

THE LIFEBOAT

You can trust the Captain to bring you safely to shore

Imagine for a moment that you were born and raised on the *Titanic*. You never had a choice as to your condition and destiny—that's just the way you began your existence in the universe. Having grown up quickly, you didn't mind this lifestyle. In fact, it was promising to be quite pleasurable.

You'd been taught that life has its ups and downs, its seasick moments, disappointments at the dinner table and on the dance floor. In fact, some people were angry at the captain, whom they'd never

seen, questioning how he could allow pain and still claim to be a loving captain.

You'd also been taught the importance of being a good person in order to win the captain's favor and hopefully ensure a pleasant future.

Can You Trust the Ship?

You admired the beauty of the ship and reveled in its ability to provide you with the comforts of life you felt you deserved. You rested securely as you pon-

dered the ship's strength. Alone with your thoughts, you were troubled momentarily by fleeing fear, which was quickly allayed as you drew comfort from what you saw around you. The truth was so evident, how could you have questioned it? Chiding yourself for your moment of weakness, you reminded yourself that you could trust this ship—the ship you had grown to know and love, the ship that everyone knew was so solid and indestructible that there would never be a need for lifeboats.

Caught up in your immediate sur-

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roundings and the voyage itself, you neglected to notice the majesty of the roaring sea and the splendor of the star-studded sky at night. Who was responsible for all of that? Had you considered your final destination?

But why bother about those things? You were having a wonderful time in the present. There would be plenty of opportunities later to consider your destination.

Suddenly you were jolted awake by clamor and confusion. The ship was sinking. It was going down fast. Terrified, you cried, "Help! Help me!"

No one could help. They were going down, too. The ship had failed you. All of your good deeds meant nothing for you now.

"Good news!" someone shouted. "It is finished! Everyone can now be saved!"

You learned that the captain himself had plunged into the black, icy water to release a giant lifeboat that floated to the surface. They said that even before the ship was built the captain knew what he would have to do to provide the lifeboat. You watched as the captain's body floated off into the darkness.

Freedom to Board

They said that the captain would never force anyone to get on the lifeboat, but that he wanted the people to have the freedom to board willingly. Amid the panic and confusion as the ship began to submerge, you observed this freedom of choice.

Some argued that it was pretty narrow to claim there was only one lifeboat. Others clung to the ship, refusing to let go of their source of life and pleasure. Some sadly insisted that they weren't good enough to get into the lifeboat.

Others were indignant at the thought of boarding a lifeboat with imperfect people, hypocrites and the politically incorrect. Realizing they had only minutes to live, some rushed to the dining room to eat all they could.

Politely, some granted you the right to believe in the lifeboat as long as you respected their right to believe differently. Others preferred to stick with their friends and family who had chosen to stay on the ship.

There were some who said it was all just a feel-good fairytale with false hopes. The captain never died to provide a lifeboat.

Others were holding debates to prove that there never *was* a captain.

Some refused, explaining that they knew all there was to know about lifeboats since they had gone to lifeboat class every Sunday. A few declined, complaining that they once tried to read the Lifeboat Instruction Manual but didn't understand it.

A few of the younger people weren't worried, since their parents were already aboard the lifeboat. Therefore, they too would be OK. Some said the captain was a good man but that he certainly was not capable of providing a lifeboat. Others boasted that they didn't need a lifeboat as they began to swim to shore.

Some expressed offense at the scare tactics, getting people all upset when there wasn't a problem. The ship was fine, they claimed. Still others argued cynically that the lifeboat was just a moneymaking scam.

Talk of other lifeboat options distracted many from boarding the real lifeboat. Some were determined to complain about the captain for allowing discomfort and refused to accept that he really cared.

Calmly, others said there was still plenty of time. They would get into the lifeboat after they had a chance to live their life. Some challenged the belief that a safe shore even existed, since like the captain, the shore could not be seen.

Still others complained that the lifeboat was all they ever heard about, and they wished certain people would quit shoving lifeboat information down their throats.

And a few reached out and climbed to safety in the lifeboat.

What would you do? Now is a good time to decide. The captain is waiting on the shore for you with open arms.

Secure Your Place in the Lifeboat

How do we secure our places in the lifeboat? Salvation, our lifeboat, comes only through Christ's death—the death of the Captain who rose again and is now waiting for us. Here are the steps to securing our salvation.

1. Acknowledge your helplessness as a sinner before God. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23, NIV).

2. Believe that God loves you and Christ died for *you*. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While

we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

3. Honestly admit to God that you need Him. "For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Romans 10:13).

4. Choose God's free gift of eternal life only through His Son. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal

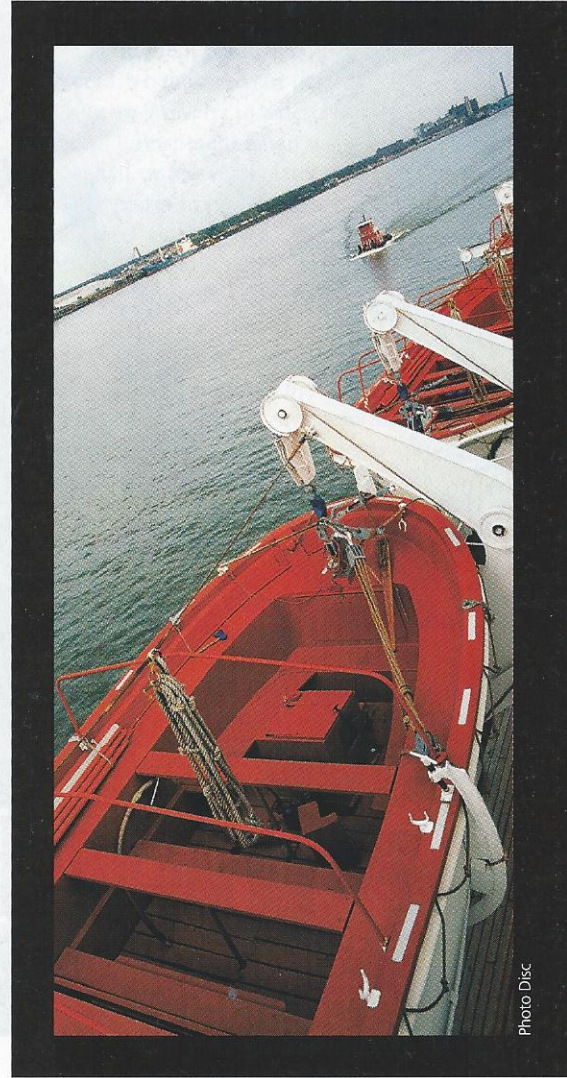


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life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

5. Trust Him to carry you safely to shore. "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:12–13). **AL**

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