

A Lifeguard Parable

A Study on Church History's Views of Mankind

Lifeguard: Great Example¹

There was a swimmer in a lake a mile from land. While treading water the swimmer noticed that the water posed a threat. The lake was deep and dark. As a result the swimmer thought of the Lifeguard, who sat a mile away on the beach of safety. The swimmer thought, "*What would the Lifeguard do?*" Being inspired by the great example of the Lifeguard; the swimmer began to replicate the swimming techniques that had been previously demonstrated. In the swimming journey back to the shore of safety, the swimmer felt appreciation towards the Lifeguard because He was a *Great Example* in a time of need. The swimmer continued to diligently mimic the Lifeguard's swimming technique all the way to the shore where the swimmer would eventually be removed from the deep and dark waters of danger.

Lifeguard: Helper²

There was a swimmer in a lake a mile from land. While treading water the swimmer noticed that the water posed a great threat. The lake was deep, dark and full of weeds. In fact, the weeds were so thick that if trapped in the weeds they would most definitely pull the best of swimmers under. As a result the swimmer thought of the Lifeguard, who sat a mile away on the beach of safety. The swimmer thought, "*I better take the initiative and call for help. The Lifeguard will be able to help me through this weed infested water!*" With a great amount of force the swimmer yelled out to the Lifeguard for help. Within minutes the Lifeguard was there at the side of the swimmer. The Lifeguard looked at the swimmer and said, "*Don't worry my friend, just swim with me and I will help you maneuver around the weeds to safety!*" In the swimming journey back to shore, the swimmer felt lucky and continually thanked the Lifeguard because He was a *Helper* in a time of need. Both the swimmer and Lifeguard continued to vigorously swim together all the way to the shore where the swimmer would eventually be removed from the deep, dark and weedy waters of danger.

Lifeguard: Rescuer³

There was a swimmer in a lake a mile from land. While treading water the swimmer began to have a leg cramp; a leg cramp that posed an incredible threat. In fact, the leg cramp became so bad that the swimmer started to drown. The swimmer started to gulp up water, splash violently and the weight of the water began to press in. As a result the Lifeguard, who sat a mile away on the beach of safety, saw the swimmer's distress. The Lifeguard yelled out, "*I will not abandon you... I am coming to rescue you!*" Within minutes the Lifeguard was there and He cast out a life preserver to the swimmer. The Lifeguard looked at the swimmer and said, "*Trust me my friend... reach out and grab a hold of the life preserver!*" The sight of the Lifeguard and the sound of His voice granted the swimmer the confidence to reach out and grab a hold of the life preserver even though there was chaos, a leg cramp and a hopeless situation of drowning. While the swimmer held tightly to the life preserver and kicked from time to time towards land; the Lifeguard pulled the swimmer through the water. On the journey back

Summaries Footnotes 1-3 Taken From: Robert Walton *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History* (Zondervan, 1986)

¹ Pelagianism: Man is essentially good and capable of doing what is necessary for salvation (Pelagius ~ Late 4th & Early 5th Century)

² Semi-Pelagianism: The grace of God and the will of man work together in salvation, in which man must take the initiative. (John Cassian ~ Late 4th & Early 5th Century)

³ Augustinianism: The grace of God comes, compelling a person to choose and perform what is necessary for salvation. (Augustine of Hippo ~ ~ Late 4th & Early 5th Century)

towards the beach of safety the swimmer felt grateful, comforted and continually spoke forth praises because the Lifeguard was a *Rescuer* in a time of need. The Lifeguard continued to pull the swimmer, who was holding on to the life preserver, all the way to the shore where the swimmer would eventually be removed from the threat of a leg cramp, a hopeless drowning situation and the deep, dark and weedy waters of danger.

Lifeguard: Life-Giver⁴

There was a swimmer in a lake a mile from land. The swimmer had drowned. A body laid motionless, dead and saturated with water at the bottom of the deep, dark and weedy water. The swimmer was devastated and hopeless to say the least. As a result the Lifeguard, who sat a mile away on the beach of safety, took notice that one of His swimmers was not in sight. The Lifeguard made His hand into a fist and said, *“I am not willing for any of my swimmers to perish... I will go out and find my swimmer!”* Within minutes the Lifeguard found the swimmer. The swimmer was at the bottom of the lake ensnared by the weeds; dead and motionless. The Lifeguard looked at the swimmer and said, *“I must descend to the depths of this lake, grab a hold of this dead body and give CPR!”* The Lifeguard then dove into the depths of the water, fought His way through the weeds, grabbed a hold of the dead body and brought the body out of the depths of the deep water to the surface. Once on the surface of the water, the Lifeguard performed CPR upon the swimmer. The breath of the Lifeguard drove out the water and filled the swimmer’s lungs with refreshing air. The pulsating pumping of the Lifeguard’s hands upon the swimmer’s heart, firmly but gently, revived the swimmer’s heart. All of a sudden life came out of this motionless, dead and water saturated body. While the swimmer was shocked, disoriented and powerless, the Lifeguard tightly placed His arm around the swimmer’s chest and pulled the swimmer through the water towards the shore of safety. While being pulled through the water by the Lifeguard, the swimmer felt secure, became overwhelmed with the gift of life and continually wept with praises because the Lifeguard was a *Life-giver* in a time of need. The Lifeguard continued to pull the powerless swimmer all the way to the shore where the swimmer would eventually be removed from the threat of death, drowning and the deep, dark and weedy waters of danger.

Questions on the Four Parables:

- 1) What was the main threat in each of the parables? (i.e. water, seaweed, the swimmer)
- 2) What were the response and role of the swimmer in each of parable?
- 3) What was the response and role of the Lifeguard in each parable?
- 4) Who was the hero in each of the parables?
- 5) Who did the majority of the work: in solving the threat; in the journey from the threat to the shore of safety in each of the parables?
- 6) After the initial threat was dealt with, how did the swimmer view the Lifeguard in each of the parables?
- 7) Expound on the meaning of each parable in relationship to us, our world, our sin and our relationship with Christ. Who represents the swimmer, the Lifeguard? What does the water and seaweed represent?
- 8) Compare and contrast each of the parables in connection to scripture.

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⁴ Lutheranism: Man is dead in sin; God descends and makes man alive through Word and Sacraments; salvation is totally by the grace of God. (Martin Luther ~ 16th Century)