

Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me
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The opening verse of this favorite hymn reads, “Jesus, Savior, pilot me over life’s tempestuous sea; Unknown waves before me roll, Hiding rock and treacherous shoal; Chart and compass came from Thee: Jesus, Savior, pilot me.”

Few of us have experienced the open seas in a sailboat let alone endured the fury of a storm at sea in one. It is hard to imagine such a primitive craft when our modern vessels are watertight, powered by engines and have all the conveniences of home. Lights, navigation and communication are taken for granted. Such was not the case little more than a century ago.

Sailors depended upon the stars for navigation, a simple compass for bearing and hand drawn charts to indicate known routes. An attempt was made to represent land masses and any dangers that might lurk beneath the surface of the water. Despite having these tools the crew would literally feel their way along when near shore. They would take soundings to be sure there was sufficient depth to float the craft and the crew would be vigilant for hazards. (Acts 27:12-44)

The hymn uses this imagery to compare man to a seagoing vessel very much in danger and in need of divine guidance. If only we were so vigilant in looking for danger and intent upon staying on course! While contemplating this idea of man being like a ship I began compiling a list of boats making a spiritual comparison to each. I wish to share them with you.

“Cargo Ship” Christians are moving slowly through life with a lot of baggage on board. They sit low in the water meaning that they are weighted down with problems real or imagined and with sins like worry. They are most likely needy, depressed and unmotivated. (Mk 4: 18, 19; Phil 4:6; Heb 12:1)

“Submarine” Christians are always in stealth mode. They sneak in and out at the last possible moment hoping to go unnoticed, unused and unchallenged. Occasionally they pop up to the surface when they want something or if trouble arises in their lives.

“Rowboat” Christians row a while, get tired, then stop to rest a while. Meanwhile they begin to take on “water”. Soon they are spending more time bailing water out of the boat than going anywhere. They attract a lot of attention and everyone wonders whether or not they will stay afloat. (Mk 4:16, 17)

“Speedboat” Christians jet from congregation to congregation. They never stay in one spot long enough to be productive. They move on when bored, asked to work, questioned about their background or don’t get their way. (Acts 9:26-30)

“Ski Boat” Christians are always in a hurry to try the next progressive idea. They pull their cliques along at breakneck speed in these risky religious behaviors leaving chaos in their wake. (2 Tim 3:1-9)

“Party Barge” Christians are interested only in entertainment. They enthusiastically embrace and share the social gospel. There is no room for spiritual reality on the deck of this ship. (Gal 6:7, 8)

“Gun Boat” Christians are out to torpedo anyone who crosses their path. One day it may be the preacher, the next a brother caught in sin. Another day the target is the prospective convert who gets a full charge of “fire and brimstone” rather than compassion and encouragement. (Matt 7:3; Gal 6:1-5)

“Life Raft” Christians are making an effort and manage to save a few people. They may be limited in what they can do but they make the most of what they have. They are passionate and faithful in their service and see it through to the end. (Rom 11:4, 1 Cor 9:22)

“Passenger Liner” Christians carry many people to salvation. They have zeal, opportunity and tremendous capacity to reach souls by the power of the gospel.

This exercise was humorous at first but I soon realized how serious it would be should we find ourselves to be anything other than a lifesaving vessel. As the hymn states, chart and compass come from God. We go astray every time we try to chart our own course. (Jer 10:23)

The cargo ships need to toss worry and sin overboard and pick up steam. If you are a submarine you need to come up for air and work in the light to save souls. Rowboats need to stop distracting others and get back to rowing. Speedboats need to drop anchor in a congregation and accept their responsibilities. Ski Boats need to realize that they are in a “no wake” zone and are obligated to follow the rules. The Party Barges need to work while it is still day so that the real celebration can last for eternity. Lastly, Gun Boats need to leave vengeance to the Lord and practice humility. Friends, allow Jesus to pilot your soul. (KJF)

A Moment's Wisdom

- Ps 5:8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

- Ps 31:3 For thou [art] my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

- Ps 48:14 For this God [is] our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide [even] unto death.

- Ps 73:24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me [to] glory.

- Isa 49:10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

- Isa 58:11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

- Lu 1:76-79 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to them that sit in darkness and [in] the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.