

A Sea Voyage

Alan Zundel at the HeartAwake Center, March 20th 2007

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So you're on a boat, you're in the cabin of the boat down below, and you're off on the sea of life on a voyage. Inside the cabin, you're sitting there—remember Ben Hur? They're sitting on benches and they have the handle of the oar coming in and the oar is outside the cabin, and there's windows—well, you're not necessarily a slave here, but you're in the cabin and you have these little windows and you can see the water outside, and you've got these oars here and you can stroke a little if you feel like it. And you have a radio—you can listen to the radio, to news from the outside world.

And for a lot of people, they all drift along, paddling a little bit, letting the current take them wherever, listening to the radio for entertainment. But you become aware after a while that this could be dangerous: you might hear stories of shipwrecks; you might even look out the window and see some other boat hit rocks or go over a waterfall or something. And you decide you've really got to take charge of this voyage, you've got to not just let the river of life or the sea of life—*[laughs]* I've already forgot what I called it—not let the sea of life just take you wherever the current's going to take you, but you have to make a little effort here to take control of the oars and start giving it some direction.

So you tune your radio away from the entertainment and start learning about how to put some order into your life, and you start learning to build up your rowing muscles and paddle so that you can direct your life instead of just letting it drift along, right? To keep yourself safe from shipwreck. So far, it's clear.

[Voice]: That's good.

Okay. *[laughter]* That's just part of life, the early part of life where not a lot of people get to this point, that you bring a little discipline into your life and give some direction to it. Well, once you get to that point, though, and you're able to steer and row and not just drift with the current, then you realize, “Well, I could take this in some direction, but I'm not sure where I want to go.” So you want some different kind of information, not just about how to build up your rowing muscles, but where you want to take your ship—which direction you want to be going in, what's the destination?

So you tune around on the radio again and you listen to different things, philosophers and religious preachers on the radio in the middle of the night, and they all have different stories about what this voyage is about and where you ought to be heading, and they describe the maps of how to get there, where you're trying to get to. So you pick out one that sounds convincing to you, and you start rowing in the direction they tell you to. You may even join a flotilla of other boats—the flotilla of the Church of Getting to Paradise Island, the destination. *[laughs]* So some of these stories tell you that the aim of the voyage is just to have a safe and comfortable

trip, and that's what they tell you how to do; some of them are telling you you're trying to reach that island of Paradise; some of them are telling you you want to be the fastest, strongest rower in the whole set of boats out there in the sea of life, and that success is your aim.

Whatever it is, you take it on and you develop this philosophy of what your destination is, and you're rowing along, working hard at it, and you may be happy enough doing that but if you're one of the lucky ones, or if you eventually come to this point, you say, "Well, how do I know that's true? How do I know that's what I really want? Is there more to it?" And you start to remember that while you were listening to these different stories of what the destination is, every so often you'd hear somebody, usually on one of these religious programs, talking about not *taking* your boat somewhere but letting *something else* take your boat somewhere. Not just the sea of life and the currents of it, but there is this other power, this higher power—you can't see it, you can't touch it, but the aim is to let that take over and take you where it's going to take you; the power is called the wind.

Well, you've never been out of the cabin of the boat so you're not sure if the wind exists, but this sounds different—sounds like, well, if you could let that take over you wouldn't have to row so hard, but after all that work to gain control of the boat you're not too ready to give up control either. So you decide you're going to take this a little at a time, and listen in and say, "Well, what are the steps? I'll try this out and see if it takes me somewhere. I'm not even convinced it's true, but let's see where it takes me."

You turn to the radio station and there's, um, Alan Zundel [*laughs*], telling you what you do is you wait until you come to a quiet patch in the sea of life, and you put up the oars and you just sit there quietly for a while—you know, for twenty minutes or so—and see what happens. Just pay attention; don't get distracted by what's going on out the window with the sea of life, and don't get distracted by what's going on on the radio in the outside world, just sit there and pay attention and see what you feel. And eventually you start to feel that there's this little breeze blowing from somewhere behind you, and you say, "I recognize that; there were times in my life when I felt like the ship was moving and it wasn't being moved by the current, it was being moved by something else. Sometimes I felt it was a little easier to row, like there was some extra power helping me out here. So, yeah, I think there's something to this; I'm starting to feel that there's this other force that can give direction to my life."

Okay, so I sense that it's moving me *this* way, and I can use my oars to paddle that way a little more, or it might be taking me the *other* way—and I can let this wind direct me, I can cooperate with it, right? So far, so good. But then you sometimes have doubts and say, "Well, how do I know that that's really a wind; how do I know it's a higher force? Maybe it's just something—air, stale air blowing around in the cabin—or maybe I'm just imagining the whole thing. Because sometimes I can barely feel it, and how do I know it's still there? Which way do I go when I can't feel it? How do I know, when I think it's moving me in this direction, it really is, and it's not my imagination telling me that?"

So you want to pay attention again and listen a little more to this radio show. And this radio show *now* says, "Well, you don't want to rest content with just cooperating with the wind and trying to feel where it's moving you and go along with it. What you want to do is *get out of*

the cabin [laughs], go up on the deck where the wind's *really* blowing, put up the sail [*laughs*] and let it take you." And you say, "I've never been out of the cabin; how do I get out of the cabin?" Well, look down. Around your leg, there's this cable—we're back to Ben Hur now, you have the chains on—but instead of a strong chain, it's kind of an elastic kind of a cable, and you look at it carefully and it's made up of a bunch of little cables, all woven together. Well, what is that? Those are the attachments you have to the cabin. And what is the cabin? The cabin is the sense of self created by your mind. You're living in this cabin, looking out through the portholes at life, when you could go up on deck, outside of this cabin, and feel free and have that wind working for you, make it a lot easier for you to find your direction and go in that direction.

So, when you have some of these quiet moments and you have your attention focused, you take this elastic cable that's holding you in that cabin and you start pulling it apart a little bit and examining the different strands. And once you recognize one you say, "Yeah, I see that that attachment is here, what's holding me in here; it's easy to break that." You can break one or two at a time if you just look at them carefully and separate them from the rest: "What's going on, in this cabin, that's holding me here? What are these attachments that are holding me here? What I am being held by?" And you start to break them a little bit at a time, and sometimes maybe even you can turn around now and stretch that cable long enough to stick your head out and you go, "Wow! I see a little sunlight, and I feel the wind—and this is really feeling more real to me that I can get out of the cabin."

Once you get it stretchy enough or thin enough from breaking a lot of the cables and there's just a few strands left, or maybe several strands but it's much thinner than it used to be, all's it takes is one good tug to break that and get you out, up on the deck. Which is kind of scary, because you've never been up on the deck and you think, "Well, if I break this it's not going to be the same anymore; I won't have my little comfortable cabin and something's going to be different."

But once you do it you find you can go up on the deck, and you put up the sail, you feel the wind blowing you along—all's you have to do is steer the rudder a little bit to keep that sail turned toward the wind and the wind takes you where it's going to go—and you realize you're not even concerned about the destination any more, because your view of the sea of life is so much vaster. You see the beauty of the water, of the sky, of the sun—the whole panorama. And you just enjoy the voyage. You can go back down in the cabin if you need to, you can come up on deck—you have the freedom to take this voyage of life and just enjoy it, and let the wind take you where it's going to take you.

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