

POMPEII



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POMPEII

Pompeii was a beautiful seaside city in southern Italy. It was situated between Mt. Vesuvius and the Mediterranean Sea. In the year A.D. 79, this region was a wealthy, prosperous part of the Roman Empire.

On the morning of August 24, there was a sharp increase in seismic activity. Several times the earth rumbled like an upset stomach under the townspeople's feet. Also, a good deal more smoke than usual issued out of the top of Mt. Vesuvius. The danger of living so close to an active volcano is that the people grow accustomed to smoke and rumblings. Most townspeople did not think that the increase in activity was anything to worry about. They continued on with their daily routines as if all was well.

We live in an age where people are failing to take warning too. For 2000 years, the gospel has been



preached, telling of a Saviour who came from heaven and died on Calvary's cross. The good news is that all who sincerely believe in the Son of God will be saved. The flip side of the good news is that those who never repent of their sins are under God's wrath. If they pass out of this world unsaved, they will pass into the darkness of a lost eternity. Perhaps you have grown accustomed to hearing the warnings about the judgment to come. Perhaps you have convinced yourself that a place like hell couldn't possibly exist. That's a dangerous way to live.

On the morning of August 24, life went on as usual. The sun shone brightly. Some went to work. Others went shopping in the market. But early in the afternoon, with a tremendous explosion, Mt. Vesuvius erupted. With incredible force and energy, the top of the mountain dissolved into tiny bits and pieces and millions of tons of hot ash, poisonous gasses and pumice from deep inside the earth shot straight up into the sky, reaching a height of over 12 miles. Within minutes, pieces of pumice, or small volcanic rock, started to fall like rain on Pompeii. People in the streets took shelter in the doorways of stone buildings. What a choice the people had to make! Should they immediately flee the city with ash and pumice falling from the sky? Or should they seek shelter in the strong buildings?

When we come to realize that God is angry with our sin, we are presented with a similar choice. Do we flee from God's wrath against sin? Or do we try to take shelter in places that cannot provide it? The

Bible says to **“flee from the wrath to come”** (Matthew 3:7). “Flee” means to hurry as fast as possible. How we “flee” is to come by faith to the Saviour of sinners. On the cross, He gave His life as the one sacrifice for sin that God will ever accept. Take the warnings about sin seriously and flee to the Saviour! He is the sinner’s only refuge.

Many Pompeiians held something over their heads to protect them and fled to the harbor where they crowded onto boats and put out to sea. Others stayed behind seeking safety in the strong walls of their homes. But the safety they found in Pompeii was only temporary. Pompeii was a doomed city. In a short while, it was to become a city of destruction.

The world, in large part, has rejected the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and can be looked at as one great city of destruction. Individuals still have time to see their danger and flee out of it, but sadly, the multitudes that are living at ease as if they have nothing to worry about will be doomed. Don’t go on with this world that is headed for certain judgment. Make a clean break with it.

Renounce its sins. Instead, place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and begin to live a radically different life that is characterized by faith, love and obedience to God. Christ is the sinner’s only hope.

An eyewitness-

ness account of the eruption has been passed down through the ages. Pliny the Younger wrote:

“Ashes now fall upon us though as yet not in great quantity. I looked behind me; gross darkness pressed upon our rear and came rolling over the land after us like a torrent. ... Darkness overspread us like a room that is shut up and the lamp is put out. You could hear the shrieks of women, the crying of children, and the shouting of men; some were seeking their children, others their parents, others their wives or husbands ... many lifting up their hands ... imagining that eternal night was come upon the world.”

The total darkness that descended on the city probably was caused when the giant cloud of ash and gasses cooled and began to fall back to earth, covering Pompeii like an impenetrable blanket.

The darkness that rolled over Pompeii is suggestive of the darkness of hell that will engulf lost sinners. The Lord Jesus spoke more about hell than any other person in the Bible. In Matthew 24, He said, **“Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”** (Matthew 25:30). In this verse, He calls hell the **“outer darkness.”** A word that is synonymous with **“outer”** is **“utter.”** **“Utter darkness”** conveys the thought of complete, total and absolute absence of light. If the



idea of being lost in the darkness of hell doesn't scare you, it should, because hell is a real place and utter darkness is its real condition.

Unfortunately, those trapped in the terrible darkness of Pompeii would never leave it alive. They would lie down in their homes, in the streets, or in their barns, and they would die. For long hours, the volcano continued to erupt and belch out a tremendous amount of ash. So much ash fell on the town that the entire town, buildings and all, was buried under it.

Life as we know it will not last forever. Someday will be your last on earth. It might even be a day when the sun is shining warmly. When you pass out of this world, will you pass into the eternal darkness of hell to hear other lost souls around you weeping in misery? Or will you enter heaven to be with the One who died and rose again, that your sins might be forgiven? Joyous sounds will only be heard in heaven. Crying and sorrow form no part of the place. In heaven there will not be the slightest agony, but only imperturbable peace and delight. Throughout the endless ages, nothing will ever disrupt the perfect joy and delight of souls in heaven. I want to be there, and I hope you do too.

Where you spend eternity depends on what you do with Christ. Don't waste another second before you take to heart God's warnings about sin. Flee to take Christ as your Saviour, and start down the road that leads to life everlasting!

Now is your opportunity. Find out about people unashamed to ask for help in *Should You Make a Distress Call?*

SHOULD YOU MAKE A

DISTRESS CALL?

Twenty-six people aboard a charter fishing boat were enjoying their time of fishing when their vessel hit a rock, which put a bowling-ball-size hole in the hull. They were 15 miles south of San Diego when their vessel began taking on water. They were going down.

Realizing the trouble they were in, someone sent out a Mayday signal, the international signal for a distress call. The call for help was heard, prompting the Coast Guard and San Diego harbor police to respond with mighty rescue efforts. All 26 people were saved.

These people could be grateful because some-

one did the right thing when they realized they were in trouble. Someone made a distress call to the people who were both willing and able to save them.

The Bible has many stories of people who made distress calls when they found themselves in trouble. When they called on the Lord God to save them, He heard their cry for help and saved them. David is a good example. When he faced trouble with enemies who wanted to kill him, he sent out a distress signal to God through prayer. **“In my distress I called upon the**

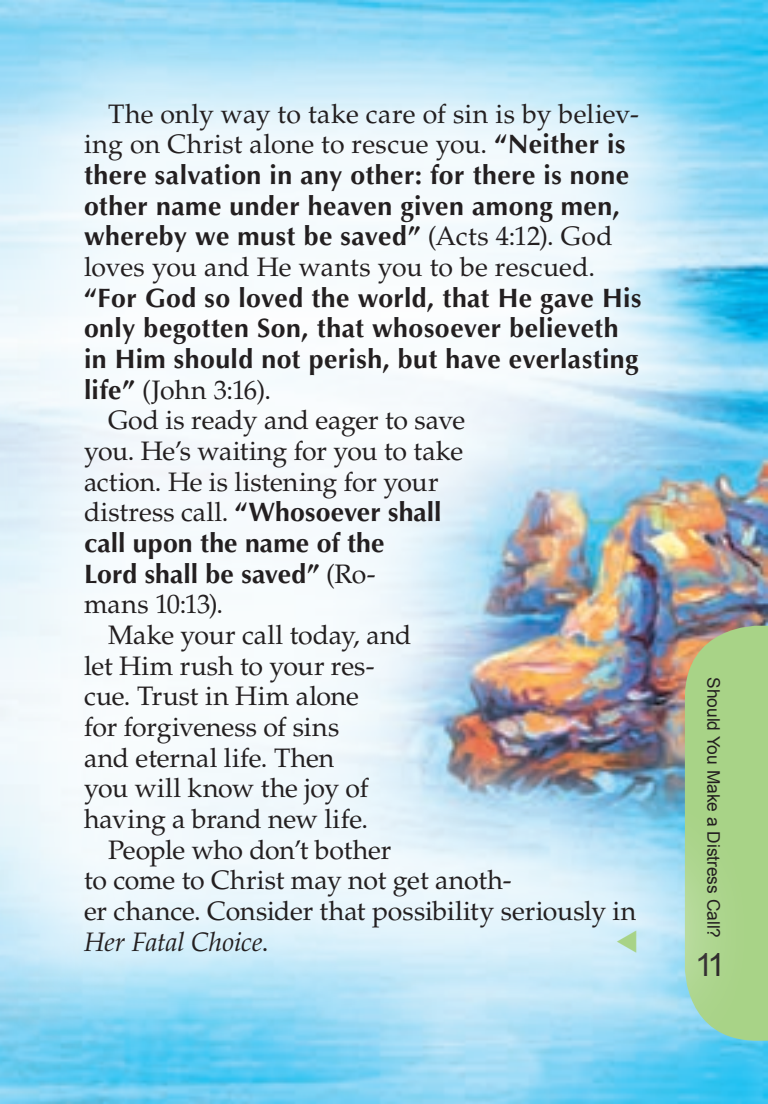


Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of His temple” (Psalm 18:6).

What about you? If you're living a life without Christ, then you are in trouble, and you need help. Your ship is sinking, and your life is going down. Your trouble exists because of sin and its penalty, which is eternal separation from God.

Perhaps you feel you're okay and that you see no threat or imminent danger, but the Bible says we're all sinners (Romans 6:23). This means that no one is perfect and measures up to God's standards. Unless the sin problem is properly addressed, then you will face judgment with severe consequences (Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:15).





The only way to take care of sin is by believing on Christ alone to rescue you. **“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved”** (Acts 4:12). God loves you and He wants you to be rescued. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16).

God is ready and eager to save you. He’s waiting for you to take action. He is listening for your distress call. **“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”** (Romans 10:13).

Make your call today, and let Him rush to your rescue. Trust in Him alone for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Then you will know the joy of having a brand new life.

People who don’t bother to come to Christ may not get another chance. Consider that possibility seriously in *Her Fatal Choice*. ◀

Her FATAL CHOICE

Betty Heath was dying, but she would not believe she was near eternity. She kept expecting to get better and wouldn't give up hope of life. When urged to come to Christ, she would only say, "I have to think about it."

A Christian friend determined to tell her the truth. He came and found that her Bible had been thrown aside. Gasping for breath as she lay dying, she was still trying to drown the voice of her conscience.

The Christian said gently, "Betty, don't you know that you are very near the end of your life? Has no one told you the truth, that the doctor has said your case is hopeless? You will meet God in a few hours!"

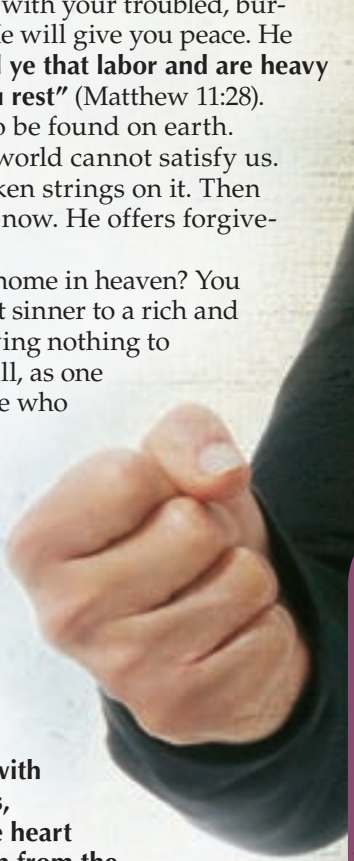
A despairing look came into her eyes. "Are you sure what you've told me is true?"

"Yes, I'm sorry, but it's true," he answered sadly, "and I came with a message of God's love for the last time. Will you accept Christ now?"

Her final answer was given: "Not tonight."

The next day she was gone. She died with bitter curses against God and herself. "Lost!" she cried. "Too late! I have thrown away my opportunity!"

Don't wait. A deathbed is a difficult place for repentance. Come today! It may be too late tomorrow.



Come to Christ with your heavy heart, and He will give you rest. Come with your troubled, burdened conscience, and He will give you peace. He says, **“Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matthew 11:28).

There is no true rest to be found on earth. Friends fail us, and the world cannot satisfy us. The harp of life has broken strings on it. Then come to Jesus and come now. He offers forgiveness, rest and peace.

Do you want a happy home in heaven? You must come as a bankrupt sinner to a rich and giving Christ, as one having nothing to the One who possesses all, as one guilty and lost to the One who pardons and forgives.

You must come with eyes of faith to see the living Saviour, with ears of faith to hear His welcome to you, with a heart of faith to believe unto righteousness and with lips of faith to confess His name.

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9). ◀



THE *Divine* WARNING

*There shall come a night of such wild affright,
As none beside shall know:
When the heaven shall shake, and the wide earth quake
In its last and deepest woe!*

*The children of day are summoned away:
Left are the children of night —
Sealed is their doom, for there's no more room:
Filled are the mansions of light!*

*What an awful cry will rend the sky:
"Open to us, O Lord!"
O ye sinners, yet, ere the door be shut,
Let that cry in faith be heard.*

*And then, in that night of such wild affright
As none beside shall know,
Ye shall calmly rest on HIS tender breast,
Far off from the world's last woe.*

ECHOES OF GRACE

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*“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while
we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).*

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