

## **Lessons From The Titanic** *Marshall Reid*

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1912, one of the most famous tragedies occurred – the sinking of the great *Titanic*. It was late at night on the 14<sup>th</sup> that the *Titanic* struck an iceberg in the icy waters of the North Atlantic. It began taking on water immediately, and after 3 hours, over 1500 people lost their lives. Only 705 survived.

The *Titanic* was a monument to human engineering and achievement. But it was also a monument to human pride, arrogance, and greed, and selfishness. There are many lessons to learn from the disaster, but I'll focus on two.

**Pride is the path to destruction.** Solomon said, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Prov. 16:18-19). One of the *Titanic* survivors, Sylvia Caldwell, is purported to have heard a deck hand exclaim, "God himself could not sink this ship." He wasn't the only one who felt that way. Numerous comments had been made by experts leading up to its maiden voyage that the ship was practically unsinkable. Even as word began to reach New York of the *Titanic* disaster early that fateful morning, the Vice-President of the White Star Line in New York stated without qualification, "We place absolute confidence in the *Titanic*. We believe that the boat is unsinkable."

There is no way of knowing whether God had any role to play in the sinking of the *Titanic*, but knowing how much he hates pride, and considering the numerous biblical accounts of God humbling prideful men, I wouldn't be surprised if he was behind its sinking. Especially when someone taunted and tested God by saying he couldn't sink the ship. Then again, it could have just been happenstance but one guided by the principal expressed in Proverbs 16. Either way, we shouldn't be surprised.

Teaching against pride and the extolling of humility is one of the most prevalent themes in the Bible. The ultimate example of humility is, of course, Jesus. Of all men, he had every reason to be anything but humble – he was God! And yet he showed us what true greatness is by being humble, by serving, by being selfless.

Pride is not something to be proud of; it is something to be relinquished and replaced with humility.

**Our lives can change in an instant.** Many of the passengers onboard the *Titanic* were sound asleep when the ship struck the iceberg. They were thinking they'd wake up and be landing in America, ready to go on with the next part of their lives. Many were living it up with the party-like atmosphere the upper class were enjoying on the voyage. One moment there was peace, prosperity, and pleasure. The next there was death. Survivor Eva Hart recalls, "I saw all the horror of its sinking, and I heard, even more dreadful, the cries of drowning people."

James puts it this way: "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; whereas you do not know what will

happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.' But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:13-17).

Have you ever wondered why James put that last sentence in there? What does knowing to do good and not doing it have to do with the previous verses? His point is that our lives are so fragile, so temporal, and instead of living like we're here for the duration and that we're "unsinkable", we need to be mindful of how quickly our life can change and we face our immortality. With that in mind, what should we be spending our time doing? It should be spent doing good! We don't have much time, and as Paul says in Eph. 5:16, we need to "redeem the time" or "make the most of the time".

Instead of living for pleasure, living for ourselves, and acting as if we're "unsinkable", let's use the time God has granted us, however long or short that may be, for serving him and doing good. Since our lives can and most likely will change or end when we least expect it, let's make good use of our time, and let's be constantly ready to meet the Lord. This life we live is not about us; it's about the Lord. It's about helping others come to know the Lord. It's about selfless living. It's about preparing for the next life – the one that really matters.