

# CARRYING THE MESSAGE OF THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

*by Jason Roberts*

I made my hike up the gangway of the ship to meet with an Indian crew. At the gangway, I met a seafarer named Roshan, who kindly welcomed me on board. We met in the mess room and he asked what we offered as a ministry. I shared with him that we offer free transportation, sell sim cards, and most importantly, we share the Word of God!

I then asked about his family and religious life. He has a wife and shared with me that he is a committed believer. He shared that he was initially Catholic but recently transitioned to a church that is affiliated with the Assemblies of God. He shared above all that he believes Jesus Christ is the one true God and died for the sins of the world. I was thrilled to hear about his relationship with the Lord and encouraged him to continue to seek God in the Word.

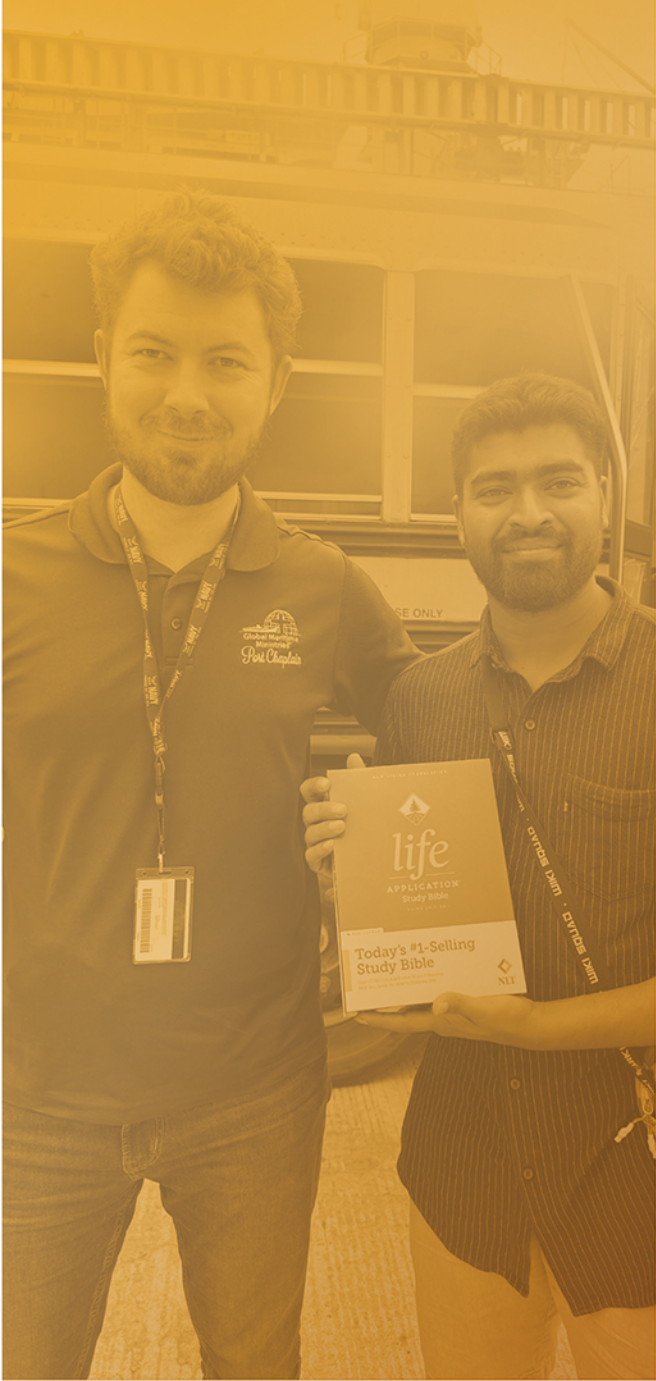
He was passionate about the Word of God and asked for a new study Bible. He then asked me a question about biblical sacrifices. He essentially asked how Old Testament sacrifices relate to the New Testament concept of sacrifice. I shared with him briefly about the book of Hebrews and asked if I could come back the next day to walk through Hebrews 9 with him.

The next day we sat down for Bible study in one of the offices on the ship. He was ecstatic about his new study Bible and thanked me several times for it. He was touched by the handwritten note that some of our volunteers wrote to him that came with the study Bible. The notes contained a few Scripture verses and encouraging words. He told me that the gift brightened up his day and gave him a dose of hope. I then showed him the study outline of

Hebrews 9 that I developed as an aid. We read through the entire chapter out loud together. He read the first half and I read the second half.

We walked through some theological truths of the chapter. I shared with him a few connections between Old Testament sacrifices and the New Testament sacrifice of Christ. I made the connections by walking through the implications of the Old Testament tabernacle as well as discussing God's presence amidst the Israelites within the tabernacle. I discussed how the Levitical priests offered sacrifices on behalf of the Israelite community to make temporary atonement for their sins. I then drew a parallel to the superior sanctuary that is Christ Jesus, God incarnate. Christ Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice and his blood purchases eternal redemption for those who believe in him, as contrasted to the temporary burnt offering sacrifices in the Old Testament. Those who believe in Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the redemption he offers through himself can be saved for eternity. We reflected together on how we can now approach the God of the universe with confidence since he atoned for our sin through his perfect sacrifice. Praise God for the Ultimate sacrifice! We both walked away encouraged from the reality of our identity in Christ after working through his atoning sacrifice in Hebrews 9.

Roshan clearly is wrestling with some of the hard questions of the faith. I was encouraged by the fervor of his faith and was encouraged to see that he genuinely loves the Lord. Pray that Roshan's relationship with the Lord will continue to grow and that the Holy Spirit will encourage his heart as he works on the ship far away from his family.







# THE WIND BLOWS WHERE IT WISHES

by Vadym Bondarenko

trickled out of the room one by one, leaving us looking toward the last man, who sat quietly watching the TV.

We introduced ourselves and learned his name was Arnel, an experienced seafarer. After a short exchange, I asked Arnel if he was a religious man. He began sharing about his Catholic upbringing while confiding his genuine doubts regarding some of its teachings and practices. We

listened. Later, we asked about his family and whether they held the same convictions as him. He replied, "My wife is a born-again Christian." We inquired whether he understood, from the Scriptural basis, what it means to be born-again. He did not, but he immediately revealed a deep heartache concerning his bedridden father.

In Arnel's opinion, his father had lived a good, moral life, unlike others who forsook any moral reference to God and yet prospered physically and monetarily. Arnel's concern was legitimate and filled with great emotional distress. Our new friend essentially raised a very important question: Why do bad things happen to seemingly good people (not perfect or sinless) and the wicked go unpunished? The answer to this question can be multifaceted, requiring careful assessment so that it may not come across as superficial or trivial, especially if one comes from a non-Christian background.

However, our new friend was well acquainted with the story of Jesus, His claims, and His works. After a moment of silence, as the conversation settled, the question was posed to Arnel: "Do you think Jesus had a successful life?" What followed next can only be described as entirely the work of God in opening the minds of unbelievers so they may see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of

God (2 Corinthians 4:4). In the twinkling of an eye, the man's spiritual blindness was overcome, and his understanding was opened. He began swaying with emotion, like a tree in the wind, exclaiming, "Light bulb! Light bulb!"

Subsequently, as Arnel regained his composure, he told us that the purpose in Jesus's coming now made sense to him. Upon further inquiry, we were convinced that Arnel understood that the sinless Son of God became a suffering servant in the person of Jesus. In every imaginable way, Jesus was the ultimate "good person," whose suffering on the cross was not a consequence of His own sin but a deliberate, redemptive act for the sake of rebellious humanity's salvation. His resurrection was a demonstrative vindication of this truth.

Arnel confessed he was a sinner in need of God's grace. We pointed him to the Scripture passage found in John 3:36, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." At this, we noted the present tense of the word "has," meaning he could receive this life right now: the forgiveness of his sins, reconciliation with God, and life with God now and beyond the grave, if he trusted alone in the finished work of Christ on his behalf.

Without a moment's hesitation, Arnel expressed a desire to do so. We bowed our heads together in prayer, occasionally interceding for Arnel, asking the Lord to forgive, save, and seal him with the promised Holy Spirit according to His great act of grace and Arnel's remorseful heart. As we raised our eyes, our brother commented, "I feel light." With the newfound living hope and tears of joy in Arnel's eyes, we celebrated.

After much encouragement, we gifted Arnel a Bible in his own language, along with a couple of study resources for him to delve into during his voyage. He hastily motioned for us to wait while running out to get his phone to memorialize the occasion with a picture. We proceeded to do the same and were gifted not only a moment captured in time, but also a brother in Christ for all eternity.

As port chaplains, we regularly engage with the lost (unbelievers) from a variety of backgrounds, counting it the greatest privilege not only to be recipients of God's grace in Christ, but also to be transmitters of it to those married to the sea. We get to enter into contexts otherwise inaccessible and experience moments otherwise unattainable. Consequently, we make it our aim to depend on the One who is faithfully present through time, to guide our endeavors for His name's sake, and to grant us words to speak that revive weary wanderers. Such was the case in our encounter with a Filipino seafarer named "Arnel."

When we climbed aboard his cargo vessel, we were greeted warmly and taken into the office of the chief mate, who was interested in our services. After a brief conversation, we asked for an opportunity to speak to the rest of the crew in the mess room to inquire personally about any existing needs. Upon our arrival, the dining room was filled with Filipino seafarers enjoying their meals while watching "teleseryes" (Filipino soap operas). The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly. However, many of the men began to be distracted either by their phones or something that was taking place outside the mess room, so any kind of attempt at meaningful engagement fell flat on its face. Eventually, the men





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