

Pilgrim's



Pilgrim lived in the dark, dank, cargo hold of a sailing ship. He didn't realize the hold of the ship was dark and dank—for he had been born there and had lived there all his life. Pilgrim's eyes were used to the darkness, and being damp and cold seemed normal.

In fact, all of Pilgrim's friends and family had always lived in the cargo hold, and none of them

found it particularly dark or dank. It was all they knew.

For the most part, life in the cargo hold seemed pretty good. Pilgrim loved the stories that were told about the Captain of the ship. Some of his friends and family told stories of having glimpsed the Captain or heard his voice once. Pilgrim wanted so badly to meet the Captain someday, but it seemed impossible. All of Pilgrim's friends said that the Captain

wanted all good sailors to wear chains on their ankles and wrists, so Pilgrim did his best to wear his chains without complaint. Perhaps if he wore the chains long enough the Captain would one day notice him down in the cargo hold and commend him for being such a good sailor.

Pilgrim would often look up through the wood grid that formed a small square in the ceiling of the cargo hold. Pilgrim



Voyage

Rescued From the Darkness—Striving to bring others into the light

BY CHRISTOPHER A. LEE
(WITH REGARDS TO JOHN BUNYAN)

loved the light that would filter down through the cross work of the hatch. Occasionally, he would be able to see people walk by above the cargo hold. He would certainly like to see what was above the cargo hold, but there wasn't much chance of that as long as he was chained up, and he couldn't risk the anger of the Captain by removing the chains. Pilgrim knew the world above was not for him. He was a hold

dweller. Always had been, always would be.

Meeting A Person of Light

One day while Pilgrim was sitting under the small square of light, he suddenly noticed that one of the shapes that always darted past the hatch so quickly had actually stopped. A face was peering down at him through the hatch. It was hard to see the face with the bright light behind it. The face

looked more like a silhouette, but from the little that Pilgrim could see, the face looked kind.

The man's name was Evangel. Evangel told Pilgrim that he had once lived in the cargo hold himself, but had found that there was so much light, joy and happiness outside of the cargo hold that he couldn't stay any longer. What's more, he claimed that the Captain didn't want people to live in the cargo hold

and didn't want them to wear chains. Pilgrim didn't believe him. In fact, he was scared of this person from the light, but somehow he also wanted to hear more.

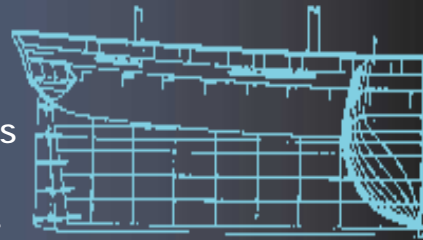
Evangel pulled out a parchment that contained a copy of all the Captain's orders and pressed it against the hatch so that Pilgrim could see. Evangel began explaining how the Captain wanted all the inhabitants of the ship to live in the light where they could learn to be real sailors. It was hard for Pilgrim to make out the parchment through the grid in the ceiling. The grid obscured the words of the parchment and there wasn't enough light in the hold to read. For Pilgrim to read he had to pull himself up closer to the hatch. This meant he had to loosen the chains on his ankles that held him to the floor. He left the chains on his wrists just to be safe, but was still able to grab the hatch and hang on long enough to read a few more words from the parchment.

The Captain's orders were wonderful! They said that anyone who wanted to be a sailor should let go of their chains, come up on deck and learn to sail! Pilgrim wanted this more than anything in the world, but the thought of leaving the hold was scary.

Warnings About People in the Light

Pilgrim's friends and family were becoming very worried about him. They began begging him to sit back down on the floor and put his ankle chains back on. They warned him how dangerous it was to read the parchment and try to interpret the Captain's orders on his own. They warned him about the people up in the light. They

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warned him how the people in the light would try to deceive him. They warned him how angry the Captain would be if he left the hold.

Pilgrim tried telling his friends and family about the Captain's orders to take off their chains and come into the light, but they just responded that he was trying to twist the Captain's orders. They told him that when the Captain said they should take off their chains it really meant that they could loosen certain links in the chains under certain conditions, but not too much, so it was probably better not to tamper with the chains at all. They pointed out that if you really looked at it correctly it could be seen that the Captain actually endorsed wearing chains as the best way to learn to sail. They told Pilgrim that he should sit down, put the chains back on and trust those who had been in the hold longer than he.

Pilgrim now felt discouraged. For the first time ever he started noticing how dark the hold was, how damp it was, how cold it was. It seemed like he shivered all the time now, and the chains began to chafe his skin raw. He had dutifully sat back down and accepted the chains that the others were so eager to help him with, but he couldn't help taking longing glances at the small square of light in the ceiling. The hold had always seemed like a good place, the only place he had ever known, but now it seemed oppressive. Pilgrim cried sometimes, and in his despair he

began to speak under his breath to the Captain. He didn't think the Captain could hear him down here in the hold, but speaking to him brought comfort somehow.

Meeting the Captain

One day, Pilgrim was sitting beneath the hatch thinking of the Captain, when suddenly the wooden grid of the hatch was lifted out of the way, revealing completely unobstructed light for the first time. Pilgrim stood up in surprise, not even realizing that the chains had fallen from his wrists and ankles. A form leaned down into the darkness and firmly grasped Pilgrim's arm, yanking him up into the light.

At first Pilgrim was so dazzled by the glorious light that he could not make out who had lifted him out of the darkness. At first he thought it might be Evangel, but as his eyes began to adjust he saw it wasn't Evangel at all, but someone who looked just a little like Evangel. But that wasn't quite right. He could now see that it would somehow be truer to say that Evangel looked just a little like this man. At that moment the man came into full focus and Pilgrim suddenly realized with astonishment that he was standing before the Captain. He embraced the Captain with all his might and clung to him. The Captain embraced him back.

"I've wanted to meet you all my life," cried Pilgrim.

"I know," said the Captain in a voice which was matter-of-fact yet



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that a good sailor needs to know. There were many challenges, but time went quickly as Pilgrim began to develop his skills. He loved working with so many

kind and infinitely wise. "I have been near you all your life, but I am very hard to see from the darkness of the hold. Evangel came to you at my bidding. He was once as you are, but now he is a sailor. Are you ready to learn to sail?"

Earnestly Pilgrim responded, "I've always tried to be a good sailor."

"But, my son, you cannot learn to sail while locked in the hold," laughed the Captain.

"But Captain, what about my family and friends? They're still in the hold!"

"Speak to them. When you are ready, another of my sailors will begin to teach you. I will always be near." With that the Captain strode off across the ship.

Sharing the Good News

Pilgrim knelt down by the open hatch and called down into the darkness. He excitedly told the inhabitants of the hold all about how he had met the Captain. He tried to describe the brightness and warmth of the sun, the feel of the cool sea air on his face. He had only begun to describe what he was experiencing when several voices from below began to object that he couldn't possibly have met the Captain on the deck since it was well known that the Captain favored the hold.

Some of the hold-dwellers even claimed that Pilgrim had only left the hold so he could eventually be free to carouse on an island full of rum and naked natives. Pilgrim began to explain that he had left

the hold to become a real sailor, but before he could finish, several sets of hands reached up from the darkness of the hold, grabbed the hatch and quickly pulled it back in place.

Pilgrim was stunned. His friends and family didn't want to hear about what he had experienced. They didn't want to hear about meeting the Captain. They had reacted to him with fear and even anger. Instead of joining him on the deck with the Captain they had pulled the grid of the hatch more tightly into place.

Sorrowfully Pilgrim turned away from the hatch and saw another sailor standing there. He too looked just a little like the Captain. The man introduced himself as Disciple.

"How is it that you and Evangel look different from each other and yet you both look something like the Captain? Are you related?" asked Pilgrim.

"I suppose you could say we are, in a way. The Captain treats us like family and part of learning to be a sailor is learning to be more like the Captain. After awhile we all start to resemble the Captain to one degree or another. Some resemble him more and some less, but we're all learning. You'll start looking a bit like the Captain yourself as you learn to sail. Shall we get started?"

Becoming a Sailor

Disciple taught Pilgrim to tie knots, scrub the decks, trim the sails and a hundred other things

other sailors with so many different skills. He soon realized that each sailor seemed to have unique talents and a job that matched their talents.

He began to see how the ship could not sail without each sailor in his place. It also became obvious to Pilgrim that those still in the hold were not engaged in the work of sailing the ship and that they could never develop sailing skills as long as they remained in the hold. He began to long to teach the hold dwellers to sail.

Meanwhile, in the hold, Pilgrim's departure had caused much consternation. Several committees had been formed to discuss why people left the hold. Some thought that if they brightened up the hold a bit then people would be less likely to leave, but most thought that a bright colored hold was against the rules of sailing, so the idea was vetoed.

Others thought they should talk about the Captain more. Everyone agreed in theory, but felt that talk of the Captain should be balanced with training in managing shackles. This was tried for awhile, but it seemed like only a few had seen the Captain pass by the grid, but everyone knew something about chains so this approach fell flat.

Some hold dwellers thought that if they at least talked more about sailing then people would be less likely to leave the hold. Several people liked this idea.

Unfortunately, someone who had once briefly been outside the



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hold scandalously mentioned the sun and the sea.

The rest felt that it was inappropriate to talk about things outside the hold. It was agreed that light could be discussed as long as it was in reference to how it looked through the grid. Mention of the sun should be avoided. It was agreed that they could talk about sailing, but not about the sea.

In the end, a vote was held to pass a resolution confirming that the only place one could learn to be a real sailor and truly please the Captain was in the hold. Everyone was pleased with the vote and agreed that a strong resolution on the necessity of hold-dwelling in the life of a sailor was the best way to solve the problem of people leaving.

Pilgrim's Transformation

Every once in awhile someone in the hold saw Pilgrim pass by the

hatch. He looked strong, sun drenched and happy. He looked like a sailor!

The change was hard to explain, so the hold dwellers chalked it up to too much time carousing with naked natives.

Pilgrim had not been carousing with naked natives. He had been learning the Captain's commands from the ship's order parchment. He had been learning sailing skills from the Captain and from fellow sailors.

He had developed many new skills and, as Disciple had predicted, he had begun to look just a little like the Captain.

But still Pilgrim longed to have his own job as all the other sailors did. One day while talking with the Captain he asked him for a job that would fit his talents. The Captain turned to him with a twinkle in his eye and said, "I think you know what that job is.

You've known since the day I pulled you from the darkness. Now you are ready."

Pilgrim nodded, hugged the Captain then turned and headed for the hatch with the ship's order parchment in his hands. It wouldn't be an easy job, but somewhere below in the darkness there were future sailors that needed to hear about the sunlight, the sea and the Captain. □

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