

God's Great Rescue of His Children

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Easter Sunday morning, take your Bibles and let's go to John 14. I am taking a brief break from our study through the book of Amos. Lord willing we will return there next Sunday Lord's day but this morning John 14. I want to talk about the doctrine of the rapture, "God's Great Rescue of His Children." God's great rescue of his children. He has promised this to us and one of the clear places where this promise comes through is John 14 in verses 1 through 3. Jesus says,

1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you [here it is], I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

All of mankind lives under one of two destinies and only one of two destinies. You are either destined for holy retribution or you are destined for a holy rescue. It's one of the two. Now, for those who believe in Christ, they are destined for the great rescue of God. You see, Jesus is the agent of our redemption, he wrought that out on Calvary, and he's the agent of our rescue on the appointed day.

The Scriptures have much to say about this theme of God rescuing his children. Galatians 1:3-4, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father." Can I just make a side note here? As you look at the vile perversion and wickedness that is no longer being tolerated in our culture but celebrated by our culture, is there not a part of you as a child of God that says, "Lord, please rescue me"? 2 Timothy 4:18, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed," and notice this, "and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen." So part of the ultimate rescue that our Lord gives to us is that time when he takes us out of this sin-cursed world, a world that hates him and hates us, and receives us back to himself and brings us out of this present dark kingdom.

You see, Jesus is mighty, in fact, he's Almighty. He's mighty in his faithfulness. He's mighty in the faithfulness to his word he's promised us and to the work he's performed on our behalf. Listen, there is no way Jesus is going to die for our sins, be raised for our

justification, intercede for us faithfully at the Father's right hand and then fail to come again and receive us unto himself, therefore rescuing us from the sin-cursed world that hates us and hates him, and from the awful wrath that he's going to pour out on the earth at the end of the age. He has promised that he will come again and rescue his children. 1 Thessalonians 5:9 reminds us that we are "not destined for wrath." Did you hear that, child of God? If there is a holy God, then there must be a wrathful, holy retribution against sin, but for those who know Christ, he has not destined us for wrath. Friend, that's good news. That's good news.

Three things about this great rescue I want to point out in this morning's message. I. God's great rescue foreshadowed. God's great rescue foreshadowed. The Old Testament, you see, contains a collection of shadowy pictures and illustrations of that which will come forth literally at a later time and most of it literally has come true when the New Testament era began and the New Testament was written. These shadows or these pictures, these illustrations from the Old Testament are sometimes called types. You've heard the word "typologies." And sometimes they're referred to as shadows, something appeared in the Old Testament and you don't see it all clearly yet, it's something of a shadow but then in the New Testament it unfolds in full bloom. Well, this holds true for this final event that God has planned for his children on earth, that is, the rescue of those children in the rapture.

Now, let's mention a few of those illustrations from the Old Testament that form a shadow of what's going to be finally revealed at the end of time when the Lord returns to rescue his children. Remember Daniel, a teenage boy enslaved in Babylonian captivity and the king issued an edict that no one could pray except to the god that Nebuchadnezzar had ordained but when Daniel heard that, he just kept right on praying three times a day toward God in Jerusalem. Well, they found out about it. The penalty was the lions' den. Daniel is cast into the lions' den and this troubled the king's heart because personally he liked Daniel, had respect for him. In the morning the king went to check on him and said, "Daniel, has your God been able to deliver you?" And the first thing the king heard was, "O king, live forever." God rescued Daniel from the lions' den, a foreshadowing of the ultimate rescue he would have for his people.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not bow toward the image that the king had set up. The penalty: thrown Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in a fiery furnace. Even the men who went and cast those three Hebrew boys in the furnace perished in the flame. But the king was watching in the furnace and the Bible says, "Lo, there appeared one in the furnace with those three and he appeared as one of the sons of the gods." That's the best way that king could describe it. I believe it was the Lord Jesus Christ. And then those men were brought out of the furnace and the only thing that was burnt were the bonds that were tying them. God rescued his children, all of this pointing to that God has an ultimate plan of rescue for his children.

In Joshua 10, God made the sun and the moon stand still thus giving Israel the victory over the Amorites, and through doing this, God rescued his children from their enemies.

In 2 Kings 19, the mighty Assyrians who had devastated all the nations of the earth now find themselves encamped against Jerusalem but God promised, "The Assyrians will not as much as fling one arrow into the city." And that very night, the Bible says the angel of the Lord came into the Assyrian camp and when men woke up in the morning, 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were dead, thus God rescued his children from the Assyrians.

In Exodus 7, Israel is enslaved in Egyptian captivity and God begins to send the plagues against Egypt: plague of frogs and lice, then flies, then the death of the livestock, then boils all over their skin, and then hailstones, and then locusts, and then darkness, and that lastly, of course, the death angel visited every house that didn't have the blood of a spotless lamb applied to the lintel and the doorpost. Not only at this point did the Pharaoh allow Israel to leave, the Pharaoh ordered them to leave and go and worship their God. So they left out of Egypt and then the Egyptians saw that great host of Israeli slaves leaving and they kind of relented on their decision and thought, "What are we doing letting all of this free labor go away?" And so Pharaoh sent his army after them and Moses leading the children of Israel finds himself at the bank of the Red Sea and he raises his rod and God raises up the waters, they stand up like walls on each side, and Israel marches through on dry land. Then the Egyptian army pursues them and the waters close back over them and drowns the entire Egyptian army. God rescued his children from their enemies.

My last one, 2 Kings 6, Elisha is with his attendant and the Arameans who figured out that they couldn't defeat Israel because God would keep telling Elisha where the Arameans were going to attack and he'd tell the king of Israel and the king of Israel would protect them at that point so the Arameans said, "We're going to take care of this prophet," and they sent a mighty host of horses and chariots and they surrounded Elisha's house. The attendant of the man of God, he's called Elisha's associate, goes out in the morning and he sees all of those horses and all of those chariots of the Arameans and he comes back in and says, in effect, "We're doomed! It's over! How will we escape this?" And Elisha prays and he says, "God, open the eyes of this man to see." He goes back outside and lo and behold he sees on the mountains all around them horses and chariots of fire. Then God strikes the Arameans with blindness and they are unable to take Elisha captive.

God rescues his children. Over and over and over again we have the shadow and the type of that ultimate final rescue when Jesus will return again to rescue his children from this sin-cursed, God-forsaking, Christ-hating, Christian-hating world and from the impending wrath that God will bring on the earth in the final days.

II. Not only the great rescue foreshadowed but, secondly, notice the great rescue foretold. The great rescue foretold. When we come to the New Testament, we begin to see that this event is somewhat spelled out. It not only was in a shadow or a type in the Old, but now we're seeing some particulars about the great rescue God has planned.

Notice first of all, it's a signless event and what I mean by being a signless event, there is nothing that will precede it that we could discern, "Well, the return of Christ and the rapture is right around the corner." No, there's not one event that can lead one to say,

"Hey, the rescue of the church, the rapture is just around the corner." It's going to come suddenly, it's going to come unexpectedly. Luke 12:40 reminds us, "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."

Now, there is a coming day after this rescue called the Day of the Lord, the Lord's Day, or the Second Coming when he comes all the way to the earth. A number of events will unfold. Jesus will return all the way to the earth. There will be seven years of horrible, unbelievable wickedness and tribulation on the earth. There will be the destruction of the wicked and the judgment of the wicked. Then there's going to be a millennial kingdom. Then there's going to be a White Throne Judgment. Then there's going to be the destruction of this present earth and the present heavens. Then there will be the establishment, the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. And then there will be an eternal state. But before any of those things take place, there is a trigger that sets all of those into motion and that is the rapture, God's great rescue of his children.

Friend, if you know Christ as your Lord and Savior, you're going to miss every bit of that stuff I just mentioned. Well, in one sense or another you'll miss it, you'll miss it as far as being an object of wrath anyway. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Paul writes, "Behold, I tell you a mystery," now hang onto that word, a mystery, "we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." So what is Paul referring to when he says, "I'm telling you a mystery"? What he means is: this is something that hadn't been revealed as yet but now it's being revealed. What is this mystery? What is being known now that wasn't know before? Here it is: that we'll not all die. That's the secret. That's the mystery that's now known. You will not all face death. When the great rescue occurs, many will be living on the earth and they will fly away to meet the Lord in the air after the dead in Christ, of course, have been resurrected, and we will all put on glorious, immortal bodies and we will always from that moment onward be with the Lord.

Now, another passage that gives us a foretelling of how these events will unfold, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe," now that's a key, do you believe? "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus." That means those who are already dead. Verse 15, "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep." Here it is, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them," that's one thing that tells us it's not his coming to the earth, it says "going to meet him in the air in the clouds," that's where the birds fly, "to meet the Lord," he says it again, "in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord." It's a sudden event. Just like that. You're going to be going to the grocery store, you're going to be petting your dog, you're going to be eating a meal, you may be in your bed at night, no warning, no event,

nothing to look for, there is no precursor, boom! The Lord will appear in the sky. His great rescue of his children.

It is a signless event. We're not looking for earthquakes, wars, rumors of wars, signs in the heavens, signs in Israel, signs about the antichrist, tribulations or judgments. No, we are only and exclusively looking for Christ. Looking for him. My friend, stop analyzing the signs and gaze on the glories and the wonders of your Savior. The next thing that happens on God's great timetable toward the last day is Jesus appearing and rescuing his children.

It'll come just like that. I don't know of anything I've studied in recent years that has encouraged me like this. "Lord, what are we going to do? How are we going to raise kids in this world? How are we going to make it in this thing? The Gospel is being perverted, churches are getting worldly, the world's going to hell, what's going to happen?" And God said, "Don't worry. Hang on. I'm going to come and rescue you, my child." Isn't that good news? I can keep preaching, I can keep praying, I can keep witnessing, I can keep giving, I can keep going, I can be devoted to the Lord because one day in a moment's notice he'll appear and shut it all down and take me home to be with him. Woo, it's good news! It's good news.

Well, not only is it a signless event, quickly, it's a non-judgment event. When he comes to rescue his children, there's no judgment associated with this. That's later. This is not the Lord's Day again, this is the rapture or the rescue. This is not the Second Coming. He's not coming all the way to the earth. The Lord's Day and the Second Coming the Bible makes very clear are fully associated with judgment, but all the language associated with the rapture, the great rescue of God's children, John 14, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, they say nothing of judgment. Quite the contrary, he is coming to rescue his children from a sinful world and the judgment that's about to be poured out on that world. We are going to be rescued by Christ. That's why he lives, friend. That's why he lives. It's a signless event, it's a non-judgment event, but dear friend, this morning I plead with you from my heart: are you ready for him? There will be no warning. There will be no preparation time. He'll appear.

III. Not only is God's great rescue foreshadowed, not only is God's great rescue foretold, thirdly, God's great rescue is a firm guarantee. It is a firm guarantee. His word promises it. Now the text we looked at a while ago in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says – now listen – he's coming for those, two words, very powerful and very important, who are "in Christ." He's coming for those who are in Christ. You must know that you are in Christ.

Now, for those who are in Christ, there are wonderful favors and blessings God has in store for those. You see, Christ is coming again into this earthly realm. He's coming to the atmosphere above the earth's surface, that atmosphere where the birds fly and where the clouds dwell. There is coming a mighty invasion from outer space, not some weird creature from Mars but the holy and majestic Lord of glory, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. This coming will be the time when he has the great calling away of his children, rescuing them from the godless world that hates him and hates them and from the impending

wrath to come right after they are rescued. Now, after this he's coming back a little later to finalize his judgment against the world and establish his kingdom upon the earth, but that's not what these texts speak to.

You might say this morning, "Pastor, how do I know for sure? How do I know the Lord will come and rescue me, take me out of this troubling world and bring me home to eternal glory and I'll miss the wrath to come? How do I know?" Well, first of all, let me tell you I know because he's one of absolute veracity. The word "veracity" is the idea of truth. It means that he has complete observance to the truth. Oh, but my wife's favorite song,

"Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee,
Thou changest not, Thy compassion's, they fail not,
As Thou hast been, Thou forever shall be."

He's faithful but more than just the observance of truth, friend, we have better than that. Jesus said he was the truth, "I am the truth," he said. "I am the way, the truth and the life." You see, he cannot lie. It's impossible for him to fail to keep his word. Did you hear that? He's God. It's impossible for him to fail to keep his word. That would be a complete contradiction of his holy, divine nature. In other words, if he failed to keep his promises to his children, then he would cease to be God and God cannot not be God. He cannot lie. He cannot fail.

In John 14 again, verses 1 through 3, he said, "Do not let your heart be troubled." There is a lot of reason if you follow Jesus Christ in this sin-cursed, Satan-controlled world to have a troubled heart. But he said, "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you." That preparing of a place I believe included the cross. "I'm going to the cross and paying your redemption price. I'm going to the cross and clearing your guilt out of the way so you can fully be mine. I'm going to be raised to prove your justification. I'm going to the right hand of the Father. I will faithfully there intercede for you and I will not fail to complete what I started. I will return and receive you unto myself at the rapture, the great rescue of you, my children, for whom I died, for whom I was raised, for whom I have been interceding." What an assurance. What an assurance.

There is a word in the Old Testament, a word used throughout the Bible that is used when someone gives a solemn vow to another, it's called a covenant, and in the Old Testament they would literally use the phrase "cut a covenant. Let's cut a covenant." And often they would literally cut an animal in half and split the animal halves and the two would walk between those two halves. It was a statement of, "May this be done to us if we break our vow and fail to keep our word." When Jesus, the Son of God, promises us that he's coming again to rescue us from this godless world and from the wrath to come, he's made a covenant with us to do so. He has sworn to literally tear himself in two before he would not keep that word to his children.

His covenant promise to his children is that he will come and rescue them and he will keep his word but there is something else here I want you to grasp. There is another covenant that's even more important. There is a divine – listen to me now, don't go to sleep on me this Easter – there is a divine covenant in the Godhead. God the Father has made a vow to God the Son and God the Son has made a vow to God the Father, "We're going to have ourselves a people. We're going to save us some children." And God the Father says, "This is the plan and, Son, if you'll execute the plan, then you will have your children, we will have our people that will know us and love us and fellowship with us for time and eternity forever and ever, amen." There is a vow in the Godhead to bring this about.

Isaiah 53:10, "But the LORD," that's God the Father, "was pleased To crush Him," the crushing is Jesus on the cross, that's Jesus, "putting Him to grief," now notice, "If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand." Now, here's the agreement: God the Father says, "If you'll give yourself as a guilt offering for the children, then I will crush you, and if you perform your task, Jesus, perfectly," he's never done anything that he didn't do it perfectly, "if you'll go as the sinless Lamb of God, the only one qualified, the only sinless one, if you'll go to the cross and bear their guilt there on the cross, then I will guarantee you I will keep my covenant, I will keep my vow. You will see your offspring," that's us, that's the children, "and you will prolong your days," in other words, "you'll have them for all eternity." That's the covenant vow between.

You say, "Preacher, you Baptists, do you preach once saved, always saved? Do you preach the eternal security of the believer? Do you preach the perseverance of the saints?" Yes, because God the Father and God the Son have made a vow to have for themselves a children to be with them forever and that vow is not going to be broken.

From before time and eternity past, God the Father and God the Son had their heart set on the children, children that they would have as their own. Jesus would first redeem them and at the set time he would come again to rescue them, but before the rescue, the covenant agreement between God the Father and God the Son required a redemption – now get that – had to be a redemption before there could be the rescue. And in Jesus' death on the cross, his pouring out of his blood on the cross, the children are redeemed from the possession of Satan and from the fate of judgment of a sin-cursed, godless world. At the set time, Jesus fulfilled his covenant commitment to the Father perfectly. He yielded up himself to crucifixion, though he himself was holy and sinless and perfect. But there on the cross he took the guilt and the sin of the children, brutally whipped and beaten, he was nailed to a cross, his blood was poured out and the covenant requirement of redemption was met. The earth was darkened as Jesus was looked upon by God the Father as a guilty sinner and there in the darkness God the Father crushed his Son and in his agony and in his death redemption's price was paid.

No wonder he cried out at that point, "It is finished!" Can you imagine before there was anything, before there was time, God the Father and God the Son said, "Here's the plan,"

and finally eons and eons went by in eternity past and then time was established and then decade after decade and century after century a millennia went by and finally the day came. Jesus goes to the cross and said, "Father, I am doing it. I've done it. I've done it. I've done it. The children are secured. I've redeemed their precious souls." In that darkness, he secured our redemption – listen – and secured the right to rescue the children.

Jesus' dead body was laid in a borrowed tomb, borrowed because he wasn't going to use it very long, because on the third day the Father, in effect, speaks from heaven and says, "Arise, my love," and Jesus' dead body was infused with divine power and life ignited every cell and every molecule. The burial clothes fell off and he is clothed with power and with glory and up from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph over his foes. He arose a victor from the dark domain and he lives forever with his saints to reign, that's the children. He arose! He arose! Hallelujah, Christ arose! I believe this. Do you believe this? I believe this. I believe it with all my heart. I believe it.

And as he arose, he came forth out of death into life – now listen – and in his right hand he had the title deed to men's souls. He has won full rights and claim to them and he has won the right to come again and rescue them that they might escape from this wicked, godless world that hates Christ and hates them and from the great tribulation wrath that is to follow.

Now think about it: how could it be that God the Father and God the Son would have this covenant agreement from before time to save the children and have the children with them forever, how could it be that Jesus could fulfill the requirements of the covenant perfectly in coming to the earth, suffering, bleeding and dying and being resurrected from the dead, took the blow of sin in their place, bore their guilt and purchased their redemption, doing all of that and then somehow he's going to fail to keep his word to come again and rescue them? No. I'm telling you, you listen to me: Jesus Christ I believe sits on the edge of his seat in heaven saying, "O Father, can I go now? I'm ready now. Can I go and get them?" I believe one day God the Father will look at Jesus and say, "Go!" and he'll be gone. He'll be ready to go and get his children. Look, the Godhead is in this. You just to get in on it because they wanted to do it. Woo! Great news. Great news.

If Jesus does not come to rescue the children, then he's not who he said he is. Then he's a failure. He's not a true Savior. He's not Lord and he's disqualified as God and such a thing is utterly unthinkable. In conclusion, let's remind ourselves in John 14, Jesus looked at those troubled disciples who had pledged their hearts and all to this Christ and he's going to leave and Jesus said, "Look, I know humanly and emotionally this is tough but let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me and in my Father's house are many dwelling places, and if I go, the earth may perish, the sun may not shine, the moon may hide its face, but listen if I go, I will come again to receive you unto myself. So don't be troubled." And as the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4 gave us the foretelling of these rapture rescue events, he ended the whole sequence by saying, "Now comfort one another with these words."

That first Easter Sunday morning, those two dear ladies, you knew it would be women, wouldn't you, because they just have a heart for these things. Those two ladies rush to the tomb and they're looking in the tomb and they didn't know what they saw but it was an angel and he says, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He has risen just like he said he would be," and they rushed back and they had to be with every second footstep, "He's alive! He's alive! He's alive! He's alive!"

Now, we live on this side of that. I'm not so sure the church's theme, I'm not so sure our rally cry shouldn't be, "He is returning! He is returning! He is returning! He is returning!" And he's returning for one reason first, to rescue his children. He will not, he cannot fail. No wonder the songwriter said, "Hallelujah, what a Savior!"

One final word: do you know him? Have you come to sense the weight of your sin and guilt? Do you not see that you should be destined for wrath? Do you not feel and sense that if God is God you must be crushed? But if you will turn, if you will just turn in faith to Christ, he's mighty to save. He will forgive you. It doesn't matter where you've been, what you've done, how deep the depth, Christ will save you if you'll just come to him. Listen to me: come bankrupt. Come saying, "I bring nothing but filthiness, nothing good, but O Christ, save me!" And I promise you he said, "Whoever believes in me will not be disappointed." He'll be faithful to forgive you, redemption will be applied to you, and you just live every day of your life waiting for the rescue. That's why we don't have to cheat and steal and take advantage and give into our filthy lust like the world has given in to them. That's why we can keep teaching Sunday school and bringing our offerings and trying to be a witness and working and rebuking ourselves and asking brothers to hold us accountable. Why? Because he's coming again. He's coming to rescue us. This stuff ain't lasting, he's lasting and he's coming to get me. While there are no signs, I just feel like it's not far off. Even so, come Lord Jesus.