"Promise to the Persecuted" | September 15, 2012 | Order Info

Text: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12; John 1:18; Romans 2:5; 12:19; Revelation 16:4-7; 20:1-6; John 14:1-3.

Can you imagine landing a small plane in the ocean a mile from land and then hoping someone comes to rescue you? That’s what a father and son expected would happen last Sunday afternoon around 3:45 p.m. off the coast of Big Sur Coast near Morro Bay, California.

“A father and his adult son were rescued from a sinking plane that crashed into the ocean off California's central coast on Sunday, authorities said. The single-engine Cessna 185 was heading to Canada when the engine stalled, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing in the sea around 3:45 p.m., Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Allen Kenitzer said.

The Coast Guard received a distress call at 3:06 p.m. from the plane whose beacon alerted rescuers to the aircraft's whereabouts, which was a mile offshore and northwest of Morro Bay, Petty Officer Rachel Polish said. She said the beacon, which was hooked to an international satellite system that detects and locate distress calls, was key in getting rescuers to the scene quickly.”

By the time the rescue helicopter arrived the plane was overturned and already submerged. The Coast Guard immediately hoisted them out of the water. The two men were taken to a nearby hospital where they declined medical attention. Evidently the plane hit a kelp field when it landed in the water. An eyewitness watched the last 15 minutes of the operation and reported that the plane sank at 5:15 p.m.
Key to the rescue was the GPS system on the plane.

“The plane's location was determined by a global positioning system locator beacon on board the aircraft that had been registered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The helicopter from San Francisco was first to arrive and hoisted the two occupants out of the water, Polish said. The aircraft had overturned and was partially submerged by the time they got on scene. She credited the presence of the NOAA-registered GPS device for the speed with which rescuers found the plane.2

As we come closer to the time of Christ’s return, we know that the trials and persecutions of Christians will increase. In our Sabbath school lesson this week we consider Paul’s encouragement to the Thessalonians who faced many difficulties. He points them to a “rescue from above”—that is, Christ’s second coming. Like the anxious father and son standing on top of their overturned plane and needing help, Paul says to Christians facing persecution that God will “give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels” (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

When you give yourself completely to Jesus, you will have a built-in GPS system in your heart. During difficult times the Lord will have no problem finding and rescuing you.

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