

Saving Lives

THE structure on our front cover is an unusual one, but a type of building found in many coastal locations around the UK. Some other countries have similar ones. It is a lifeboat station, operated by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, which describes itself as ‘the charity that saves lives at sea’.

The lifeboat is launched on receiving a distress signal, because another boat is in trouble or people are in danger of drowning for some other reason. Typically, the boat will be maintained by a full-time mechanic, but the crews are volunteers. They are called by phone or radio, and instantly stop their work or leisure activities to rush to the lifeboat.

Often in dangerous, stormy conditions, they put out to sea. They show great skill and courage, risking their own lives to save others.



Bible Saviours

The Bible too has stories about people saving others. One good, if unexpected example, is Joseph (not Jesus’ step-father),

and we read his story in Genesis chapters 37 to 50. One of twelve sons of Jacob, he was hated by his brothers. This hatred was inflamed because he had dreams which told him that one day they would all bow down to him. Eventually, the brothers sold Joseph into slavery and he was taken to Egypt.

In Egypt, he suffered injustice and imprisonment, but eventually entered into the king’s service. He became second in command in Egypt, and managed its food resources during a terrible famine. His brothers visited Egypt to buy food, and were terrified when they found out about the now powerful Joseph – what would he do

to them? Would he take revenge?

However, Joseph was gentle and gracious with them. He could see that God was at work, and he had this to say to them:

I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; God sent me before you to preserve life... God sent me before you to preserve a posterity

for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance (Genesis 45:4–5, 7).

God was using Joseph to save his family, which would become the nation of Israel. He would also use His prophets to warn those who would listen, and tell them to obey God. The prophet Ezekiel was given this message:

He who takes warning will save his life (Ezekiel 33:5).

God as Saviour

The Lord God is described many times as the saviour of Israel, as in these examples:

For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour (Isaiah 43:3).

I am the LORD your God... there is no saviour besides Me (Hosea 13:4).

His work of salvation goes much further than this. He wants to save everyone and calls to everyone:

Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other (Isaiah 45:22).

A subject which appears regularly in *Glad Tidings* is the need for men and women to be saved from death; by faith and baptism we can hope to be in God's kingdom.

Jesus the Saviour

God's work of salvation is carried out through Jesus. Even his name means 'God Saves'. There was another Joseph who was the step-father of Jesus. When he was told

that Mary would have a son, the angel said to him:

She will bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus came to save lives, and he was very explicit about this:

For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them (Luke 9:56).

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10).

Jesus spent his life serving God, teaching people about God's purpose and calling them to follow him. When he died, he was a perfect sacrifice: he did not deserve to die as he never disobeyed God, but he willingly offered his life so that men and women could be saved. Paul summarised it like this:

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him (Romans 5:8–9).

Saving or Losing Life?

How we respond to this is crucial. What God wants is for us to believe His promises and to be baptised. We need to commit our lives entirely to God, following Jesus:

Whoever desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it (Mark 8:34–5).