



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

Thank God for Hope!

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It was worse than we thought—and we thought it was horrific. Here’s how Michael Wines of the *New York Times* news service told the story:

Trapped in the stern of a sunken submarine on the Arctic seabed, the electricity failing and facing all-but-certain death with 22 companions, Lt. Capt. Dmitry Kolesnikov of the submarine Kursk scrawled a message 10 weeks ago to what was then an unknowing outside world.

“13:15,” he wrote, noting the military time for 1:15 p.m. “All personnel from compartments six, seven and eight moved to the ninth. There are 23 of us here. We have made this decision as a result of an accident. None of us can get out.” (*Memphis Commercial Appeal*, October 27, 2000, p. A1).

In August 2000, when we first heard of the Kursk disaster, the focus was on who would undertake a search and rescue operation and when it would begin. As the operation was delayed—not beginning until more than six hours after the accident—and it became obvious there would be no survivors, many took consolation in assurances that the 118 crew members had most likely perished within minutes following the catastrophe. Many probably never knew what had happened, and the rest didn’t suffer long. Or so we thought.

In fact, twenty-three did not die so quickly. Instead, they shared the knowledge that they soon would. What were they thinking? What were they *feeling*? We shudder to imagine. Maybe, at first, they listened for sounds of rescue. They were, after all, part of a naval exercise. From their training, they would have expected that the two explosions they experienced would be noticed (they were, but those who heard them did not realize an accident was the cause). Surely, help would be on the way. But as the minutes turned to hours, first one, then another would have given up. Help was not coming.

“None of us can get out,” Kolesnikov wrote. There was no hope.

History has recorded many incredible stories where people survived disasters by overcoming incredible odds. Sometimes, the survivors are among the famous people whose names are well known. Sometimes, the individuals remain anonymous, but the disastrous event—a battle, volcanic eruption, earthquake, or some other calamity—was notable enough to be recorded in history textbooks. And sometimes, a man or woman previously unknown and

not otherwise famous has the extraordinary story of their survival experience featured in magazines like *Reader's Digest* or *Guideposts*. The details differ, but the stories invariably have one thing in common. Those who survive were able to retain their hope. No matter how desperate the circumstances, it seems, so long as hope remains, we feel we have a chance and so we keep fighting.

We are not surprised, then, that hope is such an important feature of the biblical story. No circumstances are more desperate than those that separate us from the glory of God and the abundant and holy life he always intended for us to share (Isa 59.1-2; Rom 3.23; John 10.10; Heb 12.10). To remain separated from the Father and the Son he sent to reconcile us is to be “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2.12 NIV). Conversely, to follow Jesus is to know “the God of hope” (Rom 15.13); to be enlightened to know the hope of our calling (Eph 1.18; 4.4); to avoid the kind of grief experienced by those who have no hope (1 Thess 4.13); and to thus be able to “boast in the hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5.2).

Because of Christ, we've been rescued! We have hope! We keep fighting!

Thank God!

And spread the word.

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