



STAY IN THE
BOAT

When Perception Begs
Our Abandonment

Jeremy B. Strang

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Jeremy B. Strang
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Index

Dedication	9
Forward: Frank McEleny	11
A Note from the Author	13
Introduction: To Rome – A Brief History	19
Chapter One: Pretense Of The Times	31
Chapter Two: Stay in the Boat	39
Chapter Three: Cut Away the Ropes	45
Final Thoughts:	55
About	59

Stay In The Boat: When Perception Begs Our Abandonment

Dedication

To My Children,

When the culture all around presses in, when the world begs to drag you under the sea of sin, when everything appears but hopeless, ask yourself, “What has been my focus?” Then turn your eyes upon Jesus and never, never, never leave His side. For much more can be attained in the closet of prayer, alone and shut up to God, than in ten thousand arms of the flesh.

All love,

Your Dad.

Stay In The Boat: When Perception Begs Our Abandonment

Forward

I first met brother Jeremy a number of years ago and was immediately drawn to him as a serious minded brother. He is concerned with the Word of God, our relationship with the Lord, and the authenticity of who we are in Christ. These are traits I admire in a man. I first heard him speak on the subject found in this book when we both attended a recent meeting. Over the years, like many of us, I have heard a thousand sermons and many words shared. This is one of those words I will always remember.

In this book, the climax of the journey, the *cutting away of the ropes*, captured my heart because it has all the elements of our life in this world. Have you ever found yourself in a life or death situation where you are compelled to abandon logic and well intentioned advice and throw it to the wind? Have you ever found yourself in a situation where there is no plan B? God, speaking through Paul, was telling all aboard that ship that outside of Him, all hope was lost, and yet, be of good cheer for you shall live – only *cut away those ropes*. Life or death had arrived.

Will you listen to God through the words of a tentmaker who knows nothing of the sea? Or will you exercise your natural mind and make for the lifeboat. This is the essence of faith. When confronted with the stark realities of your situation, and all seems lost, what will you do? Will God find faith in you? Will you cut the rope?

Probably you will face these situations more than once. Even Jesus came to the earth for one purpose, and yet still, we see the struggle in the garden where He sweated like great drops of blood as He contemplated the will of God. We will have our own Gethsemanes,

where we have to declare, “*not my will but thine be done.*” It is the battle, it is the defining moments of our lives as we either bow the knee in obedience or allow our will to be bent to the desires and demands of our flesh.

Brother Jeremy’s book considers how important it is in dealing with the issue of who Jesus is to you. Is Jesus the grand obsession of your life? Is He the air that you breathe? Is He in every step that you take? Is He the abundance of your heart, and does He sit on the seat of your affections in the deepest parts of who you are? He must be the reason you get out of bed in the morning. He must be the lover of your soul and the consumer of your thoughts.

If you have never had this kind of relationship with Him, then you must seek it out. If you have had it, but have lost your first love, then you must get Him back. Even now saints, even now He is knocking at the door of your hearts. Will you *cut away the ropes* that bind you to this world and throw your lot in with Jesus?

Brother Frank McEleny, Author
The Fall of Christendom and the Separation of the Remnant
A Poem for Every Psalm

A Note from the Author

There is without a doubt a growing darkness blanketing the world. It is the presence of Satan deceiving, and his alter ego¹ the devil, “*roaring like a lion.*”² In the midst of this, millions have bought into the deception and lies of multimedia, entertainment, and numerous other idolatries, for the ease of their condition. But let us not forget that difficult times are indeed described to come upon us.³

Unfortunately, I see all around that many⁴ are fulfilling what the Apostle Paul had feared for the church in Corinth, when he wrote...

*“But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, you thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”*⁵

Most assuredly we are being ever so deceived. Yet let us take heart, even in the time when great tribulation comes, the days will be cut short.⁶

¹ Revelation 12:9, 20:2

² 1 Peter 5:8

³ 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 10-22, 3:3-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Jeremiah 23:30-32; Amos 5:18-24; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-22; 1 John 4:1; 1 Peter 4:7-8 – to name a few; also consider chapter 13 of the author’s book, *Realities of a True Christian*

⁴ Relating to those who profess to be a Christian.

⁵ 2 Corinthians 11:3

⁶ Matthew 24:21-23

Having mentioned such, here let us consider and always remember two very distinctive marks of a false prophet. Now in this you may say there to be a dichotomy, but that could not be further from the truth. These two marks indeed lie hand in hand, and they cover the extremes of easy-believism of false grace⁷ to the supposedly sound doctrine that is void of love and self-condemning the world.⁸

The false prophet will always prop up *secondaries*.⁹ He will give great attention to anything, and especially good things, such as, gifts, blessings, healings, and etc. As he or she does this, they give evidence to the most severe of markings – they deny the supremacy, eminency, and centrality of Christ. For in elevating secondaries, a sin of idolatry that feeds directly into humanism (the flesh), these false prophets seek to dethrone Christ Jesus as they refuse to boast in knowing Him and having Him to be their chief end. Never forget, every time the devil wrongly used pieces of truth to tempt Jesus, Jesus would always come back with full truth,

⁷ Everything from simple decisionism centered around human gains and losses for the individual, and the ability to simply be a ‘Christian’ based upon their own prayer, their own belief, their own decision, etc. , verses becoming right with Christ because of who He is, what He desires, for the attainment of “*knowing Him*”; grace without repentance, and the elevation of the flesh; i.e. go on living without any change in regards to sin, godliness, or the commandments of God.

⁸ Although a bit more difficult to understand and spot, it is a person who claims “right” biblical doctrine, but yet shows no love; focuses a lot of attention on sin and repentance, yet gives very little, if any, focus on Jesus Christ, His person, His attributes, His desires for the preacher to first remove the “*log out of their own eye*”; such a one demonstrates no love for souls, no understanding, and constantly condemns others, yet denies their own repentance and admission of sin. They are a false prophet in that they elevate sin above the Savior; hatred above the love of God, false authority and misuse of Scriptures; false motivations and/or sinful actions to speak against sin. There are cults springing up who act like this, operating in the terminology of love, yet pouring out pure wickedness in a very deceptive mask.

⁹ More on this upcoming.

“*It is written...*”¹⁰ For this is why we must know the Word of God, in reality, in context, in truth and why we need discernment,¹¹ personal convictions of the Spirit,¹² and discipline¹³ (training in righteousness)¹⁴ for ourselves.

As we move forward in this book, let us use wisdom and discernment.¹⁵ Let us set our sights, in the reality of the moment we live, running the race with endurance,¹⁶ “*looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*”¹⁷ “*Let us consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility*”¹⁸ and who “*did not revile in return*”¹⁹ for the sufferings He endured on our behalf. Let us “*arm [ourselves] with the same way of thinking.*”²⁰

I encourage you to read this book with an open Bible in front of you. Read the verses for yourself. Be sure to test what I have written and examine if I am leading you astray and away from Christ.

“Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature

¹⁰ Luke 4:4, 8, 12

¹¹ Hebrews 5:14

¹² John 15:26, 16:13

¹³ Hebrews 12:3-11

¹⁴ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁵ 2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁶ Hebrews 12:1

¹⁷ Hebrews 12:2

¹⁸ Hebrews 12:3

¹⁹ 1 Peter 2:20:25

²⁰ 1 Peter 4:1-3

think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.”²¹

²¹ Philippians 3:13-15

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Introduction: To Rome - A Brief History

“When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.”
Acts 27:27-29

It seems that in recent times, many have focused in on the story of Peter leaving the boat and walking on the water, only then to sink and be swept up by Jesus;²² so too with the story of when Jesus was asleep down in the bottom of the boat, the storm raged, and the faith of the disciples lacked.²³ Often we relate this to ourselves for the purposes of talking about our faith, how we must be willing to step out of the boat and to have faith amidst the storm. But the problem is if we stop there, we have missed the point. The point is not so much about our faith, although faith is very important, but that in each story, it is about being with Christ and with eyes fixed on Christ (or a lack thereof).

You see, we are not to be pointed to some “*muster-up-your-own-faith-and-go*” mentality, but to authentically set our sights on Christ and walk with Him. It’s not about what we can do for God,

²² Matthew 14:22-30

²³ Luke 8:22-25

but what He has done for us; when conversion is real, response to God will be real – although, obviously not perfect.

As you have already noticed in the opening passage, we too are going to examine another *boat story* in a raging sea. For in this story we are urged to remain on board while avoiding false pretense and relinquishing all unto Christ. Lord willing, we will be carefully examined, be vulnerable to assess the reality of our focus, and grow in godliness, humility, repentance and true worship.

Let us take a quick look at the historical context that brings us to our passage above.

I: The Journey Resolved

Paul Resolved

“...Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, ‘After I have been there, I must also see Rome.’”

Acts 19:21

Months prior, Paul was resolved²⁴ in the Spirit of God that he must not only “*go to Jerusalem*,” but he “*must also see Rome*.” His sights were set to do the will of God regardless of any personal cost.²⁵ It is not as if Paul decided by his own flesh to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome, for he was “*constrained by the Spirit*”²⁶ and knew “*that imprisonment and afflictions*”²⁷ awaited him. His resolve was Spirit led, God ordained and Christ centered.

²⁴ *Purposed* – NASB; KJV

²⁵ Acts 20:24

²⁶ Acts 20:22

²⁷ Acts 20:23

For a moment, let me bring up an issue that begs our attention. I often hear people say, “*God told me...*”, or, “*God wants me to...*”, and then nothing ever happens. Why so little follow through? The conclusion that we must draw is either, such a person is derelict and disobedient in the command, or God never said any such thing. If the later indeed be true, it is then either the will of a rebellious and deceiving heart²⁸ or it is demonic spirits portraying themselves as angels of light.²⁹ If the former is true, then immediate repentance, along with associated obedience, is needed. Either way, we ought to seriously watch the words that come out of our mouth. For what kind of poor representation of God are we displaying to an already unbelieving and condemned world?

Could we not be much more serious about our faith in our culture today? Do we too, like Paul, not need to be much more resolved in our personal walk with Christ? Oh that we would set our purposes, our resolutions, our overarching desire, for the glory of God in everything we do and in the application of personal piety.³⁰ “*So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*”³¹

Not Persuaded

*“And since he (Paul) would not be persuaded, we ceased and said,
‘Let the will of the Lord be done.’”*

Acts 21:14

Shortly after Paul had, “*resolved in the Spirit,*” that he must go to Jerusalem and then onward to Rome, the disciples in Tyre urged Paul, “*through the Spirit,*” not to go to Jerusalem.³² But hold for a

²⁸ Jeremiah 17:9

²⁹ 2 Corinthians 11:14

³⁰ Not at all meaning legalistic, but personally convicted by the Spirit.

³¹ James 4:17

³² Acts 21:3-4

moment, how could the disciples say the opposite thing to Paul and yet through the same Spirit? Does this not pose a direct contradiction for us? Could it be that the Spirit is purposing the same thing and that maybe not everyone yet understands? Could it be that the disciples, fearing that they will lose Paul, a seemingly noble and honorable motivation, really has more to do with the fact they are fearful? Although the text does not directly specify, I believe we will have a better understanding as we move forward.

But before we become side tracked, let us ask ourselves, if we were one of the disciples who were there and greatly loved Paul, would we say the same? Would our concern and love not be our motivation in begging for Paul's safety? Would we beg Paul to reconsider his resolve? What about for those of us today who have children? What if our child says to us, "*I desire to lay my life down for the purposes of God and go the most difficult and dangerous places on earth. I know my life there is unknown, but I am compelled by the Lord to go.*" How would we respond?

Without a doubt, I truly believe you can be in the Spirit of God, having all the fruits of the Spirit,³³ each having different gifts,³⁴ motivated by concern and love, not in any direct sin, and yet not understand where and what another has been called to go and do. Are we not the same today? People are always telling each other what they can or cannot do, and yet there seems so little convictions unto personal holiness.³⁵

Moving onward from Tyre, Paul arrives in Cesarea and "*entered the house of Philip.*"³⁶ There "*a prophet named Agabus*"³⁷ comes and prophesies about Paul's future. After hearing this, Luke said,

³³ Galatians 5:22-23

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:1-11

³⁵ Hebrews 12:14

³⁶ Acts 21:7-8

³⁷ Acts 21:10-11

“When we heard this we and the people there urged him not to go up to Jerusalem.”³⁸

This is where I believe we can see both the sincere motivations of the people and yet their fear at the same time. They desire Paul’s best in the physical world and yet are holding him back from the Lord. It is something that they must get past, trusting more fully in God, just as Paul.

Paul’s response to those gathered is classic and demonstrates his resolve.

“Then Paul answered, ‘What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’”

The disciples come to realize Paul’s driving motivation and centrality of Christ, for he is willing to die for Christ.

Luke continues,

“And since he would not be persuaded, we ceased and said, ‘Let the will of the Lord be done.’”

The disciples now trust in the sovereignty and will of God for Paul’s life. When the Spirit works among the church, that is those who have been truly converted, it is for the purposes of God, for the church in totality, and in the life of every single person who makes up the body of believers. Here we see that the Spirit not only resolved in Paul, but uses him prior to the purposed goal, to sanctify the disciples, whose motivations are noble, but yet needed to be transformed into more of the image of Christ – from noble man-centered emotions to God-honoring, open-handed release of

³⁸ Acts 21:12

Paul for the desires of God. It was truly a time for the disciples to move from a sort of *Paul-centeredness* to a *Christocentric faith*.

What about us? Are we trusting, truly trusting, in the will of a sovereign God? Or do we feel we need to always add something of the flesh to our profession? Could we be falsely resolved? What if the times grow too difficult; the cost too high; the flesh too offended? Just exactly how Christocentric are we today? Do we even understand the term?

Take Courage

“Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about Me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.”

Acts 23:11

By this time, Paul has not only arrived in Jerusalem,³⁹ he has been arrested, beaten, bound with chains,⁴⁰ and led out from the midst of a violent dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.⁴¹ The following night after the ordeal between the religious sects, *“the Lord stood by him [Paul]”*⁴² giving encouragement and reassuring his earlier call to go to Rome.

I believe there was no one who could or would have encouraged Paul to continue onward. Looking at the preceding events alone, one would be highly tempted to think this is the end for Paul and that his resolve to see Rome is false. But here we must remember, our sovereign God does not see as we see.⁴³ For God Himself comes to Paul, in reality, and in a perfectly orchestrated place and time.

³⁹ Acts 21:17

⁴⁰ Acts 21:27-36

⁴¹ Acts 23:6-10

⁴² Acts 23:11

⁴³ Isaiah 55:9; 1 Samuel 16:7

No doubt, I would imagine Paul is wondering just how he will have the strength, how the details will play out, what tomorrow will bring, yet in this drawing near of God, Paul is given the greatest of courage. For in this place and this time, Paul is reminded, yet again, God is indeed with him and his resolve is indeed true.

Here we must realize the will of God is not always some clear cut, clean and easy thing that makes us happy and feel good. Often the will of God is full of toil and uncertainty, especially in the details. For if it were easy all of the time, would we not be tempted to boast in ourselves, in our might, in our resources and reject faith and trust in God? Oh most certainly!

II: The Journey to Rome

The story leading up to our main text is nothing short of God's mighty hand. The book of Acts truly is about the acts of the Holy Spirit leading mere men. And although we can examine many intimate details of how Paul reacts, we ought never to diminish God's hand as He specifically and generally executes the overall plan for Paul to go and testify in Rome.⁴⁴

We must take heed: for how easy it is for us to elevate and boast in the power of man's hand, and yet, offer up only weak and casual hints of God, as if He is a secondary supporting cast character in some man-centered story. Let us be warned: Let us be both a demonstration and a verbalization of the hope that is in us.⁴⁵ May we speak, not because of rote memory, but because of the true

⁴⁴ Be sure to read the rest of Acts 23 through all of 26.

⁴⁵ 1 Peter 3:15

living power of God, the living Christ, abiding in us.⁴⁶ For the kingdom of God consists of power.⁴⁷

Setting Sail

The time had come for Paul to be taken to Rome.⁴⁸ Again we see the sovereign hand of God in giving him “*a centurion named Julius.*” For in the midst of this journey, “*Julius treated Paul kindly*” even giving “*him leave to go to his friends and be cared for*”⁴⁹ in Thessalonica.

Timing of the voyage was certainly questionable. They “*sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus,*” and “*coasting,*” again, “*with difficulty*” all the way to Fair Havens.⁵⁰

*“Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, ‘Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.’”*⁵¹

Here the centurion “*paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to Paul,*”⁵² and being ever so focused on the budget, the journey before them, not to mention the time of season and the fact Paul is a prisoner, I can imagine this to be true. Herein does pose the principle problem for mankind in this story, and we will examine, for secondary things have taken over the focus of these men. But naturally so, they are unconverted men running in

⁴⁶ John 15:1-11

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 4:20

⁴⁸ Acts 27:1

⁴⁹ Acts 27:3

⁵⁰ Acts 27:7-8

⁵¹ Acts 27:9-10

⁵² Acts 27:11

the course of this world and running after the things of this world. But should this be for us who believe Christ to be our Lord and Savior? No!

Shortly after setting out, “*a tempestuous wind, called a northeaster, struck down from the land*” and the ship helplessly “*gave way*” to the violent storm.⁵³ The storm’s intensity was such that the boat was starting to be broken up, both the cargo and tackle was jettisoned, all hope of being saved was abandoned, and “*fourteen days*” the ship was storm-tossed.⁵⁴

It is during this time when Paul encourages those on board.

*“Paul stood up among them and said, ‘Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on some island.”*⁵⁵

Do you think God had now gotten the attention of everyone on the boat? Do you think that they will not consider Paul’s words? Why does it always seem to take a storm to get our attention?

⁵³ Acts 27:14-15

⁵⁴ Acts 27:16-20

⁵⁵ Acts 27:21-26

This brings us up to the opening passage. Let's read it one more time before moving into the next chapter.

“When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms. And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.”

Acts 27:27-29

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Chapter One: Pretense Of The Times

“And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship’s boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow...”

Acts 27:30

Pretense, when directed by a misguided perception, makes for an extremely dangerous situation. If the fourteen days of a violent storm at sea is not enough to redirect your attention unto God, then you are going to be completely hopeless and feel as if it is time to abandon ship. At this point, this is where the sailors are at. They have no hope, and being used to manning all of the ships multifaceted duties, they set out to prepare to escape from the ship. But why at this time?

The answer lies in this question: What is the direction and perception of their vision, in other words, what is their focus? To better understand their pretense, we must see what is motivating them to act. Their vision, as I can understand, is so *tunneled* on the raging sea, the ship that’s coming apart, the utter “*hell*” that’s going on all around them, that they have not remotely considered the will of God, prayer, and submission to anything except their own flesh. But quite honestly, what can they, in their own strength, do about it? Nothing!

Here we come to the point where our declaration of faith must meet up with what is actually true about us. It is the place where we are not only awake and attentive, but the place where we examine if our vision is actually focused on what we claim. For if we declare that our sights are set upon Christ, yet we are willingly centered on the world and all its trinkets, all its shininess, all its entertainments, then our profession does not match reality. Our perception is clearly off and we are in danger, grave danger.

As with the sailors, if we put our focus and our attention on anything other than Christ, we are already off course. More than that, we are saying to those around us, *“I profess to be a Christian, but quite frankly all the things that I like, I desire to have, and are entertained by, is just more fascinating than Jesus.”* It is the elevation, and idolization of secondary things. You may be thinking, just what are the secondary things he keeps talking about? Let’s look.

Secondaries

Let me ask you, can you name anything, any person, any imagination of the mind that is more worthy, more majestic, more valuable, more exquisite, or more wonderful than Jesus Christ? Anything at all? No, nothing! Jesus Christ is of such infinite worth, of such eternal beauty, of such incredible awe, that everything pales in comparison to who He is.

Therefore, secondaries are anything other than Christ. They can even be good things, things that God gives and grants us by His grace, such as, gifts, blessings, healings, good doctrine, wonderful preachers of old, etc. The moment we begin to lift the value of secondary things to that above Christ, and we do not repent, we are entering a dangerous place.

Earlier I mentioned false prophets. Well, just like a false prophet, we too must be sure not to give prominence to the things of this world. In our perception, we can have what we believe to be right motives and beliefs, and yet, if they are not central to the will of God, they are amiss. Much of what people believe is right today seems to be mere rhetoric and simple correct terminology, a verbalization to correct doctrine and to the *what-we-oughts*, but so little personal application to that which is verbalized. Of course not everyone has been privileged to correct doctrine. Many have very poor teaching that does not align itself biblically nor historically. Regardless the case, the perception of being on the correct course, and yet far off, endangers just the same.

Allow me to interject here as I feel I must address something of importance to those of us who have been a Christian a bit longer. For those of us who have had a bit more biblical training (and I don't necessarily mean formal seminary training), ought we not to go to those who have had little or poor Christian training, in love, grace, patience, and gentleness, so they too might understand more about Christ? For if we think for a moment that we have some bit of truth, ought we not to go back, of course if discerning and mature, into weaker churches and edify others? I mean, just how sanctified were you before you were saved? How much did you know about theology, sanctification, glorification, and piety the moment after you were saved? Wasn't it great that someone else loved us enough to tell us the truth, or bring us up in discipleship, or to simply love and serve us? Wasn't it wonderful that when we were first saved, that someone patiently "*put up with*" our spiritual ignorances?

Would it not behoove us to go back in as "*indigenous missionaries*" into the churches of our area, to the doors of our neighbors, to the people we work and live around and

simply serve them in Christ name? It is not as if we are leaving the doctrines of Christ at the door, it's that we are doing what Jesus said,

“Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at the table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”⁵⁶

Therefore, I say, let us rethink if our constant running to separate ourselves from everyone else is indeed for the purposes of godliness, as we may think, or if it really is not because of our selfish desires. Unfortunately, I truly believe for most, the latter is all too often the case. I fear that many people think they know exactly where someone else is at in life, yet so few care to ask if another has any needs, or if service can be rendered, or simply desire to hear their story; I fear many have forgotten where they have come from, forgotten about the grace needed in their own lives, and constantly belittle and tear apart people for their own pride's sake. And in this, I do not exclude myself, but I take these thoughts seriously.

Think about this for a moment. What about personal piety? I would dare say most people don't even know what this means. Or think about ministry? Now you may be saying, *“Oh no, this cannot be a problem for us.”* But I say it is a very, very dangerous area for a believer, especially for a person in *“full-time”⁵⁷* ministry. The danger is that we profess we are Christocentric in our work and in our lives, but in reality we operate and promote humanism. Often

⁵⁶ Luke 22:26-27

⁵⁷ By full-time I mean those who make their living by working directly working within the confines of “church.”

this happens under the guise of a few right pieces of Scripture, but then we openly promote the good of man as the reason for it all. I believe it is not necessarily the intent, nor the plan to do such, but it sorely ends up being the message portrayed. Even if it is not the intent, we will stand before God and give an account of what we have done with His Word and how we have represented Him to the world. It may be that we will find out, and might I add way too late, that we fulfilled Jesus' prophecy when He said...

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name, and cast our demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.’”⁵⁸

Secondaries of this life have become so much our focus that hardly can be found⁵⁹ a ministry, a message, a teaching that focuses on God's attributes, or the cost of Christ's sufferings in the work and demonstration of grace, but there is ample weak and powerless teachings sprinkled with enough sugar that the poison is not noticed. Think, when was the last time your church focused on the attributes of God for a year, how about six months, how about one month, how about even a sermon in five years?

The deception is that we think we can handle looking and listening to the culture. Before you know it, we believe the lies, think often upon worldly things, become more and more like the carnal, and if without repentance, we then let fear, anger, bitterness, and pride waltz right through the front door. All we are then left to hope on is the flesh and powerless rhetoric.

⁵⁸ Matthew 7:21-23

⁵⁹ Having said this, there are many very good and very biblical churches, pastors, teachers, and etc. today. Not to mention the ample supply of God honoring writings and sermons of past.

I love how George Whitefield talks about his early years and the damages of cultural influence upon his soul when yet an unconverted youth. I cannot but help to fully agree, and yet too, at times morn over my past sins.

“Whatever foreseen fitness for salvation others may talk of and glory in, I disclaim any such thing: if I trace myself from my cradle to my manhood, I can see nothing in me but a fitness to be damned. ‘I speak the truth in Christ; I lie not!’”⁶⁰

Again, he says...

“I cannot but observe here, with much concern of mind, how this way of training up youth has a natural tendency to debauch the mind, to raise ill passions, and to stuff the memory with things as contrary to the gospel of Christ, as darkness to light – hell to heaven.”⁶¹

“I got acquainted with such a set of debauched, abandoned, atheistical youths, that if God, by his free, unmerited, and special grace, had not delivered me out of their hands, I should have sat in the scorner’s chair, and made a mock at sin. By keeping company with them, my thoughts of religion grew more and more like theirs. I went to public service only to make sport, and walk about. I took pleasure in their lewd conversation. I began to reason as they did, and to ask, why God had given me passions, and not permitted me to gratify them? In short, I soon made great proficiency in the school of the devil. I affected to look rakish, and was in a fair way of being as infamous as the worst of them...”

⁶⁰ *Whitefield’s Life and Times*, pg. 4, Robert Philip, Banner of Truth Trust, first printed 1837

⁶¹ *Whitefield’s Life and Times*, pg. 6

Author Robert Philip goes on to add...

“This, not oratory, was what young Whitefield learned from plays and acting. He fell into sins, of which he says, - ‘their dismal effects I have felt and groaned under ever since.’”⁶²

It is the effects of sin, “*their dismal effects*,” that seem to take hold of us and steer us down many wide pathways to hell. It is why we must be so diligent to seek out a *coin lost*,⁶³ to “*confirm [our] calling and election*,”⁶⁴ and “*to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.*”⁶⁵

Are we not just like the sailors on the ship Paul sailed? Are we not seeing storms of various types and in various formats? Most certainly! And if we do not get our focus firmly set upon the correct path and correct destination, our perception will deceive us and our motivations will send us further and further into the storm, literally dragging us into murky waters of sin.

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

1 John 2:15-17

⁶² *Whitefields’ Life and Times*, pg. 6

⁶³ Luke 15:8

⁶⁴ 2 Peter 1:10

⁶⁵ 2 Peter 3:14

Stay In The Boat: When Perception Begs Our Abandonment

Chapter Two: Stay in the Boat

“Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, ‘Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.’”

Acts 27:31

Paul now shifts the attention of the sailors, soldiers, and I am sure everyone else, from the violent northeaster unto Christ; for *“unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.”*

Remember, they have lost all hope,⁶⁶ and in the middle of absolute chaos, with a storm beating all around, Paul now has the ear of the *“centurion and the soldiers.”* It is time for the final warning to be issued, a time for the call to be direct, a time for the false perception and nearly devastating pretense to be corrected. It is time for all the people on the ship to come to the awareness, *“If you leave, you will die.”*

For what they did not know, was that their perception was amiss, and they were resting in the hope of their false thinking. They did not realize that the ship was a representation of Christ. There would be no rescue, no assurance, no correct thinking, if they continued down the path of their own design. For fear had manifested itself amongst the storm. And this is what Satan would have for the sailors and us today – fear, hopelessness, and actions

⁶⁶ Acts 27:20

based off our own perception. For as long as God was not in the forethoughts of the sailors, they would be completely at the mercy of their own arm, with abandonment the only answer.

Have many of us been taken captive by the fears of this world? How many of us right now are trying in our *arm of the flesh* to handle the storms ragging all around? Or let me ask, what about the political scene and all its deception? What about social media addiction and porn addiction? What about all the opinions of man? For much is raging all around and we must have our eyes resolved upon the will of God – and nothing else!

In regards to fear, we need to be told...

*“For the Lord spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: ‘Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary...”*⁶⁷

And in regards to the exalting of our flesh and of mankind, we need to be told...

*“Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, who heart turns away from the Lord.”*⁶⁸

*“Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?”*⁶⁹

The time for the sailors to abandon the ship was wrong for they saw the ship as their tomb. But in that moment, it really was an

⁶⁷ Isaiah 8:11-14

⁶⁸ Jeremiah 17:5

⁶⁹ Isaiah 2:22

after-shadow, if you will, of Christ. Secondary things had flooded their mind long before the storm came. And when the storm came, they were powerless to discern the narrow path, for the wide way had become their gain.

The Great Distraction

Just like the sailors in whose vision was driven by the “*pride of life*,”⁷⁰ we too must turn our eyes away from the storms, away from the secondary pleasures, and away from the things we have willingly swallowed down and has thus distracted us from Christ. For if we have been born again, thus truly saved unto Christ, how could it be we can be distracted by such foolishness? Simple, Christ has not been held in the honor as He is in reality; we have not even held Christ in the honor-place that we have preached and presented before others.

Let me ask you, what is the greatest desire of your life? What do you care about most? What brings you great happiness and joy? What is your most favorite of things to do? What do you look forward to the most?

Most likely you did not have to struggle too hard with these questions. For most of you, I would say, the answers came quite easily and even images popped into your mind. For in each question there was a direction that would then lead you towards that thing, that desire, that fulfillment of happiness, that *thing* to do. I would also bet that they consume much of your thoughts. Furthermore, I would argue, for many of you these things have moved from *thought* to some sort of *action* in acquiring that end goal. Could it not be said that you have your sights set on that *something* – that end desire, that end care, that end happiness, that end favorite thing? And if indeed your end goal is not Christ, danger is very real.

⁷⁰ 1 John 2:16

If we identify with Him (Jesus) in that we say we are Christians, then should He not be our consuming joy, our chief motivation, our end goal? For to set our sights on Him means that we should be looking to Him both in private and in public, in times of plenty and times of drought, in times of ease and in times of heartache, in the daylight and in the night watch, in the long range, and in the moment-by-moment decisions. It is to have Him in reality and not mere theory; walking with Him in truth and not in show for one hour on Sunday; it is to really know Him and not just facts about Him. Sights set on Him means that the style of our life be affected by Him, resulting in Him having so captivated our attention that everything else seems but dim. As I have heard it said, that if we would see just how valuable, how precious, how worthy Jesus Christ truly is, He Himself will become the Great Distraction⁷¹ of our life, thus causing us to have our hope and our focus set on Him, thereby turning from the secondaries of life. For hope set on anything else is secondary and futile and is no hope at all.

Think about this for a moment, if my desire is to achieve “xyz” and yet I am looking towards “abc,” then how can I say that my end goal is “xyz”? For if I say I am a Christian, yet my eyes are on the world, I desire the things of the world, I listen to the world and I talk like the world, then we should admit we are not Christian. For no one who is authentically and radically given a new life in Christ, having been rescued from their wretched state of sin, and given His true powerful grace, says, “*Well, I will take the name of Christian, but I do not desire to know Him and learn more about what He has done for me; I desire not to walk with Him.*” Yet this is what is being displayed when we say one thing and do another – nothing short of true hypocrisy.⁷²

⁷¹ Thought owed to *Behold Your God* Study. www.beholdyourgod.org

⁷² Again, not pertaining to any sort of perfectionism.

For if I say I desire more of Christ, and yet the style of my life gives evidence to the fact I spend no time reading His Word, no time of true prayer, no desire to be more like Him, could it not be confidently said of me, “*You are not looking towards Jesus as your All in all at all.*” For in this case, my life does not reflect Jesus as my chief desire, my end goal, my Lord and Savior. And if this indeed be true, I have become well recognized, for as Jesus said, “*You will recognize them by their fruits.*”⁷³

As with the sailors, we must not allow our perception to guide our pretense of action; for we must have our eyes correctly, and most certainly authentically, focused on Christ – oh that we would be Christocentric minded such that our intentions, motivations, and actions would be eternally focused with Christ Himself as our chief end, and our knowing Him as our chief boast.⁷⁴

Remember, when you’re tempted to hope in the flesh, when the storm is so much your focus, and your perception is to abandon the ship, remember these words,

“*Unless [you] stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.*”

For it could be that the storms we are facing are ordained for us to return wholly unto Christ. It just may be that the very same storm may also be used to “*get the attention*” of those around us, so that we in truth, in love, in power and in reality, may be heard and they may be saved.

⁷³ Matthew 7:20

⁷⁴ Jeremiah 9:23-24

Stay In The Boat: When Perception Begs Our Abandonment

Chapter Three: Cut Away the Ropes

“Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship’s boat and let it go.”
Acts 27:32

A response to Paul’s warning is indeed heard, not just in logical agreement, but in actual work that followed suit in tandem with their faith.⁷⁵ For “*the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship’s boat and let it go.*” Remember, the cargo and the tackle,⁷⁶ very valuable items, have already been jettisoned, and soon the rest of the wheat⁷⁷ would be thrown overboard, along with the anchors as well.⁷⁸ This storm is real and it is a wearisome reality to those on board. Yet when Paul gives the final warning, it is either do or die.

Here we see that the response to their understanding of Paul’s word, “*Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved,*” has taken root in their beliefs, thereby affecting their actions. They now truly understand that they must relinquish all their carnal hopes and turn to the only way of being saved. Their relinquishment is seen in the form of the *cutting away* from their reliance upon the arm of the flesh. In a way, it was much like the

⁷⁵ James 2:14-26

⁷⁶ Acts 27:18-19

⁷⁷ Acts 27:38

⁷⁸ Acts 27:40

disciples up in Tyre who had to let go of Paul and let God's sovereign will take over.

What about us though?

Cutting Away Our Ropes

Here we must be so careful to really examine our profession of faith. It is where we must see if indeed Christ has truly been wrought in us.⁷⁹ And when we have had the Holy Spirit bear “*witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*”⁸⁰ in that we too will “*suffer with Him [Christ]*”⁸¹ in the storms of life, we should know with certainty that we have been given “*all things that pertain to life and godliness.*”⁸² This is the place where we too must respond to Paul's admonishment and *cut away our ropes*.

Now for some of you, you may be in direct sin of some type; some of you are simply in the early stages of wondering away;⁸³ yet others of you may simply feel as if you have lost all hope. Regardless of your current situation, we are commanded to *cut away* from, in other words, “*put to death*” the deeds of the body.

*“For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”*⁸⁴

“Do you mortify; do you make it your daily work; be always at it while you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

John Owen

⁷⁹ 2 Corinthians 13:5

⁸⁰ Romans 8:16

⁸¹ Romans 8:17

⁸² 2 Peter 1:3

⁸³ James 1:14-15

⁸⁴ Romans 8:13

How do we go about doing such a thing? How do we go about cutting off the “*deeds of the body*” and living “*according to the flesh?*” Just as with the sailors in verse 30, we need to be brought to attention, in some way, in some storm, by some Paul, ultimately by the power of God, that we would understand our grave position. I do not for a moment believe we can take all the personal convictions of the Spirit of God, upon all the men and women who have ever walked the earth, and make it a simple formula, but yet Jesus has promised us, if we will search for Him with all our hearts, we will find Him.⁸⁵ For just as in our story, it is about what we are looking unto and trusting in, again, not with mere words, but with truly authentic actions that result from a pure faith.

We talk much of many good things of God, secondaries that indeed do help our sanctification, but if we elevate these things taking our attention away from the person of Christ, we then enter a secondary path, a path that will not weather the storm. Take for instance the arena of arguing doctrinal differences and eschatology (study of end time events). So often many are stuck in the waves of details, that they have completely left their first love,⁸⁶ and as mentioned earlier, have “*wandered away from a simple and pure devotion unto Christ.*”⁸⁷ I have been guilty of this in the past, but God was so faithful to discipline me as His child, that I would return unto Him and Him alone, never looking back.⁸⁸

For us to go about the *cutting of our ropes*, we must first have our attention on Jesus, for He, by His Spirit, will bring about a right conviction, not one leading to despair, but conviction leading to true repentance, life, joy and a drawing near of God.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Deuteronomy 4:29; Jeremiah 29:13

⁸⁶ Revelation 2:4

⁸⁷ 2 Corinthians 11:3

⁸⁸ Genesis 19:26; Luke 9:62

⁸⁹ 2 Corinthians 7:10

When we are battling “*against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil,*”⁹⁰ we must do as James tells us, “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil,*” and “*draw near to God.*”⁹¹ For “*God opposes the proud,*”⁹² and when we do submit ourselves to Him, drawing near to Him, we must also “*purify [our] hearts.*”⁹³ Is this not all to say, “*Turn away from your wrong view points and perceptions, turn away from secondaries, turn from your pretense, stay on the boat, be saved, and cut away the ropes of false strength?*”

Let me ask you, does God’s Word “*awaken*” you from your views just as Paul’s word did for the sailors? For if we say we are Christians, believers and followers of the One True God, ought we not to experience His working power in our lives?

Consider the passages below.

*“Is not My word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”*⁹⁴

*“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*⁹⁵

For if God’s Word carries with it such transforming and exposing power, and if indeed we are His children, ought we not to respond to Him out of the love, grace, and mercy we have received? For us

⁹⁰ Ephesians 6:12

⁹¹ James 4:7-8

⁹² James 4:6

⁹³ James 4:8

⁹⁴ Jeremiah 23:29

⁹⁵ Hebrews 4:12-13

to remain with our eyes affixed on secondaries could result in our *lampstand* being removed.⁹⁶

Let us drink in deeply, pondering, praying, and responding to God's word.

“Beloved, [if] we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.”

“No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”⁹⁷

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. Whoever says ‘I know Him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”⁹⁸

For us to say we have changed our direction, cut away the ropes, and are remaining on the boat, then a reality must proceed the profession, not in perfection, but in a genuine transformation. For

⁹⁶ Revelation 2:5

⁹⁷ 1 John 3:2-3, 9-10

⁹⁸ 1 John 2:1-4

God really does “*put His law within,*”⁹⁹ really does give a “*new heart*” and a “*new spirit*”¹⁰⁰ to those who are His. So should we expect any less today? I think not, for our God does not change.¹⁰¹

As we close this chapter, consider what F.B. Meyer said about himself in his book, *The Christ-Life for The Self-Life*.

“Sixteen years ago I was a minister in a Midland town in England, not at all happy, doing my work for the pay I got, but holding a good position amongst my fellows. Hudson Taylor and two young students came into my life. I watched them. They had something I had not. Those young men stood there in all their strength and joy.

I said to Charles Studd:

“What is the difference between you and me? You seem so happy, and I somehow am in the trough of the wave.”

He replied:

“There is nothing that I have got which you may not have, Mr. Meyer.”

But I asked:

“How am I to get it?”

“Well,” he said, “have you given yourself right up to God?”

⁹⁹ Jeremiah 31:33, context 31-34

¹⁰⁰ Ezekiel 36:22-32

¹⁰¹ Malachi 3:6

I winced. I knew that if it came to that, there was a point where I had been fighting my deepest convictions for months. I had lived away from it, but when I came to the Lord's table and handed out the bread and wine, then it met me; or when I came to a convention or meeting of holy people, something stopped me as I remembered this. It was the one point where my will was entrenched. I thought I would do something with Christ that night which would settle it one way or the other, and I met Christ.

You will forgive a man who owes everything to one night in his life if to help other men he opens his heart for a moment.

I knelt in my room and gave Christ the ring of my will with the keys on it, but kept one little key back, the key of a closet in my heart, in one back story in my heart.

He said to me:

“Are they all here?”

And I said:

“All but one.”

“What is that?” said He.

“It is the key of a little cupboard,” said I, *“in which I have got something which Thou needest not interfere with, but it is mine.”*

Then, as He put the keys back into my hand, and seemed to be gliding away to the door, He said:

“My child, if you cannot trust Me with all, you do not trust Me at all.”

I cried:

“Stop!”

...and He seemed to come back; and holding the little key in my hand, in thought I said:

“I cannot give it, but if Thou wilt take it Thou shalt have it.”

He took it, and within a month from that time He had cleared out that little cupboard of things which had been there for months. I knew He would. May I add one word more? Three years ago I met the thing I gave up that night, and as I met it I could not imagine myself being such a fool as nearly to have sold my birthright for that mess of pottage.

I looked up into the face of Christ and said:

“Now I am thine.”

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

John 12:24-25

Stay In The Boat: When Perception Begs Our Abandonment

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Final Thoughts: Exhortation & Admonishment

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”¹⁰²

What then shall we say? “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”¹⁰³ What then shall we say? Does the grace that we so boldly make claim to not transform? Oh most certainly!¹⁰⁴

If we would indeed seek for God as the treasure that He is, if we would indeed turn from secondaries, and in joy, *cut the ropes off* and live for Him, if we would seek for the great pearls of knowing Christ, walking with God, in obedience to His Spirit, we would then begin to experience Him as our Great Distraction.

For never lose the awareness of God and His sovereignty, especially in the moment-by-moment routine of your life. For if we will take one moment at a time, elevating Christ as our supreme value, our supreme worth, our supreme precious supply, we will achieve victories that only God could have known.

¹⁰² Matthew 13:44-46

¹⁰³ Romans 6:1-2

¹⁰⁴ Titus 2:11-14; also consider the author’s book, “*The Foothills of True Grace*”

Let us this day be resolved against all odds, against all fears, against all people who disbelieve, against all storms, and live for the will and purposes of God. For He is yet changing us from glory to glory.¹⁰⁵

In all that has been said, let us ask ourselves...

“...when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Luke 18:8

*“Break up your fallow ground,
and sow not among thorns.”¹⁰⁶*

*“Sow for yourselves righteousness;
reap steadfast love;
break up your fallow ground,
for it is time to seek the Lord,
that he may come and rain
righteousness upon you.”¹⁰⁷*

¹⁰⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁰⁶ Jeremiah 4:3

¹⁰⁷ Hosea 10:12

*“If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know
as he ought to know.”*

1 Corinthians 8:2

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About

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The Foothills of True Grace
Reveling or Resisting
Realities of a True Christian
Christian: A Dangerous Title to Claim
Limiting God?

and more...

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