

God's Lifeboat Is More Than Half Empty



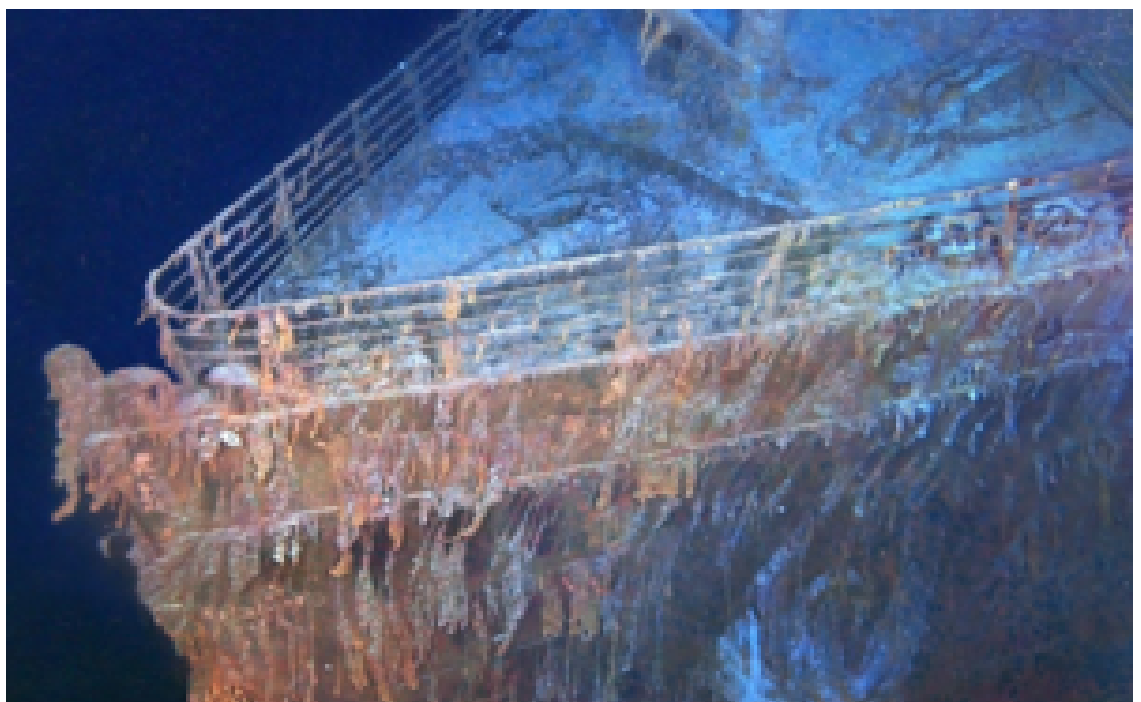
By Rob Pue

April 14, 2024

This month marks another anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic. For generations, this tragic story has captivated hearts and minds. The loss of the Titanic left a shaken world in disbelief and made people stop and think. I, personally, became deeply intrigued by the Titanic from the moment I learned of the story as a young child.

I believe this is one of those rare, historic events that provides a myriad of timeless lessons. The most obvious is the sinfulness of human pride and arrogance...clearly present in almost every aspect of the story.

Titanic took 12,000 men more than two years to construct. The people of the day wanted luxury, and to



say that's what they found in Titanic would be an understatement. Not only was Titanic the largest man-made moving object ever built, it was also the most luxurious ship the world had ever known. It was a floating palace loaded with fine amenities; a five-star hotel on the sea. Never before had anyone seen anything like it. First class suites even included private promenade decks, sitting rooms and lavatories. It boasted the first on-board swimming pool, and the dining rooms were decked out in fine linen, crystal glassware and fine china.

She was truly impressive, but Titanic's owners failed to remember Psalm 127:1: *"Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."*

Throughout the Bible are accounts of proud men who refused to humble themselves and acknowledge God, who built monuments to themselves and their achievements, trusting in their own abilities, possessions and self-efforts, rather than acknowledging the Lord. All inevitably came to a tragic end. In 1 Peter 5:5 we read, *"...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble..."*

The Titanic was a symbol of everything man could achieve, and she was truly beautiful. But the people forgot God and even taunted God's awesome power, boasting that: "God Himself could not sink this ship!" With all the latest innovations in ship-building technology, including 15 watertight doors, it was accepted as fact that Titanic really was unsinkable.

As we all know, God Himself *could* sink the Titanic, but no big storm or major "act of God" was needed. Once again, the arrogance of man was adequate to facilitate his undoing.

Titanic was brand new, shiny and strong, and this was her maiden voyage. Passengers enjoyed a tranquil crossing the first few days on their way to New York and, in fact, crew members remarked they had never seen the Atlantic more calm,

the night tragedy struck.

On Sunday, April 14, 1912, Titanic was making excellent speed and most of the passengers spent the day indoors because the weather had turned suddenly cold. Captain Smith held church services that morning, which would have normally been followed by a lifeboat drill for passengers and crew, but on this day, there was no drill...after all, the ship was "unsinkable."

As for the lifeboats, Titanic's owners were so certain that the ship would never need them, they only included enough for less than half those on board, to make for a better looking, less crowded boat deck.

Iceberg warnings came in all day and evening but were generally ignored and Titanic pressed forward, speeding even faster toward disaster.

Perhaps what makes the story of the Titanic so sad and heart-rending is that the people involved were really no different than we are today. We can easily identify with them. If we were on a ship that was said to be "unsinkable," would we feel it necessary to hold a lifeboat drill, or would we call it off if it was too cold outside?

Would we heed iceberg warnings if we "knew" our ship was unsinkable, or continue on with the party we were enjoying? Wealth, comfort and luxury can make people complacent, lulled into a false sense of security. We can become so full of ourselves that we feel we're invincible. We can think all is well, when disaster is just around the corner. As First Thessalonians tells us, *"When they shall say, 'Peace and safety,' then sudden destruction cometh upon them...and they shall not escape."*

In much the same way the people of Noah's day were warned, and just as Sodom and Gomorrah were warned, and just as those on the Titanic were warned about the icebergs, we are warned about the consequences of complacency and indifference to sin

– sin in the world and sin in our lives. We're warned of the cost of living apart from God and without the salvation of Christ. But do we heed the warnings? Or do we continue on in comfort, luxury and ease, doing our own thing, ignoring God?

Disaster struck the Titanic at 11:40 pm, April 14, 1912, as she collided with the iceberg. Two hours later, she slipped beneath the sea, and has rested in a watery grave ever since...slowly disintegrating and disappearing into rust and dust.

When the unthinkable became obvious, Captain Smith ordered the crew to ready the lifeboats. But passengers were reluctant to leave the comfort of the gigantic ship for a 70-foot drop down to the dark ocean in a small, wooden boat. Even though there were only lifeboats enough for less than half those aboard, most left the ship more than half empty.

The rule was "women and children first," but many of the ladies refused to leave without their husbands, and had to be forcibly picked up and placed in the boats. Families were torn apart, as women and children bid farewell to their husbands and fathers, who were not allowed into the lifeboats. Many of the wealthy on board refused to leave without their valuables and went back to collect their belongings from their staterooms – and in so doing, lost their only chance at survival. They didn't realize the danger, and preferred to remain with their earthly "treasures."

By the time the bow of the ship began to disappear beneath the surface of the water, it was too late for most.

Many of the third class passengers remained trapped below decks, separated from the rest of the ship by locked gates. When some of these finally made it to the boat decks, most of the lifeboats were gone – again, most launched more than half-empty – as hundreds remained on the ship with no hope for survival. Captain Smith, who was set to enjoy retirement

after this last voyage, went down with the ship.

There are hundreds of inspiring and heartbreaking stories that are told of Titanic's last moments...the band that kept playing until the end, to help calm the passengers and avoid a panic. The wealthy Mrs. Isador Strauss, who chose to stay and die with her husband, rather than leave without him. The hundreds who were left on board with all the lifeboats gone and no way to be rescued – women, young children and families alike.

1,517 people died that night in the frigid waters of the North Atlantic. Only 706 survived. Survivors in the boats were haunted by the screams of dying people in the water – now beyond salvation – for the rest of their lives. The screams slowly faded away, leaving only the sounds of sobbing widows and crying, now fatherless babies. When the sun rose the next morning, the survivors in the lifeboats had their first look at the harsh reality – hundreds upon hundreds of corpses, still wearing their life jackets, frozen to death or drowned. They were surrounded by icebergs, some more than 200 feet high. And Titanic, that symbol of man's greatest achievement, was GONE.

A great many awe-inspiring artifacts have been brought up from the site of the wreck...things that help to tell the story, and remind us of what happened that night. We've seen pieces of the ship, personal belongings, even letters, menus, deck chairs and tickets. But can we grasp the real story here?

What can we learn from all this? We can learn to not trust in our wealth or the attractive things of this world...they're only temporary. Trusting in worldly possessions is futile. After all, what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? The consequences of pride and arrogance are always destruction.

As Christians, charged with the great commission, we are the "Captains" here. For the sake of our "passengers" – those

we're called to witness to, we can't skip the lifeboat drills. We need to actively teach people there is a lifeboat (Jesus Christ) and lead them to it (by teaching the Gospel, and equipping them, as "crew members" for the work of the ministry). We must also reach out to the lost – those drowning in sin – and pull them into our boat.

And we need to heed the iceberg warnings, and keep our ship on a safe course. We need to be sensitive to the "icebergs" of temptation and unrepentance, because our eternal lives, and those of our passengers are at stake.

Satan would have us believe we're "unsinkable," and that there's no need for a lifeboat. This is one of his greatest lies...not that there is no such thing as a lifeboat (God), but that there's no rush, no sense of urgency. And that it's much safer and more comfortable to stay aboard the ship of our own sinful desires, where we're in "control." It's not just inconvenient – it's scary – to put yourself in someone else's hands and be lowered into a lifeboat that doesn't look at all comfortable – or safe. But it really depends on Whose hands you're talking about, doesn't it?

Even though we're hopelessly lost, with no way to save ourselves from eternal death, the Lord provided each and every one of us with a Lifeboat. The ship is going down, no question... *"...it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this, the judgment."* (Hebrews 9:27).

But like those on the Titanic, people are still reluctant to get into the lifeboat. They feel much more comfortable where they are. They don't realize they're on a sinking ship, and the lifeboat is the only way to be saved...it's very simple: *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life..."* (John 3:36). There are only two choices: Get in the boat and live, or don't get in the boat and die. It's not complicated.

In THIS lifeboat there are enough seats for all of us, yet it remains more than half empty. And the boat is open to all – no third-class passengers trapped below decks...at the cross, Christ unlocked the gates and brought freedom and salvation to all who will seek Him. And this isn't just for women and children! *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Romans 10:13).

In 1985, explorer Bob Ballard discovered the wreck of the Titanic, more than 12,000 feet beneath the ocean surface. Since then, exhibits of the ship's remains have been available for the public to view. As a Titanic "fanatic," I've been to many of those exhibits. I was even blessed to be present many years ago, when, at one of those museums, they sounded one of the ship's sirens, recovered from the wreck – and thousands heard the sound of Titanic for the first time since 1912. In 1912, that very same whistle blew as she left port, in jubilation and celebration. Just a few days later, it blew as a dire warning of impending doom. Few heeded that warning then, and few heed God's gracious and merciful call to mankind today.

The Lord isn't willing that any should perish. God's Lifeboat awaits you, but few there will be that find it. Today is the day of salvation. It's time you got in the boat!

© 2024 Rob Pue – All Rights Reserved

E-Mail Rob Pue: Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com

Audio CDs and transcripts of this message are available when you call me at Wisconsin Christian News, (715) 486-8066. Or email Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com and ask for message number 426.