



## Rescue on the Elwha River

A trio of friends, all energetic young men in their early twenties, pulled up to Altaire Campground on the Elwha River. They unloaded two brightly colored kayaks, one red and the other yellow, from on top the van and carried them to the river's edge. Two of them, Evan and Tyson, donned lifejackets, sat themselves down in the small openings of the narrow boats, and snapped the cockpit skirts around their waists. With a wave to their friend and a flick of their paddles, they propelled themselves out into the current of the river. The Elwha flows down from the Olympic mountains. Fed by snowmelt, it flows at a brisk rate.

The third friend, Josh, didn't like the water as much as his two buddies. He had volunteered to come along on the condition he would hike the trail next to the River. He had a digital camera on a strap around his neck. The blue-gray water of the river, surrounded by forested hillsides, is home to all sorts of birds and wildlife. Josh planned to get some great photos.

All was going well until coming around a bend, the pair in the kayaks saw a giant uprooted tree blocking a large portion of the width of the river. The tree was several feet in circumference and over a hundred feet long. Its giant root system was washed bare by the constant flow of water and the roots looked like giant strands of unkempt hair blowing in the wind. The fallen tree was redirecting a large flow of the river creating treacherous currents. If Evan and Tyson had any experience kayaking on a river, they might have foreseen the danger and avoided it. However, all their prior experience kayaking had been on lakes and the protected waters of Port Angeles Harbor. They were steering their kayaks around the tip of the giant log, when, caught unawares, the current got them in its power and quickly swept them towards the log. They thrust their paddles into the water to break away from the current, but the flow of water was too strong.

With a heart stopping thud, Tyson and his kayak rammed the tree broadside. The point of Evan's kayak hit Tyson's kayak, causing Evan to spin away downriver. Tyson trapped against the log by the current lost his balance in the collision. The relentless flow of water piled up on top of his small craft. An enormous flow of water ran downward under the tree. It was drawing the kayak beneath the surface. Tyson feeling himself and the kayak getting pulled under the water reached out and grabbed a small limb of the tree. The current ripped the Kayak away from him, disappearing beneath the downward surge of

water. Holding onto the limb with one hand, most of Tyson's body was submerged beneath the surface. The same relentless current that pulled his kayak under was now pulling on him. He sensed, if he let go, the current would pull him under the surface and he would drown. For long minutes he clung to the limb fighting for his life. With his free hand he claw at the bark of the tree to pull himself up, but it was hopeless. The current was far too strong. Abruptly, the limb partially broke, plunging him even deeper into the water. Just when it seemed he would lose the battle against the current, a hand reached out and grabbed his arm.



It was Josh. He had seen his friend's ordeal from shore and ran out on top the fallen tree as fast as he could. Lying down on his stomach, he extended his arm as far as he could and grabbed his friend's arm just as he was sinking. The force of the river was so great that Josh felt like he was hanging on to a thousand pounds of dead weight. A deep fatigue set into his arm as he strained with all his might to hang on to his friend. They had been friends since grade school. The thought of losing his Tyson was unbearable. He determined to do everything in his power to save him. The muscles in his arm grew tired with the strain. Josh yelped with pain as the as his arm was pulled from its shoulder socket. Yet somehow he hung on.

Fortunately, soon after Josh dislocated his arm, Evan was able to beach his kayak and run out on the giant tree to help. Together he and Josh pulled Tyson out of the water and on top the tree. The trio of friends lay on their backs on the broad tree, panting for breath. Josh's arm, badly bruised, had returned to its socket on its own. Downriver they glanced and saw Evan's yellow kayak as it finally resurfaced. It had been held under water during the entire ordeal of several minutes.

If Josh had gotten to Tyson a few seconds later, or if Josh's arm had been shorter, Tyson would have been sucked under the log jam and drowned. Tyson owes his life to his friend's strength and perseverance. There is One mighty in power who is reaching out to lost souls. No matter how deeply anyone has fallen into sin or how strong the current is that is pulling them into iniquity, the arm of the Lord is strong enough and long enough to reach down and save them. God can save the most wretched of sinners because his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, died on Calvary's cross for them.

The arm is the part of man that does most of his work. At Calvary the great work of redemption was finished, so God can forgive man and bring him to heaven. At Calvary God "showed strength with arm" Luke 1:51. And made a way for destitute, ungodly sinners to be saved. Because Christ died on the cross, the good news of the gospel can go out to all the world telling them of a free salvation. Sadly, not everyone who hears the good news of a Savior dying for the sins of the world will believe it. Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet, asked, "Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the

Lord revealed?” Isaiah 53:1. It is sad because only those who believe the gospel will receive eternal life while those who reject it will be cast from his presence into the darkness of hell where they will remain for all eternity. Those who reject the gospel will learn by awful firsthand experience, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Do you feel like sin has caught you in a swirling whirlpool and is dragging you under and there is no hope of recovery? Like you have given yourself over to hell and to hell you must go? Like life is unbearable? Turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, because of his work on the cross he can save you. His hand is not shortened but he can surely reach you where you are, lay fast hold of you, and bring you to himself. He alone can cleanse the guilty sinner and set their feet on solid ground.

God can act in complete grace towards sinners and treat them infinitely better than they deserve because Christ died for them. “Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins” 1 John 4:10. The Lord Jesus didn’t give his life for us because we loved him but because He loved us. He knew our sins, shame, unworthiness, coldness, and hardness, and still he loved us, and gave his life on the cross that we might be saved. If he treated us as we deserved, there is not a man or woman who would escape the destruction of hell. No one by his own strength can deliver his soul from the death and judgment his sins deserve. Only the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners can set him free.

Won’t you come as a lost sinner to the Lord Jesus. No matter how black your heart is, his blood can wash it white as snow. If you come to the Savior, you may know for yourself the wonderful truth contained in the following incredible verse, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” Deuteronomy 33:27. Those are the only arms strong enough to keep you safe for time and eternity. Don’t pass through life without ever knowing the security of depending on His everlasting arms.

“The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations: and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” Isaiah 52:10.