

Deliverance in the Nick of Time



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Many of us have read about and seen stories of people being saved from dangerous situations at the precise moment before disaster strikes a fatal blow. Examples include a helicopter rescue of a family from the roof of a house moments before it is swept away by flood waters or the timely arrival of reinforcements that prevent pinned-down soldiers from being overrun and slaughtered by enemy troops. Some of us may have our own personal experiences with “in the nick of time” deliverance.

Starship Troopers 3: Marauder is a 2008 American science fiction action film based on the 1959 novel called *Starship Troopers*, by Robert A. Heinlein (1907-1988). It is set in the 23rd century, where a stratocratic United Citizen Federation (UCF) governing the Earth is involved in interstellar travel and colonization throughout the galaxy. This brought Earth into contact with an insectoid alien race they called “Arachnids,” who had an expanding empire of their own. War broke out when the Arachnids attacked Earth with a meteor weapon that destroyed Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing and wounding more than 20 million people.

During the course of the war with the Arachnids, UCF weapon developers created the M11 Marauder, a heavily armored combat vehicle suit for mobile infantry soldiers that included a wide array of very powerful weapons.

On a mission to a secret Federation planet called Sanctuary, Captain Lola Beck's ship *Geronimo* was severely damaged in an Arachnid attack that killed most of the crew. Beck and a flight attendant named Holly Little were able to send a distress call and depart the ship in an escape pod before it was destroyed, but they were marooned on a planet that turned out to be the home of the Arachnid ruling body.

Trapped in the wreckage of their escape craft and facing imminent death from the Arachnid forces surrounding them, Holly implored Lola to pray with her to God to send an army of angels to deliver them from this evil place. She told her that when you are all out of hope, God is all you have. Though initially reluctant, Lola knelt beside Holly and started praying after her the *Lord's Prayer*.

As Holly and Lola sought the Lord's help, seven points of light appeared in the night sky, looking like angels rushing toward them. Seven infantry troops in Marauder suits landed. Through their special visors they were able to scan the wreckage of the escape craft about to be crushed by the Arachnids and see the two women inside on their knees praying. The soldiers quickly destroyed the Arachnid forces with their immense firepower and rescued them. Both Lola and Holly were deeply affected by this dramatic deliverance from death in the nick of time, and it deepened their faith in God.

Hezekiah became king of Judah (715-686 BC) several years after watching the kingdom of Israel fall to the Assyrian Empire and the people taken into exile. His father, Ahaz, was an evil king who promoted idolatry in Judah and paid tribute to Assyria. But Hezekiah stopped the tribute to Assyria, trusted earnestly in the God of Israel, and sought to turn the people back to being faithful to the Lord (2 Kings 18:1-6; 2 Chronicles 29-31).

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah and seized its fortified cities.

Sennacherib demanded 30 talents of gold and 300 talents of silver for him to withdraw from Judah, so Hezekiah emptied the house of the Lord and his house to pay it. But even after he received the tribute, the Assyrian king continued his invasion of the country.

As the massive army of Sennacherib arrived to besiege Jerusalem, he sent his envoys to call on Hezekiah to surrender to him, to mock him and his trust in God, and to threaten death from starvation and utter devastation to the city, likening the God of Israel to the powerless gods of the nations that had fallen to Assyria (2 Kings 18:13-37; 2 Chronicles 32:1-19).

Dismayed by these events, Hezekiah entered the house of the Lord in torn clothes, covered in sackcloth, and with a letter from the king of Assyria spread out before God. He realized the situation was hopeless, that he and his people faced an impending terrible death, and only God could deliver them out of the hand of Sennacherib. So Hezekiah prayed to God:

"O LORD, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. Now, O LORD our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD, are God." (2 Kings 19:15-19)

After this prayer, the prophet Isaiah sent a word of encouragement from God to Hezekiah, saying, "Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard you." The Lord assured him that He would save Jerusalem out of

the hand of the Assyrians, that Sennacherib would not enter the city but return home in disgrace (2 Kings 19:20-34; Isaiah 37:21-35).

That night, the angel of the Lord went among the Assyrian army encamped around the city and struck 185,000 soldiers dead. Sennacherib and those who remained arose in the morning to find the army destroyed, so he returned home defeated to Ninevah, where he was assassinated by two of his sons (2 Kings 19:35-37; 2 Chronicles 32:20-23; Isaiah 37:36-38). God delivered Jerusalem from destruction in the nick of time, and He did so in a way that made it obvious it was by His hand. This strengthened Hezekiah's faith in the Lord and that of the people of Judah, and it was a testament to the nations that the God of Israel alone **IS** God.

Be it like "Arachnids" swarming on your position to seal your demise or the Assyrian army coming to annihilate you and your home, you may be facing a serious crisis that threatens life as you know it. Your job may have been cancelled through no fault of your own. As the bills mount and savings diminish, you fear that you will not be able to take care of the basic food and housing needs of your family. Or you may have a child experiencing a life-threatening injury or illness that dismays and perplexes you.

It is especially in these times when it is easier to give in to hopelessness that God wants us to pray to Him for help and to trust Him to bring it about in His own best way and time. He often saves people in dire situations in a way they did not foresee and at a critical moment. God is our helper in good times as well as stressful times, and our fears of what confronts us can be calmed because He will never desert or forsake us (Psalm 91; Hebrews 13:5-6).

The Father demonstrates this care and love for us because, just at the right time, He sent His Son Jesus into this fallen world to save us. He lived the perfect life we could not live,

died a gruesome bloody death on a cross that we deserved, and rose again from the grave to redeem us from our sins against God and adopt anyone who believes in Him into His family and inheritance (Galatians 4:4).

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”
(Hebrews 13:8)

Trust in the Lord Jesus for your *yesterday* and *forever*, for no matter where you have been or what you have done, He graciously grants forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and entrance into His eternal, heavenly kingdom. But also trust in Him *today* when you face serious, even dangerous, challenges in your life, for He still brings deliverance in the nick of time.

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