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A VOYAGE AT SEA

"SO HE BRINGETH THEM TO THEIR DESIRED HAVEN"

Psalms 107:23-30 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifeth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and from and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

INTRODUCTION: Out text is an inspired description of a voyage at sea. I am using it as a figure of the journey of life, in the hope that we may safely make that voyage and finally drop anchor at the desired haven and leave the ship for the shores of sweet deliverance.

It is quite common to compare the journey of life to a sea voyage. We have it in our hymnals and in all the world of poetry. The comparison between a voyage at sea and the journey of life is very striking. I do not recall that life is ever compared to a journey by land, the sea voyage is much more apt. We travel, some do, in three natural elements today: land, sea, and air. I'm a land lubber, I'm neither sea minded nor air minded, so far as means of travel are concerned.

Our journey through life is much more like a voyage by sea than by land or air. Life, like a sea voyage, is a great adventure. How much of mystery there is about it! How much mist and fog! How numerous are the perils to which we are exposed! And how pathless is the sea we traverse. Journeys by land are over well

marked roads, but not so on a sea voyage, there are no paths across the ocean.

Life is full of loneliness, like the wide, wide sea. We who have not crossed the ocean are apt to think the sea is covered with ships. In the harbours we see them jostling one another, but one may cross the ocean from New York to Europe without ever sighting a ship. And there is a loneliness in our individual experiences as though we were a ship at sea. All alone in the world, alone even while we walk the crowded streets of the city. In our deepest experiences, whether of joy or sorrow, we are alone. We have heartaches, and hopes and thoughts that nobody shares with us, they do not even know of them. Every individual sails the sea of life in his own frail bark. Changing the figure there is a room in our lives into which we never invite anybody, nobody save the Lord and Saviour. In the Roman Catholic Confessional, the kneeling penitent whispers into the ear of the priest, father confessor, things not even told to wife or husband. And so those who have Jesus Christ for their High Priest pour into his ear things that nobody else will ever hear.

1. We are all voyagers, we are all headed towards some sort of port. How quickly the days and weeks and months and years go by! How soon grey hairs appear! Job compared the journey of life to the swift ships. Life was slower in Job's day than ours and the ships were slower too. So life today can be compared to the swift ships that plow the high seas. We are all on our way to some supposed haven. We have no continuing city here. We are on the move and there is no stopping place. Whether asleep or awake, we are living out our allotted days on earth. The place that now knows us will shortly know us again no more forever.

But this aspect of life gets little attention today. The masses are making the best of this life, getting all they can out of it. We live in utter forgetfulness of the life that is to come. The end of this life is a forbidden subject with most people, they deliberately ignore the end of the way. But whatever our circumstances, however vigorous our physical frame, however strong our will, we are going on and will soon reach the end of life on this earth. There will soon be a hole dug for you and for me. Medical science has raised the average length of life, but it is still true that men live no older than they did generations ago. It is still true that if we reach the age of fourscore years, their pride is but labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away. We might as well face the fact life is a voyage and our ship of life is headed towards some kind of port. We cannot go on forever, the voyage will end. We may exercise our will over some people, but when death summons us, whatever our wealth, our learning, our influence, or force of will, we shall have to obey Him.

Here's a thing I wish I could get everybody to seriously consider, to what haven is your ship directed? To what destination are you traveling? The ocean of your life will some day be crossed, where will you land?

I have never crossed the ocean, I have never been on a ship long enough to get seasick. But those who have, say there are two stages of seasickness. The first stage is when you are pretty sick, so sick you are afraid the ship will go down; the other stage is when you are awfully sick, so sick you are afraid it will not go down, you really want to die, you are so sick. And so, on the ship of life there are times when one is so sick of life that he wants to die. I suppose most of us have had experiences on the sea of life, when we felt that if all the voyage is going to be just like that, we would be glad for the voyage to come to an end. Some of you have had such a stormy voyage and you have longed for the ship to come to port somewhere.

There may be somebody today who is tired of life, but you have no home to go to. Your soul is orphaned, and you know nothing of homesickness for the Fatherland. You are weary of life, but do not know where to go.

II. Psm. 107:30 **So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.** What is your desired haven? To what land will you

emigrate? If you could have your heaven made to order, what kind of a place would it be? A missionary who had spent years in India under scorching sun came home to America; there was such beauty and comfort everywhere, he remarked to someone: "It may be that heaven will be better than this, but for the moment this is good enough for me." Yes, there are times when earth seems good enough, but all of us have had enough of earth to know that it is not the desired haven. There are too many broken homes, too many blasted lives, too much wreck and ruin all about us, to find any paradise on earth. We have to sail for another country.

What is your desired haven? What would fulfill your ideal? What kind of people would you want there? How many would you gladly leave behind? How much baggage would you carry? And how much would you label, "Not wanted," and even forget to bring it on board?

I tell you somebody I would like to leave behind. He is called "the old man" in the Scripture. I don't think I could have any heaven with him present. T.T. Shields tells of a member he once had who had the habit of climbing up the "miff-tree." He learned to leave him up there, because when he brought the stop ladder to help him down, he would use it to climb another tree. One day Shields said to his wife, "Suppose you and your husband take your church letters and go somewhere else and be happy." She shook her head and said, I fear, pastor, it would be as Dr. so and so (naming his predecessor) used to say, we should take our miserable selves with us." Yes, our miserable selves, that's the trouble with all of us.

What is your greatest trouble in life? Your circumstances? No. Is it somebody who is hard to live with, a husband or wife? No. Your chief trouble is in your own breast, and so is mine. The land to which we are going must be a land where the old man will never be known.

My desired haven is a sinless land. I want to reach the place where there will be no sin in me and no sin around me.

My desired haven is the land of which it is written, Rev. 7:16 **They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.** This is the land where there are no climatic difficulties, where everlasting wealth obtains, where there are no cemeteries, and no broken hearts.

Where is there such a place? Not in America, or Europe, or Australia, or Africa,

or Russia. It is not on this planet.

III. I must tell you of a Ship and Pilot that will take you to this desired haven. There is a liner guaranteed to transport all who desire to go from this sin-stricken world to the desired haven. And there is a Pilot who has never lost a passenger. There is a heavenbound ship. That is what salvation is. And Jesus Christ is the Pilot and owner of this ship. The ship is all paid for and the passage has been paid for as well. I see marked on the side of the ship the name "GRACE." Do you ask the fare? Nothing at all, the ticket is marked. Isa. 55:1 **Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.** You get the ticket for nothing when you trust the Pilot, Jesus Christ. The Pilot is dependable and the ship is seaworthy. The passage is going to be stormy, but the ship is safe and all passengers are safe.

I heard of an old man of melancholy mood. His only pleasure was in being melancholy. You see people like that. But he was sound in the faith. He knew the Lord and although he did not show it in his face, he rejoiced in Christ. Somebody went to him for advice about his spul's salvation. He had believed in Christ but did not know whether he was saved or not. "I have so much trouble, so much difficulty in my business, so much trouble with my children, so much trouble with this old body. I wonder if I am really a Christian. If I were, it seems I would be free of all these things." The old brother said, "Did you ever cross the ocean?" "Yes." "Did you have a good passage?" "No, a dreadful passage." "What was the matter with you?" "Well, it was terribly stormy." "Did you get off the ship?" "Oh no, I had to stay on." "You had your ups and downs?" "Yes, I did." "But," he said, "you did not have your ins and outs, didn't you?"

Being a Christian will not insure smooth sailing on the sea of life. But Jesus Christ our Pilot and His ship, salvation are equal to all the storms of life and will bring every trusting soul to his desired haven.

What a troubled world this is. Find me if you can a bit of tranquil water anywhere. There is no smooth sailing anywhere on the sea of life. But there is a desired haven to which Christ will bring us. I close with a prayer which I wish might be the prayer of

everyone:

Jesus, Saviour, pilot me,
Over life's tempestous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rocks and treacherous shoal:
Chart and compass come from Thee,
Jesus, Saviour pilot me.

As a mother stills her child,
Thou canst hush the ocean wild;
Boistrous waves obey thy will
When thou sayest to them, Be still!
Wondrous Sovereign of the sea,
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.

When at last I near the shore,
And the fearful breakers roar
Twixt me and the peaceful rest,
Then, while leaning on thy breast,
May I hear thee say to me,
Fear not, I will pilot thee.

C. D. COLE



"HE THAT WINNETH SOULS IS WISE"
(Proverbs 11:30)

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