

THE STORY BEHIND THE RESCUE

AN ALASKAN FISHING BOAT CAPTAIN'S JOURNEY TO FAITH

by Christian Trosvig, as told to Richard Greene

The sinking of an Alaskan fishing boat last July 24 made news around the world when a video of the crew's rescue went viral. The ship's captain, Christian Trosvig, spotted a crewmate who had been trapped inside the sinking boat. Trosvig dove in and rescued his unconscious friend. In media interviews later, Trosvig boldly shared his Christian faith. Here is the story of how Trosvig himself was rescued by Jesus Christ.

RIGHT: Christian Trosvig on the *Grayling*, the boat that sank last July.

OPPOSITE: A still frame from a U.S. Coast Guard video shows Trosvig pulling his unconscious friend Brandon to safety.

When I saw Brandon's limp body pop to the surface, I didn't hesitate. I jumped into the choppy and frigid water to rescue him. As captain of the *Grayling*, I would do anything and everything to help save my crew.

First John 3:16, says: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters" (NIV).

The other guys on the commercial fishing boat that July 24—Brandon, John and Fred—were childhood buddies of mine. Our morning began like most others. We circled up to pray, and I asked for God's protection and blessing. Then we headed from our home port in Kodiak, Alaska, toward the Kupreanof Strait near Alaska's Raspberry Island. That's about 30 miles west of Kodiak and about 250 miles southwest of Anchorage.



We were seining for salmon, and we had a nice catch. But after dumping it into the fish hold, the *Grayling* suddenly began taking on water. We started up the pumps, but the stern still sank below the surface. The boat *Calista Marie* noticed I was in distress and sent out a mayday call to the Coast Guard.

A massive wave hit us, rolling us over. Fred jumped into the

skiff—which is used as part of our fishing operation—and detached it from the *Grayling*. The boat capsized, knocking John and me into the water. Brandon was inside trying to control the flooding and got trapped.

Fred pulled me into the skiff, while a Good Samaritan from the *Calista Marie* got John. But Brandon was missing.

Fred and I circled the boat. We banged on the hull with a plunger pole. But no word and no sign of Brandon.

I had a knot deep down in my stomach. I had gone through this before, when I lost my twin brother, Matt, in a boating accident in 2005. After cod jigging near the Aleutian Islands, we had dinner, and I retired around 9 p.m. Somehow Matt fell overboard, and his cries for help jarred me awake. I got him to the side of the boat, but because my right wrist had been broken two weeks earlier, I wasn't strong enough to pull him up. I

ran to the cabin to fire up the hydraulics, but when I got back 15 or 20 seconds later, Matt was gone.

So here I was again facing the possibility of losing another man to the sea. I prayed for God's favor.

After 20 minutes, another wave struck the capsized boat, and Brandon, face down, floated to the surface. He was about 50 feet away.

My teeth were chattering. I was soaking wet. I had boots and rain gear on underneath my life vest. But God was with me, and I stayed calm. Isaiah 12:2 reassured me: "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation" (NIV).

It was as if God pushed me forward, and I jumped into the 47-degree water. I swam to Brandon and pulled him to the skiff. After getting him aboard, I ripped his

sweat shirt off, and over the next five minutes I administered CPR. I had taken a CPR refresher course just six months before.

With each compression, I cried out, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!"

Brandon's fingers finally twitched. His eyelashes flickered. He coughed up foam and black gunk after having ingested diesel fuel. Then his eyes opened. "Am I alive?" he asked.

I knelt over him, kissed his forehead and said, "Yes, you are alive, Brandon. You are alive."

After Brandon was stabilized, a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter airlifted him to Kodiak, where he was treated. I talked with him recently, and he's doing well. Praise the Lord.

I had no idea the rescue was being filmed from above and was later posted on social media. Reporters called me from everywhere, even from Norway, since I'm Norwegian. I gave

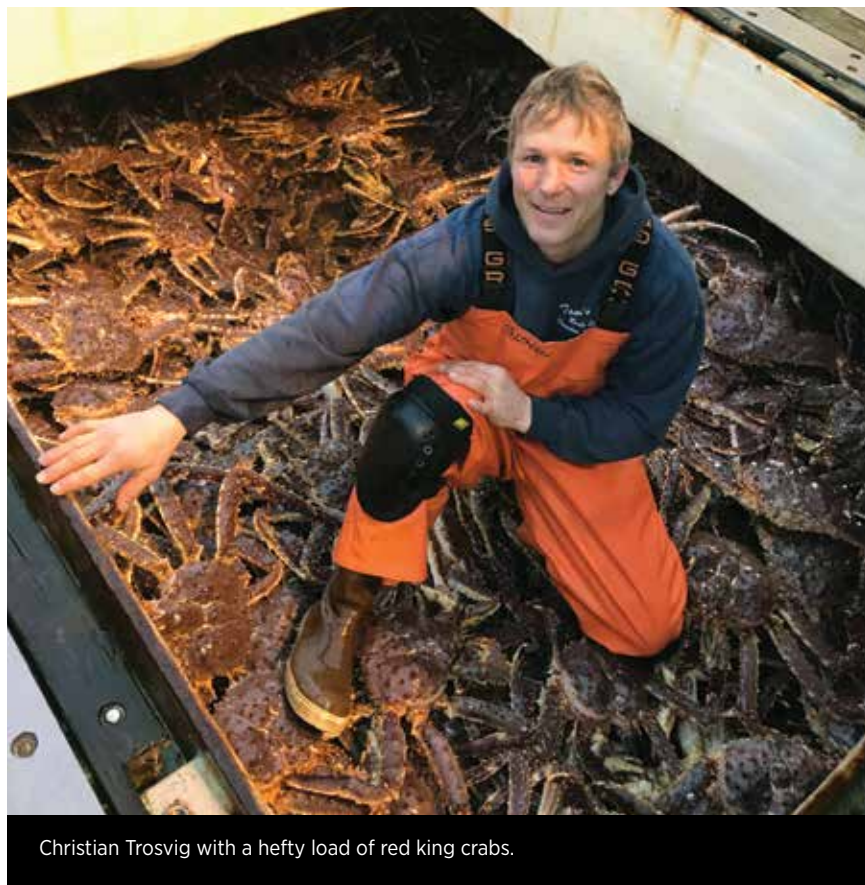
glory to God because He gave me the courage and strength that scary but amazing day.

The fear that day was intense, much like the fear I felt as a 10-year-old. Back then, I would burst out in uncontrollable crying every time we'd drive around a sharp curve along a particular steep cliff. One night at home after such an episode, my mother asked me why I cried so. I told her I was afraid to die.

Mom had taken me, Matt, my older brother Josh, and my younger brother Jesse to church in Kodiak. We were in the choir. We had attended a Bible club for kids. I knew about the Lord, but I didn't understand about being saved.

Mom explained that if I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, I wouldn't have to be afraid to die anymore because Jesus would be with me. And if anything happened to me in my earthly body, I would be with >>





Christian Trosvig with a hefty load of red king crabs.

» Him in Heaven. That truth resonated. We got down on our knees, and I prayed to ask Jesus into my heart.

And since that day, I have not feared death. But for many years, I struggled with faithfully following the Lord, especially after Matt died.

Since my father was in the Coast Guard, we moved a lot. I was born in Minneapolis, but I've also lived in New York City, then Kodiak, then Michigan, then back to Kodiak. When a high-school relationship with my first girlfriend fell apart, I started living for myself.

I went to college in Michigan, then Alaska to become a forest ranger. But when I compared how much money rangers made versus fishermen, I followed in Josh's and Matt's footsteps out onto the open sea.

Being a fisherman is hard, dangerous work. It's not for the faint of heart. As a young adult, I often

followed the ways of the world and I drank a lot and, I'm ashamed to say, fooled around.

But amazingly, I always sensed God's conviction when I did bad stuff. I'd pop into church with Mom on Christmas and Easter—and once in a while at other times.

After Matt died, I spiraled downward. Alcohol was killing me. I got DUIs and was fired from boats because of my drinking. I tried to stop but always relapsed.

One night in 2009, I passed out in a snow drift. The village public safety officer tried to help me, but when I

came to, I put up a fight. He tased me, handcuffed me and hauled me to jail. I hit rock bottom.


When my mother bailed me out, I talked with our pastor and told him I didn't need jail, I needed God.

At my hearing, I was given the choice to take seven months in jail or one year with the Christian program Teen Challenge. I said, "Teen Challenge, your honor."

While in the program, I helped build a \$28-million church on a big hill in Issaquah, Wash. I also helped on other jobs with landscaping, painting and carpentry.

And boy, did we dig into God's Word. Every morning we had devotions, and at night we had Bible studies and focused on discipleship. I experienced God's healing, and I recommitted my life to Him. God has enabled me to overcome my nicotine addiction, and I've stopped drinking.

I praise and thank God that He led me to Ursula. I first met her in a Bible study before Teen Challenge, but she always turned me down when I asked her out. After Teen Challenge, I called her again and this time she said "Yes." We dated for about nine months and were married in 2011. She's such a woman of God, sensitive to His Spirit. She leads worship at our church.

And here we are, trusting God for our future. Most likely, I'll buy another boat. I'm leaning on Christ, who Himself reached out to fishermen. I pray every morning, "Give me strength, Lord." He's my Rock and will get me through each day, as long as I keep my eyes on Him.  ©2017 BGEA

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