

Maybe you grew up in a city on a bay. Or perhaps you're even a Navy or Coast Guard veteran and you've forgotten more than other people will ever even know about ships and oceans. But if you're like me, you really don't know very much about boats and bays and seafaring ships and oceans—that whole theater of life. Oh, sure, I've been on a few boats here and there for short jaunts, but that was hardly being part of a well-trained crew actually doing the technical tasks necessary for a successful voyage or excursion.

But boats sailing the seas have a very long, very rich history for many people! And lots of us, seafarers or not, recall gazing with wonder at those half-dozen or so maps in the back of our Bible that tracked the first missionary trips—from Israel to Asia Minor to modern Greece to Rome. Well, look at all those trips together and they form a large section of the circumference around the northeastern part of the Mediterranean Sea! Yeah, there's always some blue sea on those maps, right? Of course, seafaring in that area of the world was well established as an enabling means of commerce and war. After all, no trains, planes or automobiles then...yes, ships were a key, cutting-edge enabler at the time of the early church!

In fact, I would bet that, when you are thinking Biblically just now, your mind went to Noah, the first big-time boat captain ever—or perhaps Jonah, or Paul! Remember? Paul was going about our Father's business on a ship, and that famous voyage and shipwreck was recorded by Luke in Acts 27 with all sorts of technical details, including references to anchors and storms. Likewise, Mark wrote about Jesus and His disciples crossing the sea in a boat: "When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore." (Mark 6:53) Anchors and moorings have always been vital tools and processes for boat captains. And this kind of reporting alongside the good news being proclaimed worked for the gospel writers, because knowledge about ships in the Mediterranean and boats on the Sea of Galilee was right where people lived, kind of like Kansans knowing about tornadoes or Koreans knowing about monsoons.

Now let's take a specific look at anchors for a minute. It's pretty interesting: a bunch of mostly landlubbers like me might think it's all about a heavy anchor thrown over the side of the boat to keep it stable. But the truth is that it's really a combination of two things that really works: an anchor from the boat is dropped down to the seabed, then the anchor gets set properly into the seabed. Both anchor and seabed work together to then stabilize the boat. Well, duh, that's why no boat captain releases the anchor in the middle of the Pacific Ocean—a free-moving anchor in swirling ocean water won't be stabilizing the boat!

That's what makes what some business leaders say so ironic. "What's our company's anchor here?" Or, "Can we count on this anchor to keep us in business?" The reality is, you need an anchor *and* you need a seabed, working together—one doesn't really work without the other in stabilizing the boat.

Well, even if business leaders might not think about this, Mark certainly did! Remember our verse from the gospel of Mark we just talked about? When Jesus and His disciples had crossed over, they "moored to the shore." Yes...that's right, two things are needed: something good to moor *with*, like perhaps a rope, and something good to moor *to*, like the shore or a dock!

In the biggest picture of all, the Apostle Paul knew who and what to anchor to...and how to anchor! Here's 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (ESV). "And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

Now you know Paul was one the most highly educated people of his time. So why would he say that he "decided to know *nothing* among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified?" Well, for the astute reader, it's clear that "Christ and Him crucified" is the legitimate seabed to anchor to...it's really the only reliable shore to moor our eternity to! Paul's word choice here was very important: the seabed is not about Christ the great teacher and not about Jesus the gentle man. No, it's about Christ and Him *crucified!* The Cross,

the effectual shedding of the blood of Christ, the only route to salvation, the sole path to now and ever-after Kingdom citizenship. Yes, Christ's finished work of the Cross is the core reality of the reliable seabed. So, you see it's just as important to know what *isn't* the core seabed than to know what *is*. Countless people think Jesus is a good teacher—and He *is* that, of course—but that isn't the core thing we can anchor to for eternity. Paul knew this—that's why he said "he knew nothing except" Christ and Him crucified!

But, if that's the seabed, just what is the anchor that needs to be set into that seabed? Well, right there in that same passage, Paul wrote this: "I was with you...in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." Now that's a clear anchor, right there: *the faith of the believer* deeply set in the seabed of Christ and Him crucified! Yes, the anchor of each believer's faith set into the seabed of saving grace provided by Christ and Him crucified. That grace is not found in Buddha, Mohammed, religion, or yoga. But that grace is *available to whoever calls upon the name of Christ!* That seabed is *external*—it's not exclusively offered to just one church or one believer!

But there's this passage, too, written to the Hebrews (6:18b-20). "...we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Yes! We are "to hold fast to the hope set before us...we have...a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain." Wow, here, the writer to the Hebrews says a sustaining *hope* is our anchor embedded where Jesus has gone as a forerunner, even while Paul told the Corinthians that *faith* should rest in the power of God—that is, rest in the saving grace found only in Christ and Him crucified! Now that's a very powerful recipe: *our responsive faith and our sustaining hope* as anchors, deeply set in the seabed of the grace found in Christ and Him crucified! Indeed, our spiritual boat will be ready for *any* excursion when we fully avail ourselves of these anchors and this unmatched seabed!

Sadly, over a very long time, many Christians have blithely expected that a simplistic, diluted reference to Jesus is enough, maybe as a great teacher or simply a cultural touchpoint. But it's really about the unique, deep sacrifice of Christ and Him crucified—*the ultimate seabed, stunningly accessible to all!* And that can only be made effectual through the believer's responsive faith and sustaining hope. You see, in the Kingdom of God, we need both the seabed of what we *can't* do—that's the grace only from Christ and Him crucified—and the anchor of what we *can* do—exercise faith and sustain hope in that seabed! Here's an interesting tidbit. History tells us that, in early Christianity, anchors were used in engravings as a symbol of the faith and that the Roman catacombs—you know, the underground burial passages just outside the city—had Christian tombs engraved with anchors as a symbol of their hope in Christ. Isn't that crazy good?

Now, think of this! For any business or any nonprofit, it's the same type of structure! Is your business successfully anchoring to an utterly reliable seabed that's external to you, a seabed that you and all your competitors can *and even must* access to succeed? Well, that's been Walmart's approach for years! The utterly reliable seabed for retail sales of dry goods is reliably high demand in a highly consumerist society covering a very large land area. Yes, that's in America, not in a smallish Switzerland! Enter Walmart in the 1960s, which built a massively large-scale operation that resulted in very low prices at numerous locations across much of America! Yes, that was and is Walmart's *anchor*—numerous well-placed locations that are chock full of items for sale at very low prices. And, unlike being in Switzerland, a small country, or in a communist country with limited consumer options, Walmart's anchor of very low prices for many items in a wide geographic area is set in that huge consumer seabed! And because that seabed is still in place, likewise, Amazon's product-selling division has set its own anchors! Now these giants are duking it out!

That's the very clever craft of *anchor-and-seabed* success—internal anchors are set in to a very reliable external seabed! And that's how great value is created! True for retail *and* true for the Kingdom of God!

A&A: Application & Action

1. Have you been thinking that anchors in and of themselves are the full story, the bottom line—when anchors really only work in a reliable seabed? What are your workplace’s anchors that you can modify, improve, or fix and the seabed that you can’t? Explain.

2. God has already fully provided the gift of grace to everyone who would call upon the name of Jesus. But what about your faith and your hope that anchor in the seabed of that grace provided only by Christ through the Cross? Use examples to describe the anchors of (a) your responsive faith and (b) your sustaining hope in Christ and Him crucified.

3. Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” We can’t control God’s seabed of grace even one little bit, and that’s a good thing! What is your approach in getting others to revel in God’s grace, as accessed by their faith? Be specific.