

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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SCARCELY SAVED

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Some people, out of a sense of humility, will tell you that they are barely going to make it into heaven. They do not believe that they are so evil that they will be lost, but they do not want to convey the thought that they are so good that they can't miss. No, it is more polite to say, “I will make it, but just barely”.

After all, does not the Scripture teach such a possibility? Peter writes, “*And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly appear?*” (I Peter 4:18).

The key word for investigation in this text is the word “scarcely”. Our English word “scarcely” conveys the thought of “barely”. We may say “I can scarcely speak” meaning I can “barely” talk. We could also look at the word as denoting “difficulty” in speaking, not just barely uttering a word.

The concept of “difficulty” is conveyed by the Greek word *MOLIS*, translated “scarcely”. The father describes the demon coming out of his son as it “*hardly (MOLIS) departeth*”. The context helps us see that the sense of “difficulty” is under con-

sideration for the demon caused him to have convulsions and foam at the mouth, and when departing, bruised him sorely. He did not barely come out, but departed with difficulties suffered by the son.

Three times in Acts 27 the adventures of Paul in a ship are described by the Greek word of our text. Luke records that they “*sailed slowly many days, and were come with difficulty over against Cnidus, the wind not further suffering us, we sailed under the lee of Crete, over against Salmone; and with difficulty coasting along it we came unto a certain place called Fair Heavens;*” (Acts 27:7-8). Later, “*And running under the lee of a small Island called Cauda, we were able, with difficulty, to secure the boat*” (Acts 27:16). Surely the concept of doing something with difficulty due to outside interference is the true understanding rather than emphasizing that something is “barely” being done.

The context of I Peter 4 clearly paints for us the picture of the Christian suffering from the persecution initiated by outside foes. A “*fiery trial*” has come upon them (I Peter 4:12). They

are being “*reproached for the name of Christ*” (I Peter 4:14). They are suffering “*as a Christian*” not as some thief or murderer (I Peter 4:15-16). God is allowing this suffering to be experienced by his people.

Peter sums up the definite persecution in these verses in verse 18 as being the difficulty that can be part of the Christian's life. Yes, the faithful Christian will be saved, but the difficulties of persecution may also characterize the journey. Further revelation teaches a different concept than “barely making it”. The Christian, growing spiritually, knows that his “*entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” will be “*richly supplied*” (2 Peter 4:8-11). The righteous Christian “grows” into heaven with an “abundant entrance”. He or she does not get in by the skin of their teeth.

If God allows the righteous to undergo a difficult salvation, the ungodly should tremble contemplating what God might bring upon them in the Judgment in their lost state.