

The  
**CRASH**  
of the Costa Concordia

Echoes of Grace



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# The CRASH of the Costa Concordia

The cruise ship *Costa Concordia*, over three football fields long from bow to stern, glowed with lights. Some of its 4,252 occupants strolled the decks, others found the elegant dining rooms and ordered meals, while some checked out the schedules for the live performances of the evening. Its promoters called the ship “a floating temple of entertainment.” Passengers looked across the calm seas to the hilly Italian countryside. For about four hours the ship sailed across the Mediterranean, cruising peacefully at 20 miles per hour.

## CARELESSNESS

Captain Francesco Schettino thought he would provide the passengers an extra treat by sailing by the island of Giglio. He had firsthand knowledge of the waters around the island. But he grew careless and took his attention away from navigation.

Suddenly he looked up and saw that the ship was passing dangerously close to the rocky island. Immediately he ordered the helmsman to turn the ship. This careless move made the ship swing about in the water and brought the back part of the hull even closer to the island.

Passengers in the dining rooms heard the grinding of the ship's metal hull against the rock, and they felt a jolt as the rock cut deep into the ship. Chandeliers overhead swung wildly, plates fell off tables, waiters carrying food stumbled to the floor. Near pandemonium developed as passengers rushed to the upper decks. Sea water rushed into the engine room, swamping the engine and electric generators and putting them out of commission. The ship had hit an underwater rock, cutting a 230-foot-long gash in the hull. Within minutes, the head engineer notified the captain that the ship had been damaged beyond repair. Emergency lights switched on throughout the ship. The seawater entering the hull caused the ship to lean 20 degrees to one side. The ship, carried forward by its momentum, drifted away from the island.

The luxurious *Costa Concordia* was in trouble because of carelessness and negligence on the part of the captain. The captain had the solemn responsibility to protect the welfare of every person on his ship. You too have a solemn responsibility to look out for the welfare of your own soul. If you are living without faith in the Saviour, you are sailing in dangerous seas. Wake up to the danger of living

without the Saviour and cry out for the Lord Jesus to save you! **“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”** (Romans 10:13).

## CONFUSION, PANIC AND LIES

Frantic passengers made their way through the dark corridors to the lifeboat stations. Every second wasted could make the difference between life and death for the men and women on board. But Captain Schettino didn't give the order to abandon ship. If he had given the order immediately after the crash, many lives might have been saved. Perhaps he was in a state of denial about what had happened.

Captain Schettino didn't even call the Coast Guard and ask for assistance. The Coast Guard ended up contacting him. Worried passengers used their cell phones to call relatives on shore and tell them about the crash. These relatives then called the police, who in turn called the Coast Guard. The Italian Coast Guard immediately contacted the *Costa Concordia* by radio. Unfortunately the conversation went like this:

*“Do you have any problems on board?”*

*“Yes, we have an electrical blackout.”*

*"We had a relative of a passenger say things were falling on passengers' heads. Are you in serious trouble?"*

*"No, negative. We are working to fix an electrical problem."*

In another deception, the captain sent a high-ranking crew member with a message of false hope to the passengers who were crowded together by one of the Lifeboat Disembarkation Stations. This crew member, in a calm and reassuring voice, gesturing with her hands to make her points, emphatically told the passengers, *"We have an announcement from the captain. We kindly ask you to return to your cabins, or, if you prefer, you can stay in the lounges. Once we are finished addressing the electrical problems, everything will be fine. That is why we have these emergency lights. Everything is under control. If you want to stay here that is fine, but I ask you to kindly return to your cabins and stay calm."* A short time later many of those cabins would become death traps when the ship rolled on its side and filled with seawater.

## LIES, TRUTH AND YOU

Everything on board the *Costa Concordia* was in a state of confusion. Do you know that this world is in a state of confusion? Romans 5:12 reads, **"As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."** Since that time death and sin have wreaked havoc. Who can make

sense of all the evil that has been committed in human history? Who can make sense of the evil even in their own heart? Why the stubbornness, the hate, the willingness to see others hurt? Why the insubordination to authority, the envy, the cowardice, the dishonesty? Because of sin, men and women are headed to eternal death and separation from God. It is not a future God wants for the people He made and loves. He wants us to come back to Him and look to Him for salvation. He says He **“will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”** (1 Timothy 2:4). To save us, God sent His Son into the world. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16).

The gospel proclaims a full and free salvation offered as a gift to all. **“By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”** (Ephesians 2:8). But many won't receive this gift. Since the Garden of Eden, the lie has been whispered, **“Ye shall not surely die”** (Genesis 3:4). And since that time deceit and misinformation has made people think they aren't so bad as to need the forgiveness of sins and salvation. Many think that they should try to live as comfortably as possible and not to trouble themselves about spiritual things which they can't really understand anyway. This lie takes many different forms and shapes and has many

willing accomplices. Many people leave God entirely out of their lives. Will you fall for this misinformation? Or will you open up your eyes and see your need of the Saviour who can forgive sins and bring you to heaven?

## RUNNING FROM RESPONSIBILITY

The momentum of the ship carried it about a mile away from the island. At this point Captain Schettino could no longer deny that the ship was sinking. He turned the ship back towards the island with the hopes of running it aground in the mouth of the harbor, but when he got close, he saw his plan wouldn't work. The mouth of the harbor was far too small. So he turned the ship parallel to the island and ran it aground on a rock shelf in about forty feet of water. In a terrifying moment, the giant ship rolled over on its side, and a good portion of the interior of the ship flooded with seawater.

Life boats became difficult or impossible to launch. Captain Schettino, fearing for the safety of his own life, abandoned ship, leaving hundreds of stranded passengers behind him. In the harshest language possible, the headquarters of the cruise line called the captain and ordered



him to get back onto the ship and see to the safety of his passengers. He refused.

How vast the difference between Captain Schettino and the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of abandoning us when we needed Him the most, the Lord Jesus endured the pain and agony of the cross so that we might be saved.

## HOW WILL IT ALL END?

A desperate rescue operation lasted for hours, and the search for missing passengers trapped in the ship continued for days. In the end 32 lives were lost in the accident. The *Costa Concordia*, one of the most beautiful ships ever built, remained on the rock ledge partially submerged for over two years before being refloated, towed to a shipyard, and cut up for scrap.

What will be your end? Will you end up lost and ruined in hell or will you trust Christ for salvation? He is completely worthy of your trust. Those who trust Him will never be disappointed. **“Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed”** (Romans 10:11). Won’t you trust Him for salvation before another day goes by?

Captain Schettino abandoned hundreds while Jesus Christ showed His devoted love to the whole world. But does Jesus Christ have a personal interest in one individual—you? Find out more in *The Amazing Rescue*.

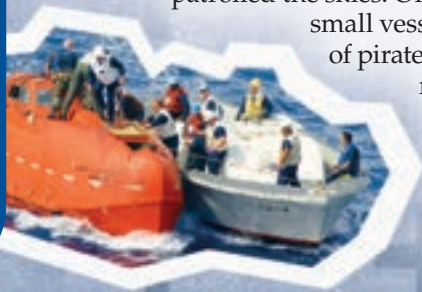
# THE AMAZING RESCUE

When the U.S. Navy rescued a captain held hostage by four Somali pirates, it left an Italian boat owner astounded.

Captain Richard Phillips of the *Maersk Alabama* had been taken hostage on April 8, 2009, and held on a lifeboat for several days. He tried to escape on his own but was soon recaptured. The U.S. Navy rapidly converged on the area. The guided missile destroyer *USS Bainbridge* with its crew of 270 and the frigate *USS Halyburton* with about 200 crew members arrived on the scene. A team of FBI hostage negotiators on board began working for the release of Captain Phillips. In the air overhead, *P-3 Orion* surveillance aircraft patrolled the skies. On the sea other

small vessels lay just out of pirate gun range. As

negotiations deteriorated, the amphibious assault ship, the *USS Boxer*, capable



of carrying nearly 2,000 Marines moved into the area and Navy SEAL Team 6 parachuted into the water near the *Halyburton*. With an operation led by the Navy SEALs, the United States took swift action on April 12 and set the captain free.

Silvio Bartoletti, owner of a shipping company, marveled at the rescue, the Associated Press reported. Bartoletti said, "I'm marveling that they'd do that for one American."

## WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU

Indeed, it was truly amazing to see the extent to which the United States would go for one person. This story, however, illustrates an event that is even more amazing: God, the creator of the universe, loved us so much that He took drastic measures and went through an extraordinary process to save us from our sins.

The Lord Jesus Christ said, **"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"** (Luke 15:4). God cares about the world, but He also cares about individuals. Christ said, **"Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance"** (Luke 15:7).

The Bible, God's Word, declares that without God, we are all sinners (Romans 3:23). We, like the captain, are held hostage by the powers of dark-

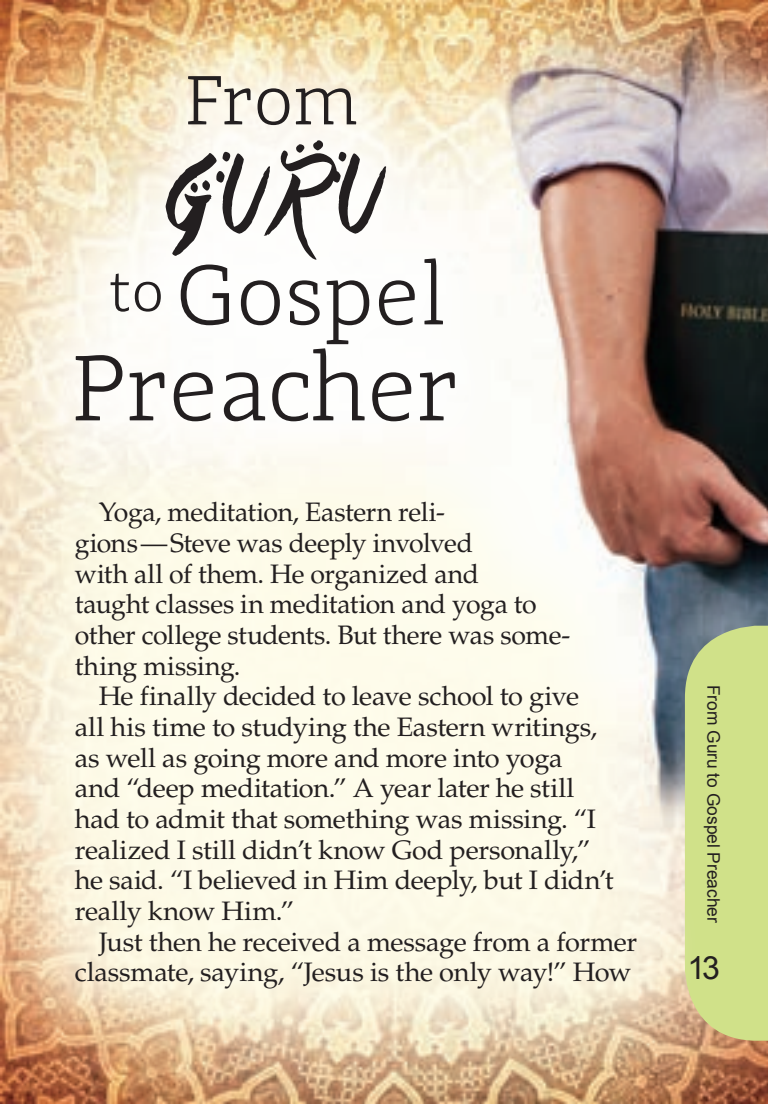
ness. We need to be rescued. We might try on our own to free ourselves through religion and good works. But such efforts would be worthless. Why? Because Christ is the only One who can free us. **“There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved [or rescued]”** (Acts 4:12).

Christ, the Son of God, left heaven and all of its glory so He could come to this earth as a man and die for our sins. He rose from the dead to set us free and give us everlasting life. He did all of this for you, me and the entire world. The Bible says, **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”** (John 3:16).

Because of His love and His great acts of kindness, nobody has to remain a hostage. What about you? Are you still in bondage? If so, then please turn to the Lord Jesus Christ today! He has promised that anyone who calls on His name will be rescued (Romans 10:13). Those who trust in Him will not be disappointed (Romans 10:11).

Call on Him today and experience real freedom. Only then will you know the joy of being saved and the thrill of having an amazing rescue.

When you reach out for the help of the Lord Jesus Christ, you aren't looking for a religious experience but a living, personal Saviour. Find more in *From Guru to Gospel Preacher*. ◀



# From GURU to Gospel Preacher

Yoga, meditation, Eastern religions—Steve was deeply involved with all of them. He organized and taught classes in meditation and yoga to other college students. But there was something missing.

He finally decided to leave school to give all his time to studying the Eastern writings, as well as going more and more into yoga and “deep meditation.” A year later he still had to admit that something was missing. “I realized I still didn’t know God personally,” he said. “I believed in Him deeply, but I didn’t really know Him.”

Just then he received a message from a former classmate, saying, “Jesus is the only way!” How

different from his religious search! Steve spent the whole day praying that if that were true, God would show him. When he went out that evening, he stood by the roadside with his thumb out for a ride, asking God to show him if he should turn to Jesus.

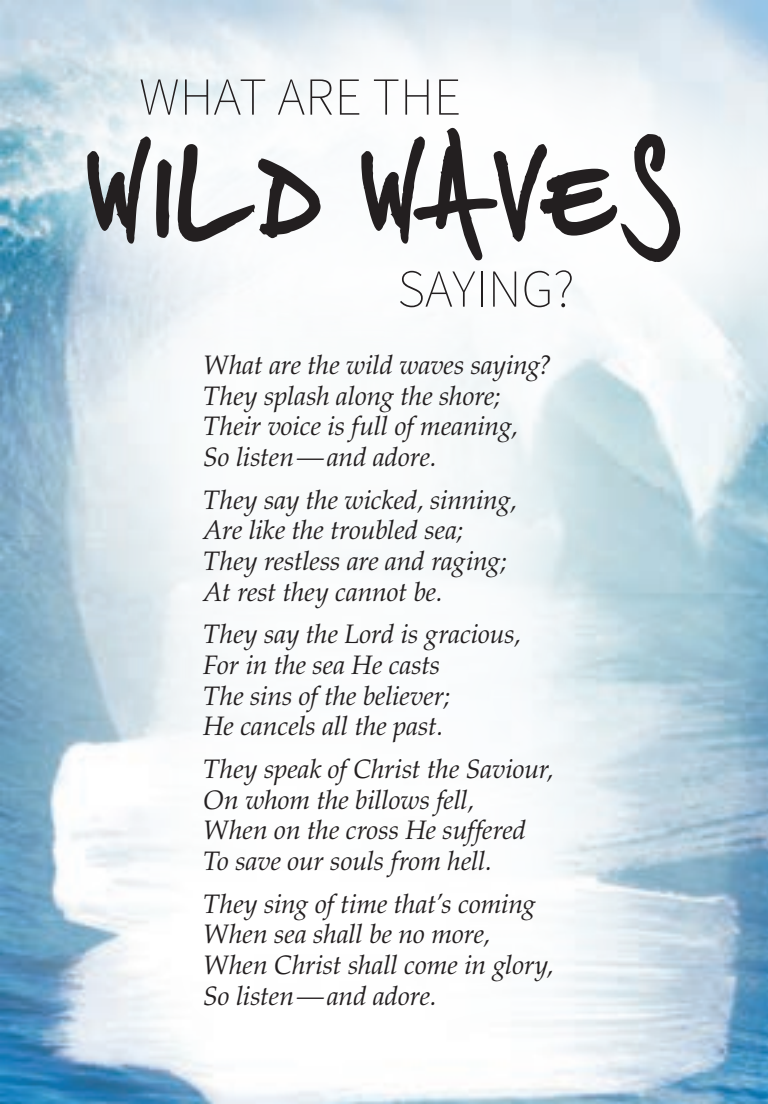
A van pulled over. Steve climbed in and was barely seated when the driver turned to him and said, "Have you ever asked Jesus to be your Lord and Saviour?"

Steve didn't even hesitate. "No," he answered, "but I'm ready to!" He immediately asked the Lord Jesus to come into his heart.

Steve says, "That experience has proved the reality. With Him living in my heart, I KNOW He is the way."

He went back to his yoga classes and told all his students that "Mohammed didn't die for our sins. Buddha never got out of the grave, but Jesus is the living Saviour who was crucified for us."

No longer is "something missing" in Steve's life. The Lord Jesus has filled that emptiness, and his time is spent in telling others of the One who said, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me"** (John 14:6). ◀



WHAT ARE THE  
**WILD WAVES**  
SAYING?

*What are the wild waves saying?  
They splash along the shore;  
Their voice is full of meaning,  
So listen — and adore.*

*They say the wicked, sinning,  
Are like the troubled sea;  
They restless are and raging;  
At rest they cannot be.*

*They say the Lord is gracious,  
For in the sea He casts  
The sins of the believer;  
He cancels all the past.*

*They speak of Christ the Saviour,  
On whom the billows fell,  
When on the cross He suffered  
To save our souls from hell.*

*They sing of time that's coming  
When sea shall be no more,  
When Christ shall come in glory,  
So listen — and adore.*

## **ECHOES OF GRACE**

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*“God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world;  
but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:17).*

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