

# Via

A night cityscape with a lightning bolt striking the sky. The city lights are visible in the foreground and middle ground, while the sky is dark blue with a bright white lightning bolt striking down from the top right. The word 'Via' is written in a large, orange, sans-serif font in the upper left corner.

**BIBLE-BASED READING FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY**



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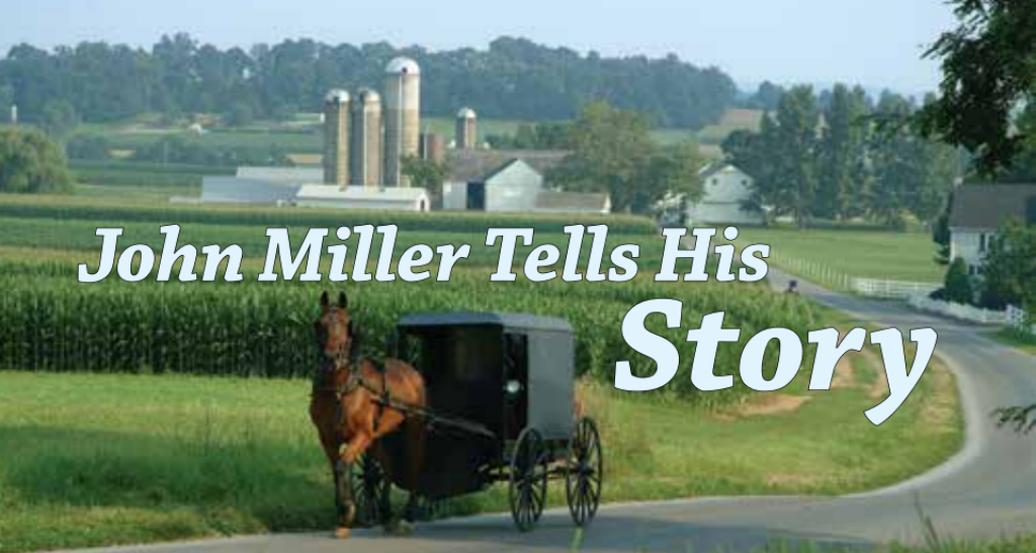
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*All the Bible quotations in these articles are from the New King James version.*

We hear about upheavals of nature such as hurricanes, tsunamis and forest fires and the devastating effects they have on people, particularly if warnings are ignored. We hear about terrorist attacks and people destroying their bodies and lives with street drugs. Sometimes we may wonder "What is this world coming to?" The Bible has the answer to this and many other questions. God warns that in a coming day this earth will be judged in righteousness by the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can learn through the articles in this magazine that we need to turn to God, who "is light" (2 John 1:5) in order to be saved. Also we see that God loves us and His love has no expiration date. As John Miller discovered, it is not what we do but what Jesus did for us that can make us sure of being in our future, eternal, forever home in Heaven. Read on to learn about the Lord Jesus Christ who is able, willing and available to save us.

We hope that through reading the articles you will be drawn to learn more of the Saviour who came to save you! You can have hope and peace in this fearful world.



# John Miller Tells His Story

**O**urs was a typical Amish family. When I was 16 years old I started what the Amish call, “Rumschpringah.” Usually this consists of spending time with a group of your peers and being involved in their activities. My friends and I did many things against the church rules and against our parents’ wishes.

Later, I made a commitment to God and the church to give up my sinful life and to live within the ordinances of the church. It is a solemn occasion when young men and women join an instruction class mandatory for church membership. They are expected to conform to the rules of the church and to shun the ways of the world in dress and manner of life. Because of the turmoil and conflict involved in doing this, many think that when they are finally baptized, this means they are now born again.

After three months of instruction, everyone in our class was baptized. We were told that we were clean and

new, ready for Heaven. I remember having expectations of being happy and sinless, of being filled with joy. All I felt was emptiness!

At an Amish wedding, I met Mary Delagrang. We later married. A few short years later found me the father of a growing line of boys. We looked for a midwife and found Barbara Hawley, a kind and gentle lady who liked to talk about spiritual matters, and about the Lord Jesus Christ. This made me uncomfortable for several reasons. I was afraid she would ask me what we believed, and why. I was not sure of either.

As I got to know the Hawley family better, I recognized they had something I did not possess – peace with God. They would talk to me about Jesus, and how we needed to be saved. As Amish, we did not believe a person could know they were saved, we could only hope to make it into Heaven.

Barbara gave me a New Testament. Reading my new Bible was a real eye

opener for me. A light bulb went on when I read Romans 9:31-33. It was easy to make the comparison between Israel and the Amish. It was made clear to me why I had no peace with God by keeping the church rules. My condemnation before a Holy God was made obvious. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). I knew, without a doubt, what my wages were - because of my sins, I would not be in Heaven, but I was going to be in Hell forever. However, the last part of the verse eluded me. I still thought that somehow, I had to pay God for my sins.

Those were dark, awful days, but I thank my God for them. He was bringing me to true repentance and to the provision of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Barbara asked me what I thought would get me to Heaven and I answered as I had always believed: that you have to confess all your sins or God will not let you into Heaven. This prompted her to ask me, "John, if you committed a sin and before you could ask forgiveness Christ came back, would you go to Hell?"

All those months of struggling, of pleading with God, of knowing I was condemned, and those Bible verses which told of righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus came back to me. Immediately I knew something had changed. Almost without thinking I said, "No! I would go to Heaven!"

I felt something different; something new that I had never experienced before. I felt a peace with my Creator. I was saved. My simple trust in what Jesus had done changed my life forever. I no longer felt condemned before God.

It was not long before I was telling others among the Amish that we could

**I felt a peace with my  
Creator. I was saved.**

be sure of being in Heaven because it is not what we do, but what Jesus did for us.

Looking back, I marvel once again at God's amazing grace and mercy. I was 37 years old when He reached down into my darkened world and set me free. The peace that I now have with God through my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is worth more to me than anything the world or any religion has to offer. To know that I shall be in Heaven because God *"so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"* (John 3:16) to die on the cross for sinful, undeserving mankind (me), still moves me to tears.

Make things right with your Creator now. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). Trust Jesus for your salvation and you too, will be sure of spending eternity in Heaven.

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# Are You Afraid of the Dark?

**L**ots of people are afraid of the dark. Why is that? Why are we afraid of the dark? Some people think that when we can't see what is around us, we begin to imagine all kinds of scary things that might be out there. Plus, if something really was there, we wouldn't be able to see it.

But there is another kind of darkness which is even more scary than anything we can imagine, and just as real as anything we can see. It's the kind of darkness that the Bible talks about: the spiritual darkness that comes from ignoring or rejecting God.

Many people spend their lives "in the dark" about important spiritual things. They have not read much of God's Word, the Bible, and nobody has ever taught them what it says. Just

like it's easy for us to trip over things when we walk in the dark, if someone doesn't know what the Bible teaches, their view of life "*is like darkness. They do not know what makes them stumble*" (Proverbs 4:19).

When the Bible talks about darkness, it is usually telling us about evil. Evil is the opposite of good. Every time we do something that we shouldn't do, the Bible calls it sin. Sin, which is a kind of evil, is called the "*unfruitful works of darkness*" (Ephesians 5:11).

It is important for us to remember that God is not the only spiritual being trying to get our attention and loyalty. Satan, the enemy of God, is the ultimate example of evil and darkness. The Bible warns that our greatest enemies are Satan and "*the rulers*

of the (spiritual) darkness of this age” (Ephesians 6:12).

Any time I get scared of the dark, I think about how much worse it will be for the people, “for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13). The Bible says that because of our sin, we all deserve an eternity of darkness separated from God in Hell. Some day He will say about many: “Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 22:13).

We all know that turning on a light makes the darkness go away. This is why we need to turn to God, who “is light” (1 John 1:5). Let’s find out how from the Bible, which is “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

The first thing we learn is that God is so perfectly holy that sinners cannot be with Him. Next it teaches us that we are all sinners. Finally, it shows that none of the good things we try to do can take our sins away. Does this mean that we are all doomed? Yes, but it’s not the end of the story. Read on for the good news!

The Bible also tells us about Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, who came to earth to show us the way to God, and also to make the way to God by dying as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus taught that we must all “repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). To repent is to tell God that you have been doing the wrong things, thinking the wrong

thoughts, and going the wrong way in your life. The Gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again from the dead. Believing the Gospel means not only accepting it as true, but also trusting Jesus Christ completely as your Saviour.

The message of the Bible is that we can only be saved from Hell, rescued from darkness, and given a home in Heaven some day because of what Jesus Christ has done. Salvation is a gift purchased by Jesus Christ and

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given by God to sinners like you and me who see our need of it and receive it by faith.

Spiritual darkness like evil, Satan, and eternal separation from God are all scary things. But when we are saved and begin to follow Jesus, we don’t have to be afraid of them anymore. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).

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# No Expiration Date

**W**e've all seen them, those little dates printed on the milk jug cap or in small print on the package of bread.

That fresh milk taste or the delicious flavor of good bread has a time limit. Enjoy it before that little date, or run the risk of sour milk and dry bread. All great foods go bad at some point. Imagine trying to munch on food pulled from an Egyptian tomb. Disgusting! We don't have forever to get the good out of some good things before they spoil.

You will hear some people say, "Let bygones be bygones." When they mean don't treasure bitterness, that may be good advice. However, justice doesn't allow some crimes to have an "expiration date" or a statute of limitations. Time can't heal the deadly wound of murder. There is usually no statute of limitations for first-degree murder.

It shouldn't surprise us that God's standards are far higher than those of the criminal justice system. God has said, "*Whoever hates his brother is a murderer*" (1 John 3:15). Which of us hasn't become angry at someone close to us? We might have a long list of "justifications" like their repeated thoughtlessness or cruelty. But that is their sin. Our heart-response of hatred doesn't escape the notice of God, who detects and remembers the "*thoughts and intents of the heart*" (Hebrews 4:12). God views the plan of the heart

as evidence of the same wicked work as the physical act itself. One wicked thought twenty years ago (and who can deny having done far more than that), leaves us guilty in the presence of a holy God. There is no expiration date for the judgment of sin. "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23).

We can be so glad that God's love has no expiration date. He has said about the ones He loves, "*I have loved you with an everlasting love*" (Jeremiah 31:3). He expressed that love when the Lord Jesus Christ came to Calvary's cross to die for people like you and me who have wicked hearts. "*The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*" (Galatians 2:20). Thankfully that love can never lose its freshness and go sour or dry like milk or bread.

Christ's death wasn't merely a nice gesture; it had a purpose and a massive price tag. "*He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*" (Hebrews 9:26). The death penalty from a holy God for my sin was executed on Jesus Christ. I've been washed clean of the guilt of my sin by the "*blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son*" (1 John 1:7). God's justice didn't expire or get waived. It was satisfied when Christ was punished for my sins. You too can enjoy the love of God that never ends.

God's love will never end, but His offer of it can be refused. Will you refuse to repent and suffer the penalty for sin - "everlasting fire" (Matthew 18:8) - or will you enjoy God's everlasting love? *"He who believes in the*

*Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him"* (John 3:36).

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Bible Truth Publishers

## What are Christians?

**W**hat are Christians? Is a Christian someone who is not Jewish or Muslim? Often we hear of "Christian Countries," but is this a misnomer? Christian is the title given to the followers of Jesus Christ in the early days, and has been proudly owned by thousands for almost 2000 years. A very brief definition of the word Christian is "a person who has placed their faith and trust in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and has enthroned Him as Lord of their life".

Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26). This relationship can only be brought about when a person believes in Christ and thus is born into God's family. Once this all-important, never-to-be-forgotten experience takes place, a new life begins, with new desires, new goals and new attitudes toward both God and people.

Christians have changed masters, and should behave like Christ (1 Peter 4:16). Before being saved Satan is the master, but upon salvation allegiance is given to a new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians accept the truth that *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23) and need salvation. They believe in the future punishment of those who reject Christ, and the future glory of all those who receive Him as their Saviour. Christians wholly accept all of the Bible as the infallible, inspired Word of the living God. They embrace all of the fundamental truths that are found within its covers, such as the virgin birth, the atoning sacrifice, the triumphant resurrection and the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you a Christian? If I should ask if you are Canadian, Australian or any other nationality, you could readily answer. You would know because of your birthright. So it is with a Christian. A Christian is someone who has been born into the family of God and now belongs to Christ: *"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name"* (John 1:12).



## Storm Warnings

**W**ho has not experienced the power and terror of a storm? Homes and businesses are destroyed by tornadoes and floods. Hurricane winds ruin coastal communities. We have no control over when storms will start, where they will move, and how they will affect people.

The damage caused by these upheavals of nature is much greater when warnings are either ignored, or not received. Weather services are constantly developing better ways of communicating storm warnings to the public. Your smart phone can alert you to potential storm threats. The radio and TV stations send out alerts. But sometimes we don't pay attention. Other times a warning is ignored because in the past you escaped without harm even though you were told of an imminent storm. In spite of warnings being given, some choose not to act and so suffer severe loss.

I want to share with you a warning about your personal danger in the coming storm of God's judgment. Everyone needs to heed this warning, because *"it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27). Those who flee to the

Lord Jesus Christ to seek shelter will find permanent safety and protection. He is *"as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest"* (Isaiah 32:2). The storms of life that seem the worst to us now, are minor compared to the future storm of God's judgment that will be experienced by everyone who rejects the gospel message.

Storms often have minimal effect on those who take proper precautions and seek adequate protection. The Lord Jesus Christ can be your shelter from the coming storm because He bore the storm of God's judgment against sin. He cried, *"You have afflicted Me with all Your waves,"* (Psalm 88:7) as He endured the judgment that God should have poured forth on you and me eternally. After He had borne the penalty for sin, He cried, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30)! He provided a shelter for every person who would accept Him as Saviour.

Many have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and no longer fear the coming storm of God's judgment. They have found protection and peace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can avail yourself of that protection by coming to Him, acknowledging your sin and guilt, and relying upon Him for salvation and safety. If you have not come to Him, you are in a place of danger, fully exposed to God's coming judgment against sin.

Be wise and pay attention to the storm warning! Run to the Lord Jesus for safety and salvation today!

# THE DELIVERER

The pyramid tombs in Egypt stand as a monument to human ingenuity. Built of huge blocks of stone, these tombs continue to be a marvel of ancient construction. According to an Egyptian tourist guide, these tombs were possible because Egypt had a vast army of slaves who made bricks for ramps that allowed these immense stones to be placed one on top of the other. While the guide does not identify these slaves, Exodus 1 describes them as the Children of Israel who were forced to make bricks by cruel Egyptian taskmasters. In their affliction, they cried out to God because of their suffering and oppression. God provided them with a deliverer, an escape from judgment, and an escort out of Egypt.

Although we may not acknowledge it, every person is a slave to sin. The Lord Jesus said *“whoever commits sin is the slave of sin”* (John 8:34). We ignore God and spend our lives slaving to obtain the “good life” featured in advertisements. We enrich corporations while destroying our bodies and lives with vices such as alcohol, drugs and entertainment. Moses came back from Midian to Egypt to deliver the Children of Israel from their bondage.

The Lord Jesus came to earth to deliver us from our bondage to sin. He delivers everyone who believes in Him.

Our world system is condemned by God. The Israelites were protected from the judgment that came on Egypt by the sacrifice of Passover lambs. In a similar way, we can be delivered from future judgment by trusting in the life that the Lord Jesus gave at Calvary. It is a redemption price paid to bring us back to God and to deliver us from coming judgment. We are *“not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The Lord Jesus Christ also has promised that He will deliver everyone who believes in Him. In leaving Egypt, the Children of Israel were protected by a cloud and guided by a pillar of fire. Everyone who accepts the Lord Jesus Christ can experience His guidance and protection throughout their lives and they will be delivered from future judgments on the unbelieving. The pyramids can remind us that if we are oppressed and in bondage in this life, God can provide deliverance through the Lord Jesus Christ.



# Can We Know?

**Seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling** – everyday, we use our senses and our minds to learn more about ourselves and the world around us. By using our senses, we can know about the physical world that surrounds us. But what about spiritual matters? Can we know these things also?

## **We can KNOW God.**

*“Be still, and **know** that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalm 46:10)!*

*“And this is eternal life, that they may **know** You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).*

*“I am the Good Shepherd; and I **know** My sheep, and am **known** by My own” (John 10:14).*

## **We can KNOW that we are sinners.**

*“How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me **know** my transgression and my sin” (Job 13:23).*

*“O God, You **know** my foolishness; and my sins are not hidden from You” (Psalm 69:5).*

*“...**Know** therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing that you have forsaken the Lord your God, and the fear of Me is not in you,” Says the Lord God of hosts” (Jeremiah 2:19).*

*“Now we **know** that whatever the law (ten commandments, etc.) says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the **knowledge** of sin” (Romans 3:19, 20).*

## **We can KNOW the way of salvation.**

*“And you shall **know** the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).*

*“Therefore let all ... **know** assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).*

*“And you **know** that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5).*

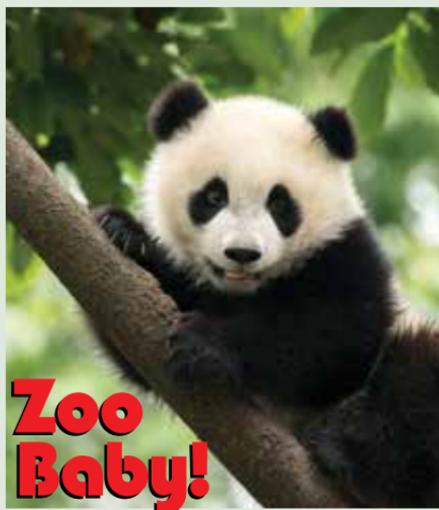
*“Therefore let it be **known** to you, brethren, that through this Man (Jesus Christ) is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38, 39).*

## **We can KNOW that we are saved.**

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I **know** them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27, 28).*

*“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may **know** that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13).*

*“...For I **know** whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Timothy 1:12).*



## Zoo Baby!

There is a super cute new baby with big eyes and round cheeks at the zoo. People are lining up to see her. Her picture is in the news. Who is this black and white ball of fur? She's a baby panda!

Giant Pandas are an endangered animal. There are only about 1500 of them living in the wild. About 300 live in zoos around the world.

Pandas live in the bamboo forests of the mountains in China. Only a few kinds of bamboo grow here. Pandas eat shoots from these bamboo plants. Pandas eat fast, they eat a lot, and they spend about 12 hours a day doing it. They must do this to stay healthy.

Pandas have some special body parts that help them stay alive. Their teeth are very wide and flat. This helps them crush the bamboo shoots, leaves and stems. Their jaws have very strong muscles. Pandas have five fingers on each paw. They also have special large wrist bones that are like thumbs. They

hold the stems in their front paws to get the bamboo into their mouths. They have a special stomach lining to protect them from bamboo splinters.

Pandas are shy. They do not go into places where people live. When a panda is an adult it usually lives by itself.

Everyone thinks this zoo baby is special! And she is. God made her in a special way so that she is able to live in a special place and eat special food.

God made you special too! He knows all about you. He loves you. He wants you to know Him and love Him back. God's special book, the Bible, says that He cares about each and every person that was ever born. He knows the good things we do and also the bad things (sins) we do not want anyone else to know about. The Bible says that everyone does bad things and will be punished for doing them. But you are so important to God that He sent His very own Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and take the punishment for you.

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).

God loves you so much that He wants to forgive you for your sins. First you must agree with Him that you have sinned. You must also believe that Jesus died for you so you can be forgiven and live with God in Heaven some day. That is why God made you – you are special to Him!

# Choose Life!

All of us have been deeply shocked and disturbed by the terrible incidents of violent crime and terrorism. Why, we ask, would people terrorize and murder their fellow citizens? I will not try to go into the psychological and sociological explanations that some would offer, but the Bible does give some warnings and guidelines pertaining to our thought life, which is the source of our actions.

God's Word, the Bible, tells us that when people refuse to acknowledge God, they are in danger of being given over to evil thoughts, and capable of the heinous sins mentioned in Romans 1:28-32. Unfortunately our society, including our schools and courts, seems to be more and more determined not to acknowledge God. While this does have an impact and negative influence on young people, you personally can choose to know God!

The only way you can really get to 'know' God is to accept His Son, Jesus Christ, as your own personal Lord and Saviour. If you will do this by confessing that you are a sinner and believing that Christ died for your sins, the Holy Spirit will enter your heart and mind. You will then have the strength to say "no" to those things which can only drag you down morally and spiritually. Jesus said, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6).

You will then be able to choose not to listen to the immoral and diabolical suggestion on social media and elsewhere that evil is 'cool' and therefore desirable.

Speaking of choices, we read in the Bible of a young man, Joseph, who was faced with a fierce temptation on a daily basis. Because he acknowledged God, he was able to say, *"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (Genesis 39:9). Samson, another young man, was ruled by his selfish passions and chose what pleased him (Judges 14:3). This began his downfall, and eventually caused him to lose his life.

God wants you to have the best life – one that is spent in happy service for Him! He says to you, *"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil ... therefore choose life"* (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19). Won't you choose to begin living a new life by accepting Christ today?





A blue line is painted on the road that leads to my house on the hill. It is unlike any other road markings. As you will see from the picture, there's a blue strip across the road, a wave symbol, and the words **tsunami safe zone**. The idea is, if you get above the line you will be safe from a tsunami. Wellington, New Zealand, where I live, is a hilly city; it is by the sea and is also very prone to earthquakes and, therefore, tsunami.

So, there are blue lines on all of the roads that lead uphill, a continual reminder – indeed, a warning - of potential disaster. A lot of planning, based on elevations above sea level, went into deciding the placing of the blue lines. Yet can the people of Wellington be certain that, if they are just above the line, they would be safe from the devastating effects of a

tsunami? Nobody knows for sure - but everyone hopes so!

What about God's way of salvation? Can I ask you, are you sure of going to Heaven, or do you "hope so"? Did Christ die on the cross so that we could only "hope" to be safe

**Did Christ die on the cross so that we could only "hope" to be safe from God's judgment on our sins?**

from God's judgment on our sins? No, the Bible is certain: Jesus said, "*I am the way*" (John 14.6). He spoke of a narrow way that leads to life (Read Matthew 7:13-14), and He was speaking of eternal life. When you trust in Him you enter on the narrow road – it's like getting above the blue line – and you will be saved and safe.

The blue lines are distinctive from other road markings, which is good. However, as people see them daily they get used to them and begin not to notice them. Also, in some places they get worn down by traffic, so that unless they are repainted, you would hardly be able to see a line in an emergency, especially in the dark.

Could it be that you have heard the gospel story so often you have “got used to it” like the drivers going every day over the lines? Or, has it become for you like the worn down blue line - faded from your consciousness? If so, may this article stir you up – your eternal destiny is at stake. There is a tsunami of judgment coming your way!

Wellington city had a huge reality check on November 16, 2016, just after midnight, when a 7.8 earthquake struck. After the violent shaking stopped, the continuous broadcasts began, warning of a possible tsunami, “If you are in low-lying suburbs, *move to higher ground immediately...*” From my house high on the hill I could see the headlights of vehicles moving up nearby hills. Whole families huddled in their cars during the night, taking refuge on high ground. But many families didn’t listen to the warning, or ignored it. They went back to sleep! They took an awful risk. Thankfully there was no tsunami that night for they were in the danger zone.

We are told what to do “if” there’s danger of a tsunami. There is a difference, however, with the warnings in the Bible about God’s coming judgment. It’s not a case of “if” but “when”. God is incredibly merciful and patient towards sinners, and offers the gift of eternal life (Romans 6.23). But when His righteous judgment falls, it will be swifter than a tsunami. There will be no escape for the unbeliever.

The good news is that you **can** get into the “safe zone” of salvation. Here are just two of the assurances

**The good news is that you can get into the “safe zone” of salvation.**

in the Bible: “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved*” (Acts 16:31). And, “*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life*” (John 3.36). Can you get anything more beautifully simple and sure than that? But you **need** to heed this message! It’s as urgent as the rescue of Lot and his family from Sodom, who were told, “*Escape for your life! Do not look behind you*” (Genesis 19.17).

Dear reader, if you stay in your sinful state, will you perish forever? YES! Can you get into God’s safe zone, and live forever? YES! So, why are you waiting?

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L M Thompson



## *The Most Expensive Tree*

**I**t was recognized in 2010 by the *Guinness Book* as the world's most expensive tree. It cost over 11 million in US dollars. There was nothing cheap about the Christmas tree in the lobby of the Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi. The bare-bones tree cost at least \$10,000, but it's what hung on the tree that gave it such incredible value.

The Christmas tree was decorated with ornaments that were breathtaking to the human eye. Over 181 ornaments of gold and precious stones, including diamonds, pearls, emeralds and sapphires hung from the boughs of the tree.

The reality is-a higher, more permanent record has listed another tree as the most expensive tree in the world. Again, what gave the tree its value was what hung on it. In fact, the world's most expensive tree so far outstrips the value of the Abu Dhabi tree

that it almost seems like poor taste to attempt a comparison.

The costliest tree of the ages was not mounted in the lobby of a luxury hotel to be viewed by admiring eyes. This tree was mounted on top of a barren little hill outside of Jerusalem. It looked more like a pole or a cross than an actual tree. No matter what angle you viewed it from - there was nothing pleasing to the natural eye.

In fact, this tree had all the markings of human brutality on it. The polished veneer of good taste was nowhere to be seen. Those who passed by sneered and mocked. The world's most expensive tree was of no value to most.

The wood from the tree is not what gave it value but who was hanging on that tree was of infinite value- far above the price of diamonds, silver and gold. A Man beaten and bruised hung upon that tree. Yes, death by crucifixion was the Roman way of executing

the worst of criminals-but this Man was innocent. He was perfect! This Man had been stripped of His clothes. His back was slashed open from a horrific beating. Men repeatedly spewed their spit in His face and threw their punches at Him, even pounding His head with a rod as they blindfolded Him.

Then the ultimate insult reserved for those who had committed the most despicable crimes: they nailed His hands and feet with spikes to a cross-a tree-and left Him to die.

Through all of the torture, not a threatening word came from His lips. Not a flash of anger from His eyes-nothing but love. From that tree He prayed to God and said: *“Father, forgive them”* (Luke 23:34).

You need to know something else about that tree. There God placed upon Jesus the heaviest load of all - He put Him there to die for us, to offer Himself as a sacrifice for us. He offered Himself there to take God’s holy wrath and judgment for our sins in place of us. God *“made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us”* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Apostle Peter wrote: *“who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree”* (1 Peter 2:24). He also said: *“you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold... but*

*with the precious blood of Christ”* (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Just before Jesus died, He triumphantly cried with a loud voice: *“It is finished”* (John 19:30)! He then bowed His head, delivered up His spirit and died. What was it that Jesus finished? Jesus paid my sin debt by dying on the tree. “Paid in

full” is the equivalent phrase in the Greek language. His precious blood flowed freely. You too can claim its value and say your sins are “paid in full.”

Without question, that tree is the most expensive tree of all time because of “Who” hung upon it and “what” He accomplished there for our sins.

Which tree is of greater value to you -the one elaborately decorated that will only make it to the Guinness World Records or the one recorded in the Bible as the tree upon which sins were paid for by precious blood that flowed from the innocent and holy One- the Lord Jesus Christ?

Everyone going to Heaven appreciates, in a very personal sense, what happened on that tree. This will be the best moment of your entire life, if you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Saviour.

**The wood from the tree is not what gave it value but who was hanging on that tree was of infinite value - far above the price of diamonds, silver and gold. A Man beaten and bruised hung upon that tree.**

# The Way That Seemed Right



**A**s Portugal sweltered under 40° Celsius temperatures during the summer of 2017, a danger lay silently waiting to wreak havoc on the country. On June 17th, fire broke out in central Portugal in the municipality of Pedrógão Grande. The wildfire spread rapidly due to atmospheric instability which resulted in downbursts - strong winds blowing straight down at the ground and spreading embers. The fire would also spread to the neighboring municipalities.

As the fire spread, the local citizens prepared to evacuate the area. Personal effects were gathered up and put into vehicles to be taken along to protect them from being destroyed by the fire. Escape roads were chosen and families set out. Due to the shifting winds and scorching heat, the direction the fire would spread was difficult to predict. As local residents made their way to what could have been safety, the fire changed course and their vehicles were surrounded by thick smoke.

People perished due to automobile collisions in the dense smoke. People also perished because they

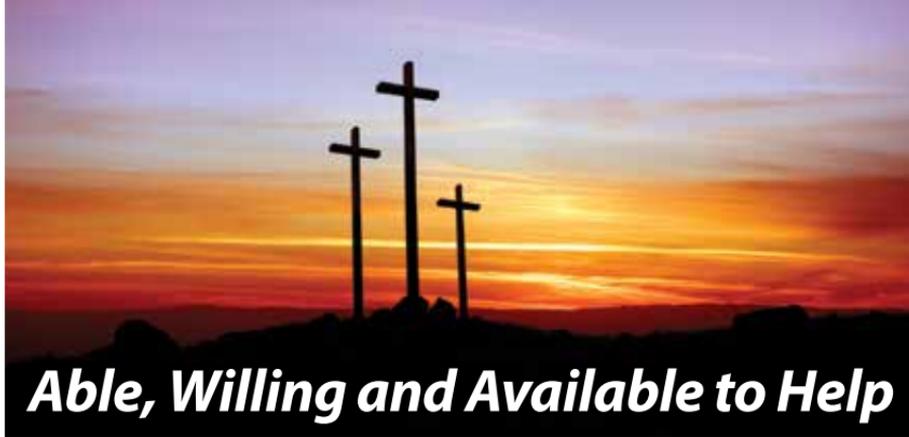
could not see to navigate their way out. They were in the path of the fire and burned even while sitting in their vehicles. Twenty-two people died on one road (from Figueiro dos Vinhos to Castanheira de Pera) alone.

Portugal's Prime Minister asked the head of the Republican National Guard why the EN-261-1 road had not been closed. On that road 47 lives were lost. The response came back that there had been no indication of any danger on that stretch of road. Quite likely the lack of information came as result of the fire taking out the communication network.

How safe is the road on which you are traveling? What are your thoughts as you accumulate your possessions and make your way along the road of life? In Proverbs 14:12, it says *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death"*. The local residents, in Portugal, set out to escape the fire on a road they thought would lead them to safety. Sadly for some, it ended in death.

Where is the road you are on heading? Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6). Accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour. Be on the road that leads to a guaranteed home in Heaven when this life is over!

The decision about which road to take away from the fire cost these people their physical lives. Do not let the decision you make today cost you your spiritual life.



## ***Able, Willing and Available to Help***

**W**hether we think so or not, we need people to help us. For our society to work, we need people in specific places at specific times. Take a doctor, for example. We don't want just anyone to make important decisions about our health! We need people who have studied medicine and know how our bodies work. But they can only help us if they are available. Going to a hospital to see a doctor is useless if they are not there. So we need someone who is able to help - the right person in the right place at the right time.

The same thing is absolutely true about our spiritual lives. The Bible, which is the word of God, tells us that every one of us has a problem of sin (Romans 3:23). Sin is disobedience against God. God is our Creator (Genesis 1), and He has given us clear instructions about what we should and shouldn't do, and the consequences of disobedience. But we don't listen. Many of us think that we are in control of our lives. But God is just and righteous, and He must punish us for our sin. We can't save ourselves, because the best we can do isn't good

enough. We need someone to help us with our spiritual problem.

Thankfully, there is someone who can help us. His name is Jesus Christ, and He is God's Son. The Bible tells us that He "*came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Timothy 1:15). He is the only person who has ever lived on Earth and never sinned. Because He didn't have any sin of His own, He was able to take our place, and He gave His life to pay for our sins. God is satisfied with the price His Son paid, and three days later, He raised the Lord Jesus back to life. He is alive today, and is "*able to save to the uttermost*" (Hebrews 7:25). He is able to save completely and forever!

But not only is the Lord Jesus able to save, He is available to save! A wonderful promise from the Bible is in Jeremiah 29:13. God says, "*you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*" Even though the Lord Jesus died many years ago, He is still willing and able to save. Everyone who turns from their sin, and asks Him to save them, will be saved. He wants to save you. Do you want to be saved?

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