

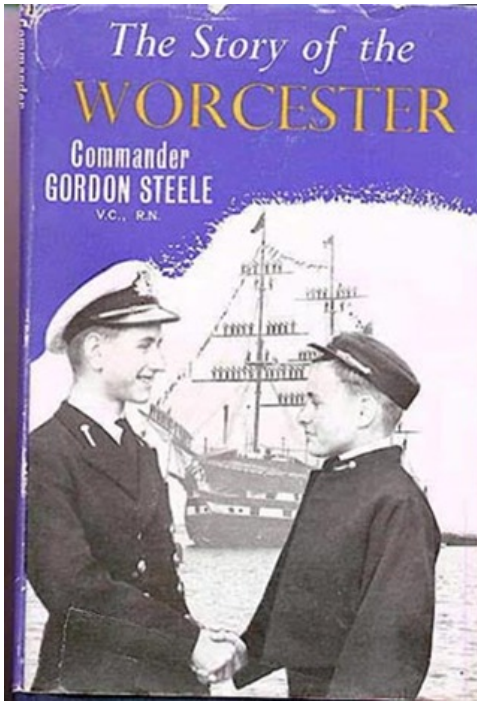
# NAVIGATING THE VOYAGE OF LIFE

By Graham Elliot OW 1961

Part 2

This reminiscing has given me the opportunity to look back and see our life in this world as similar to a voyage. So now to return to the main subject of my book, I'd like to go on with some thoughts that this raises - it's why I've used the title "Navigating The Voyage of Life".

When I was reading Captain Superintendent Gordon Steele's *The Story of the "Worcester"*, it quoted a very passionate message that the first "Worcester" college superintendent, Captain J F Trivett, gave in his final speech before leaving the ship, back in 1863... "My dear boys, you have gained my affection, and before I leave you, I wish to make a comparison between the use to be made of another book which is part of a sailor's outfit, and your navigation books. I allude to the Bible, and ask you as a personal favour to not let it remain in the bottom of your sea chests. My boys, it is often said that the boys of the "Britannia" make better navigators than the boys of the "Worcester", but never let it be said they make better Christians. Be true men, true to yourselves, true to your queen and country, and true to your God. Goodbye."



It actually brings us a deeper understanding of the term 'crossing the bar', so I'd like to compare navigating a sea voyage with the voyage of living our life in this world. That's what Captain Trivett is challenging us to do, comparing our navigational books to the Bible, and the importance of adhering to truth. In these next pages I'd like to share my thoughts on this, I really think it's the most vital subject for our lives. I'm using quotes from the bible (in bold italics) so that it doesn't come across as just my personal opinion.

2 - What is truth? "Be true men ..." What does he mean by being true? It's becoming more popular to say there's no absolute truth, just have an open mind and everyone's opinion is equally right. My favourite example in defining truth is to imagine a passenger train about to enter a long dark tunnel which then comes out onto a bridge spanning a deep gorge. But the bridge has collapsed! As the train approaches the tunnel, it is urgently signalled to stop by a railwayman to alert the driver and passengers of the danger ahead. Now is there an actual truth to be believed and therefore acted on, or should the warning be merely taken as an opinion, with each passenger to decide for themselves according to their own opinion of what the situation might be?

I mentioned earlier that a cargo of bulk sugar to be discharged at Liverpool had become as hard as concrete. During my apprenticeship when we were returning to Liverpool on the "Ajana" with a full cargo of bulk sugar, we tied up alongside at Panama before entering the canal to top up our main fresh water tank. I was told to help the shipwright with his job. A hose line was connected from the hydrant ashore to the tank's valve on the main deck, then the water turned on. As the hours passed into the night, the chippy left it with me, saying he was going below for a break, and to call him when the tank was filled. However, things turned a little more dramatic. After some hours, the ship started listing. That didn't concern me though, it was probably the ship starting to rest on the bottom as the tide dropped, (just like the Everard ships did when alongside in the Thames); I was only interested in the water tank, and it hadn't filled yet. However, it did concern the officer of the watch, it was his ultimate responsibility. Opinions and probabilities would not solve the problem. When the chippy came back on deck he realized the tank was taking a long time to fill. He opened the manhole

hatch lid and alas, the hold was half full of water! On further inspection, the water pipe was found to have burst, and was pouring the water into the cargo of raw sugar! Truth is the reality we need to know.

Captain Trivett is telling us to 'be true', referring to the use of our navigation books in comparison to the Bible. Our first need was to be able to observe both the stars we were sighting and the horizon. This could only happen at morning and evening twilights; (the same with terrestrial navigation at night, needing moonlight or a lighthouse). And so we have our first comparison of using the factual truth of our navigational books with the Bible's truth; they both require some light to enable us to see reality and so find our way. "Your word is a light for my path" Ps 119v105.

So, gathering on the bridge with our navigational books ready on the chart table and the lid of the chronometer box opened, we'd take our sextants out to the bridge wing, select the first of 2 or 3 suitable stars with appropriate altitudes above the horizon and good cross bearings with each other. Bracing ourselves on the moving deck for a steady sight, we'd bring the star down to the horizon to measure its altitude, and then, counting the seconds, return through the wheelhouse to the chartroom to read the chronometer. Having identified each star, knowing its altitude at the exact GMT to the nearest second, we'd go to our navigational books and spend fifteen to twenty minutes in serious calculation. We used the information in our navigation books as actual facts; any variation to accuracy was in our own physical ability in taking the sights and doing the calculations. There's a difference between a fixed position from our star sights, and an estimated 'dead reckoning' position. Imagine navigating with D.R. positions through dangerous reefs and sandbanks!

3- God and the Bible Why would Captain Trivett be so concerned for us to hold to the truth? He says "I allude to the Bible". Before we consider life in this world as a voyage, our first decision is, does God really exist? To accept the Bible as actual truth first needs acknowledging that God actually exists.

"Anyone who does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar" 1 John 5v10.

The very first words in the Bible say "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" then it says "what may be known about Him is plain to everyone..." Rom 1v19, but we've "exchanged the truth of God for a lie." v25. The world today prefers its 'big bang' theory as an alternative to God's existence; 'In the beginning there was nothing, and then it exploded with a big bang'. So what about the day before? The world's view is that over millions of years the world is gradually evolving to perfection, the opposite to what is actually happening... "The world in its present form is passing away." 1 Cor 7v31

The first half of the Bible gives a history of God dealing with the world to demonstrate His method: a promised destination; our need to change the course of our life's voyage and our total inability to do it without His help. The second half shows us how He's working this out; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then it says "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" John 1v14, so meaning the Word is actually Christ himself. It records history revealing the reality of His life, death and coming alive again after He'd been dead for three days. If this didn't actually happen, it'd be a deceitful book with all its false warnings and promises. It says that itself; "If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" 1 Cor 15v14. It's recorded as history by witnesses who were actually there. Like the song by Carl Perkins in my DVD 'Class of 69' - "I was there when it happened, don't you think I ought to know; I was there when it happened, I watched Memphis give birth to rock & roll."

The Bible is all about actual truth, it doesn't hide anything. For example Peter, as a close friend of Christ, said "even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." Matt 26v35. But when Christ was about to be crucified, we read... "Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. 'You also were with Jesus', she said. But he denied it before them

all. 'I don't know what you're talking about', he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, 'This fellow was with Jesus'. He denied it again, with an oath: 'I don't know the man!' After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, 'Surely you are one of them'. Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, 'I don't know the man!' There are many other examples, like King David one night secretly watching the girl next door having a bath, seducing her to have sex with him and then organizing her husband's death to hide what he'd done when she became pregnant. Even Noah, after the flood, got drunk and naked! The Bible keeps to actual truth.

So here's the great challenge that our first Worcester captain has gives us. Are we going to accept the Bible as truth, or 'let it remain in the bottom of your sea chests' ? How important is actual truth to our life and its following consequences? "I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe." John 13v19

4 - God's Plan and our Response. To organise a voyage, there first needs to be a purpose. Our ship owner's first commitment was to decide the types of cargoes to be carried and so requiring appropriately designed ships, such as passenger liners, bulk ore carriers, oil tankers or tramp steamers. Imagine sending an oil tanker to take passengers on a cruise, or a cruise liner to carry bulk oil! Just like ship owners had a purpose in the design of their ships, the Bible tells us God has a purpose in creating us and the world. So, why are we here?

That's the reason God gives for giving us the Bible, to explain it all, that He has a very definite purpose, is totally in control of everything, and His ultimate and perfect plan is going to finally come about. That makes the Bible the most important of all truth.

"God created man in his own image." Gen 1v27. That must mean we have similar personalities; the main one being love, which is to bring us our greatest experience of joy. This is the reason God gives in deciding to create us; for His own glory in the greatest joy of us all living together forever in a loving relationship. "I will be your God and you will be My people," Lev 26v12.

His first step in creating us and the whole universe as our environment was all perfect (including us!) "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good." Gen 1v31. We were given total freedom to look after it all, using our minds, differing personalities and physical abilities. "...God said, 'Let them rule over... all the earth,' v26. But then what happened?

First, the devil said "I will be like God" Isaiah 14v14, then he said to Eve "you will be like God" Gen 3v5, and she listened. God let this happen, as part of His ultimate plan. If we were then left in the perfect world as it was when first created, our total interest would be the opposite reason for God creating us. We'd be content with living our own way, enjoying our own pleasures in a life of bliss in the 'Garden of Eden'! So the next step of God's plan was to remove us out of there, "...the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden" Gen 3v23 into a world that He has deliberately cursed, "...because you have done this... cursed is the ground for your sake." v17. Although my dictionary describes 'curse' as a decree of punishment, 'for our sake' has a greater meaning... 'for our best interest'!

That's how we can understand why such terrible things happen in the world when people ask, "If God is a God of love, why does He allow it all?" "I bring prosperity and create disaster; I the Lord do all these things." Isaiah 45v7 It's all 'for our sake'. Although God's invention of death at the end of our life's voyage is an act of His judgment, it's got a much greater purpose. It gives everyone a warning that this life is only temporary and so an urgency in considering the destinations ahead and our need to be on the right course. But for us to genuinely love God, we first need to see this love in action. "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Rom 5v8. He sent His own Son to become one of us and live a perfect life, and then take on our punishment! The judge takes the punishment, not an innocent third party. There was no greater cost to God than the blood of His

own Son. All we need to do is to believe, "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." John 3v16; because "all will be condemned who have not believed the truth." 2 Thess 2v11.

Christ's death for us is a combination of legal punishment and loving forgiveness. The Bible describes this amazing compatibility in God's personality - "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Ps 85, just like we've experienced the ocean's waves and swell existing together in totally opposite directions!

We've been designed to enjoy a loving relationship with God and each other for eternity. The joy we seek in this present world will not give us the real joy we've been created for.

5 Crossing the Bar A voyage is a journey from somewhere to somewhere, so before we set out, we need not only a destination, but also a starting place so that we can set our course between the two.

When we look to our own life, we've already travelled most of our voyage; our starting place is well behind us. So to be on our correct course in life, we need to have a clear knowledge based on actual truth, not our own personal opinion or wishful thinking. God says in the Bible that He's chosen to reveal this otherwise hidden truth to us, giving us the opportunity to reset our course for the right destination. This is our first "Worcester" captain's continual challenge to us, 'I wish to make a comparison between the use to be made of another book which is part of a sailor's outfit, and your navigation books... do not let it remain in the bottom of your sea chests'. Are we going to ignore the urgent truth of the Bible, which Captain Trivett says he is alluding to, and just go our own way?

Where is our life in this world heading? Does it matter? Without the Bible, the best answer we can come up with is not to think about it; how morbid to dwell on the reality of death!

The very first pages of the Bible give a clear picture of our starting place. After we were created, we decided to go our own way. (Well, it was Adam and Eve, but we've inherited their fallen nature.) Adam and Eve had been warned that if they disobeyed God, "...you will surely die" Gen 3v3 and so now "...man is destined to die..." Heb 9v27. God's plan is to let us go our way, and in His grace has made it a voyage, with the invention of physical death at its end. ("... sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men..." Rom 5v12) Our death is the doorway to what is to follow, it's 'crossing the bar'. We've been created to exist for eternity, (God has "... set eternity in the hearts of men..." Eccl 3v11.), so where will our eternity be? Our ultimate destination is after this life, and the ways leading to it are referred to as either narrow or broad ways. "For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." Matt 7 v13-14. Just as our navigational books were a collection of facts to be used in our navigation, so the Bible shows us the way to our eternal destination. But first it needs a decision, followed by action.

Our ultimate destination for eternity is either heaven, which is where God has designed us for, or a place of absolute sorrow and misery which the Bible calls hell, where those that reject God will be. There's no third option. What is coming is forever, and they're absolute opposites. Talking about hell is so unpopular and even seen as ridiculous. 'There's no God, after this life we're just buried in a nice coffin, and eventually the worms will eat us', so... "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." 1 Cor 15v32. But the Bible warns us "The fool says in his heart 'there is no God'." Ps.14v1

'If the Bible is true, then hell is real and true. Hell will be an intense and unutterable woe. Our mind can never fully realize it. The miseries of mind and conscience are far worse than those of the body. The whole extent of hell, the present suffering, the bitter recollection of the past, the hopeless prospect of the future, will never be thoroughly known except by those who go there. Hell is eternal. 'Forever' is the most solemn saying in the Bible.' (from 'Wheat and Chaff'

by JC Ryle). "The pains of hell are more excruciating than any conceivable on this earth, so are the pleasures of heaven infinitely more delightful than any we can presently imagine." (from 'Heaven and Hell' by Edward Donnelly).

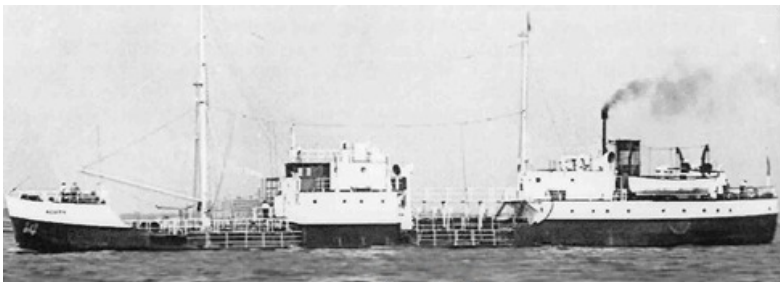
The destinations are not unfair, we have the choice now. God wants us to make our own choice. He says "Let us reason together" Isaiah 1v18. The right motive in deciding our destination should be realizing God's love in our relationship with Him as our captain, not just in escaping the horror of hell.

6 - Knowing our captain Just like our ship's captain requires us to use our navigation books and instruments, so God requires us to use His book as we navigate through this temporary life in the world. That's what Captain Trivett was implying when he said 'I allude to the Bible, and ask you as a personal favour to not let it remain in the bottom of your sea chests.' The Bible is saying that God is our captain, our ultimate authority, and so demands our trust and obedience. He promises to be always with His crew, protecting and comforting them and never to lose even one. "God has said, never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Heb 13v5. He promises that every single person who signs on His ship will never be lost, guaranteeing a safe arrival at their destination. But the opposite will be the case for whoever is not on His ship. That's what the history of Noah's Ark is all about, for us to see in history an example of God's ultimate plan of judgment, after giving a life of warning of what is to come.

To maintain our course, we need continual guidance, strength and encouragement from our captain. That means submitting to His authority. The captain has total control, even in the ship's saloon, to my frustration! Once in my apprenticeship after finishing dessert at the dining table, I winked at the steward hoping for a chance of seconds. The captain sent for me, having noticed what I'd done, and with a serious frown he quoted an official rule that "Your attitude to the foc's'le hands should always be civil and courteous, but you should avoid becoming too familiar".

One evening on Everard's "Acuity" we were tied up alongside at Greenhithe, just up from the "Worcester". The captain, before he went ashore, ordered everyone to be back aboard for

sailing at 2300. The shipwright was to fill the freshwater tank, so he connected up to the shore supply, turned it on, and then went ashore for a few drinks. I went to my cabin and turned in for a sleep before sailing. Next thing, I suddenly woke to find water lapping under my bunk! The ship had temporarily sat on the river bed with the low tide and, being on an angle, the tank had filled and overflowed into



ss "Acuity"

the accommodation. I remember bucketing water out the porthole in my panic. Then the first mate returned aboard after his time ashore in the pub. The captain hadn't returned at his appointed time, so the mate took charge, telling us we had been ordered to put to sea. We started sailing down the Thames without the captain, with a drunken mate in command, and a police boat chasing us! "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Matt 6:24

Another example... crossing the Atlantic on the "Ajana", the ship was rolling moderately and a few of us sitting in the smoke room heard a strange rattling noise on the deck above. Going up with the 1st mate to investigate, we found the captain lying in his bunk and an empty whisky bottle rolling back and forth across the deck. The mate said 'get that man out of my bunk', (jokingly implying his promotion to replace the captain!) How opposite is that to the story of a ship sailing from the UK to America back in the 18th century when the captain had his family aboard with him. One night a severe storm blew up, as we know is usual when crossing the Atlantic, and waves began crashing across the decks as the ship pitched and rolled in the

mounting sea. All hands were on deck under the captain's orders to maintain control. One sailor was sent down below to warn the passengers of the impending dangers, but when he knocked on the cabin door of the captain's young daughter, she quickly asked 'where's my daddy?' When she was told he was on the bridge, she responded with 'then all is well', and went back to sleep! She trusted her captain. "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Ps 4v8.

A ship needs its captain! And that's what we need in this voyage of life, a captain we can trust. "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." Ps 46v1. He guarantees our safe arrival, and promises that not one of his crew will be lost. "...I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost, only the ship will be destroyed." Acts 27v22

Our goal is not guided by our own knowledge or ability of trying our best to live a good life. It's believing what God shows us in the Bible. We either submit to our will, which is governed by our fallen human nature, or we submit to Christ as our captain. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Rom 12v2

Our Captain knows best, not the crew. Here's a quirky memory; once when we were about to sail and at our stations, as apprentice I was on the bridge with the movement book. The new 1st mate on the foc's'le, having difficulty with a few things, radioed to the bridge "nothing on this ship seems to work properly". The captain's immediate reply was 'There's nothing wrong with this ship mister, it's the people on it!'

Without knowing and trusting our Captain, it's impossible for anyone to understand what they read in the Bible. We must submit to his authority. "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them..." 1 Cor 2v14. Our joy and direction of life depend on how well we know his Word. "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love... I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." John 15v10-11

We can make the decision to change our course, but it's more than just accepting the Bible as truth. ("You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder!" James 2v19). We must use the truth, obeying it and having our total trust in it.

Let's compare the covenant that God offers us, with the one our ship owner made with us, our 'indentures'... 'The said apprentice hereby voluntarily binds himself unto the said company and their assigns for the term of three years from the date hereof, and he hereby covenants that he will faithfully serve the said company and obey their lawful commands, and that he will not absent himself from their service without leave; in consideration whereof, the said company hereby covenants with the said apprentice, that during the said term they will use all proper means to teach him or cause him to be taught to perform the duties of a deck officer, and provide him with sufficient meat, drink and lodging, and with medicine and medical and surgical assistance and pay to the said apprentice agreed wages, and twelve shillings in lieu of washing, the said apprentice providing for himself all wearing apparel and necessities. It is further agreed that if the apprentice is convicted of any offence under the Merchant Shipping Acts, the company may at their discretion terminate this agreement by written notice, and all obligations hereunder on either side shall thereupon cease.'

This compares with God's first covenant with us, the promise of eternal life, "I shall be your God and you shall be my people", and the warning that if disobeyed "...you will surely die" Gen 2v17. But the Bible then tells us Adam and Eve broke this covenant, that God let this all happen so that He could show and teach us the truth of His Word. Again with our sea voyage, when it finished and we were paid off, we were given a certificate of discharge which officially recorded our working ability and general conduct, normally achieving 'VERY GOOD VERY GOOD'.

When our life voyage finishes, the Bible also reveals a similar official report... "man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement" Hebrews 9v27. And here again is the greatest message the Bible is giving us; "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3v16 Jesus obeyed the law, living a perfect life of obedience, fulfilling God's covenant on our behalf, and also took the punishment for our sin. That means our certificate of discharge when we die will be 'VERY GOOD, VERY GOOD' if we've submitted to him as our captain, because His life and not ours is the subject of the report. It's not earned by us being religious, "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags." Isaiah 64v6. The Bible says "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Rom 10v13. Not one person who comes to Him will be turned away. "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." John 5v24 That's 'crossing the Bar'!

Form 5  
No. 41 and 47  
Nav. (M & S) Reg. 10

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA  
Navigation Act

No 422054

Form M & S-5  
(Sept. 71)

### CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE

Name of Ship	Official No.	Port of Registry	Tonnage Gross	Net	Trade
S. S. IRON HUNTER	332288	MELBOURNE	34048	20557	FOREIGN GAIN
Name of Seaman	Year of Birth	Place of Birth	Capacity and No. of Certificates (if any)		
Graham Elliott	1944	Adney	1ST MATE 25 1741		
Date of Engagement	Place of Engagement	Date of Discharge	Place of Discharge		
3/1/74	Newcastle	13/8/74	Brisbane		

I CERTIFY that the entries in this certificate are correct.

Signed this 13<sup>th</sup> day of August, 1974

(Signature of Master)

Signed in my presence

(Signature of Superintendent)

COPY OF MASTER'S REPORT  
plotted if the seaman so desires

GENERAL V.G.

EFFICIENCY V.G.

AS BOARDING (where applicable)

Our hope in God as our captain is a sure hope. The Bible says that "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." Heb 6v19. "Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are my Saviour, and my hope is in You all day long." Ps 25v5

While it's our responsibility to choose to trust God, we are dependant on God for the ability to do it, for "... it is God who is at work in you, to will and to act, according to His good purpose." Phil 2v13. We can only say 'God, I don't understand, but I want to trust You'. We should have all our confidence in our captain, who will bring us to a safe arrival. He has promised to not lose anyone who comes to Him. "The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you or forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Deut 31v8, "and this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me..." John 6v39." Our safe arrival at the end of this life's voyage is not earned, but reached by our trusting in Christ as our captain.

7 - Perseverance Our decision to trust God as our captain is only the beginning of our voyage, it then requires keeping our eyes on our new destination. Weak faith is like sea sickness on a voyage; we start off sea sick, because we've no experience. The more adversities we experience on the voyage, the more able we become in handling them. That's why we're warned that a decision for heaven will mean a hard voyage. Christ as our captain warns us "In this world you will have trouble." John 16v33. Remember God's reason for giving us his Word, "I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe"; so, "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." John 14v27 & 29.

We have three enemies when God is our captain, bringing us the storms in life. Firstly, our fallen human nature is still in us, wanting our own desires to have priority. "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it." Luke 9v24. Then there's the world offering the easy, comfortable, self-pleasing way. "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Col 3v2 When we look to the world, we get "tossed back and forth by the waves, blown here and there by every wind of teaching" Eph 4v14. Finally there's the devil, who hates God. He's very active in bringing adversity, luring us off our course. "The enemy rages against us". But if we stick to our captain and His Word, we'll successfully defeat him. "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." 1 Peter 5v7

That's our voyage. We're only travelling through this world, not belonging to it; we become "...strangers and pilgrims in this world." Heb 11v13. So, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." Phil 3v13 "...let us throw off everything that hinders and

the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus..." Heb 12v1. That's our destination, a life in heaven where Christ awaits us. In a worldly life there's no interest in a destination, just looking for joy in our present circumstances.

Let's compare an ocean cruise and a sea voyage with Christ's warning of the wide and narrow way.



With an ocean cruise, a destination is of least importance, it's all about giving total priority to enjoying each day, sitting in deck chairs, swimming in the pool, strolling the decks and enjoying the dinners and entertainment events. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." 1 Cor 15v32. But joy now in this present world is temporary. "...I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry'. But God said to him, 'You fool, this very night your life will be demanded from you'." Luke 12v19-20

On a voyage, we have our eyes on our destination. Likewise, when God is our captain, He has promised an eternal joy awaiting us at our destination. This requires us to have hope in what we haven't yet experienced in this life. "...hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." Rom 8v24-25.

In the oral exam for my master's ticket, the first question assumed I was master of a passenger ship in Brisbane and a cyclone was approaching, what would I do? Of course the right answer is to leave port as soon as possible, there's no greater danger than being next to land, bad weather is always best fought out at sea where there's room to move about in contending with it. And then what would I do? The examiner was testing if I knew the characteristics of these 'tropical revolving storms' with their differing paths and wind directions. We can compare that with the danger of worldliness in this life's voyage. We need to keep clear of the shallowness of little faith and the sandbanks of a love for worldly things, and the jagged rocks of pride. We need to be out in the ocean with our eyes and hopes on heaven, our destination, where there'll be "...no longer any sea" Rev 21v1 to contend with.

As we know, the adversities are not always obvious; currents are totally invisible, no matter how careful we kept watch. A wind comes up at any time, blowing us sideways off course, either gently or dramatically. But adversities can be used to advantage, if we have the right knowledge. For example, there's a permanent 4 knot southerly current that flows down the east coast of NSW. While a great advantage when heading south, it can also be used wisely when heading north. As this current passes headlands, it causes a counter current, albeit slower, next to the shore, and so the expedient action heading north is to hug the coast. (I make no mention of any distractions on the beaches...)

As 3rd mate on the 8-12 night watch, we were steaming up the Queensland coast on C.S.R.'s "Tambuda", which meant travelling within the Great Barrier Reef with all its dangerous shallows, reefs, rocky islands, tidal swells and currents. It was usual for ships to have a Torres Strait pilot aboard for such a passage, but C.S.R. so continuously sailed in that area that they were trusted with the ability to navigate without one. Being an old steamer built in 1938, the "Tambuda" had no gyroscope or radar, just a magnetic compass in the wheelhouse and on the monkey island. There being no lighthouses and barely any recognizable landmarks for bearings, I had to stand in the rain over the compass, waiting for the next flash of lightning to light up a hill or point of land for a bearing. As well as the poor visibility, the ship was rolling and pitching, causing the magnetic compass to be continuously swinging from one way to another, and of course there was the continual rain drops in my eyes.



But not all distractions to a voyage come from adversities. When sailing to Hamilton in the Great Lakes of Canada and after climbing the locks of the St Lawrence Seaway, Lake Ontario had to be crossed. On our starboard side were the 'Thousand Islands', a luxurious pleasure resort, where girls would be sunbathing in the scantiest of clothing. I make no comment on the accuracy of our ship's course, only making the point that not all distractions appear as adversities. "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Cor 4v18. "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." Heb 2v1.



ss "Tambua"

One of the most effective ways that we are trained by our Captain is with trouble, so God deliberately allows adversity. "...do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you." 1 Peter 4v12. It's trusting the truth of His word that keeps us on the right course and prepares us for our destination. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." 2 Cor 4v17.

The whole purpose of adversities is to train us to keep our eyes on Christ our captain, and to long for the comfort that awaits us in heaven, not in this world (which has been cursed by God, 'for our sake'). "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching..." Eph 4v14

One of my younger sisters died recently from cancer. She would often quote from the 23rd Psalm "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me." Behind the sorrow of approaching death, she showed a deep joy of her awaiting destination. She knew death was only a gateway, and kept emphasizing "...walking through the valley of death." That's 'crossing the bar'! "Put your hope in the Lord, both now and forever more." Ps 131v3 Our captain has promised "I will never leave you" Heb 13v5, and "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you". Isaiah 43v2.

The greatest joy of a sea voyage was the destination ahead of us. All our interests and joys awaited us there, like being paid off, going on leave, meeting up with our wife or girlfriend, our family and friends etc. This gave us the needed enthusiasm and endurance to push on through all the adverse conditions. So it is with the voyage of life. Christ warns us that it will not be easy, to count the cost before we decide our destination. Voyaging this life with God as our captain will put us into conflict with the world's cruising, but His promise gives us a sure hope. "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope." Rom 15v4. We have a sure hope. "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Heb 11v1. "Who hopes for what he already has?" Rom 8v24.

8 - CONCLUSION In summary, what is truth? We can believe anything we want to, but it doesn't mean it's true. Preferring to 'let it remain in the bottom of your sea chests' is because what the Bible says is opposed to our natural desires. "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires." Rom 8v5

What's so special about the Bible? It reveals who God is, who we are, what our life is about, how it started, where it's now heading, that there's a day coming... and it gives us the wisdom and understanding we need to navigate our life through this fallen world.

There's nothing worse than ignoring God's truth. Even murder can be forgiven, but not this sin. "...do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising

that God's kindness leads you to repentance?" Rom 2 v 1-2 (warning us not to waste these days of God's mercy being available.)

For me personally, I've had three experiences that have challenged me with the reality of truth. The first was just months before I left Australia to join the "Worcester", when my father took our family to hear the famous evangelist Billy Graham in Sydney. His message was a warning to everyone that there's one of two destinations awaiting each one of us. (Of course Billy Graham was holding the Bible in his hand.)

He put it so bluntly, and his plea for our response was so urgent! He said that "many who go to church, who think they are good people and expect to be in heaven, will find out to their horror that they're not truly saved, that they haven't really committed their lives to Christ, and that they're faced with spending eternity in hell". He said that "God has promised to not turn back anyone who comes to Him, and that now could be the last opportunity to give your lives to Christ, that there's a day coming when Christ himself has warned it'll be too late, the door will be shut!"

I never gave the matter much thought until a few years later in New York during my apprenticeship on the "Ajana". Soon after tying up at Brooklyn, the police came aboard to warn us when going ashore to always stay together in a group and travel directly into the city on the train. That night, about midnight we were ambling through the centre of New York city when we passed a fellow on a street corner, yelling out the Bible message. I didn't need to hear what he was on about, my conscience reminded me of Billy Graham's urgent message. Finally, after a few more years and being 3rd mate on BHP's "Iron Derby" in Newcastle discharging iron ore, a customs officer came aboard expressing concern having seen a couple of seamen being let ashore with some luggage while we were off shore awaiting a berth. But then, his real motive for visiting the ship became apparent; belonging to the Merchant Navy Christian Fellowship he wanted to warn and encourage us to think about the eternal consequences of this life's voyage, with its ultimate destination after 'crossing the bar'.

We can only conclude that actual truth is God's own word that He's given us in the Bible, and understanding it is not governed by our own wisdom, but is given to us when we put our trust in Him. Paul writes "... I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God... not with wise and persuasive words... so that your faith might not rest on man's wisdom, but on God's power." 1 Cor 2v1-5 We can't know God on our own, no matter how hard we try. His light shines in the darkness, but the world can't see it. "In Him was life, and that light was the light of men" John 1v4 "...but men love darkness rather than light." John 3v19.

The voyage of life is only passing through this world; it's God preparing us for eternity with Him. The journey is not the main thing, it's the destination. If the voyage is more enjoyable than the destination, we're foolish. "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." 1 Cor 15v19.

We got our enjoyment of a sea voyage from the anticipation and hope of our arrival at our destination. That compares with the even greater joy that our Captain has promised awaits us at our heavenly destination. "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me..." John 14v2

The Lord is my pilot; I shall not drift.  
He lights me across the dark waters. He steers me through the deep channels.  
He keeps my log. He guides me by the Star of Holiness for His Name's sake.  
As I sail through the storms and tempests of life I will dread no danger;  
for You are near me; Your love and care shelter me.  
You prepare a haven before me in the Homeland of Eternity;  
You quieten the waves with oil; my ship rides calmly.  
Surely sunlight and starlight shall be with me wherever I sail,  
and at the end of my voyaging I shall rest in the port of my God  
By Captain J.H. Roberts (1874)