

Striking the Sails Heb. 10:39

“But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed.” – *humeis de ouk semen hupostoles eis apoleian*.

“But we are not shrinking back unto destruction.”

The present active indicative of *eimi* shows what their status quo, their present existence was; that is, they were not of *hupostle*.

The descriptive gen. of *hupostle* tells what kind of people they were, “Not the shrinking back crowd.”

The word *hupostle*, from *hupostello*, meant; to shrink back, to draw back, to withdraw. In a military action, it meant to retreat from battle.

In nautical terminology, it meant to lower the sail, so slackening the course. But for a naval vessel at sea, there’s a reason for lowering all sails. Even in a storm, some sails are left up for propulsion to provide steerage for the ship. The only time sails were lowered was when the ship finally hit port and was safely anchored inside the breakwater.

So what’s the meaning behind a slackening in the course due to a lowering of the sails?

There is one analogy in military terminology to this, and that is called “Striking the Sails”. When two combat vessels were fighting each other at sea; and the one had dominated the other to the place of surrender, it would strike it’s sails. That is, cut them down, or lower them, to let the other ship know that it had given up, and no longer wanted to fight.

Retreat, in the Army metaphor, is the same idea. Although, one may retreat to keep from surrendering.

Hupostle meant to strike the sails, to give up, to withdraw from combat, to retreat from the battle. It looks at the believer who was in combat, but for some reason had given up. These Christians are the “Giver-uppers”; the one’s who turn from: doctrine, faith, grace, and the angelic conflict.

Combat here for the Christian, takes in the entire concept of: the angelic conflict, God's plan for your life, living the Christian way of life, warfare against satan, living by faith, grace, truth, under the doctrinal system of God, etc..

It is fought by, sticking to God's game plan, and utilizing the various grace provisions he supplies. Faith, Doctrine, positive volition, the Holy Spirit, are all vital aspects of this. So much so, that success is dependent on them.

Sails on a ship were often used as a metaphor for faith; the chart equals the Word; the Course to sail is God's Plan for your life; the rudder or Helm are your volitional decisions; the Compass is our constant orientation to his grace, His Word, etc.; and of course, the sails refers to the exercising of one's faith.

So that, when a believer "strikes his sails", it's saying that he no longer wants to live by faith, he's giving up! And now he wants to retreat back into the World System.

He's made all that progress across the open sea, following the course laid out by God for him to sail, but the opposition of the enemy and the storms of life have been too much for him; so now he wants to strike his sails of faith and give up! (A negative volition decision).

But in so doing, he not only wants to give up living by faith, but gives up on Doctrine and Doctrinal teaching in a true Local Church. He might turn to religion and still attend some Church; but in essence, he has given up on living the Christian life, on following God's Will for his life, on God blessing him by grace, and all other related concepts.

So *hupostello* meant to shrink back from doing God's Will, to withdraw from the battle, to strike the sails of faith, to give up the battle, to turn tail and run, to give up living by faith in the grace-faith life.

But one of the realities of existing is, that every action and decision has a consequence; and so does striking the sails of faith! When we decide that we don't want to continue on any further in the battle; that we don't want to live the life of grace, faith, doctrine; that we're tired of fighting the Angelic Conflict just to stay on course in God's Will for our lives. And whether out of arrogance, cowardice, weariness, lust, etc., we strike our sails of faith, then there will be consequences, which will be brought out in the next phase.

"Unto destruction", *eis apoleian*, tells us what's going to happen, the ruin of the soul.. Not it's extinction, but it's ruin; the loss of it's well being.

In the Greek, these two phases stand off against each other in a comparison. We are not those described as Retreators, Quitters, Giver-uppers unto destruction; but of those Holding to faith unto the preserving of the soul. It appears from the parallel construction that *psuche*, soul, is supplied to to the soul's destruction or preservation.

The crowd that strikes it's sails, is the crowd that quits living by faith, and grace, and doctrine, and the Christian Way of Life, and the Plan and Will of God for their Life; and now becomes involved in the Worlds System, and governed by the lust patterns of their flesh natures. And, they are now moving towards the destruction of their souls, and will arrive at that, if they don't repent and get back on the right track. While the crowd that holds to faith, holds to Doctrine, The Christian Way of Life, and God's plan for their life under Doctrine, will be moving towards the direction of the preservation of their souls, and they will arrive at that place.

"Unto destruction", *eis apoleian*, is the preposition *eis* with the accusative case, showing not only movement and direction towards something, in which the believer is heading, but the results of actually ending up there. Which is to say, that once a believer strikes his sails of faith, then he will be heading in the direction of the destruction of his soul and will end up there! Not it's extinction; his soul will not be killed, but in the loss of his souls' well being. Which brings in all the ideas of; mental disorders, emotional disorders, multiple personality disorders, etc..

Now why is this? Rather than going into the lengthy matter of the soul's fragmentation, loss of stability, loss of cohesiveness, the waning of the light of the personality, etc., it would be better to approach this from the nautical metaphor again.

We have two ships at sea warring with each other. In the first ship we have a crew of men, who through; weariness, arrogance, stupidity, the tossing sea, the barrage of the enemy, dis-orientation, loss of purpose, panic under pressure, prolonged engagement of battle, breakdown of military discipline, discouragement, and an incomplete or erroneous knowledge of the enemy's strengths and abilities; they give up and strike their sails.

Now their big mistake here, along with all the others, is an incomplete and inadequate understanding of the enemy. They think that this enemy is somehow bound by the rules of fair play! They are subjective in that they think the enemy will treat them as they would them. But it's the farthest thing from the truth.

What the enemy plans on doing is torturing them, when they get them; making sport of them; inflicting on them the greatest amount of mental and physical pain that they can, while still keeping them alive!

And that's what's in store for the believer, who turns away from the battle, away from the grace and faith live. Maximum ruin and destruction [loss of well being] for the soul, the inner child. Where the soul is tormented by the Tormentors and the Sin Nature, while it and the body are kept alive. What the believer has to do is not surrender at any cost, for his deliverance from these things is found in staying in the battle, utilizing the grace provisions of God, until he eventually overcomes the enemy. In fact, you could say, that to fight on in faith and doctrine is the only option and recourse he has. For lowering his sails of faith is not only defeat, but sure destruction for his soul. So he has to fight on in faith to survive spiritually.

2. "But of those who believed and are saved" – *alla pisteos eis peripoiesin psuches*.

"But of faith unto preservation of the soul".

We had seen how these two concepts stand off against each other. Giving up on faith and withdrawing from the battle, which will result in the utter ruin of the soul; and staying with faith, which results in the preservation of the soul, are the only choices we have!

In the analogy of the two ships at sea, we looked at several factors that could have caused the first ship to strike it's sails; arrogance, stupidity, weariness, dis-orientation, loss of purpose, panic under pressure, failure to implement strategy and tactics under pressure, prolonged engagements of battle, breakdown of military discipline, distorted understanding of the enemy's strengths and weaknesses, and intentions, all speak of internal factors they are subjected to.

The tossing of the sea, (the storms of life), and the battle against the enemy ship are external factors. Lowering our sails, (a bad decision), in either instance, is sure to result in either ship or crew, or both.

In the case of the storm, certain sails had to be lowered to keep the ship from capsizing, the mast from breaking, or the sails from tearing. But other sails had to be left up to provide steerage for the vessel. Without which, it would quickly capsize, killing all on board.

During a storm at sea, (which is analogous to the trials of life we go through), everything becomes dis-oriented and unstable. One may try to hold his course, but really now all his efforts are directed towards trying to survive the storm. After the storm has passed, then he can make corrections in his heading to get back on his original course. If he was blown off. But if he had no sails up, then he would have no steerage, regardless of how he managed the Helm. And, he would drift aimlessly around the sea, or be capsized by the first large swell or wave that came along. Remember, that ships are designed to go forwards, not sideways, (or backwards).

Remember also, that the Helm, from which one steers the ship, refers to the factor of the Christian's volition in making the right decisions to follow the plan of God for his life.

But, if there is no forward motion, there is no steerage, and the Helm is useless! And what provides the forward motion? The wind as it hits the sails. (The wind is the forward propulsion of God the Holy Spirit as He propels you forward in God's Plan for your life). And what do the sails refer to? The faith of the believer. So he has to keep the sails of faith up! Not only to keep his forward momentum going, and to keep on the plan of God, but to keep from being destroyed by the storm! Even if his faith is small, just a few small sails up in the storm, will keep him going.

No wind or no sails equals no forward movement and no direction. One has to move out in faith so that one's positive volition will have direction. Without faith, the believer is making decisions, but not going anywhere. He has to have forward motion, which faith provides, just as the wind in the sails, then his decisions will give him direction and put him on course. It's like putting the car in gear without the engine on.

What's the concept of lowering some of the sails and leaving a few up in a storm? And how does it relate to believers?

Commercial vessels left all the sails up that they thought prudent, to get as much speed as they could. Taking down some sails according to the intensity of the wind, and the skill, fear, faith or courage of the crew or Captain.

With the believer, he might only keep a few sails up because, 1) He's afraid the storm is too great, [afraid of life]; 2) afraid his ship can't handle it, [no confidence in God's provisions]. But even so, this is still good, because at least he has some sails of faith up, he has little faith, but is still moving forward in the Plan of God.

And in time, he can start leaving more sails up, even in the fiercest of storms; because time, experiences and the knowledge of the Word has taught him; 1) that these sails

won't rip, 2) this mast won't break, 3) the ship and hull can take the pounding of the seas, and 4) God regulates the storm! So in time, he learns to relax and "enjoy the ride".

Now the first external factor that we saw was the tossing of the storm at sea, and how important faith was to keep one's forward momentum going, without which, he would be adrift and be destroyed by the storm.

The second external factor, is his ongoing battle with the second ship, which was the enemy vessel.

Losing his sails during the battle meant that he couldn't maneuver, he couldn't even move; and now he has become a sitting duck for the enemy's guns; which would result in the loss of both ship and crew.

Striking his sails during the battle meant that he has given up and will be boarded by the enemy, with the ship and crew taken captive, who will then be shown as "trophy" of the enemy. And not only that, this enemy will take perverse pleasure in inflicting as much mental and physical torment on the men as they can, while keeping them alive physically.

And this becomes the fate of the Christian, who gives up in the Angelic Conflict; who strike his sails of faith, thus surrendering to the enemy. Let him not think that the Terms of the Geneva Convention will apply to him. For the enemy will take him captive to torture him; to inflict on him as much pain and suffering as he possibly can, all the while keeping him alive. Which is a figure of speech, to describe the mental and emotional disorders he will eventually develop, (psychosis, multiple personality disorders, etc.), as the result of him walking away from the grace, faith, doctrinal life of the Christian life.

So the only course of action that he has is to not give up! To not surrender! To not retreat! To keep going by faith, and to press the battle against the enemy! He has no other recourse.

But the writer of Hebrews says, "that we are not of that crowd who turn away from doctrine, faith, grace, resulting in their mental and emotional disorders, (destruction of the soul child's well being), but we belong to that crowd of faith, resulting in their soul's preservation. [the use of the preposition *eis* tells us that we are heading in a certain direction and that we will arrive at it. Either the preservation of the soul, it's well being; or the destruction of the soul, the loss of it's well being].

The word for preservation is *peripoiesis*; which means to keep safe, to preserve, to keep intact, to protect from damage, harm, spoiling. To protect it from being damaged any further.

So what we have is the destruction of the soul, or it's preservation. The one comes from turning from grace, faith, doctrine; the other comes from staying with them.

The destruction of the soul child speaks of it's ruin; it's being brought into a worsened condition; of it being brought into a damaged psychological condition, neurosis, psychosis, multiple personality disorders, etc.. To develop thing that one did not even have before. This is a situation, though, that pertains only to born again Christians.

The preservation of the soul child speaks of it being protected first of all from any further damage being done to it. Many enter the Christian life with much psychological abuse, and this passage tells us that it will be protected from any further damage being done to it. But also under the entire grace, faith, doctrine concept, this damage, in time, can be corrected. And as the process of growth and healing goes on, the soul becomes stronger and more stabilized.

So 1 Pet. 2:11 tells to hold ourselves back from fleshly lusts, which damage the soul. And Heb. 10:39 tells us to stick with doctrine, grace, faith, keeping our "sails of faith" up, thereby protecting and preserving the precious inner child of the soul.