

# Rescue 3:15

Genesis 3:15

It was one of those disasters that gripped your attention and drew you in to its drama.

On Thursday August 5 2010 the 121-year-old San José copper-gold mine suffered a cave-in. The mine is located in the Atacama Desert about 28 miles north of the regional capital of Copiapó, in northern Chile.

The buried miners were trapped 2300' underground and about 3 miles from the mine's entrance. The rock that trapped them was the size of the Empire State Building.

As a result of the mine's notorious history, it was originally thought that the workers had probably not survived the collapse or that they would starve to death before they were found, if ever.

The national government took over the search and rescue operation from the mine's financially strapped owners.

Seventeen days after the accident, a note written in bold red letters appeared taped to a drill bit when it was pulled to the surface after penetrating an area believed to be accessible to the trapped workers. It read simply "Estamos bien en el refugio, los 33." (English: "We are well in the shelter, the 33 of us").

Chile implemented a comprehensive plan to both care for "the 33" during their entrapment and to rescue the miners from the depths.

The plan included the deployment of three large, international drilling rig teams, nearly every Chilean government ministry, the expertise of the NASA space agency, and more than a dozen multi-national corporations from nearly every continent.

While three separate drilling operations progressed, technicians worked on building a rescue capsules that would eventually carry the miners to safety.

Three such steel rescue capsules, dubbed Fénix (English: Phoenix) were constructed by the Chilean Navy with design input from NASA.

The eventual capsule used to rescue "the 33" was the Fénix 2, a device 21" in diameter, narrow enough to avoid hitting the sides of the tunnel. It had retractable wheels to allow for a smoother ride to the surface, an oxygen supply, lighting, video and voice communications, a reinforced roof to protect against rock falls, and an escape hatch with a safety device to allow the passenger to lower himself back down if the capsule became stuck.

All 33 men were brought safely to the surface on October 13 2010 by a winching operation that lasted nearly 24 hours.

After winching the last trapped miner to the surface, the mine rescue paramedics, the best available drawn from multiple national agencies and military services, held up a sign for the TV cameras reading "Misión cumplida Chile" (English: "Mission accomplished Chile"), which was seen by a TV and internet audience estimated at more than 1 billion viewers around the world watching the rescue live.

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010\\_Copiapó\\_mining\\_accident](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_Copiapó_mining_accident)

If you noted the date of the cave-in, you realize that the rescue took 69 days to accomplish. That's a very long time.

Life went on as the rescue progressed. Campamento Esperanza (Camp Hope) was a tent city that sprang up in the desert. At first, relatives gathered at the mine entrance and slept in cars as they waited and prayed for word on the rescue operation's progress. As days turned into weeks, friends brought them tents and other camping supplies to provide shelter from the harsh desert climate.

The encampment grew with the arrival of more friends and relatives, additional rescue and construction workers, and members of the media.

Over time a school house and children's play zones were built while volunteers worked to help feed the families. Clowns entertained the children and organizations provided emotional and spiritual comfort to the waiting families. Police and soldiers were brought in from Santiago to help maintain order and security with some patrolling the desert perimeter on horseback. In many respects the camp gradually grew into a small city.

69 days was a long time. Humanly speaking, it could not have been done any faster. There was none of the corporate greed we are used to, from both reality and fiction. There was no attempted cover-up; no national pride that kept Chile from accepting help.

Nevertheless, every minute of those 69 days was absolutely necessary for the success of the endeavor.

I want to make what might seem like an abrupt segue from the Chilean mine rescue to a biblical issue I believe to be of grave significance in our presentation of the Gospel.

If there is such a thing as the "average nonbeliever," I'd say the thing about Christianity that bothers him or her more than any other is the problem of pain.

That is what C.S. Lewis called it - the problem of pain. Philip Yancey puts it in question form, asking, "Where is God when it hurts?"

Warren Wiersbe's book on this is titled, *Why Us? When Bad things Happen to God's People*. It was a rebuttal to a book written by Rabbi Howard Kushner, titled, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Kushner concluded that the on-going suffering in the world was evidence that God was loving, but not all-powerful - otherwise He would put a stop to it.

Pop-culture promotes that same thought every chance it gets. God is some distant, neutral power, Who obviously could care less about His creatures. He might be benevolent, but the pain we see and experience proves (they say) He is powerless.

There is a division of theology devoted to the study of this question. It's called *theodicy*, and is defined by some as,

... the attempt to vindicate God in response to the evidential problem of evil that militates against the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent deity.

This is not merely a philosophical discussion, reserved for theology students. The problem of pain is where people live, every day on planet earth. Something is clearly wrong with the world, and it appears to most people that God isn't doing a thing about it.

We love apologetics here. We love to defend the faith, and give proofs for the resurrection of Jesus, and to tear-down the strongholds of pop-psychology, and to point out the failings of Darwinian evolution.

But after we've won all those arguments, we are still dealing with a person whose wife contracted cancer and died, leaving behind small kids in what seems a senseless, random experience of pain and suffering. And that is the real issue nonbelievers stumble over.

I suggest to you that the rescue of human beings from what the Bible describes as the fall of man is somewhat akin to the rescue of the 33. **It is a long rescue.** It requires just the amount of time it is taking - not a minute more, not a minute less.

I can prove the timing is perfect, biblically. I'm getting ahead of myself, but this is important. Concerning Jesus Christ, we read,

Gal 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

"Fullness of time" can be translated, "when the set time had fully come." It means Jesus was on-time; that He came at the perfect time - the time prescribed by God the Father.

Since that is true, we can confidently say that everything leading up to His coming, and everything that is going on since, is on time.

As I said, I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's go back to the beginning. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sinned and were buried, as it were, by sin. They needed rescue, and God acted immediately to effect their rescue.

God wasted no time in outlining His rescue plan. His plan was revealed in one line of dialog - 28 words in English. He said to the serpent, with Adam and Eve listening,

Gen 3:15 "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel."

This verse is called by scholars, the *protevangelium*, meaning "The First Gospel." It predicts perpetual hostility between Satan and the woman's offspring, i.e., the human race; and between Satan's seed (his agents) and her Seed.

To put it in terms we are using, God said He was sending Someone to rescue Adam and Eve, and He used every resource available to Him to accomplish it.

It would be an unusual rescue - more like a battle. The woman's Seed - the Rescuer - would crush the Devil's head, a mortal wound spelling utter defeat. In turn, Satan would bruise the Seed's heel. The heel wound here speaks of suffering and even of physical death, but not of ultimate defeat.

The description, "Seed of the woman," is a clue that this Person would be born without the seed of a man. He would be virgin-born.

We know Who this first-responder is. It's Jesus, the virgin-born, sinless Son of God, Who died on the Cross.

From The Garden of Eden until today, God has been implementing His rescue plan, and has been saving human beings. As I read the Old Testament, then the New Testament, I see the rescue unfold, and I marvel at the wisdom of God.

Rescuing your soul from sin and Satan and death is not like getting you out of a mine shaft. It is a complicated, involved rescue that must take into account many psychological factors, not the least of which is free will.

Let me illustrate the difficulty this way. Suppose after 68 days the rescuers in Chile had sent down the note, telling the trapped miners that everything was ready, and to prepare to be rescued... ***But they refused.***

It's unimaginable.

Yet a refusal far more serious than that occurs every time a person says "No" to Jesus Christ and His offer to rescue them from sin and Satan and death.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the Light, but that men love darkness, and choose it over the Light. Think of that in mining terms.

Let's say the 33 had refused to get in, one-by-one, to the capsule. Would the rescuers have immediately given up? Packed their gear? Left them to die?

Of course not! They would have made every effort to bring them to safety.

It's conceivable, is it not, that they might have sent someone down to them - to try to convince them.

God's rescue effort continues, minute-by-minute, day-by-day. It is hindered by mankind's own refusal to be saved. Every day that men and women reject rescue, sin and Satan and death wreak havoc on our planet.

It's a little like Camp Hope, in that life goes on, with its ups and downs, while the rescue remains in progress.

People ask, "Why doesn't God do more?" That's silly. What more could He do than has been done, and is being done?

If you mean, "Why doesn't God snap His fingers and resolve everything?," then you haven't really thought very deeply about these things.

This is big-picture stuff. This is macrocosm. It doesn't answer the more personal questions about pain and suffering. It doesn't address why one person contracts cancer, and the next person doesn't.

It doesn't address *you* personally, in *your* pain.

But it's important to set the context first. We can't really begin to address the problem of our individual pain until we know that the rescue of the human race has been ongoing since the first sin.

I suffer in the context of an on-going rescue, in which God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance, and receive eternal life.

If only men would quit loving the darkness, and turn to the Light of Jesus, the problem of pain would end.

It **will** end, one day, as God's longsuffering ends, and the End Times unfold just as presented in the Revelation of Jesus Christ.