothly out of Vancouver, British Columbia, in spite of a pouring rain.

While the other thirteen passengers slept, I was taking in the beauty of the Canadian Rockies until the flight attendant whispered to me that a problem had developed. The pilot had been told by a radio tower to set the plane down as soon as possible because the storm was worsening, the

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rain quickly turning to snow. The quandary was that all the airports in the area had been forced to shut down due to the heavy snowfall.

When the captain located an open field below, he announced that he was going to dive through a hole in the clouds. While his commanding voice was reassuring, the mood intensified when he explained that because of the snow cover he couldn't tell how the field was plowed or how the furrows were running. "I'll leave the wheels up, and we'll slide in the snow . . . but it's going to be bumpy," he warned.

Sure enough, we touched down, and the small plane bumped hard before coming to an abrupt stop. People screamed at first, but when they realized they were safe, there were tears and sighs of relief. Hope for a safe landing was realized.

We spent the night on the plane, in the middle of a farmer's field, waiting for a rescue squad that came for us with a team of horses pulling a wagon. Dawn was breaking, and the passengers were content to ride the short distance to a waiting bus.

Not all air travel mishaps end this well, with all passengers saved from disaster.

PLUNGED INTO DARK WATERS

The nation was stunned the summer of 1999, when news flashed around the world that a small plane flown by John F. Kennedy Jr. was missing. Kennedy had left New York with his wife, Carolyn, and her sister Lauren Bessette to attend a cousin's wedding at the Kennedy family compound on Cape Cod. When they didn't show up, the wedding was postponed and the hopes for celebration turned to hopelessness and despair—a tragic story that came to an end several days later when the Coast Guard pulled the three lifeless bodies out of the private plane that had plunged into the Atlantic. The cause of the crash: pilot error.

I had visited with John and Carolyn in 1996. They were an engaging young couple with endless opportunities ahead. As a small boy, John had

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bravely endured the horror of losing his father, the president of the United States, to an assassin's bullet. Years later he had watched his mother die a painful death from cancer. President Kennedy's son had learned how to graciously overcome the scrutiny of the public's watchful eye and the media's constant presence. He displayed the poise of a survivor in the face of ridicule or praise.

John also had a sense of adventure. His interest in aviation intrigued me because my son Franklin also loves to fly and is an accomplished pilot. To hear Franklin describe the likelihood of what happened in the cockpit of John's plane that night was chilling. When a pilot becomes disoriented in flight, survival is unlikely.

There isn't much hope for those who crash into the sea—few survive the impact. But I know someone who did.

PULLED FROM THE OCEAN

Louis (Louie) Zamperini, a former American Olympic distance runner and World War II prisoner of war (POW), has been a friend of mine for many years.

This decorated war hero was shot down in his B-24 bomber, the *Green Hornet*. He lived to tell about the 1943 crash into the Pacific Ocean, where he drifted on a life raft for forty-seven days until he was captured by the Japanese. Louie spent twenty months in a Japanese prison camp, enduring physical and mental torture. His courageous story—and ultimate victory—is told in *Unbroken*, which reached number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list and was acclaimed by *Time* magazine as the best nonfiction book of 2010.¹

When Louie was finally rescued from the prison camp, he returned to California a hero, only to fall victim to another enemy, imprisoned again—this time by alcohol. He tells the story of his rescue from that second prison, giving hope to weary hearts who long to be saved from mental anguish, disastrous circumstances, and physical defeat.

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RESCUED BY PORTUGUESE FISHERMEN

My friend John Coale, a successful attorney in Washington, DC, experienced his own brush with death on the sea, as he would later tell my son Franklin.² John and his wife, attorney and television journalist Greta Van Susteren, surprised me by attending my ninetieth birthday celebration. I was with them again in 2011, when Greta covered book signings at the Billy Graham Library with former President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura.

John knows about adventure that turns perilous. He also knows the relief of a successful rescue operation. He was saved out of the icy waters off the northwest corner of Spain in 1979, the same day that China invaded Vietnam.

At the time, John was a restless attorney looking for a thrill, but he didn't know that his voyage would turn treacherous. He had been drifting around Europe, trying his hand as a blackjack counter and had become pretty good at it. But his real love was sailing. An experienced sailor since his youth, John was waiting out the choppy waters to take a voyage from the North Atlantic to the Mediterranean. Europe's coast had been pounded with hurricane-force winds all winter, so when the wind calmed as much as it probably would, John gathered his crew—his fourteen-year-old brother and his brother's friend—and climbed aboard his sailboat. The *Wolfwood*, a thirty-five-foot steel ketch, left the port of La Caruña with three adventuresome souls aboard. Despite the squally winds, John managed to hoist the four sails and rev up the engine to a speed that would get him around the northwest corner of Spain. Fifty miles off the coast, the storm intensified, and gale-force winds began raging between thirty-five and fifty-five knots. The white-knuckled crew hung on for dear life as John worked hard to keep the boat steady while eyeing the compass.

Then he heard loud cracks! He knew it was the mast. The mainsail came down on him, and then the rear sail popped. The remaining sails collapsed and wrapped around the propeller, pulling the shaft out and

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causing the boat to start sinking. Chaos erupted, and the boat lost power. Like a cork on the water, the *Wolfwood* floated aimlessly as the cabin filled with water.

In those days Spain had no coast guard, so the fact that the antenna snapped didn't make much of a difference. The noise was deafening, and John had to bellow, "Abandon ship!" hoping his crew—just six inches away—would hear.

John fought the gales to inflate the raft—their only exit strategy. Grabbing essentials along with his brother and friend, John hastily transferred from the sinking boat to the sophisticated life raft and pushed the imperiled boat away as the winds battered their only hope of security. The prevailing current would pull them toward Iceland, and he knew they would never survive the thousand-mile journey. They may have been in a life raft, but they were still in extreme jeopardy.

John began shooting flares, hoping his distress procedure would be seen. As the boys were complaining about the smoke from the flares, John saw hope on the horizon—a two-hundred-foot Portuguese fishing boat. He thought to himself, *Oh man, there is help up there! Thank God, now we've got a shot [to be saved].*

After enduring six to eight hours on the ocean, the approaching boat was a welcome sight. But when it drew close and John craned his neck to look twenty-five feet straight up to the deck of safety, he wondered how they would ever ascend. Someone tossed down a rope, and it whipped around like a twister. Clutching their only lifeline, they managed to pull themselves toward the side of the ship. The wave surge acted like an elevator, hoisting each of them one at a time. The fishermen grabbed hold and tossed them fifteen feet through the air into the fish hole.

Though the rescue team did not speak English, the burly fishermen showed their thrill of triumph by bear-hugging each one as though they themselves had been saved from death at sea. John couldn't help but say, "Thank You, Lord, for giving me this day." There was hope for the future after all.

Reflecting on the experience years later, John remembered,

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I didn't realize that news of the dramatic rescue had reached shore long before we did. When we docked and were escorted off the ship, television cameras and reporters were everywhere. The next day the story made the front page, with the Chinese invasion of Vietnam a secondary story. I guess that's when it really hit home that we had been saved. In my experience as a defense attorney since then, not even a judge could put the scare in me after living through something like that.

I remember surviving my first brutal storm at sea a few months before this incident. I had never been so scared in my life. A little girl was on the boat, and in her French accent she yelled to me, "Johnny, isn't this beautiful?" When I looked around and saw nothing but horror, her words caused me to look beyond the pending doom and see the powerful beauty of a storm at sea. I thought, *Even this is God's gift*. The reality of the storm at sea took away my extreme fear of the pounding waves and rushing waters because it taught me that fright can be replaced with faith in the hope of overcoming fear. To be saved out of the power of the sea made me figure there's "somebody" up there looking down.

John is so right. God looks down, and every other living creature must look up to Him.

PANIC AT SEA

Some experience adventure in the struggle to survive while others may thrive on adventure for the thrill alone. Still others seek adventure to escape the routine of life. God gives us the taste for adventure; it is part of the DNA of the human race. An example of this is seen in the millions of vacationers who visit exotic places across the sea.

Perhaps you are among these millions. For example, did you ever wish to travel the Mediterranean Sea aboard a luxury liner? On January 13, 2012, many did: newlyweds, retirees, university graduates, sightseers,

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and even experienced travelers took the trip of a lifetime aboard a large cruise ship, dubbed the *Titanic* of the twenty-first century because of its first-class accommodations and luxurious amenities. But for these adventure-seekers their dream turned into a nightmare.³

Two hours after boarding the *Costa Concordia* off the west coast of Italy, some passengers sat down to a seven-course dinner, sipping on wine and champagne; others were entertained by magicians in theaters or by a drama on the silver screen.

But when passengers felt a jolt and the lights went out, the taste of the wine didn't calm their nerves, nor were their minds riveted to the jumbo screen. Instead, the drama of the *Titanic* that had occurred almost one hundred years earlier—on April 15, 1912—flashed in the minds of *Concordia*'s passengers. Some wondered if the cruise line was playing a Friday-the-thirteenth prank. Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On," the theme song of the 1997 movie *Titanic*, was playing through the speakers in one of the restaurants when the ship hit the rocks.⁴

Imagine a jolt that knocks you off course; lights are snuffed out, leaving you in sudden darkness, and the music of romance halts, giving way to eerie silence—until a voice announces all is well and assures passengers that the electrical blackout is temporary. This was the scene. Then the command was given to "remain seated,"⁵ assuring passengers that there was no cause to panic. But many who were not comforted by the announcements began assessing the situation from their iPhones.⁶ The data told them that the ship was listing rapidly. Hope was in peril.

Would you have remained seated? While it is important to follow instructions, there are times when our instincts tell us that conditions have changed, and if we follow reckless orders, our lives could be in danger. This is exactly what happened on the *Costa Concordia*. As the linen-draped tables began to tip, sending fine china and crystal crashing to the floor, people began screaming and running toward the doors, fleeing the restaurants, casinos, theaters, and bars. There was bedlam as men, women, and children scrambled to the decks, hoping to find the light of the moon.

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People frantically searched for life vests and gripped the ship's rails in order to stay on their feet while the captain was reporting to authorities that everything was fine and that there was only "a small technical failure."⁷ The truth was that the stricken vessel had already run aground.

According to port authorities, the captain continued to respond that there were no problems. Neither the ship's owner nor the Italian coast guard knew the pandemonium that was escalating as people pushed and shoved frantically through the corridors, screaming for help and guidance to the lifeboat deck. Many crew members calmly insisted that the passengers return to their cabins or remain in the lounges. Unfortunately, some did. Thankfully, most ignored the dismal and irresponsible advice. The crew had not been given orders to abandon ship, but passengers still begged the crew to launch lifeboats to save them from drowning.

FAITH IN A LIFEBOAT

In the aftermath of the disaster, some reporters scoffed at people's fears, pointing out that the *Concordia*, unlike the *Titanic*, was just a few hundred feet from shore.

While it may not be a practical comparison, one writer called the panic that occurred on the *Concordia* the "*Titanic* effect," claiming that passengers could have had "the odd idea that they were on the *Titanic*, [and] that lifeboats were their only means of salvation." They believed that if lifeboats did not come to their rescue, they were doomed—hope lost. They even may have been lulled into thinking "that it is the boats themselves, rather than human intelligence, good order, calm, and courage that are necessary to save human lives."⁸

But panic was a natural response. If you did not see the lifeboats being lowered, would you cry out for the ship's captain to save you? Passengers knew that the elderly, young children, and the disabled would be incapable of swimming even the relatively short distance, especially in the dark and the cold.

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One passenger reported that her husband insisted they jump off the stricken boat, but she hesitated because she couldn't swim. He gave his life jacket to her and jumped into the water, urging her to trust him. She did and survived, but he died in the water before they could get to shore.⁹

As the story of the *Titanic* has become part of pop culture because of the blockbuster movie, it's unlikely that anyone in the past century would ever be on a sinking boat and not consider the fate of the *Titanic*. I recall as a young boy, hearing stories about *Titanic's* catastrophe and the vows that it would never happen again. Seems modern-day cruise-goers believed them.

GRIPPING WHAT CANNOT SAVE

When three thousand two hundred souls¹⁰ boarded the *Concordia*, they did so in the spirit of the *Titanic*—counting on a majestic voyage of leisure and awestruck beauty. One report said that there was a festive and upbeat atmosphere on deck as the ship set sail just two hours after the sun took its evening dip into the sea. But accounts from survivors were entwined with flashbacks of *Titanic's* doom.

The *Titanic* was acclaimed as “a monument to the promise of technology.” At its launch an employee of the company boldly claimed that “not even God himself could sink this ship.”¹¹ This assumption was backed up with the fact that *Titanic* did not carry enough lifeboats for 100 percent evacuation, if one were to be necessary. When escape from the promised safety of the vessel was vital, the lifeboats that were launched off the ship were not completely filled because there were those who still believed *Titanic* could somehow be saved. During the evacuation, there were “reports of passengers refusing to get on the lifeboats, choosing instead to stay in the warmth and light of the doomed ship.”¹² They didn't believe that within an hour their decision would send them to death in the icy waters.

In contrast, *Concordia* crew members reportedly “were shoving their

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way past passengers. One of the crew was screaming: ‘I don’t want to die!’” One passenger “emerging from the terror inside the ship to find himself perched on top of the slowly submerging hull” said it was “like waking up from one nightmare and stumbling into another.”¹³ He couldn’t find a way to save himself but was grateful that someone else did.

Thirty-two did die, as opposed to the *Titanic*’s death toll of more than fifteen hundred.¹⁴ And instead of sinking entirely like the *Titanic*, *Concordia* came to a precarious rest on its side, balanced on a rocky underwater ledge with its port side out of the water. For more than a year,¹⁵ the lingering sight of the half-submerged ship was a reminder that while we humans may boast of our abilities and our technology, we ultimately cannot save ourselves or the trophies of our achievements.

Geraldo Rivera made this point succinctly as host of a Fox News special on this colossal tragedy at sea that sought to answer this question: How could such a calamity happen in this day and age? The documentary concluded:

Aboard one of these massive engineering marvels it’s easy to forget that the ocean is implacable. . . . No matter how sophisticated the technology or luxurious the surroundings or immense the vessel, there is nothing that overcomes human misjudgment or recklessness or cowardice.¹⁶

The truth of this amazing statement is precisely why God made a way for us to be saved from ourselves. Years from now people will remember the *Costa Concordia* and be determined to build an unsinkable carrier that can overcome human error, for humanity’s fundamental weakness is to think we can save ourselves by getting aboard our own design with controls in hand.

Are you one of those who would rather stay on the sinking ship in the warmth and light for a few more moments of comfort as you watch an empty lifeboat drift further away to safety? Will you finally loosen your grip from what cannot save you and commit yourself to the vessel that can take you safely to shore?

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As reports continued to emerge following *Concordia's* shipwreck, I also was struck by a story that speaks about the indifference of heart. Many of the crew members did evacuate the sinking ship in sheer panic for their own lives. The passengers did not know *the way* to the lifeboats. No emergency drill had been given prior to sailing. No evacuation instructions had been communicated. Video footage documents some crew members apparently boarding the boats with no thought of saving the women, the children, and the disabled. They brushed the shoulders of the panicked passengers without answering questions or offering assistance as they ran for their lives.¹⁷

We hear such stories and ask, "How could this be?" Obviously they knew the way, but they refused to stop long enough to tell others the way to safety. What a sad testament to their indifference of heart. There were, however, other stories from the *Concordia* of crew, passengers, and citizens onshore who went out of their way and even risked their lives to save others: an Indian cook who helped load lifeboats despite a serious head injury that would leave him disabled; a Peruvian waitress who died because she gave her life vest to an elderly man (who survived);¹⁸ even the ship's purser, who had helped search the decks for passengers, said, "I never lost hope of being saved." When he was finally rescued, his mother said, "To speak to him again was like being reborn."¹⁹

Rescue stories always lift our spirits. Perhaps the news media, in its twenty-four-hour cycle, will become more aggressive in reporting good news, because good news certainly abounds—news of men and women who are willing to risk their lives to save the lives of others.

Just four months before the *Concordia* disaster, in fact, YouTube and nearly every media outlet showed the dramatic rescue of a young man in Utah who grounded his motorcycle to avoid a collision with a BMW. When he was thrown from the bike, his body slid under the burning vehicle. Onlookers gathered, sure he was dead but wanting to recover his body. Then an unidentified woman got down on the ground and looked into the flames underneath the car. "He's alive!" she yelled.

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Construction workers and bystanders on the Utah State University campus joined efforts in saving this young man's life by lifting the vehicle and pulling him from the flames. When the young man was later interviewed from his hospital bed, he told the Associated Press, "I'm just very thankful for everyone that helped me out. . . . They saved my life."²⁰

May I ask, would you have refused rescue?

RESCUED FROM SOMETHING, SAVED FOR SOMETHING

Some may say, "Oh, so that's what it means to be saved!"

I have spent my life talking about this subject. After all, who doesn't want to be saved? "Search and rescue" is a term we hear almost every day, whether in the newspaper, over the Internet, or on television or radio.

We watch people being saved from automobile accidents. We hear about children being saved from drowning. We read of others being pulled out of fiery flames. We sigh with relief when military men and women save innocent lives around the world or when the National Guard rescues families from floods left in the wake of hurricanes like Katrina and Sandy. And most of us, I believe, hope that if we find ourselves in dangerous situations, there will be someone to rescue us.

What we seldom stop to realize is that when we are rescued *from* something, we are also saved *for* something. When we are rescued by someone, we are indebted to the one who has saved us from disaster, impending doom, and perhaps death itself.

It was a privilege for me to know the late president Ronald Reagan. We talked many times about his brush with death in 1981 when he survived an assassination attempt. He considered himself forever indebted to those who took bullets for him. He was candid about his own mortality and told his son Michael, "I believe God spared me for a purpose. I want you to know that I've made a decision to recommit the rest of my life, and the rest of my presidency, to God."²¹

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But even if we are saved from such experiences, we will eventually find ourselves facing other threats, whether an incurable disease, a fatal accident, or something as natural as growing old and wearing out from progression of the cycle of life.

No other human being, no matter how selfless or brave, can rescue us from the certainty of death. But that doesn't mean we can't be saved, that we have no hope of rescue. It just means we need to be clear about Who really saves us. That's why I have written this book—to share what I have learned in nearly a century of living with unwavering assurance of being saved.

So what is your story? **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SAVED?**

“I only say these things so that you may have salvation.”

(JOHN 5:34 BBE)