



RECAP

OUT OF THE HOLE

By Mark Spencer
PLEA President



Thousands of years ago, an ancient Hebrew poet didn't talk about his glass being half-empty nor being half-full. He spoke of his cup "overflowing" – his gratefulness was obvious. Even though he was walking in "a valley of deep darkness," the perspective of his life-journey was illuminated by hope and thanks.

Like the shepherd poet walking out of the valley, so the miners started coming up out of the hole. On October 12, after being trapped in a Chilean mine for months, the sight of these workmen reunited with their families moved people around the globe. The seven-year old boy, with tears in his eyes, couldn't get to his father quickly enough. The success of the rescue operation was an overdue shot in the arm for a weary world. For parents, spouses, friends, and peers, as each miner left the rescue cage, their glass was spilling all over the place. Thankfulness was being sloshed about. It wasn't valuable minerals or gems that were unearthed from deep underground that day. What was brought to the surface was a priceless perspective that comes from gratitude. Perhaps a perspective of thanks and appreciation is best acquired or certainly brought into sharp focus when one stays half a mile underground for over two months.

This past year, without question, has been difficult and dark for many. Personal, professional, and spiritual struggles have scarred numerous lives. Like it was for the poet, so our "valley" can be difficult to navigate through. The discouragement brought by these difficulties can make it hard to maintain a clear view on what really matters. It can make us lose sight of what really counts. It can make it hard to give thanks. A feeling of being trapped in a mine begins to surface.

A miner will quickly become disoriented and lost if he forgets to turn his lamp on. We too can lose perspective if we forget to keep the valuable things in our lives on the forefront of our minds. Knowing our purpose and remembering the preciousness of our families and freedom are crucial in keeping the lights on and the glass overflowing. Yet, with dark difficulties surrounding us, good things have a tendency to stand out in a clear stark contrast. The brightness of hope generated by an attitude of thankfulness vividly stands out against the backdrop of darkness, disappointment, and danger. There's a connection between hope and thankfulness – almost as if they're cousins. Hope and gratefulness feed off each other and propel us forward through the deep mines and dim valleys of the years.

All the rescued miners were wearing the same tan t-shirt as they came out of the ground. The words on their shirts had great meaning to them and provide a great example to us. The perspective of hope and thankfulness was bright and clear. It got them out of a dark hole; it can make a difference in our dark valleys too. The message in Spanish was from the same Hebrew poet: "In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are His also." (*Psalms 95:4*)



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