



Links Players

RESCUED FROM DEATH 4: THE HELP WE'RE GIVEN

I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now... (Philippians 1:5, NIV)

HOW DID YOU LEARN TO PLAY GOLF? Even if you were mostly self-taught in regards to your swing, you had to figure out the etiquette and the rules, some of which you may have come to know the hard way.

Kinder and gentler, perhaps, you learned at the side of a friend or trusted teacher. They gave you the rudiments of the swing, or taught you where not to stand when others were playing their shots, or explained the nuances of reading greens. In a game as complicated as ours, it's hard for anyone to call himself a "self-made man" or tell you that she learned it all on her own. This just isn't the way it happens.

We find ourselves in the midst of our study of the apostle Paul, and we cannot survey the accounts of his life without recognizing the role of others, even as he did himself. Their help came to him as acceptance, encouragement, affirmation, ministry partnership, and even financial support.

In the beginning, you may recall, Paul was Saul of Tarsus, the Jewish stalwart breathing out threats against those who believed in Jesus, though at this time they were all fellow Jews. But Jesus stunned him on the road to Damascus, and a blinded Saul walked into Damascus on the arms of his companions. Already he was getting help!

As we explored a couple of weeks ago, Saul's next helper was the reticent Ananias, who became the first man to accept Saul's conversion, something he could only do after the Holy Spirit calmed his fears about Saul.

Soon Saul was preaching that Jesus was the Messiah, which meant he had enemies of his own, conspirators to kill him. But his followers, we read in Acts 9, took him by night and lowered him in a basket, setting him outside the city wall.

This would be the apostle's life. Despite troubles and persecution of all kinds, Paul was rarely alone. His missionary companions, his partners in business, the other apostles, elders in the churches he established—all of these came to Paul in ports and in prisons, caring for him whether or not he could care for himself. Paul had been rescued from death, brought into a life that included so many others on the roads of Christ's kingdom.

Opening questions Who was instrumental in helping you learn to play golf? Do you remember any particular lessons along the way? • Who helps you in life as you make decisions and take action?

READING Acts 18:9-11; Romans 16:3, 7, 13; Philippians 1:3-8

Avenues of help (Acts 18)

Where did Paul's encouragement come from in this passage? Would you rather have the support of the Holy Spirit or the support of others? Do you have to choose?

Real people giving real help (Romans 16)

Whom did Paul commend in these verses? What ways did they supply him help? Do you recognize in this a need to increase the variety of assistance that you give to others? How so?

Spiritual help (Philippians 1)

What kinds of spiritual help did Paul exchange with the Philippians? Have you ever considered how you might help others in a spiritual sense? Do you feel capable of this, or do you think you need more growth first?
