

Perils of the Sea

“In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.” **Isaiah 27:1**



“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” **Rev. 21:1**

Adapted from *“On the Voyage and its Perils”* by J. J. J.

After you have accepted the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and though now you know what "peace" means, and you are trusting in Christ and are very happy, you have to begin a journey through the world that is full of danger and trial and difficulty.

"These things," says the Lord Jesus, "I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation." (John xvi.)

As God speaks of men as waves, and nations and peoples as the sea, and you have to pass to heaven through these, it is well for us to describe this journey as a *voyage*.

Does this puzzle you a little? Do you wonder how you can be resting forever in Wisdom's house upon the Rock, and yet be exposed to all the perils of a long sea voyage?

Perhaps this analogy will help us understand. When a boy goes to sea, he has to leave his home behind him; but if he loves his parents, and it has been a happy home to him, he never forgets it. He is often there in thought, and sees it all just as it was when he left it. He may live for years upon the vessel, but it will never be his home; and should you meet him at a foreign port, and ask him about his home, he will tell you at once that it is where his father lives, in the far-off land of his birth. But what will happen if his parents die while he is far away? Ah! he will say, sadly enough, "I have no home now."

What is it, then, that makes the sailor's home? It is the place where the objects of his heart's affections are. If he has no one to love him, and no one whom he loves, he may have many houses on shore, if he be rich, but he has no home.

Do you understand now? Your soul is on the Rock, and that wonderful Rock bears you into the presence of God as your Father. So heaven is your home now; Christ's Father is your Father, and His abode is your home; for God *"bath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* (Eph. ii. 6.)

This, then, is the home of your soul. You can always be dwelling there in spirit, and some day you will be there in body too; but at

present your body is like the sailor boy—far away from its home, upon a weary voyage. And it is of this voyage that this booklet is about; for it is full of perils, and the waves of this great and restless sea are strewn with wreckage. Perhaps you want to know why the Lord Jesus leaves those who believe in Him to pass through all the trials and sorrows that are in the world. God leaves His children here for just the same reason that an earthly father leaves his boys and girls at school, because there are many lessons to be learnt which could not be learnt at home; they have to learn their own worthlessness, and prove His love and power, and get experience which will fit them for His future service.

Jesus said to God of such before He left them, "*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*" (John xvii.)

But you must not think that all who pass over this sea are *believers*. No; many alas! are merely *professors*; for, sad to say, there are many, very many, sailors crossing this great sea who have no home at all; their hopes are all built upon the frail vessels in which they are crossing the surging waters. They will tell you that they *hope* their ships will carry them safely through; but, alas! these have never been fitted out by a Father's tender care to contend with the perils of the mighty deep.

Most of us have been to the seaside in the summer-time, and have seen the blue waves breaking in snowy foam upon the golden sands, while every ripple glitters with the glory of the gorgeous sunlight; and you have thought "how beautiful the sea is!" Perhaps a fresh breeze tosses the great expanse of water before you into heaving masses of sheeny blue and green, which, rolling on in ever-changing hues, breaking into white sheets of foam and over this changing, glittering, tumbling waste of rolling waters, the cloud shadows chase each other; while, white as the foam and light as the wind, the sea-birds glanced hither and thither, uttering their shrill cries of joy. One could not help but say, "It is a beautiful sea to-day!"

But if I said to one whose locks were grey, and over whose head the storms of many winters had come and gone. "Oh, it's a beautiful sea to-day; the waves are dashing one against the other, and are breaking into sheets of foam! Then they would shake their head sadly, and answer, "So that's what you call a beautiful sea, is it? Ah! we've too many such seas here. We've seen sad sights on this coast. There's a sandbank under the water, where those waves are breaking in foam, and it's not long since a brig went aground there; and the men—poor fellows!—so near us, and we could see them a-waving to us; and—well, there's two graves up in the churchyard, if you would like to look at them."

I had gazed but at the outside thing, those more experienced in the Word of God knew that those leaping and sparkling waves were cold and cruel as the grave.

But what are the waters of this great sea? It is peoples and nations and tongues. Is it a quiet sea? Listen:

"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." **(Isaiah lvii. 20, 21.)**

No; its waves are always beating against one another; they are always in more or less tumult and agitation, just as those of the natural sea are always more or less in motion.

God says again, *"Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!"* **(Isaiah xvii.)**

Does God call this sea "a beautiful sea," do you think? No; His eye looks down from above, and to Him ungodly men look like *"raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame."* **(Jude 13.)**

And nations and peoples are like thousands of waves swept along in great currents or tide-waves by a mighty power over which they have no control.

Do you know what the *tides* are? There are flood-tides and neap-tides in the sea. These are caused by the action of the sun and the moon upon the water. The flood-tide is very high, because both the sun and the moon are drawing the water towards them in the same direction, and if the *wind* happens to be high as the great wave rolls along the coast, much damage is done by it. People who have never seen the sea can hardly understand the great change that the rising and falling of the tide makes in some seaside places in a few moments.

Jehovah sounds, saying, "*Hithertoshalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.*" (**Job xxxviii.**)

And so, though men know it not, all the tides of popular feeling and ideas, all men's plans and counsels, their wars and tumults, are but secretly working out the purposes of Him "*which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.*" (**Ps. lxxv. 7.**)

God is still overruling; He has never given up the reins of government; and, therefore, all men will one day have to answer to Him for their deeds, when "*every secret thing*" shall be brought out in the light of His presence. "*Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting. ... The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.*" (**Ps. xciii.**)

So you see there are tides in this great sea of which I am talking, just as there are tides in the natural sea.

God tells us that a great flood-tide of Independence will one day rise over the whole world.

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." (**Ps. ii.**)

The Hebrew word which is translated "*rage*" means the surging rush of waters falling back broken.

So, dear ones, the time is coming when all the nations shall gather together, and roll themselves in one great wave against God, and against His Christ. Oh, what a terrible time that will be Satan's power, like a mighty wind, will urge on the waves of men; and for a time everything but God's Word will disappear amidst the triumph and the tumult of evil; but that Word, like the lighthouse, will remain untouched, for the Lord hath said, "*Heaven and earth shall pass away.*" **(Matt. xxiv. 35.)**

I do not want to frighten you, but I really believe that this terrible flood-tide of evil is quickly rising even now at this time.

We must also consider what stirs the sea into a storm. What is it that makes a storm at sea? It is the wind.

The wind can raise the quietest waters in a very short time into the wildest disturbance. Satan is called, in the Bible, "*the Prince of the power of the air.*" **(Eph. ii. 2.)** Men are in rebellion against God; they are acting in independence of Him. Satan is called the "*god of this world.*" **(2 Cor. iv. 4.)**

He has come in as a usurper between man and his Creator; therefore he has power over the minds of men, and his evil spirits are able to stir up their passions as the wind stirs up the waves of the sea. I think the wind is used in the Bible as a figure of *spiritual influence*, whether good or bad; because we cannot see it, but we can feel its power.

The action of the Holy Spirit down here is likened to the wind by our Lord Himself: "*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.*" **(John iii.)**

He is moving upon the face of the waters, hindering the work of the usurper, and checking his power; and not till He quits the scene will that great flood-tide of evil be able fully to rise up. Till that time all "*the powers that be are ordained of God,*" and He bids His people honour,

pay tribute to, and obey all rulers, as the ministers of God for good; for "*whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God.*" (**Rom. xiii.**)

In one of the wonderful visions of Daniel we read that he saw the four winds of heaven striving "*upon the great sea*" (**Dan. vii.**), and then, apparently in consequence of this turmoil in the powers of the air, there rose up out of the waters "*four great beasts.*"

We are told that these four beasts were figures of four great kingdoms which were to rise up among men. The Apostle John, too, during his lonely exile at Patmos, had a vision from God, in which he says he "*stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea;*" and to this beast "*the Dragon*" gave power and great authority. God allows all this for His own wise purposes. He allowed an evil spirit to tempt the wicked Ahab to go down and fall at Ramoth-Gilead; and by the influence of evil spirits, the men of Shechem rebelled against Abimelech. As well might the sea declare that the wind cannot rouse it to fury, as man in his pride assert that he is not the subject of the mighty stirring powers of spiritual agencies. This is very solemn, is it not? And I think we too often forget that Satan is ruling in this world. If you look in the sixteenth chapter of Revelation, you will see that "*unclean spirits*" are the unseen but powerful agents by which men are brought to face the last terrible struggle against God. The Apostle sees in vision "*the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*" **Rev. 16:14**

The Bible tells us wonderful things, does it not? It tells us secret things which, but for its pages, we should never have known. How is this? It is because God has written it. Man walks "in a vain show," but God is behind the scenes, and sees all the secret springs at work. He knows the terrible power and cunning of Satan, and He tells us about it, that we may not be deceived by it. Has anyone ever seen Satan? No; I do not think any mortal eye has ever seen him. He is like the wind; we feel his power, but we cannot see him. But the power of Satan is not only felt, like that of the wind *over* the sea; he is *in* the sea also. What do I mean by this? I mean that he moves about among

men just as some mighty sea monster moves about amid the waters of the deep. How do I know this? Because I find that God sometimes calls him "*leviathan*," sometimes "*the serpent*," and sometimes "*the dragon that is in the sea*." (**Isaiah xxvii. 1.**) Oh, what a terrible being this is!

And he dwells and moves in this great sea over which you have to pass. We do not know whether there is or is not in the natural sea a monster called the "*sea-serpent*." Some sailors really believe they have seen it, but others have made up foolish and lying stories about it. But we *do* know that in this great sea of which I am telling you to-night there really lives and acts a mighty being whom God calls "*the piercing serpent, even leviathan*."

What we really need to get hold of is, that there is an evil Power moving and stirring up the minds and passions of the great mass of mankind, which is not of God—a Power which is against God, and which is, therefore, against Christ.

A bright and beautiful Light once shone upon the dark waves of this great human sea; but "*the Prince of the power of the air*" raised the waves into a tumult, and used them to beat out that Light. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, said, as man led Him away to crucify Him, "*But this is your hour, and the power of darkness*." (**Luke xxii.**) He was nailed to the cross, He died, and the Light went out from the world, and darkness—deep, moral darkness—sank down upon this great sea.

Is it night now, then, upon the waters? Yes, it is night now. Yet those who have always lived in the darkness are quite content with it, and say "they see." When a person goes out of the brightness and light of his home on a dark winter's night, he is afraid of stumbling at every step, for his eyes are used to the light, and the darkness seems very dense to him; but those who have been out in the gloom all the time can see quite distinctly. It is just so with those who live in the light of God's favour and smile, for the rock is a sunny place, and when these people have to mix in the world, they feel the darkness on the minds

of those around them very dense indeed; they have to move with the greatest caution, where men of the world will go quite boldly.

Yet it has lights of its own, this great and terrible ocean. Have you ever stood by the seaside on a dark summer's evening, and seen the flashes of phosphorescent light that run along the waves, and glance hither and thither amidst the waters? This light comes from the bodies of thousands of tiny living creatures which are moving in the water. I have read that sometimes, in tropical seas, sailors have seen the water one mass of gleaming light, and that flashes of red and blue and crimson fire can be seen on every side of the ship. How beautiful it must be! Many kinds of fish give out these gleaming rays, and there is a shark which swims about in a pale green light of his own.

Can all these wonderful sights be seen in the day-time? No; you must wait till the sun has gone down, and the darkness of night has settled over the sea; then you will begin to notice all these strange lights glancing about amidst the gloomy waters.

But are such sights to be seen on the sea of which we are talking? Yes, indeed, there are; for it has lights of its own,—strange, wandering lights, that glance hither and thither amidst its dark billows. There is the light of *man's reason*, the glory of his philosophy, the bright flashes of his genius, which glitter from mind to mind and light up the darkness with a radiance of their own. "We see, we see!" say the men of the world ; and if you listen to them, you will hear them speak of theories and researches which they are ever saying throw "new light" upon the minds about them.

"But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?"

Is there an answer to that question in the rear of the great human sea, as it dashes to pieces its own reasonings and theories? No. *"The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me."* (**Job xxviii. 12-14.**)

All these gleams of man's reason and philosophy are false lights—lights that would not be seen if darkness were not the condition

around. And this is the world through which you and I have to pass. I am sure you will not say now, "What a beautiful sea it is!" No; if you belong to Christ, and are going to pass through it for Him, there is nothing to help you in its entire vast expanse. Before you lies one wild waste of tumbling waters; against you rush mighty currents and surging tide-waves; over you sweep blasts of fierce or fitful winds, which come and go unceasingly; while darkness, which is broken only by the fatal flashings of unholy lights, broods over the whole scene. Do you think that I make the picture too terrible? No, dear ones, indeed, I do not. What can be more dreadful than a world under the power of a mighty usurper, whose wishes it acts out as its own—a world at variance with its Maker? Ah! it is no light thing to be true to Christ in the midst of such a scene.

But will the darkness always last? Will the morning never come? Will these wild waves be always tossing defiance up to God? No, no! Look up; raise, raise the eye of your faith from the raging waters to the heavens above; for there, through cloud and storm, through night and darkness, gleams the silvery ray of one bright and glorious star. It is "*the bright and morning star!*" fair herald of a rising Sun!

The light that men would not have on earth beams steadily beyond their reach in heaven above, seen by the eye of faith; and thus it guides the storm-tossed mariner upon his dangerous way, and tells his fainting heart that the "*night is far spent, the day is at hand,*" heralding in that glad moment when over this troubled sea "*the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.*" (**Mal. iv. 2.**)

And "*in that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan, the piercing serpent, even leviathan, that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.*" (**Isaiah xxvii. 1.**)

Then shall the waters—the surging, tumbling waters—be smooth as a sea of glass, on which those who shall have been, as we are now, storm-tossed mariners shall find firm footing.

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire : and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the

number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are Thy ways, thou King of nations [margin], Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee ; for Thy judgments are made manifest." (Rev. xv.)

This speaks of the Millennium when Christ shall reign over this world in righteousness and Satan will be chained for a thousand years. At the end of that time Satan will be released for a brief time and organize a revolt again in opposition to Christ Jesus but then will be Christ cast him into hell forever.

In the first verses of Revelation chapter twenty-one the eternal state is brought before us and it is said then; *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."* **Rev. 21:1**

It is our prayer that in the mean time we will take heed to the warnings that God has given in His precious Word so that we may go on wholly for Him who is so worthy.

Little Flock Hymns #171

He bids us come; His voice we know,
And boldly on the waters go
To Him our God and Lord;
We walk on life's tempestuous sea,
For He who died to set us free
Hath called us with His word.

Wesley

