

Rescue in the North Pacific



Mayday, Mayday, Called the lieutenant on the radio of his F4 Phantom jet streaking through the grey, rain soaked sky, I have engine problems. We are bailing out.

The radio operator at the Coast Guard Station in Astoria, Oregon got the message and sounded the alert. Throughout the compound a loud blaring horn drowned out all other sounds. The well-drilled crew of the rescue helicopter responded quickly and efficiently to the alarm. With utmost precision they completed their preflight routine. In a matter of minutes they were airborne and flying at nearly 190 miles per hour towards the scene of the incident.

The F4 Phantom jet was losing altitude. The pilot radioed in his location. He was many miles away from the coast over the ocean. Only that morning he had heard a maritime forecast that predicted storm lashed waves reaching heights of twenty feet. He braced himself for the shock he knew was coming. He pushed the eject button on the control panel. The canopy over the cockpit flew open. The wind, for the plane was still traveling at 250 miles an hour, tore the canopy off its hinges. Beneath him there was an explosion as the rocket booster under his seat ignited. The impact of the rocket booster was as if a giant sledge hammer had struck him terrific blow on his spine. He went shooting a hundred and fifty feet into the air above the plane, accelerating so fast that he momentarily fainted. When he came back to consciousness, he felt a sharp pain in his legs and backbone. He pulled the ripcord of his parachute. It opened up and slowed his descent. He had little time to collect his wits; when, through an opening in the clouds, he saw the frothy white caps of the waves beneath him. He hit the water with a splash. The water was unbelievably cold as he tried to catch his breath. The parachute full of wind tried to drag him across the waves and then collapsed into the water. He pulled a strap on a compartment on the back of his flight suit and a small life raft came free and automatically inflated.

He went to pull himself out of the cold water and on to the raft but discovered his parachute had sunk beneath him and was holding him down. The parachute along with the injury to his back and his legs made it impossible for him to climb out of the freezing water. All he could do was to hang onto the side of the raft and hope help would arrive before the intensely cold water drained his life away.

The rescue helicopter flew at top speed to the last reported location of the plane. Rain and low clouds made it difficult to see. Making a low pass over the area they spotted the pilot clinging to the side of the raft.

In twelve years of service the pilot of the Coast Guard helicopter had never attempted a rescue in such bad weather conditions. However, he along with all the members of his crew knew if they didn't act quickly the man below them in the water would perish. So hovering fifteen feet over the wave tips he directed his rescue swimmer, Lieutenant Kelly Mogk, to jump into the water. With a splash she landed several yards away from the raft and struggling against the wind and the waves swam to it.

She saw up close his face had a bluish tint to it, and he wore a blank expression on his face. These were telltale signs of a falling body temperature caused by the bitter cold water. She grabbed him by one of his hands and yelled at him to squeeze. When he was barely able to apply any pressure she had no doubt he was close to death. She tried to push him out of the water onto the raft but something was holding him back. Diving under the raft she discovered that his sunken parachute was pulling him down, and, further complicating the situation, the chords had become tangled up in his legs.

Lt. Mogk drew her knife from its sheath and repeatedly dove under the raft and sliced away at the chords. On one of these dives her wet suit sprung a leak. The icy cold water began to numb her limbs also. Every time she dove she ran the risk of getting tangled up in the chords and drowning herself. At last, the chords were cut free and she was able to hoist him onto the raft. The flight mechanic lowered a cable with a harness attached to it from the open door of the helicopter. Exhausted, Lt. Mogk secured the man into the harness and watched as he was hoisted up into the helicopter. The man needed medical help, and fast, if he were going to survive.

To save precious moments, the helicopter sped off leaving Lt. Mogk behind floating on the tiny raft. Another helicopter sent out from the base would have to pick her up later.

This exciting rescue of the F4 pilot is a fitting illustration of sinners getting saved by the Lord Jesus. The downed pilot hanging onto the side of the raft in the icy cold water had no strength to save himself. Sinners have no strength to save themselves either. When we were yet without strength, God's Word says, Christ died for the ungodly. You see, the sins we have done have entangled us in chords so strong that there is no getting free of them by our own efforts. Those sins are pulling every unsaved person downwards away from God and heaven, and towards a lost eternity. One sin is enough to sink a sinner to hell, and we have committed many more than one.

But God in his love has made a way that lost sinners might be saved. He sent his Son into the world to die in the sinners place. Because the Lord Jesus made the perfect sacrifice for sin on the cross, all who call out to him will be saved. Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.

On the cross, the just One suffered for the unjust, that they might be saved. He bore God's wrath against sin for all those who would believe on him. The moment a sinner believes on him, the sins that held him fast are cut away and cast into the deepest part of the ocean never to be brought up again. Thy sins and iniquities I will remember no more, God says of all those who place their trust in the Savior. In Jesus Christ, sinners who once were on their way to a lost eternity are forgiven, pardoned and justified, all because of what he did at the cross.

It was a great rescue that day when they plucked that man from the North Pacific. But a greater rescue by far takes place whenever a sinner trusts in the Lord Jesus.

Oh wont you believe on him so that wonderful work the Lord Jesus did on the cross might be applied on your account? Then like a young person of old who was filled with wonder at the Gods working, you too might exclaim, My spirit rejoices in God my SaviorFor he that is mighty hath to me done great things, and holy is his name.

Call out to him in faith today and he will surely save you. B.P.