

Finally, there's a fourth group of people: ***they know the Lifeboat exists, they believe it could save them and they have gotten on board.*** Not only are they firmly committed to following Jesus, trusting in him to forgive their sins and give them eternal life in heaven, but they are actively working to help other people get onto the Lifeboat as well! They can see people falling into the icy waters and recognize that they cannot survive long trapped in their sins. So these Rescuers paddle over and reach out a hand, offering to bring those struggling and dying into the only safe place there is – and that is on the Lifeboat.

Here is how Paul expressed it when he was writing to the church in Ephesus:

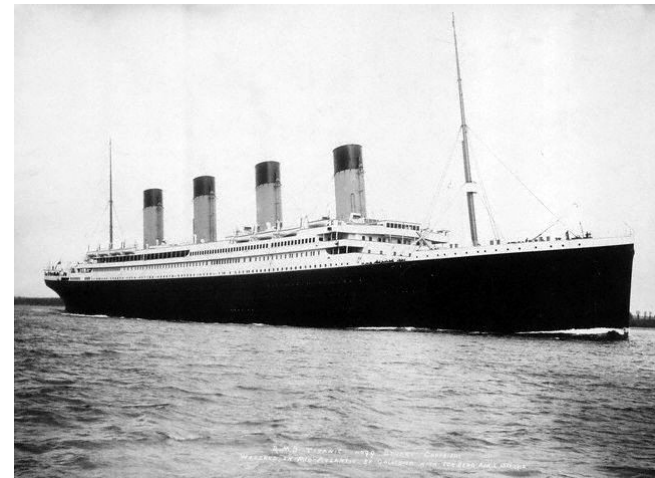
“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live... Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...” (Ephesians 2:1-2, 4-6)

There are only two kinds of people in the world: those who are dead in sin and those who are alive in Christ. There are only two places you can stand before God: righteous in Christ or guilty in sin. Jesus is the Lifeboat and you are either on board with him or you are left standing on a ship that is rapidly sinking into icy waters from which there can be no rescue.

Getting on board with Jesus starts with a simple prayer just asking him to save you – to forgive your sins and make you right with God based on his sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. As if Jesus himself were in a Lifeboat reaching out his hand, salvation is just a matter of taking hold of the hand of Christ and letting him lift you out of the icy waters of your sin.

God promises us in His Word: **“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).** This is what it means to get on board with Jesus: to accept him as your Savior and your Lord, to receive his forgiveness and give him your heart and your life. Lots of people know all the right things about Jesus, but they are just walking around the lifeboat. Have YOU gotten on board?

The Lifeboat



Imagine that we are all on the Titanic – a great ocean liner cruising through the icy waters of the North Atlantic. It is April 14, 1912, and it is nearly midnight. The ship is enormous. Most people are comfortable in their luxurious cabins on board this first-of-its-kind gigantic steam ship. Some are enjoying entertainment in the various common rooms – or are taking advantage of the gym, pool, libraries or other amenities. Probably no one noticed any of the 20 different lifeboats hanging or stowed in various locations around the ship.

The captain had received a few radio messages warning of large icebergs along our path, so he adjusted course a bit to the south on our route from England to New York City. Just 15 minutes ago a nearby ship signaled over a warning about several icebergs, but the radio operators considered the warnings “non-essential” and did not pass them on to the bridge. Then, at 11:40 pm, about 400 miles south of Grand Banks, Newfoundland – in water averaging 28 degrees – we hear frantic ringing of warning bells from the bow of the ship. We feel a sudden left hand turn and then hear a nauseating crunching sound as the ship lurches suddenly, throwing many of us to the floor. Most of us are to the back of the ship, which soon stabilizes so we think it is just a problem with the steering mechanism or some other routine test.

The crew is in full motion, scrambling this way and that. Those in first class, along the top level of the ship, are able to see the lifeboats being swung into place and rapidly form into lines. The first lifeboat is launched around 12:40 am with 28 people on board, though it has a capacity for 65. Over the next hour and a half the other 19 lifeboats were launched, a couple filled to capacity, but most half full or less. Lifeboat 1 took only 12 people of a possible 40. Many people in third class, lower down in the ship, are reluctant to leave the apparent safety of the ship – which does not show any real evidence of being in trouble – to get on small, dangerous lifeboats. But a few stewards are leading people through unfamiliar parts of the ship, up to the few remaining lifeboats.

So here is the question: do we get on the lifeboat, or stay on the ship? You saw the nice facilities and can imagine how comfortable the rooms were, with their electric lights and warm heat. Sure, there is some clamor from frantic people running here and there, but they're probably just crazy people. The sensible thing to do is to just stay put, relax, let the situation work itself out.

Now, you and I have the advantage of knowing how this story turns out. We know that the Titanic hit a huge iceberg and was sinking into icy waters in which a person can survive for no more than 10 or 15 minutes. We know that the majority of the passengers on board the Titanic died, only 700 of over 2,000 made it onto lifeboats.

There are many tragedies about the Titanic: they didn't have enough lifeboats, about 1,000 people short even if every spot had been filled – because the ship wasn't supposed to sink even if part of the hull was punctured. It was built with multiple compartments that could be sealed off if one or two or even four were damaged. Unfortunately, the iceberg damaged the front 5 compartments and brought the whole ship down. The bigger tragedy is that most of the lifeboats shoved off with empty seats. On the 20 lifeboats there were nearly 500 empty spaces. To me the saddest thing is that only 2 lifeboats went back to try to rescue any survivors!

Here's the reality for us today. We are on a ship that is sinking. This world we live in looks very nice – it has many wonderful amenities: fancy gyms, common rooms, restaurants, entertainment venues, and comfortable sleeping quarters. I'm sure all of us enjoy the blessing of living in the First Class part of the ship where life is good. But don't let that fool you into thinking that this world will

last forever, that it is unsinkable. Just like the Titanic, this world is passing away. People get sick and eventually 100% of people in this world die. 100% is a compelling statistic. We are on a ship that is sinking.

The good news is that there IS a Lifeboat. His name is Jesus and he will rescue as many people as will place their faith in him. There are plenty of seats available on board the SS Jesus, and now is the time when people can get on board. So the question is: **where are YOU?**



Some people don't know that a Lifeboat exists – they have never heard the name of Jesus. These guys are in trouble, just like the folks down in 3rd Class who had no idea what was going on up top, toward the Bow.

Other people know about Jesus but they don't believe he could save them. They're in trouble too, since for different reasons they just don't buy it that a prophet who lived and died 2,000 years ago could forgive their sins today. It just doesn't make sense to them. So they rely instead on something more logical in their minds: often it's the hope that God will accept people into his eternal heaven as long as they're decently good people – or at least not terribly bad people. On what basis do they believe this? Basically it's an eternal wager based on wishful thinking. (And it directly contradicts the clear revelation of God preserved for thousands of years in the Holy Bible.)

There is a third grouping of people: **they know about the Lifeboat, and they believe it could save them, but they haven't gotten on board.** They have heard all about Jesus and have become convinced that he is the Savior of the world – that his sacrifice was sufficient to pay the price for the sins of all people throughout all time. But these folks just haven't taken the step of getting on board – of giving themselves heart and soul to Jesus. They're probably just waiting for the right moment, which is always just a little bit later on. These people are probably in the greatest danger of anyone, because they'll get caught up in "life" until it's too late to reach the Lifeboat.