

SKYWORLD

Internet Bible Materials

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Let such as love Thy salvation say continually, "The LORD be magnified." (Psalm 40:16)

Psalm 40 was penned by David and is a wonderful song of rejoicing. It takes us from the confusion of the pit to the certainty of the rock. Floundering in the miry clay and unable to lift himself from where he wallowed, David had cried to the Lord for mercy and had been delivered. The Lord had rescued him from sinking and had planted his feet on a firm and unfailing foundation. His song of praise is a fitting testimony for what the Lord had done for him.

Near the end of Psalm 40 there is a striking contrast. Some of David's enemies had mercilessly mocked and taunted him as they looked on. They had cried "Aha, aha!" in their derision. They had no time for David or for his God. On the other hand some had sought the Lord, and these rejoiced to see what He had done for David. As they considered God's salvation of His servant, they could cry instead, "The LORD be magnified!"

"The LORD be magnified!"

CONSIDER THAT SALVATION

Do we love God's salvation? Just think of it for a moment. At great cost, and out of infinite love, God sent His only Son into the world to save lost sinners. That work necessitated the death of the Lord Jesus upon a cross, bearing the curse of a broken Law upon Himself and receiving in His own body the judgment that guilty sinners deserved. Willingly the Son of God stooped to this because there was no other way. How can we fail to love such salvation? There is nothing like it, for it demonstrates the fathomless grace of God poured out for us.



But there needs to be a response from our hearts - and a vocal one at that. David invites all who love this salvation to declare, "The Lord be magnified!" This is not something to say just once, or twice. Rather, this theme calls for an unlimited and yet fresh repetition. Those who love His salvation should "continually" praise His Name for it.

Magnification brings something closer and makes it appear greater. It goes without saying that we cannot make God greater than He is, but we should want to appreciate His salvation more and to speak of it in such a way that He receives the greater praise. He who devised the plan and completed the transaction deserves all the glory. We who love Him for His "great salvation" (Heb.2:3) should *continually* declare: "The Lord be magnified!"

*Oh, magnify the Lord with me!
With me exalt His Name;
When in distress to Him I called,
He to my rescue came.*

"He brought me up ... out of the miry clay"

Psalm 40:2

A Lone Stand

by Martin Girard

And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentils: and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the ground and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory.

(2 Samuel 23:11-12)

We are told very little about Shammah, and Bible commentaries generally refer only fleetingly to this Old Testament character. Yet, his name is preserved in the Word of God for a purpose, and there are some vital lessons that we can learn from the record of his life.

The chapter in which Shammah's name is found lists David's "mighty men" whose exploits are recalled at the end of the life of Israel's illustrious king. Shammah is the third to be mentioned. He lived at a time when the implacable enemies of God's people (the Philistine forces) were making inroads into Israel's territory. He was a Hararite, which means *a mountaineer*. This suggests that his ancestors lived in the hills - perhaps having been forced there by earlier Philistine oppression. Shammah's own name means *ruin*, and by implication it can mean *consternation*. It seems very likely therefore that Shammah had been born at a time of great difficulty when the Philistines were oppressing the people of God. The Israelites could well have been living in constant fear of the marauding armies.

As Shammah appears of the scene, the Philistines were mounting another attack. The enemy presented a united front, being "gathered together into a troop," as yet

again they invaded Israel's territory. God's people were all too familiar with this kind of situation and simply "fled from the Philistines". Some past attacks may have been thwarted, but this latest one looked well-organized and was too much for the Israelites to contemplate. Yet one man stood his ground - alone. Shammah would not flee with the rest! Bravely he took his stand right "in the midst" of the ground. Why was he prepared to be different and take this lone stand?

WHAT SHAMMAH KNEW

Shammah recognized something that nobody else seemed to remember. The land that the Philistines had entered was not theirs but belonged to Israel! The God of Heaven had given the land to their forefathers centuries before. It was His - and it was not to be surrendered! Lentils had been eaten at least since Jacob's day (Gen.25:34). Someone had planted and tended that crop. Was it to be lost to the Philistines as well? Were they simply to trample upon it as they took possession of the territory - or would they be allowed to exploit someone else's labours and enjoy the harvest themselves? As far as Shammah was concerned, it was unthinkable! Bravely he took his stand to defend that ground because he appreciated its value.



We are living at a time when many precious things are being regarded as cheap. Liberties have been won, precious doctrines have been uncovered, and God's people have in their possession a rich and priceless heritage. Enemies today threaten to rob us of our prized possessions. Many treat sacred truth lightly and think nothing of allowing the trends of the world to find a welcome in the church. Others see no harm in ecumenism and are unaware of the peril of joining forces with Rome. We need men and women of God today who will value their heritage and take that lone stand for the glory of God.

In Shammah's case "the Lord wrought a great victory." Regardless of his own safety, he stood his ground - right at the centre of the field. As he defended the land single-handedly, he actually "slew the Philistines" who had tried to dispossess him. What a great victory was wrought that day! It was great because it resulted from the courage and the commitment of one man - and it was also great because the enemy did not prevail. Superhuman strength was given to God's "man for the moment", and the victory was traced to what the LORD had done.

TO BE LIKE SHAMMAH

For Shammah, more than a field of lentils was at stake - and the challenge is here. Are the things of God precious to us? In this day of compromise and cheapness are we prepared to take our stand for God? If we, like Shammah, are ready to defend His interests He may still use us to win great victories in His Name.



The position Malachi occupies at the very end of the Old Testament is not without significance. His was the final prophetic voice to be heard before a 400 year period of silence descended that was not to be broken until the words of John the Baptist echoed across Judea, signalling the dawning of a new era. Malachi was truly God's last Old Testament voice.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The name Malachi means "My Messenger" or "Messenger of Jah". If this was the name given to him by his parents when he was born it indicates their faith, for in the purposes of God Malachi was to become God's last messenger in the Old Testament. He is mentioned nowhere else in the Old Testament, and no *certain* details about him have been preserved - though some Jewish traditions exist. Questions have been raised about his identity. For instance, was Malachi a kind of surname given to him *because* he was God's messenger? Some have even suggested that he is the man we know as Ezra. This idea, of course, is only speculative, and no proof for such a conjecture will ever be found in the Bible.

LIFE IN THOSE DAYS

It will be helpful to set the scene for this Old Testament book. The temple in Jerusalem had already been rebuilt in 515BC, and sacrifices were once again being offered on its altar after the Babylonian exile. Ezra had ministered, teaching

the Law of God in Jerusalem (Ezra 7:10). Two significant prophets had also brought God's revelation to the people - Haggai and Zechariah - but their ministry had been almost a hundred years earlier.

Malachi, like these two servants of God, also had a contemporary - not a fellow-prophet but a civil leader. Nehemiah had returned from Persia in 433BC to be governor in Jerusalem, and Malachi's prophecy needs to be read against the background of Nehemiah's Old Testament book. Sadly, God's people had already departed from the ways established by those earlier reformers. The sanctity of the temple was being disregarded (Neh.13:1-9), the people were being slack in bringing tithes and offerings to the Lord (Neh.13:10-14), the Sabbath was not being observed as it should have been (Neh.13:15-22), and mixed marriages were taking places among God's covenant people (Neh.13:23-27). Into such a scene Malachi appeared, bringing God's message to a retrograde people.



Times may not have changed greatly. In many countries in the western world today it is clearly evident that the ways of God have been departed from and His Law has become unpopular. We need to face the challenges that Malachi brought to his generation. Do *we* give God what is rightfully His - whether it be our money, or our time and talents? Are *we* concerned for God's holy standards, and do we allow them to regulate our lives? Do *we* uphold the sanctity of marriage? Malachi certainly has a message for us today.

STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

Without any introduction, Malachi launches into his attack. He was a man with a "burden" (1:1 KJV). The solemnity of the message weighed heavily upon him, for he was the bearer of "the word of the LORD". His opening sentence ought to have kindled a devotional response from his hearers. Instead, his audience quickly sought to justify themselves. The words from the Lord, "I have loved you," deserved a better response than the unthinking rejoinder, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" (1:2).

Israel only had to look back to Egypt and recall God's mighty deliverance. Was this not evidence of His love for these wayward people? We can look back to a greater deliverance. Should we ever be tempted to ask for proof of God's love, as they did, we can remember the very fact that "Christ died for us" demonstrates His great love (Rom.5:8). In the words of Elizabeth Rundle Charles, we ought to be "Never further than Thy cross, never higher than Thy feet" (1). Another hymn-writer expresses very personally the need for the Lord Jesus to "keep me near the

cross” (2). That is our place of safety, for we learn at the cross the profound extent of God’s love and of our own sinful and worthless state but for His divine grace. Humbly taking our place beneath the cross, we will not think of questioning the unfailing and inextinguishable love of God.

The people’s initial retort indicated that things were not right. God was not receiving the “honour” and the “fear” that were rightly His, but once again the priests remonstrated (1:6). How could they, the religious elite, possibly have despised Him? Malachi could see through their feigned ignorance. Their excuse, “the table of the LORD is contemptible” (1:7) betrayed contempt for God *Himself*. Did they regard the sacrificial altar (which was outside the temple courts) as not being sacred? Was *this* the reason the people were allowed to bring inferior animals to God for sacrifice - blind, lame or sick creatures? By doing such a thing they were insulting a perfect God who had stated clearly that only animals “without blemish” should be offered to Him (Ex.12:5).



Before listening to more of Malachi’s scathing attack, we need to apply his message to ourselves. Consider their words, “The table of the LORD is contemptible” (1:7). It is all too possible today to become familiar with “the Lord’s Table” and to approach those times of remembrance with complacency. We cannot partake of the things of heaven and at the same time indulge our fancies in the sinful pleasures of life without provoking the Lord to anger (1 Cor.10:21-22). That is why we are to examine ourselves before partaking of the bread and wine in memory of our Saviour (1 Cor.11:27-28). Connected with this is the thought of whether we are genuine in giving God what He deserves. Is our worship half-hearted, insipid, and thoughtless? Do we offer Him the best that we can, or does He simply have the “left-overs”? Do we harness our strength to our own pleasures and think that God can somehow make do with the weaker hours of our lives? The message of Malachi is certainly disturbing.

A SOVEREIGN GOD

The people of Jerusalem living in that closing period of Old Testament history had clearly lost sight of the Sovereignty of God. The LORD their God deserved to “be magnified from the border of Israel” (1:5). He was both their “Father” and their “Master” and therefore was rightly entitled to respect (1:6). He was also “Governor” of His people, and in that capacity they should have been seeking to please Him (1:8). He had given them His Law (4:4) and would judge them justly according to their observance of it (2:1-4; 3:1-5; 4:1). Yet this same God was the potential Source of



all their blessings (3:10) and could preserve them from the coming day of judgment (3:17; 4:2-3).

God's Sovereignty has been lost sight of by many in our day. Although the Church today is not the same as Israel of the Old Testament, the truth of His Sovereignty remains unaffected. The Lord Jesus Christ is our "Master" (Mt.23:10), and we have "one... Father... in heaven" (Mt.23:9). "The peace of God" is to rule in our hearts (Col.3:15), and we are to honour both the Father and the Son (Jn.5:23). Just as Israel in Old Testament times would be blessed when they obeyed their God and acknowledged His rule over them, so we will know the blessing of the Lord when we obey His commandments (Jn.14:15; 15:11-14).

ANOTHER MESSENGER

Malachi (whose name means "My Messenger") introduces another messenger to us. "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me" (3:1). The 400 year period of silence was broken when John the Baptist emerged upon the scene and perfectly fulfilled Malachi's prophecy. The Lord Jesus Himself connected this prediction with the ministry of John when, speaking of him, He declared: "For this is he, of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee'" (Mt.11:10). Indeed, John's cry in the wilderness was to "prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Mt.3:3). Very much like Malachi, John commanded God's professing people to repent in preparation for their King. The Lord Jesus also likened John the Baptist to Elijah of old on two separate occasions (recorded in Matthew 11:14 and 17:12-13). Malachi 4:5 refers to the coming of "Elijah the prophet" - and according to our Lord there was a fulfilment of that prophecy in John's ministry.



.....AND ANOTHER

However, another "Messenger" is also seen in Malachi's book. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that after speaking to our forefathers by the prophets, God has now "spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb.1:1-2). John the Baptist (the second "Malachi") was in one sense the last of the Old Testament prophets. The era "Before Christ" closed when the voice of John fell silent and people turned to follow the Son of God. That transition is envisaged in Malachi 3:1, for we read there that "the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant..." The four New Testament gospels record those occasions when the ultimate "Messenger", through whom God would speak, literally



entered the temple at Jerusalem. When He came, Jesus found that same temple defiled by sin and had to exercise His authority to cleanse it from the profiteering that had invaded its sacred courts (Jn.2:13-16; Mt.21:12-13).

Although all this happened, we must not imagine that Malachi is a closed book. There are prophecies within its four chapters that have yet to be fulfilled. The



Lord's first coming was in grace, for He did not come to judge the world (Jn.3:17). The language employed in Malachi 3:2-3 takes us *beyond* the past and on to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, "who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth?" But after that scrupulous judgment of evil, there will be blessing for a cleansed and forgiven people - for then "the Sun of Righteousness [will] arise with healing in His wings" (4:2).

A CURSE OR A BLESSING?

Malachi's prophecy, as we have seen, is strategically placed. Through His prophet, God had been pleading with His people, seeking to restore them to



Himself. The formalism displayed by the priests and people in Malachi's day led to the Pharisaical movement of the New Testament, while the scepticism that we also discern can be linked with the later unbelief of the Sadducees. The last word in the sacred text is the word "curse" (4:6). Contrast this with the concluding benediction of the New Testament in Revelation 22:21: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." What has brought about such a change?

It is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ that has made all the difference! He alone can replace the curse with a blessing. Do we love Him? What place does He have in our hearts? Some, in Malachi's day, responded and "feared the LORD". As a result they "spake often one to another" - and the Lord took note of their godly desires and recorded their names in His book (3:16). Today we can do the same and can bring Him pleasure by fearing Him and sharing His interests with one another. Those with hearts like this are regarded by Him as His "jewels" - and we can anticipate the glad moment when He will "make up" those jewels (3:17) and come again for His own, just as Malachi prophesied.

END NOTES:- (1) Hymn 191 in HYMNS OF FAITH: *Never further than Thy cross*, by E. R. Charles. (2) Hymn 134 in SANKEY'S SACRED SONGS & SOLOS: *Near the Cross*, by F. J. Crosby.

"Behold, I will send My messenger..."
Malachi 3:1



In His last week on earth before going to the cross, the Lord Jesus spent some time in the temple at Jerusalem. One day, near the treasury, He watched as the rich cast in their gifts. Some observers would have been impressed by the amounts being offered, but the Lord had other thoughts. A poor widow caught His attention that day. Without any ostentation, she quietly slipped “two mites” into the treasury and went on her way. The Lord Jesus used the incident to teach His listeners an important lesson. In reality the poor widow had given more than all the lavish gifts of the rich. They had given out of their abundance; she, in her poverty, had “cast in all the living that she had” (Lk.21:1-4 KJV).

That lesson is still a vital one to learn. Giving is not to be thought of merely in terms of the amount offered. It is more important to consider how much is left behind afterwards. It may not really cost a rich person anything to part with a large gift, but this poor widow gave “all.... that she had”. As she entered the temple courts she had two small coins in her hand - and no savings at home. She had a choice as she approached the treasury. Small though the coins were, she could have opted to give just *one* of them. That would have been a generous act indeed, for it would have represented giving 50% of her possessions. The widow chose otherwise. She parted with *both* of the coins - 100% of her possessions - and went home with nothing.

WHAT LAY BEHIND THE ACT?

What prompted her to be so generous? Surely it was her love for God! While the scribes sought the praise and commendation of men, she wanted no attention for herself (Lk.20:46-47). She had the simple desire to give what she could to her God. When she entered the temple that day she had no idea that her simple act of devotion was being watched, or that because she gave “all... that she had” it would be remembered for ever.



It might be helpful to connect this woman's act of giving with another incident recorded in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 there is a kind of “guide for giving” that provides us with an important insight. Before encouraging his readers at Corinth to support the work of God in practical ways,

Paul gave them an example very similar in character to the one above. Like the widow in the temple, the churches of Macedonia were marked by “deep poverty” and yet were outstandingly generous. Touched by the love of God, they held nothing back. They had given “beyond” their means - and it almost seems that someone had suggested that they were going too far because Paul reveals how they had insisted that their gift should be accepted. Their giving was done thoughtfully and willingly, but the thing that most impressed Paul was that they “first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Cor.8:1-5).

The order of events here is significant. Before the giving of *possessions*, the Lord seeks the surrender of our *person*. The believers in Macedonia had done this very thing because they knew that they belonged to the Lord. The same realization must dawn upon us. Because the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for us and purchased us with His precious blood (1 Pet.1:18-19) we now belong to Him. It is only right therefore that we should surrender our bodies to Him, presenting them as “a living sacrifice” (Rom.12:1) to be used for His glory. Before parting with our money, it is vital that we grasp this responsibility. We must yield *ourselves* to Him and place our lives entirely in His hand.

NOT OURS ANYWAY!

Many years before, David was planning a great project. He had wanted to build a temple in Jerusalem for the glory of God but had been denied. The responsibility for that task was to be given to Solomon instead. However, David knew that he had the resources available to assist in the work. In 1 Chronicles 29 there is a list of all that David had given “for the service of the house of God” (1 Chr.29:7). People might have been impressed by the amount that he had contributed, but David was not proud. Rather, the question, “Who am I?” reveals his humility. There was nothing great about David's giving, for God had supplied everything in

the first place! “All things come of Thee,” David declared, “and of Thine own have we given Thee” (1 Chr.29.14).

Today, as believers, we need to appreciate this fact too. Not only do we belong to the Lord because we have been purchased by Him, but all that we possess is really His as well! He is the One who gives us all things richly to enjoy (1 Tim.6:17). Giving to Him is actually no great deal because all that we have is His anyway!

In Old Testament times the people of Israel were responsible to give the Lord a tenth of everything. If they wanted to go beyond the legal requirement and bring a freewill offering as an act of worship, they were at liberty to do so. Some today will argue that we are “not under Law” and therefore are not obliged to offer a tenth of our income to God. This reasoning misses the point. We have just seen that *everything* we possess belongs to Him. We should seek to give Him as much as we can. It goes without saying that some will be able to give more than others. It is not our responsibility to pass judgment on the generosity or otherwise of fellow-believers. Rather, as individual stewards of what God has entrusted to our care, we should seek to be “faithful” (1 Cor.4:2). Instead of asking how much we should give to the Lord, perhaps we should ask how much we ought to keep back for ourselves. If under the Law a tenth was given to the Lord, should we give Him *less*?



HAVING THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

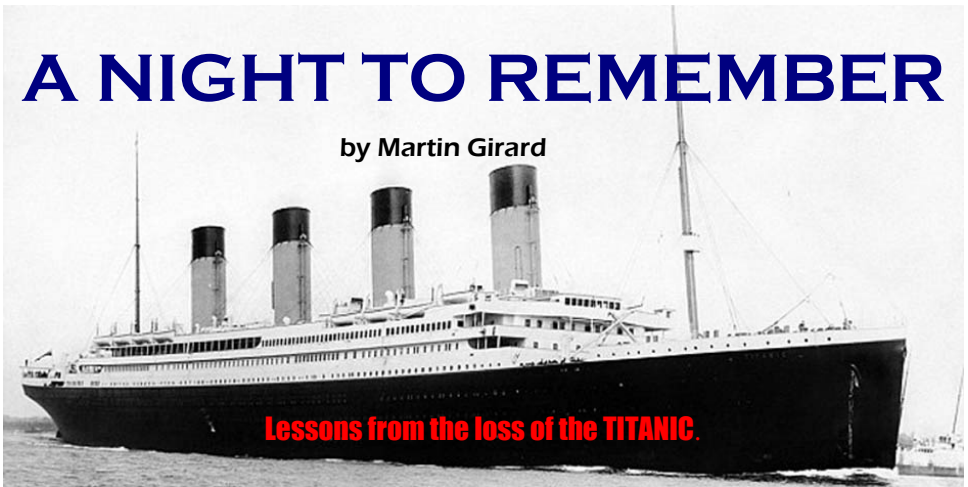
The missionary C.T. Studd had the right perspective. Forsaking a promising career as an England cricketer to yield his life to the Lord, C.T. Studd decided to give his entire fortune to Christ. Knowing what he had done, and sharing his commitment, his bride-to-be told him that the £3,400 he had set aside for her should be given to Christian missions as well. The words of C.T. Studd have become famous and have often been quoted in the context of missionary service. He said: “If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him”. It was this conviction that caused him to spend his life in the service of Christ in Africa.



God wants more than my money, He wants *me*. My spirit, soul, and body are His (1 Th.5:23). Like the Macedonians, we must first give ourselves to the Lord (2 Cor.8:5). Do we really appreciate the value of God’s “Gift” (2 Cor.9:15) and the fact that the Lord Jesus “gave Himself” (Gal.2:20) for us at Calvary? Once we have surrendered our lives and our time to Him, the natural consequence will be to lay our possessions at His feet in the spirit of the poor widow who gave all that she had.

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

by Martin Girard



April 2012 marked the centenary of the Titanic disaster, and during the month considerable interest was kindled in the loss of that great ship. Walter Lord's fascinating book *A Night to Remember* detailing the tragedy could hardly have had a more fitting title. Although some years have passed since the last survivor died, memories persist, and interest in the catastrophe still remains at a high level. Artifacts recovered from the sea, as well as exploration of the ship itself now lying 13,000 feet below the surface, have engaged the attention of people around the world. We reflect upon the worst-ever maritime disaster to have occurred.

A FEW FACTS

The Titanic was the largest, newest, and finest ocean-going liner in existence in 1912. Built in Belfast by Harland and Wolff, the gleaming Titanic was handed over to the White Star Line early in April 1912. After satisfactorily completing her sea trials, the ship was delivered to Southampton and left that port on Wednesday 10th April on the first leg of her journey to New York. As it was the ship's maiden voyage with passengers, crowds lined the waterfront at Southampton to watch her depart. Almost immediately an accident was averted. As the Titanic started downstream, the suction from her huge propellers pulled a much smaller American liner (the New York) from her moorings. Just in time the Titanic stopped her engines, and tugs pulled the New York out of the way, thus preventing an embarrassing collision.



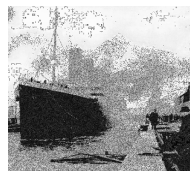
The first sector of the journey took the Titanic across the Channel to the French port of Cherbourg where additional passengers embarked and mail was taken on board before the ship continued on the Wednesday evening to southern Ireland.

The Titanic reached Queenstown harbour (known today as Cork) around noon on Thursday 11th April 1912. At two o'clock on that Thursday afternoon the world's finest liner set out to cross the Atlantic with 1316 passengers and 891 crew members on board. On the night of Sunday 14th April at 23.40 hours she crashed into that infamous iceberg, as we know only too well. Just two hours and 40 minutes later at 02.20 on the Monday morning the Titanic sank with the loss of more than 1500 lives. Here are seven lessons from the loss of the **TITANIC**.

TITANIC - TRAGEDY

Surely no other word can sum up the incident: it was an indescribable tragedy. This was no rusty old coaster that was not seaworthy but a brand-new ship making its maiden voyage! It was all the more tragic, too, because the awful loss of life *could* have been prevented.

The Titanic had been designed by the Rt. Hon. Alexander Carlisle. After the accident he recalled a conference that had taken place where 4-5 hours was spent discussing decorations on the Titanic, while the matter of lifeboat capacity was dealt with in just 5-10 minutes! Maritime regulations in 1912 were pitifully inadequate. It was not considered necessary to provide a place in a lifeboat for *every* soul on board. Regulations existing then required the Titanic to make provision for just 962 people. The White Star Line went beyond this figure and had provided 1178 places - but with 2207 souls on board the vessel, it meant that only a little more than 50% could hope for a place in a lifeboat in the event of an accident. Looking back we can see how foolish and reckless it was. After the tragedy things were never the same again.



It is similarly very foolish now to set out in life unprepared for what lies ahead. Health and fitness are rated highly nowadays, and entertainment is seen as a necessary ingredient in life. But what about *spiritual* considerations? Giving thought to eternity is vital.

TITANIC - IDOLATRY

The designers of the Titanic were understandably proud of their masterpiece. Their 45,000 ton ship was just over 882 feet in length and more than 92 feet in breadth. A poster demonstrated its amazing size, for if the Titanic could have been stood upright from bow to stern, it would have been taller than each of the highest buildings and memorial that you could find anywhere.

The Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre were similarly impressive as they rose some 1400 feet into the sky. Yet, who can forget the terrifying pictures of

figures leaping from the doomed buildings in 2001 in order to escape the raging inferno that had engulfed the floors below? A sketch of the upended Titanic in its final moments shows figures leaping from the stern of the vessel 150 feet above the sea in an attempt to escape. This was the ship that was meant to be unsinkable! One passenger, Mrs. Albert Caldwell had enquired about this as she boarded the Titanic in Southampton. A confident crew member had replied, "Madam, God Himself could not sink this ship."



We must think soberly here. Clearly God did not sink the Titanic, but it is wrong for man to glory in his achievements. God has stated, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Ex.20:3). God alone must be worshipped.

TITANIC - THOUGHTLESSNESS

Half an hour before midnight on that Sunday evening in April 1912, the Titanic was steaming across the Atlantic at the impressive speed of 22.5 knots. Early that morning at 09.00 a warning had been received, and four more were to follow - two in the afternoon, and two in the evening. Icebergs were in the area - and falling temperatures indicated their presence. At 23.00 the Californian reported being trapped in ice, but the vessel's position was never recorded. First Wireless operator Jack Phillips was very busy at his set at the time sending messages for passengers. He knew the Company would want him to keep the passengers happy, so when the Californian made its broadcast Jack Phillips was a trifle irritated. He was just too busy to listen to that! (This is simply a factual observation and is not intended to apportion blame. To his credit, Jack Phillips later on worked tirelessly at his post as the tragedy unfolded.)

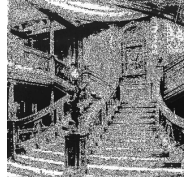


Is it not true that thoughtlessness characterizes the lives of so many nowadays? "I'm too busy!" is the cry. "I haven't time to spare" - and so we hurry on without realizing that we are rushing blindly into danger. Many a time the Lord warns us for our own good. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: for why will ye die?" He asks (Ezek.33:11). All too often His warning goes unheeded.

TITANIC - AIMLESSNESS

Old pictures from 1912 show the luxury and high-life that could be enjoyed on the Titanic, perhaps epitomized by the ornate chandeliers. Some very rich passengers were on board too. Mrs. Dickinson Bishop had 11,000 dollars' worth of jewellery, while Major Arthur Peuchen possessed 200,000 dollars in bonds and

100,000 dollars in preferred stock. When the Titanic had docked in Ireland John Jacob Astor had purchased a fine lace jacket costing 800 dollars. What a fortune is reflected in these figures - for we are thinking of 1912 and not the twenty-first century! The Ryerson family had 16 trunks with them, but Mrs. Charlotte Cardoza (who was travelling First Class) had 14 trunks in which (among other things) could be found 91 pairs of gloves! What was the *use* of all these possessions when the ship was sinking?



One verse of Scripture comes powerfully to mind: “Vanity of vanities... All is vanity” (Eccl.1:2). In another verse the Lord Jesus asked a man who was about to die, “Whose shall those things be?” (Lk.12:20). There comes a time when everything will be left behind.

TITANIC - NARROWNESS

Facts and figures reveal a stark truth when we consider who was saved after the sinking of the Titanic. 63% of the First Class passengers survived, but only 42% of those travelling Second Class. Among the Third Class a mere 25% survived, and just 23% of the crew members. It is understandable that priority should have been given to women and children, but it *does* seem that some had a greater chance of being saved than others. Members of staff in the *a la carte* restaurant in First Class were not technically crew - but neither were they passengers. Being mainly French and Italian they were disliked by the British and stood little chance of being rescued.



How different things are when we think of the Gospel message of God's salvation! John 3:16 invites “whosoever” will to come, and Romans 10:13 assures us that “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”. Indeed, “there is no difference” in God's sight between one race and another. The same Lord “is rich unto all that call upon Him” (Rom.10:12). There is no narrowness in God's invitation!

TITANIC - IMPORTANCE

As the Titanic slipped beneath the icy waters, the most important thing for each individual was a place in a lifeboat. One would have thought that all the lifeboats would have been overcrowded with survivors, but strangely this was not the case. Boat Number 2 was only 60% full, while boats Numbers 5 and 6 (which could have carried 65 each) were only occupied by 40 and 28 souls respectively. Boat Number 1 had just 12 on board instead of 40! Greaser Walter Hurst watched

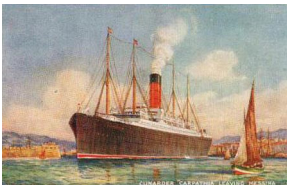
Number 1 leave from the railings. He remarked, “If they are sending the boats away, they might just as well put some people in them.” There seemed to be a reluctance to get into a lifeboat. Sadly, too, when the Titanic sank so many of those in the lifeboats did not want to return to the scene to rescue others. It was too much of a risk! Fireman Charles Hendrickson in boat Number 1 said, “It’s up to us to go back and pick up anyone in the water.” His suggestion was met with silence. People preferred to give advice to those in the freezing sea. “Hold on to something. You’ll be rescued,” they were told.



One man had a different outlook. John Harper, a Scottish minister who had been going to spend three months at Moody Church in Chicago spent the final moments of his life telling people in the water to trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour. He was heard telling his fellow dying men and women to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” before sinking beneath the chilly waters for the last time. He certainly knew of the importance of eternal salvation and sought to share the message with others.

TITANIC - CERTAINTY

How welcome that night were the approaching lights of the Carpathia! Captain Arthur Rostron’s ship was 58 miles away at the time, en route from New York to Europe, when he received the Titanic’s distress call. Sparing no effort, he increased the speed of his humble Cunard liner from its usual 14 knots to 17 knots in order to reach the scene of the disaster as quickly as possible and committed his rescue mission to God in prayer. Eventually some 700 souls reached the safety of New York through the timely intervention of that much smaller vessel. Its limited facilities did not matter then. One thing only was of the utmost importance - and that was being safely on board the Carpathia. Fred Hartnell, a steward from the Titanic, sent a one-word telegram to his anxious family ashore. They must have been thankful and relieved to read the simple message: “SAVED”.



That is the most important thing of all. We must be *saved* from the coming judgment - and we can be saved now! “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom.10:13). We can be *certain* of that salvation too - for that certainty is grounded in the unfailing Word of God. As we reflect upon the sinking of the Titanic again, we must face up to a question of the utmost importance about being saved or lost. Which are we?



That's how it always is. A clear dividing line exists, and each individual is found on one side or the other. There is no neutral position - though that dividing line can be crossed.

The end of the book of Acts describes the time Paul spent in Rome before his execution. He was living in his own "hired house" in the city (1) to which many people came - curious to know what exactly he had been teaching (2). From morning till evening Paul spoke to his listeners about Jesus, seeking to persuade them from the books of Moses and the prophets of the Old Testament who had written of His coming. As a result of hearing him, some were persuaded and "believed" while others maintained their original position and "believed not" (3).

The message has not changed, and neither have the consequences of hearing it. The human heart and mind are also the same as in Paul's day. Some, hearing the message of God's salvation today believe. Others are not persuaded and reject the message. Does this matter? Yes, it certainly does - for if we do not believe, we remain lost and will perish. If we are to be saved, we must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (4). If we do not believe, "the wrath of God" hangs over us (5).

The Bible does not teach that all will be saved in the end. Many entertain the hope that all will turn out alright in the end and that a benevolent God will allow everybody into heaven - or at least all who have been sincere. We must not be deluded. Like the people on the Titanic who boarded a lifeboat and were saved we, as individuals, must take the step of believing *"some"* in Jesus Christ. This means turning to Him and asking God to forgive our sins on the basis of Christ's once-for-ever sacrifice at the cross. To remain unbelieving will mean eternal separation from God and will result in being in Hell for ever.

Which side are you on? Are you still among those who "believed not" in Paul's day, or will you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and ask Him to save your never-dying soul?

END NOTES:- (1)Acts 28:30. (2)Acts 28:22. (3)Acts 28:23-24. (4)Acts 16:31. (5)John 3:36.