

WHICH DIRECTION?

LESSON 95 → Ezekiel 18:20-32; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10



Our eternal destination is determined by the way we choose to go.

The past two weeks on a tropical island had been a great vacation—but now it was over. On board ship, Patrick decided to do some exploring, beginning with the cabin that would be his home for the next ten days. He stretched out on the bunk for a moment . . . not too bad! He unpacked some of his things into the small wardrobe, stuffed his suitcase under the bunk, then headed for the deck.

The motion of the ship was gentle, and the throb of the engines provided a low accompaniment to the

bustle of activity on the ship as passengers settled in. The weather was perfect—just a little breeze, enough to keep the heat of the sun from being uncomfortable. The island had disappeared, but a few fluffy white clouds skittered across the horizon.

After lunch in the ship's dining room, Patrick wandered out on the deck once more. As he gazed out over the ocean, he suddenly had the strangest feeling that something was wrong. He thought his sense of direction was good, but it seemed they were heading south instead



JESUS IS THE RIGHT WAY.

*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. —
Isaiah 55:7*

of north. Of course, in the middle of the sea the sense of direction is often confused, but . . . the afternoon sun was on the starboard bow. Oh, no, surely it was impossible. The captain would know which way they were going. All those navigational instruments, the charts, the maps—they couldn't be wrong. The only way he could be going the wrong direction was if he were on the wrong ship. And that couldn't have happened. Or could it?

That terrible thought paralyzed Patrick for an instant. Then he left the deck at a run, heading for his stateroom. Where was that ticket? Yanking his suitcase from under the bunk, he hurriedly opened it. There it was! In the back pocket. He pulled it out—looked at the name. Moments later he was running to the captain's cabin with ticket in hand. And just what he feared was true. He was on a ship heading south instead of north! Why, oh why, hadn't he checked the ship's name before he boarded? Why had he relied on the steward who had allowed him to board the wrong ship?

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Obviously, this story isn't true. The possibility of getting on a wrong ship under these circumstances would be slight. But let's do some considering.

Patrick is in a predicament. But he has made the first step toward a solution—he has realized he is in trouble. If he had never become aware of the fact that he was heading in the wrong direction, in time he would have arrived at a totally different destination from where he thought he was heading. What a disaster!

Let's compare Patrick's situation to our spiritual lives. The sea in our story could represent the sea of life. The wrong ship, going to the wrong place, is sin, and its eventual destination is an

eternal Hell. We want to get to Heaven, but the ship of sin is not going to get us there. It is going the opposite way!

The ship of sin might feel pretty comfortable. It might not have even occurred to you that there is anything wrong with traveling on it. The Bible tells us, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

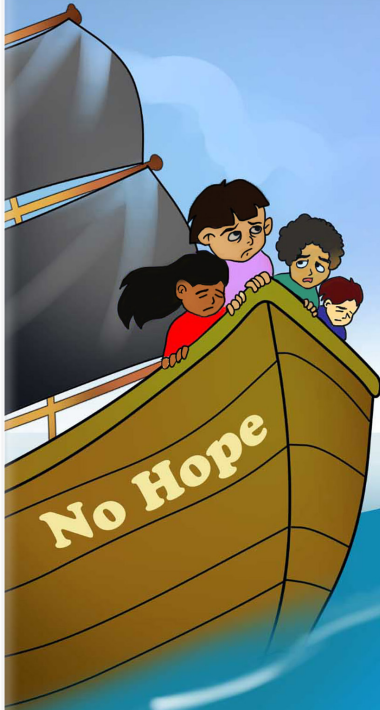
The best thing, of course, would be to start out on the right ship in the first place. But the Bible says we all have sinned. Each of us started on the ship of sin.

But God provided a way out of this dilemma. We can get off the ship of sin and onto the right ship, called salvation, and head in the right direction. However, we have to buy the right ticket. The only way we can get on the ship of salvation is with a ticket marked "repentance." To repent means to be honestly sorry for the sins in our lives. Along with that comes a willingness, and a determination to turn away from all those things that we know are wrong, and never do them again.

Have you used that ticket marked repentance, and boarded the ship of salvation? Or are you still headed in the wrong direction?

ARE YOU ON THE RIGHT SHIP?

The sea of life is a big place. Is your ship headed in the right direction? The H.M.S. Victory is headed for Glory. How can you be on that ship? The answer is in the letters below. Starting with the letter R, write down every other letter. Go through the list twice. Start with J on the second time. All the letters will be used. Use the lines below to write on.



RJEEPSEUNSTTAONFDOTRUGRINV
FERYOOMUYTOUURRNWFARYOSM
AWNROGNOGDBWEILLILESVAEV
BEEYSOAUVAESDK

PARDONED,
PREPARED, AND
POWERFUL