

Save Yourselves!

Acts 2:40

Introduction

1. People will go to extreme lengths to save their lives:
 - a. “In 2003, [Aron] Ralston was hiking alone in Bluejohn Canyon in Canyonlands National Park in southeast Utah. While he was descending into one of the remote and exceedingly narrow canyons, a boulder fell and trapped his right arm. For five days he survived off of packed water and snacks, hoping someone would find him. Trouble was, not only was the spot remote, but he also hadn’t told anyone where he was going.”
 - b. “Realizing he may never be found (and running out of supplies) he was forced to amputate his arm by cutting through the bone using his multi-tool that included a knife. After freeing himself, he began the seven mile walk back to his truck. During his journey, a family discovered him and alerted authorities.”
 - c. “He lost 40 pounds during his ordeal, and somehow...avoided bleeding to death.” (<https://www.history.com/news/5-stunning-real-life-survival-stories>)
 - d. Movie – “127 Hours”
 - e. It is incredible what desperate measures man may take in order to spare his life from otherwise certain death.
 - f. Such lengths are taken to extend what is only a vapor’s appearance anyway – **James 4:14**
 - g. What about the spiritual man?
2. Consider the urgent call of the inspired apostle – **“And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” (Acts 2:40, ASV).**
 - a. **Many other words** – what is recorded is but an outline. Peter had no shortage of words to convince the dead souls before him to save themselves.
 - b. **Testified** – His call was not senseless but based in factual evidence.
 - c. **Exhorted** – He urged them with great energy to hasten to obey.
 - d. **Save yourselves** – there are drastic measures WE are called to for salvation.
 - e. Are you willing to do what it takes to save yourselves?
- I. By Elective Spiritual Heart Surgery
 - A. Prophecy of Ezekiel – **Ezekiel 36:26**
 - a. Israel’s sin, and God’s punishment – **Ezekiel 36:16-21** – captivity, and even in captivity they profaned God’s name.
 - b. The Lord will sanctify His name for His sake in Israel – **Ezekiel 36:23** – by having Himself hallowed in Israel before the nations.
 - c. This would require a great change in the hearts of the people – **Ezekiel 36:26-28** – change of heart to receive God’s Spirit and be His people.

- i. Messianic kingdom reference – **Ezekiel 37:11-14, 24** – spiritual deliverance in its fulfilled sense in coming of the kingdom where Christ reigns at God’s right hand.
 - d. Required a heart change to receive the Spirit of God (**Ezekiel 37:4-5, 14** – word of the Lord) for spiritual life – **Ezekiel 36:26**
 - i. This is elective – i.e. it doesn’t happen against our will but is a change we make.
 - ii. **Ezekiel 18:30-31** – Make YOURSELF a new heart.
 - B. Prophecy of Jeremiah – **Jeremiah 31:33**
 - a. A heart change is necessary, for God’s people in the eternal kingdom are those who have His word written on their hearts.
 - b. In contrast to the first covenant where a newborn baby would be a part without even knowing the Lord – **Jeremiah 31:34** – those who have God’s word written on the heart, thus know the Lord, are those forgiven.
 - c. The word is that which saves – **Ezekiel 37:4-5** – but there must be a willing heart to receive it.
 - C. Preparation of John the Baptist
 - a. John’s work was essentially preparing the hearts of the people to be receptive of Christ and His teaching – **John 1:22-23**
 - i. **“Make straight the way of the Lord”** – those going before a king on his way to claim new territory would make sure the path of travel was smooth.
 - ii. **Spiritually** – make the hearts of people more receptive to the truth by taking away sin and unbelief.
 - b. **Isaiah 40:3-5** – valleys exalted, mountains and hills brought low, crooked places straightened, rough places made smooth.
 - i. Sin corrected, pride humbled, sorrow and lowliness lifted (poor given hope), doubts settled, etc.
 - ii. Prepared hearts to receive the Lord.
 - D. Teaching of Jesus – **Matthew 13**
 - a. Jesus explained why He taught in parables – **Matthew 13:11, 14-15** – because it is not given them to know due to their dullness of hearts.
 - b. **(vv. 16-17)** – contrasted with the desire possessed by Jesus’ disciples.
 - c. Explanation sandwiched in between parable of the sower – **(vv. 18-19)** – involves word being sown in different hearts.
 - i. Didn’t cultivate and give life to some hearts because they were not prepared to receive it.
 - E. It is our duty to drastically change our heart to be receptive to the truth in order to be saved – do we want to know? Would we rather remain in ignorance so as to hold on to sin? Or are we willing to give up anything? Are we biased? Do we want the truth? Etc.
- II. By Putting Off the Body of Sin
 - A. Our spiritual death we need saving from is a separation from God in sin – **Isaiah 59:1-2**

- B. Therefore, in order to be alive with God we must be dead (separated from) to sin – **1 Peter 2:24-25** – He bore our sins so that we could be separated from them and be alive to God.
 - a. **Galatians 2:20** – Crucified with Christ, now live by faith.
 - b. **Galatians 5:24** – crucified the flesh.
 - c. **Galatians 6:14** – world crucified to me, and I to the world.
 - d. **Colossians 2:20** – died with Christ. (**Colossians 3:1** – raised with Christ)
 - C. When is the body of sin put off?
 - a. **Colossians 2:11-13** – circumcision made without hands, baptism, forgiveness.
 - i. **Circumcision** – there is a cutting off so as to remove.
 - ii. **Spiritually** – cutting off so as to remove the body of sin.
 - iii. This is said to have occurred in baptism.
 - iv. (**v. 13**) – Made alive – having forgiven.
 - b. **Romans 6:3-4, 6-7** – when united with Christ’s death in baptism, old man crucified, died to sin.
 - c. **This is how men were to answer Peter’s call to “save yourselves” – Acts 2:38-41**
- III. By Consuming Spiritual Sustenance
- A. When the changed heart has been forgiven of sin through baptism that one has started a new life – **Romans 6:4**
 - a. Jesus called it a new birth – **John 3:3, 5**
 - b. Peter called it a new birth – **1 Peter 1:23**
 - B. This new life (spiritual) needs sustenance! – **1 Peter 2:1-3** – **“that you may grow!”**
 - a. Sustenance is noted to be **“the word.”**
 - b. That is what gave us life to begin with, and it only makes sense that it will then sustain us afterward.
 - C. The spiritual sustenance of God’s word is a must if we are to bear fruit:
 - a. Not bearing fruit – **John 15:1-2, 6** – taken away to be burned in fire.
 - b. Bearing fruit – **Psalms 1:1-3** – by meditating in God’s word.
 - i. **Planted** – firm, unwavering.
 - ii. **By water** – constant sustenance. (Through word) (Leaf not wither – not die because of sustenance)
 - iii. **Bear fruit in season** – whenever and in whatever situation calls for action according to God’s word, the one who meditates in it knows to bear the fruit – does what it’s supposed to do according to God in all situations.
 - D. Jesus urged consumption of spiritual water/bread for life!
 - a. Living water – **John 4:10, 13-14**
 - i. **John 7:37-39** – a reference to the Spirit’s revelation of God’s word (**cf. Ezekiel 37:4-5, 14**), which when received by one to their salvation is shared with others. (Occurring through inspired teaching – especially recorded scripture now)

- b. Bread of life – **John 6:48-51, 63, 68** – speaking of consuming His flesh, the bread of life, which is connected to mean His words.
 - E. **Matthew 4:4** – we need the bread of God to live.
- IV. By Cutting Off Causes of Sin
- A. The one who has received this life and is careful to sustain it by Divine nutrition should be careful about anything which would threaten it – **Hebrews 12:15**
 - B. We must be of the understanding that the devil is relentless in his pursuit of our souls – **1 Peter 5:8**
 - a. He is going to pounce on any opportunity he can.
 - b. We must not provide for him – **Romans 13:14**
 - c. Rather, we must always resist him – **James 4:7**
 - C. This requires our willingness to take drastic measures to separate us from anything that would cause unnecessary difficulty in refraining from sin – **Matthew 5:27-30**
 - a. I.e. are we willing to sacrifice matters which might bring on temptation to spare us from the trouble, and possible sin?
 - b. EX of adultery in the heart – sacrifice forms of entertainment that might bring on that temptation unnecessarily. (Etc.)
 - c. One brother noted – “Most of us have spent a long time learning how to be selfish and lustful. We should not expect the end of these things to come without trauma. Shrieks of anguish may arise from somewhere within us as in penitence we apply the gospel knife.” (Earnhart, Paul. Invitation to a Spiritual Revolution . DeWard Publishing Company. Kindle Edition.)
 - d. What Aron Ralston was literally willing to do to save his temporal physical life.
 - D. Why would we seek to save, or hold on to any of these things if it meant possibly losing our soul? – **Mark 8:35-37**

Conclusion

1. The call is urgent – **“Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” (Acts 2:40, ASV).**
2. **Are we willing to do what it takes to save ourselves?**