



Parable of a Lifesaving Station

On a dangerous seacoast notorious for shipwrecks, there was a crude little lifesaving station. Actually, the station was merely a hut with only one wooden boat. But the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the turbulent sea. With little thought for themselves, they would go out day and night tirelessly searching for those in danger as well as for those who were lost. Many lives were saved by this brave band of people, who faithfully worked as a selfless team in and out of this life-saving station. By and by, it became a famous place.

Some of those who had been saved as well as others along the seacoast wanted to become associated with this little station. They were willing to give their time and energy and money in support of its objectives. New boats were purchased with technologically advanced sonar. New crews were trained. The station that was once obscure and crude and virtually insignificant began to grow.

Some of its members became unhappy that the hut was so unattractive and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided. Therefore, emergency cots were replaced with lovely cushioned furniture. Rough, hand-made equipment was discarded and sophisticated, classy state of the art systems were installed. The actual hut, of course, had to be torn down to make room for all the additional equipment, furniture, systems, and upscale appointments.

By its completion, the lifesaving station had really become a popular gathering place – a show case of sorts, and its objectives began to shift. It was now used as a sort of clubhouse, an attractive building for upscale, public gatherings. Saving lives and feeding the hungry and strengthening the fearful and calming the disturbed ...rarely occurred any more.

Fewer members were now interested in braving the icy cold sea on lifesaving missions, so instead, they hired professional lifeboat crews to do the work. **The original goal of the station wasn't altogether forgotten, however. The noble lifesaving motive still**

prevailed as it was reflected in the club's decor. In fact, in commemoration of their group's movement, there was a liturgical lifeboat preserved in the "Room of Sweet Memories" with soft, indirect lighting overhead, which helped hide the layers of dust upon the once-used varnished vessel.

A curious thing happened though. During that time and season a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the boat crews brought in loads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty. Some were terribly sick and lonely. Others had black, brown and yellow skin color—they looked "different" from the majority of those who were members of this classy club. Some were even of the wrong political persuasion. The beautiful new clubhouse suddenly became real messy and cluttered. The furniture became soiled. A special committee saw to it that a shower shack was immediately built "outside" and "away from" the clubhouse so that the victims of the shipwreck could be cleaned-up "before" coming inside their five star club facilities.

At the next meeting there were some strong words and angry feelings vented, which resulted in a division among the members. Most of the people wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities altogether and place all involvements with future shipwreck victims somewhere else. *"It's just too unpleasant,"* they said. *"It's a hindrance to our social life. It's simply opening the doors to unseemly folks who are not 'our kind.'"*

Well, as you would expect, some still insisted upon saving lives and that this was to remain their primary objective. Their only reason for being was to minister to "anyone" needing help regardless of their club's beauty or size or decorations. They were voted down though and were told that if they still wanted to be involved in saving lives ...you know being involved with those kind of lowlifes ...who were shipwrecked in those distant waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast!

And so they did.

As years passed, the new station experienced the same old changes. It evolved into just another club. And yet another lifesaving station was begun. It was strange how history seemed to continue to repeat itself.

If you visit that club today, you'll find a large number of exclusive, impressive clubs along the same shoreline owned and operated by slick paid professionals who have lost all involvement with saving lives.

Shipwrecks still occur in those waters, you understand, but now most of the victims are not saved. Every day they perish in the frigid sea by drowning, and so few seem to even care... so very few.

~ Kurt von Schleicher adapted this from Author Unknown ~

Note: Of course, not all churches end up like this. I feel optimistic, but also like challenging you. There are many wonderful, soul-winning churches in this great country. May we pray in faith, act in love and keep our priorities in line with God's Word so His Church will advance.

In recent years there has been a lot of confusion though, that has arisen regarding the teaching of salvation and of Christ ...even in circles where this kind of teaching has traditionally been given the highest value. Many fishers have heard about the Barna organization's polling data that was published in 1992. The results here in America indicated a rather high degree of correct understanding regarding the basis of salvation. When people were asked to describe their belief about life after death, 62 percent of the respondents agreed that *"When you die, you will go to heaven because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior."* Only six percent of the people polled said that people go to heaven *"because God loves all people and will not let them perish."*

However, when people were asked to respond to the statement: *"All good people, whether they consider Jesus Christ to be their Savior or not, will live in heaven after they die on earth,"* ...there were a whole lot of people who agreed with this statement. Those who disagreed with it outnumbered those who agreed, but not by much. It was by less than a five to four ratio!

Probably this means that the emotional factor has overwhelmed the rational factor. Of course none of us want anyone to go into a Christ-less grave and perdition. We work long hours so they all will hear the Message and turn from their sins. Yes, perhaps this emotional factor and conflict among so called Christians resulted from the deep sympathy many Americans feel for unbelievers in their serious plight—that springs from an earnest desire to see them receive the same benefits of salvation they themselves have received ...rather than relating this belief to rational or doctrinal considerations. Whatever the case, let's be realistic and sound.

American Christians are biblically illiterate for the most part today. They need basic Bible education taught by anointed saints. They need a spiritual burden – a supernatural, heart-felt concern – for the lost ...that moves them to into lifesaving actions.

We are here to pray, to encourage ...to help believers and unbelievers (who will listen) realize how important it is to go by what the Bible says ..regardless of what we hear or feel. It's time for this nation to turn back to the Word of God. We don't believe in universalism. Not all will be born again and saved from the lake of fire. Some will reject Christ and God won't make them spend eternity with Him against their will. God will have no one in heaven who doesn't want to be there—who didn't make reservations in advance through Christ alone. Christ is still the only way. All must hear our message. Our duty is to have a right heart and spirit inside ...so much so... that God's power can flow through us as we fish for people by boldly sharing His Gospel!

What should our attitude be like?

Well, I once heard the story told of a shipwreck off the stormy New England coast many years ago. A young member of the Coast Guard rescue crew protested, ***"We can't go out — we'll never get back!"*** The old captain replied, ***"We have to go out! We don't have to come back!"***

That's what it should be like, not like some inverted country club of spoiled socialites.

Charles H. Spurgeon said, *"If you can rest without their being saved, they will rest, too. But if you are filled with an agony for them, if you cannot bear that they should be lost, you will soon find that they are uneasy, too. I hope you will get into such a state that you will dream about your child or your hearer perishing for lack of Christ, and start up at once and begin to cry, 'O God, give me converts, or I die.' Then you will have converts."*

"We will either evangelize or we will fossilize. We will grow and glow, or we will dry and die. Where there is no vision the people perish. Where there is no passion the church perishes." ~ Adrian Rogers

"Every so often, a lifesaving station like ours has to look in the mirror. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:31, **'But if we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged.'** A city full of lifesaving stations which have lost focus and atrophied into self-serving *us-four-and-no-more-clubs* needs to do the same." ~ Chuck Swindoll

The Bible says:

"Rescue the weak and needy" (Ps 82:4 niv).

"The Lord is ... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet 3:9

"...Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters" (Ps 144:7).

"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV).

"Too many of us Christians sing 'Throw Out the Lifeline', yet act as men with paralyzed arms. Our favorite hymn is 'I Shall Not Be Moved.' You can't fire us up and you can't thaw us out. We sing, 'I'll Go Where You Want Me To Go', and we won't even walk across the street to share Jesus with our neighbors. We sing, 'Rescue the Perishing, Care for the Dying,' when we, ourselves, need to be rescued from lethargy and indifference, and we forget that our lack of rescue work makes our lives perjure the words of our mouths. Forgetting the supreme objective of Jesus' own ministry was to speak and to save the lost, we go our own ways with lives devoid of a passion for souls."
~ Freddie Gage

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10).

You can't rescue all of them, but you can some. Don't let the enormity of the task intimidate or polarize you into a passive, lethargic state. Don't let what you can't do; keep you from what you can do ..or from what God wants to use you in doing! Apathy and narcissism must go. Start today!