

# What is Salvation?

by Peter John Schrock

*In him was life, and the life was the light of men.  
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.  
(John 1:4-5)*

## *Saved from the Storm...*

Click, his eyes widened as he almost couldn't believe what was happening. He tried again, click, click. Smashing his hand against the steering wheel, he heard a hhhhaoo... as the horn started and faded out. Nate Duloss was in real trouble. He wasn't near anyone who could help him and he had no way of helping himself.

Nate had been in Northern Alaska for almost three months doing research on weather patterns. He was working with one other man name Joshua Fose, who was back at their compound, probably sleeping by now.

The air was getting colder. Nate only had one flashlight and he hadn't replaced the batteries in it for nearly two weeks. As he watched the flashlight, he could almost see it get dimmer and dimmer. Wanting to preserve the power that was left in the flashlight for a little longer he turned it off. He had been outside for about six hours that day, driving from site to site. Each site had a set of instruments and sensors to measure weather conditions in their specific regions. When he went out to collect the data in the afternoon, he found that the high winds from earlier in the day had caused snow to drift and cover some of the instruments. As a result, he had spent much of his time uncovering the instruments and taking precautions so that they would not have the same problem again.

Nate turned around toward his back seat and grasped around for some blankets. His hands were a bit numb and with his gloves on he could barely recognize when

his hand had found what he was searching for. As he attempted to wrap the blankets around himself he began to feel a bit uncomfortable. With the flashlight off, he was completely blind. The sky was only lit up for a few hours a day because it was the winter season and now, with the sky covered in thick clouds, there was no hope that the moon and the stars would help him see. (Due to the earth's tilt on its turning axis, there are some areas near the north and south poles where the sun only comes up for a few hours, because they are tilted away from the sun.) If the sun had been up when he had been outside, he would have never been in his this situation, because he had used his headlights to light up the area he was working. Now, after several hours of his headlights being on, the battery didn't have the needed power to get his vehicle started.

Sitting in his seat, Nate was thankful to be out of direct contact with the wind. The rushing, whistling sound of the cold air buffeting the vehicle was deafening. He had only moments before decided that

he should get back to his compound, about seven miles south of his present location. The wind had picked up considerably from the time he had first set out and when it started snowing extremely hard. He could barely see. As a result, he figured he would call it a day and just head back.

Pulling off his gloves, he reached out, touching the cold seat as he tried to find the GPS instrument inside of the vehicle. Finding its cold plastic frame, he attempted

*Jesus brought us a life  
with an illuminated path  
and though we are  
surrounded by darkness,  
His light remains.*

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to push its buttons. It was also dead. Crouching forward in his seat, he considered his options. He could try to wait out the storm or he could attempt to walk through it. Weighing his choices, he decided it was too dangerous to attempt to make it back in the deadly cold and limited visibility. Nate leaned back a little in his seat and pulled up his knees by his chest. His feet were getting cold and he didn't want to let them get too cold if he was going to be trapped for a while. He pulled the blankets up over his head and started breathing under the covers in the hope that it would help to heat up the air inside of his little cocoon.

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Joshua stepped outside for a while. The snow was starting to come down a little harder and it was becoming difficult to see. A gust of wind blew against Joshua's face and it reminded him of the something Nate had said earlier that morning, "The cold and the snow never hurt me before." Joshua pursed his lips as he hoped that his partner would be back soon. Turning around, he went back inside the compound.

The compound was a simple structure, in the shape of an octagon with a heating device in the center of the enclosure. It was split into three varying sized rooms. There was one area for sleeping, one for a bathroom, and another for preparing food and relaxing. It was relatively spacious, but at the same time it made Joshua feel boxed in. There was nowhere to go and no one to talk to. Sitting down on a couch, he put his feet up to rest while he waited.

A while later, Joshua came out of a daze. He yawned and looked at his watch. Seeing the time, he almost fell off the couch. He had been sleeping for the last fourteen hours. The last couple of days had been very long as he had worked to get the data from the research organized, but he hadn't realized he was that tired. After calming himself, he remembered Nate.

"Nate are you in here?" Joshua hollered, as he looked around the compound. Nate was no where to be found. Putting on some warmer clothes he ducked outside to see if the vehicle was back. He was absolutely amazed as he entered the cold air, he couldn't see anything. The cloud cover was thick and without any other lighting, it was impossible to see. After retrieving a light from inside

of the compound, Joshua's heart sank. He hadn't seen Nate for nearly twenty hours and there was still no sign of his return.

Once inside again, Joshua went to their computer set up in the living space. Hitting a few keys, he brought up a weather radar map of their surrounding area. As he looked at the screen, he found that his concerns had been correct. The day before, he could see that there was a storm front forming, and now it had developed into a massive blizzard. Joshua shook his head and reached for the radio. Keying the transmitter he said, "Nate, are you there? Nate..." He waited as time seemed to stand still; there was no reply. Joshua's stomach began to twist. He had told Nate the day before that he should only be out for a few hours because he could get trapped if the weather picked up. Nate had only scoffed at him at the time, and said he could always make it back with their new GPS system. Putting down the radio transmitter, Joshua pushed a few more keys on the computer and brought up the data record of the instruments in the field. There were several locations that were being displayed and they were constantly updating themselves. As he looked, he could see that there was a time period the previous day where most of the instruments were not working and then one by one they came back on. He also saw that the last one had turned back on a little after the storm started to pick up. "Something must have happened before he could make it back from fixing the last one," Joshua reasoned. His mind began to race, "I wonder if he is ok. I hope he didn't get hurt or lost in the storm."

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The storm showed no sign of letting up anytime soon as Nate sat all wrapped up in his covers. Turning on his flashlight for a few moments, he looked at a small clock that he brought with him. The light was very dim and only stayed on for a second before it faded out. Nevertheless, it was just enough time to read that the clock displayed 6:00pm. He guessed he had fallen asleep a couple times, despite his great efforts to stay awake. He feared that if he fell asleep that he might not wake up. A cold numbness was setting into his feet and the rest of his body was beginning to shake due to the penetrating icy temperature. The constant roaring of the wind had caused him to jump on occasions because it would rock

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his whole vehicle when it gusted. Nate squeezed his eyes shut and began to question if he would make it through this thing alive.

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A light was shining from the device that was strapped around Joshua's head. All he could see were bits of snow bombarding the ground all around him and the blackness that his light could not reach. He had been walking now for about an hour and was starting to get cold. In his hand was a compass that he held steadily in front of him as he walked, being careful not to sway from the specific direction he had calculated. Joshua had found the exact location of both the compound and the last instrument site at which he expected to find Nate located. Next, he had determined the precise direction he would have to walk in order to get there. It seemed like a long shot, but it was all he had to work with because Nate had their only GPS instrument. So he trudged on.

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Nate turned under his blankets. He rubbed his feet, but he couldn't feel them. He no longer had any idea how long he had been outside. He wasn't shaking as much as he had been earlier, and he wondered if that was a bad sign.

"Don't stay out too long," the words echoed in his mind. Joshua had warned him that a storm might be on its way, but he had only mocked and ignored the warning.

"Everything would have been fine, if the vehicle's battery had worked properly," he thought, attempting to defend himself. It was no use though, he knew that he had been careless and now he was paying the price. He started to wonder if Joshua would try help him, but quickly dismissed the idea. It would be suicide to come out in this storm without a sophisticated GPS system and vehicle. "No," he thought. "I wouldn't even consider trying to help Joshua if he got himself into this kind of mess." His eyes were heavy and a chill ran up his spine as the blankets seemed to be getting colder.

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As he walked, Joshua's eyes fixed upon the arrow of the compass. His arm ached from trying to hold it steady

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and his legs were extremely worn out from walking in the snow. His body wanted so badly to stop and just to go back, but Joshua was determined. He had been walking for about three hours now. For a brief moment, he stopped to look around, but he could only see the thick snow pelting his face and eyes. He focused back down at his compass and pressed onward. Every once in a while, he reminded himself to stop and look around again. It would be very easy to pass right by the site without even knowing it, especially if at any point he had deviated from his direction.

After about another half hour, he stopped to survey his surroundings. The snow was blowing in his face, but his light was now illuminating something directly in front of him. Through blur of snow he could see a small tower with instruments. Joshua began to yell and call out for Nate. He ran up to the site and tried to look around. The snow was like a constant wall in front of his face. Then out of the corner of his eye, he saw an unusual pile of snow. As he approached, it he continued to yell frantically, hoping that if Nate were near by, he would hear him. Reaching out with his hand, he thrust it into the pile; "Hard," he thought to himself. There was something solid under this snow. Sweeping his hands across it, revealed the vehicle that he had been seeking so earnestly to find. Looking in the window he could see that there were some blankets covering up something in the front seat. He pounded on the window, but he didn't see any movement. Sweeping his hands across another area, he discovered the door. He grabbed the handle and lifted it in order to swing the door open. In desperation, he reached out to the blanket and pulled on it. The blankets lurched, suddenly coming to life before his eyes, followed by a shrieking yell. Joshua, startled, sprang back into the snow and landed with a poof. Eyes fearfully peered out of the blanket. Joshua started to recuperate from the sudden movement and said, "Nate, it is me, Joshua." The blankets remained still. Reaching into one of his side pockets Joshua found a small flashlight. He turned off the light attached to his head and turned on the hand-held flash light. Pointing the light at his own face, Joshua was momentarily blinded. Time passed and then slowly a sound came from inside the vehicle.

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The snow was beating down as Joshua led the way back to the compound. Nate was sleeping when Joshua first found him and he thought he had died at first when he saw the bright light shining toward him. Though they had warmed up in the vehicle with the heat packs that Joshua brought with him, the cold air was now seeping past their warm clothes.

Nate asked, "How do you know where you are going, and how did you find me?"

Joshua smiled, "I have a compass." Nate's eyes widened. He could see the round object that Joshua was holding in his hand.

"Are you kidding?" Nate said with astonishment.

"No, if you trust it to keep you going in the right direction, you can make it to where you want to go; but, if you deviate from its path, you will walk right by your destination," Joshua said confidently. Nate was quiet for a while as he considered his partner's method of navigation. But as they walked through their black surroundings, immersed in falling snow, Nate began to let go of his fears as he considered Joshua's success in finding him.

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After about an hour of walking, Nate began to feel a bit dizzy. He hadn't eaten or drunk anything for over a day, and his body was worn down by the abuse of the harsh weather conditions.

"Joshua, I need to stop for a bit and rest," Nate yelled out over the howling of the wind. Joshua turned to see Nate already leaning back to sit down. He could tell Nate was exhausted, so he walked up to Nate and sat down by him. Swinging the pack off of his back, and reaching into its side pouch, Joshua pulled out a thermos and some energy bars.

"Here, if you eat, you will probably feel a little better," Joshua said as he gave Nate the food. Nate relaxed. He was famished and had wondered if he would have the strength to make it.

"I'm really sorry for not listening to you before about this storm. I would probably be dead by now if you hadn't come out to find me," Nate spoke as he got ready to take a big drink from the thermos.

Joshua smiled and said, "I'm just thankful you weren't

too proud to let me help you get out of the mess you got yourself into." Nate nodded slowly as he remembered how he had treated Joshua ever since the time that they met a couple months ago. Joshua had been kind and very merciful, but he had been quite the opposite. Now as they sat, Nate began to appreciate all that Joshua had done for him.

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It was truly amazing to Nate as he looked around. He couldn't see anything except for what Joshua's light illuminated. The sky was still black, and the wind from the cold, snow filled, air stung as it blasted the area around his eyes not completely shielded from the elements. Nate was feeling much better now, and he supposed they were getting close to the compound because they had been walking for at least a couple hours since the last time they stopped. The food that Joshua brought was exactly what he needed for the strength to continue pressing onward. As they walked along, Nate followed behind Joshua very closely, and they talked. The conversations helped keep the focus off of the harsh conditions they were trudging through.

After a while, Nate began to look around searching very hard to see beyond Joshua's light and then all of a sudden, he began to fall forward. He reached out, grabbing the air, as his body tumbled into the soft snow. His foot had gotten caught on something when he stopped watching where he was going. Now as he rolled over, he could see Joshua standing beside him offering him a hand. Once he was out of the snow, they looked to see what he had tripped on. It was an empty tin gas can.

"We've got to be really close," Joshua said with renewed excitement. Both of them knelt down to get a closer look at it. Joshua slipped his hand out from the warmth of his pocket and brushed the snow that lightly dusted the now overturned can. It had a dull shine as the light beamed on it. Then as he brushed the last bit of snow off, they spotted what they were looking for. It was the black stamp that bore the phrase of their fundraising motivational slogan, "Weather or Not We Survive." A smile formed on Joshua's face, and closing his eyes, he let out a sigh. Nate jumped to his feet with a cheer.

"I must have dropped this after I finished filling up the other day," Nate exclaimed. Joshua stood up slowly

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reaching for his round compass. Looking at the dial's arrow, he turned to face the appropriate direction. As they started onward into the wall of white snow being illuminated by Joshua's light, they couldn't see anything.

Then Josh turned to look at Nate who was ready to follow behind him and said, "I am going to turn off the light to see if we can see the light from the compound." Nate's eyes widened, but he nodded in agreement. Then reaching out, Joshua grabbed Nate's hand, and with his other hand reached up, and clicked the button on his forehead, everything went black.

Both were quiet as they strained to see ahead. It seemed oddly peaceful, then a gust of wind blew which stung Nate's face. Joshua's grip on Nate's hand tightened. They stood there very still, but Nate couldn't see anything.

"There!" cried Joshua.

"Where, I can't see anything," protested Nate. Joshua's hand tightened more round Nate's and began to pull. Nate took a step forward, Joshua was moving. The pace began to pick up.

"Where are we going? I can't..." Then he saw it. The snow had been so thick in the darkness that he had totally missed the faint light now only about two hundred feet ahead of them. As they neared, he could see where the snow had drifted and covered the entry to their small dwelling. Lunging into the drift, Joshua quickly cleared the barrier to their entry as Nate caught his breath.

Nate looked up after huffing for a while from the brisk run, only to see a smirk on Joshua's face as he glistened in the light from the fresh white snow that now covered him. Nate let out a laugh and smiled. Then Joshua put his arm around him, and together they entered the safety of the compound.

## *What is all the Confusion about?*

People from all sorts of theological backgrounds view salvation in different ways, but many have a skewed perspective that is only moderately biblical. One of these groups of people see salvation as a positional standing. They believe salvation is like a ticket that one receives to get to heaven. Once someone gets their ticket, they have received salvation, and there is no reason to be concerned about hell because they already have their ticket. People

who believe such teachings miss that today is the day of salvation because their salvation is only good for a future judgment to come. Their faith is only an intellectual exercise because their salvation lacks power to change their life at the present time.

Other people swing to the opposite direction, saying that salvation is all about their being completely delivered upon conversion. They hold that once someone believes in Christ, they will instantly attain the ability to walk perfectly in the spirit and never sin again. Unfortunately, this belief neglects passages like Hebrews 12 which explains that believers are God's children who are being trained up in the way they should go. Also, it ignores Paul's teaching in Philippians which addresses salvation as something one works out with fear and trembling.

Though most people fall somewhere between these two camps, one other place people go is never knowing if they have real salvation. They simply have an unsure hope that they really do have victory over all sin or that they might make it to heaven if they are good enough. Such an idea could not be less biblical. Biblical salvation is founded on faith and, from Hebrews 11, it is very clear that faith is confidence. Those who have an unsure hope possess a doubt which James 1 warns that such a person will not receive anything from God. Those who have salvation will definitely know it.

## *If all these are not good approaches to salvation, what is?*

One of the greatest sources of confusion that people face when reading about salvation in the bible is that they do not see the distinction between the salvation a believer has on earth and the salvation that a believer will have when Jesus returns. Nevertheless, when the distinction is properly maintained, it paints a very clear picture which brings understanding to passages that many scratch their heads about or simply ignore.

The story of Nate and Joshua illustrates a biblical picture of salvation. It addresses the three ways in which full salvation is played out. First a person enters into salvation, then they walk in their salvation, and finally they obtain a greater salvation. In the case of the story,

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Nate is an example of a person needing to be saved, and Joshua represents Jesus, the savior. Though the story cannot fully display every aspect of a believer's salvation, it does bring out some points that can often be overlooked.

## *Entering Salvation...*

The salvation that Jesus brings about for people starts with the voluntary ending of their life. Not the ending of their physical existence, but a conscious surrender of their perspectives and lifestyles (Colossians 1:21-23, Ephesians 2:1-7). When Jesus died on the cross, it was not an act that merely enabled people to passively avoid certain punishment for sins. Rather, in order for people to experience the effect and results of His death, they must participate with Him in it (Philippians 3:10, Romans 6:3-7). This may sound strange to some, but practically speaking, this means that peoples' lives cease to continue in their normal path after they die with Christ. When this happens, all the sins that a person have committed are justly dealt with. For if someone sins, they deserve to die (Ezekiel 18:20, Matthew 25:31-46). Nevertheless, since that person did die with Christ, their penalty has been adequately fulfilled (1 Peter 3:18).

After someone's old life has ended, Jesus brings them into a new life that is in fellowship with God (John 3:3-8, 1 John 1:1-7). In this new life, a person is obtaining a new perspective on the world around them and as a result they live a life characterized by love and obedience toward God (Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:20-24, 1 John 3:9, John 14:15). No longer are they enemies of God but, through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and resurrection from the dead they are reconciled unto Him out of the darkness and destruction that once dominated their life and into a life of communion with God (Colossians 1:13-14). This is what it means to be "saved". Nevertheless, there still remains more to be seen for a complete picture of biblical salvation.

In the story, one can see this part of salvation when they look at the situation Nate was in. He was trapped in darkness, blind and without hope of getting out of his condition apart from someone coming to his rescue. When Joshua came as his savior, Nate needed to humble himself and accept Joshua's method of deliverance. For

any attempts Nate could have made at saving himself, would have hopelessly ended in death. After Nate decided to follow Joshua, they entered into fellowship where they talked and walked together. Joshua radically changed the nature of Nate's life by bringing him light, hope, and life (warmth and food). Nate was not saved from the storm, but he was saved from darkness and certain death. Likewise when a person enters into fellowship with Christ, it does not mean their life will be free from struggles and temptations, but rather, through walking with Christ, that person can receive strength to stand no matter what comes against them (1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

## *Being Saved...*

"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:8-9). Believers have not simply received salvation, they are receiving it. Salvation goes beyond a single event, because our need for deliverance is always present. After people start walking with the Lord they still have many difficulties, trials, and weaknesses to overcome before they enter an eternal rest with Jesus. Each trial and difficulty is something that is able to strengthen or weaken their relationship with Christ. If Jesus' followers trust (have faith in) Him, their relationship will be strengthened, because He will prove Himself faithful, but if people attempt to function on their own intellect and strength, they will be hopelessly defeated (Proverbs 3:5-6, John 15:5). So 1 John 5:4 states, "...this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith."

Paul writes in Philippians 2:12-13, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." If salvation was only a ticket that got a person into heaven, there would be nothing to work out. Salvation is not a possession - it is an action! Many people have confused Ephesians 2:8 to say that salvation is merely a wrapped present that they receive. This could not be further from the truth, for this verse states, "...it is by

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grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own labor, but God's gift, so that no one can boast." The point of the verse is not to turn salvation into an object (a gift wrapped present), but rather to explain that God's salvation is not performed as a result of an earned payment for completed labor, but on the basis of love (i.e. grace). When one realizes that salvation is an action, they can begin to understand what it means to work out their salvation.

After Nate had initially been saved from darkness and certain death, he was not immediately out of the storm. In fact, he had a long way to go before he was free from its danger. Nate had been saved from the certainty of his destruction, but not the potential (2 Peter 2:20-22, 1 Corinthians 15:1-2). He still needed to continue to work out his salvation by walking the path which Joshua blazed (Philippians 2:12, Colossians 1:23, Hebrews 12:1-3, Ephesians 2:10). Nate could not do this by himself. It was only through Joshua's motivation that Nate obtained the will and the ability to press onward (Philippians 2:13). In this picture, Nate was receiving his salvation from the storm's destructive power as he followed Joshua to safety. Just like Joshua was saving Nate from death, so too Jesus is saving those who follow Him from the coming judgment and hell fire, as it is stated in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "...Jesus who is delivering us from the wrath to come."

## *Ultimate Salvation...*

You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:5-7).

Though believers do experience a saving power from their old life of sin and spiritual death while on the earth, there will be a different and greater salvation for them in the future (Hebrews 9:28). This is the salvation that is spoken about in Revelation 21. It is a final rest where all that has hindered and bound God's people will be removed, for it states:

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away...And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who overcomes will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the unbelieving, the sinners, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:4; 6-8)

Believers who have overcome the storm of life by walking with Jesus will have great joy on that day, but those who have not followed him and have gone their own way in sin will be rewarded with great suffering.

The Bible never teaches that while a believer is on the earth that they have already been saved from hell or a coming judgment; rather, this salvation is always a future event. Nevertheless, it does explicitly teach that if believers endure to the end, they will receive this salvation (Matthew 10:22). Only those who steadfastly walk with Jesus in the new life of reconciled fellowship, will not experience God's wrath: "Since, therefore, we have now been made righteous by his blood, much more will we be saved (this is in the future tense) by Him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, will we be saved by His life" (Romans 5:9-10). Later in chapter thirteen of Romans, Paul also encourages believers, reminding them of this future salvation and the need to walk with Jesus, and not according to natural sinful tendencies: "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to awake from your sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (vs. 11-13)." There is an ultimate deliverance to be received, but it is only attained by leaving sin behind and following Jesus.

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In the story, Nate faced trials and difficulties as he followed Joshua through the storm, but his journey came to an end when he entered the safety of the compound. Inside the compound, the raging storm could no longer harm him. This place of safety and ultimate salvation was reached by enduringly following Joshua. Likewise, it is of great importance that people steadfastly walk with Jesus...

*for only "...the one who endures to the end, will be saved"*  
*(Matthew 24:13).*