

Kids: Lifeboats!

- *image: ferry*
- How many of you have been on a boat/ferry?
- Where did you go?
 - I've been to France (before the Tunnel!), to Orkney, and to Millport/Cumbrae...
- Has anyone heard of famous ship called the Titanic? (*image: Titanic*)
 - what happened to her?... *sank* (*image: Titanic's bell*)
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- Iceberg (*image: Iceberg*) - what makes especially dangerous?
 - what would happen if our boat struck an iceberg?
 - what would the people have to do? (*image: lifeboats...*)
- Life is like a boat trip
 - danger of iceberg of sin (*image: iceberg/sin*)
- Such a big and dangerous iceberg *everyone* hits it
 - trouble with sin is that its as if we are in the middle of a huge ocean without any lifeboats - stuck!
- Jesus came to rescue us from our sins: (*image: lifeboat/Luke 19:10*)
 - *he comes to rescue us, like a lifeboat*
 - *got to get into it!*
 - fantastic feeling when we take in that we've been rescued....!

Introduction

- I remember back at the start of 1997 an amazing incident:
 - there was a **round the world yachtsman** called **Tony Bullimore**
 - *(image: Tony Bullimore/yacht capsized)*
 - most folk had never heard of him
 - until his boat capsized somewhere out in the middle of the ocean in the midst of the Vendee Globe race...
 - sent a distress signal... but so far out didn't expect help
 - stuck inside the upturned hull in an air-pocket for 4 days, surviving on (as he put it later) 'a little **chocolate, water and sheer determination**'
 - air running out, water coming in, frostbite and hypothermia setting in...
 - when suddenly there was a rap on the hull; rescuers from the Australian Navy had arrived!!
- What if he'd refused to come out? **Nuts! Idiot! DEAD!**

Same in Galatia

- Galatians had been struck by universal condition of sin.
 - *(image: map of area, Galatia highlighted)*
 - they realised, as the message of Jesus was preached to them, that they were sinking without a hope!
- But they had accepted rescue by Jesus:
 - **HE their lifeboat** - gave himself for their rescue, far more than the £12 million spent to rescue Tony Bullimore!
- At first they accepted the offer.
- But now they looked like bailing out for a "different gospel".
- Some **apparently** Christian teachers had arrived and were confusing the issue!
 - getting them to add things to their faith
 - *additions to the lifeboat that were in danger of making it top-heavy and dumping the Galatians right back in the sea!*

Paul Expressed his Concern

- *(image: eyes/Paul expressed concern)*
- Paul didn't just leave his converts in danger.
- **Paul expressed his concern... by writing to them.**
- *(image: eyes/Paul expressed concern/writing to them)*
- *(No phones, faxes, e-mail or convenient airports...)*
- Young Christians - critical stage in growth.
- Note the way he wrote - he skips normal thanks-giving for their service in his haste to address the issue; real urgency
- **Paul expressed his concern... by confronting the issue**
- *(image: eyes/Paul expressed concern/confronting the issue)*
- No pussy-footing around - right to the heart of things: (v.6), **deserting**
- Paul wasn't worried about pleasing men (v.10), but they were:
 - problem was additions to the gospel - do this, do that - things that would avoid Jewish persecution
 - for the Jews probably accused Paul of making it too easy (grace!) - v.10 reminds that this "easy" gospel brings down persecution!!
- **Paul expresses his concern, because the Galatian believers are in danger:**

Paul Made Clear the Danger

- *(image: warning sign/Paul made clear danger)*
- You see the gospel is a free offer of salvation:
 - free rescue, without our help or aid, a free rescue effected by Jesus.

- The word "gospel" means "good news" - and this is the great thing, our salvation doesn't depend on us. (We can't be consistently good...)
- So the danger was of stepping out of grace (prominence in sentence, v.6).
- *(image: warning sign/Paul made clear danger/safety into danger)*
- From safety into danger!
- Out of the lifeboat and back into the sea.

There is only one Gospel

- Stepping out the "Jesus way of salvation" would be fine if there were any other way to be saved - **but there isn't!**
- *(image: warning sign/Paul made clear danger/only one way)*
- First, "which is no gospel at all" (v.7) - not good news, an illusion, a deception.
- Next, and note the emphasis - **ANY** different gospel is false, twice told!
- *(v.8, repeated v.9)*
- Compare: Peter before Sanhedrin in Acts 4:12:
- "Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."
- And note seriousness of threat to deceivers: **condemned to hell!**
- They would, after all, be responsible for the eternal death, the everlasting separation of those they deceived from God.
- They would be **responsible for spiritual murder!**
- **Paul has put one heck of a shot across the bows of the Galatian Christians!**

Conclusion

- In some ways we face something of the same situation, with people not just leaving the church - the outward expression of faith - but abandoning any commitment to Jesus, the core of true faith.
- At one level I understand - whole host of pressures and alternatives that face us today - secularism, materialism, pluralism, whatever...
- and perhaps the church, this gathering of those who believe in Jesus, isn't always all it should be...
- **But at another I just don't understand!**
- I am surprised... astonished! Can't get my head round it!
- People are turning their back on faith... on **freedom...** on **rescue...**
- **Swapping lifeboat for illusions!**

We need the same shot across the bows that Paul sent to the Galatians!

- We who have faith must take care to stay in the lifeboat, not being deceived by the alternatives - whether they come in **religious garb** such as Mormons, or Jehovah's Witnesses... or whether it is the temptation to live the **shallow surface life of Christian nominalism** - turning up when it suits us, but ordering our lives round the pursuit of money or pleasure or happiness or family.
- these are "**really no gospel at all**" - a deception, an illusion - bad news!
- they may have some good in them, **but they will not save us**
- **neither will they provide ultimate satisfaction, fulfillment**
- **We must stay in the lifeboat - hold firm to our allegiance to our rescuer:**
- to **Jesus Christ**.
- **BUT also**, not huddle in a selfish group, safe in the bottom of the lifeboat, never bothering to look over the sides.
- For there are many who are in the same situation as we were - who have no faith, who perhaps do not even realise that their lives have been struck by the iceberg of sin.
- We need to be reaching out and offering them a helping hand aboard:

- Alpha
- Summer Focus (able to help?)
- friendship, openness with the gospel
- Its not a matter of a pleasant hobby - this is a life and death business.
- Lifeboat crews put themselves at risk - for the sake of the one they seek to save.
- We have the same vital, critical, imperative, urgent, life-bringing task.

- God in Jesus still holds out his hands to rescue us from this evil age.
- Let us grab hold firmly of the offer he has made
 - and ourselves reach out those around us, drawing them to the Saviour.

- May God indeed grant us his help to man, and not abandon, the Lifeboat!!