

IDLE FLAPPING OF THE SAIL IS DOUBT

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**The idle flapping of the sail is doubt;
Faith swells it full to breast the breasting seas.
Hold, conscience, fast, and rule the ruling helm;
Hell's freezing North no tempest can send out,
But it shall toss thee homeward to thy leas;
Boisterous wave-crest never shall o'erwhelm
Thy sea-float bark as safe as field-borne rooted elm.**

Here, in a few graphic, poetic lines, lies an imagery which envelopes a sphere of deep Christian teaching. We, you and I, are in a storm on the open sea. Our sailing ship is ill equipped, like the bark of a tree – floating. Our one means of power and holding our course is our sail. Doubt, a steady enemy, causes our sail to hang limp catching no wind, giving no movement, and holding no steady course. Sailors have a term for this called 'luffing'. The wind is blowing but the sail is set directly into the wind so that it blows on both sides of the sail. If the sail is 'set' to either right or left it will catch the wind and empower the boat. Feeding our doubts, dwelling on them produces spiritual lugging and gets us nowhere. We sit like a cork, bouncing to and fro as the waves slap us first in one direction and then the other.

But Faith! Believing what Jesus says, faith in Father's love, faith in the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence swells the sail. Faith if we allow, fills the sail with power and direction so as the world's waves beat at us, we plow through, holding our course. As the Holy Spirit guides and we hold fast we rule the helm. That is, we go in the direction our inner guide reveals. The waves of the world's tribulations come at us breasting us but the Holy Spirit points the way, directly into the waves so we breast the breasting waves. If we steer away from the waves, trying to avoid what Father has placed in our lives we are in danger of tipping over as the waves hit us broadside.

Hell sends out its tempests – the strongest it knows how. Satan messes with everyone but works on Christians most of all. He hates God and because we belong to God he hates us as well. He will send every temptation, every trial, every evil thing at us just because he wants to frustrate Father and hinder us. But faith provides the power so that every hell sent storm only tosses us nearer to our Lord and His safe hands. Steadily, in our lives recurs the truth, "Satan meant it for evil but God meant it for good." As we stand at the helm, steering steadfastly into the breasting waves we are driven ever nearer to our Lord and safety. No storm can ever overwhelm us and our little sea floating bark is as safe as the mighty deep rooted Elm out in the field.

Written under the auspices of New Life Inc., a non-profit Christian organization. If you are interested in other writings contact: R.L. Pendleton, 322 Quincy St, Rapid City, SD 57701-2813 or contact us at our Web Page: www.rapidnet.com/~newlife. There are no charges for writings and there will be no request for donations