

Rescued from the Deep End

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My mom had brought me to the public pool for the afternoon and I headed for the diving board. I jumped in, came to the surface, and flailed my arms like I thought I should. I thought to myself, “Well, this is a bit more difficult than I imagined, but I’ll make it to the side.” Like Simon Peter after his first steps on the water, I became frantic, and as I started to sink—immediately—I was saved. A man pulled me to the side and made sure I was ok.



A couple weeks ago at my son’s school, I ran into the man who was the lifeguard that day. He is older so we weren’t childhood friends, but I remember what his arms looked like and what it felt like being pulled out of the water. I can’t forget.

Jesus Came to Save Sinners

Listen to what Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:15, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.” Because there are people in Ephesus teaching doctrines contrary to the gospel, Paul writes to urge Timothy to oppose them (1:3). After his initial cataloguing of certain false teachings in verses 3-11, Paul reflects on his rescue from sin, asserting that Jesus saved him in order to “display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life” (1:16).

So why did Jesus come into the world? He came to save sinners—that is, to rescue them. He did not come only to befriend sinners, or to talk with them. He did not come mainly to perform miracles or to confound the smartest religious thinkers of the 1st Century, though he did these things and more. Jesus came as a Rescuer and this is his most significant work.

If this is true, and it most certainly is, it means that each of us must arrive at two important conclusions: 1) I am a guilty sinner, and 2) Jesus is a great savior.

I Am a Guilty Sinner

Apart from Christ, your status is fixed and terrible. You are a sinner and there is nothing you can do to change it. Even if you find yourself navigating life more effectively and morally than your neighbor, before a holy God you are nothing but filthy and vile. You may have some grasp of this reality because of certain consequences you’ve experienced for your bad attitudes and actions, but it is likely that you have drastically underestimated the depth of your wickedness. The Bible says you are dead in sin, that you follow Satan, and are ruled by your fleshly passion—all of this revealing that you are a child of wrath (see Ephesians 2:1-3).

Jesus is a Great Savior

But Jesus came. In response to *your* overwhelming wickedness, Jesus stepped out of eternity into time and space. And he didn’t come to help you along the path to a better version of you—he came as a Rescuer. And because you are a sinner, you need to be *saved*, not merely cleaned up a little, or redirected.

You can be! Because Jesus came as a sacrificial substitute for all who would repent and believe. There is hope for every sinner. When Jesus died on the cross, he did so to bear the penalty that sin deserved. Without Christ we are all in the deep end of sin, drowning and splashing, no matter how much we pretend to have our act together.

You’re a guilty sinner, but he’s a great Savior.

“... I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:13-17).