

## Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice

### Topic 2 Content: "The Seafarer" from the *Exeter Book*

I of myself can  
a true tale relate,  
my fortunes recount,  
how I, in days of toil,  
[5] a time of hardship  
oft suffer'd,  
bitter breast-cares  
have endur'd,  
prov'd in the ship  
[10] strange mishaps many.  
The fell rolling of the waves  
has me there oft drench'd:  
an anxious night-watch,  
at the vessel's prow,  
[15] when on the cliffs it strikes,  
pierc'd with cold  
were my feet,  
bound with frost,  
with cold bonds.  
[20] There cares sigh'd  
hot round my heart,  
hunger tore me within,  
the sea-wolf's rage.  
That the man knows not,  
[25] to whom on land  
all falls out most joyfully,  
how I miserable and sad,  
on the ice-cold sea  
a winter pass'd,  
[30] with exile traces;  
...  
of dear kindred bereft,  
hung o'er with icicles,  
the hail in showers flew;  
[35] where I heard nought  
save the sea roaring,  
the ice-cold wave.  
At times the swan's song  
I made to me for pastime,  
[40] the ganet's cry,  
and the hu-ilpe's note;  
for men's laughter,  
the mew singing;  
for mead-drinking,  
[45] storms there the stone-cliffs beat;  
there them the starling answer'd,  
icy of wings.  
Full oft the eagle scream'd,  
dewy of wings.  
[50] ...

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no hospitable kinsman;  
he a poor soul  
might go;  
for he little believes,  
[55] who has the joy of life  
experienced in cities,  
misfortunes few,  
elate and wine-flush'd,  
how I weary oft,  
[60] in the ocean-way  
must bide:  
night's shadow darken'd,  
from the north it snow'd,  
frost bound the land,  
[65] hail fell on the earth,  
coldest of grains;  
therefore it oppresses now  
my heart's thoughts,  
that I the deep streams,  
[70] the salt wave's sport,  
myself shall prove.  
(though my mind's desire exhorts me  
at all times,  
my soul, to go,  
[75] that I far hence,  
of strangers  
the habitation seek;)  
for there is not so elate of mind,  
any man on earth,  
[80] nor in his qualities so good,  
nor in youth so ardent,  
nor in his deeds so estimable,  
nor to him his Lord so benignant,  
that he never on his sea-voyage  
[85] fear entertains,  
as to what the Lord with him  
will do.  
He has to the harp no mind,  
nor to the receipt of rings,  
[90] nor delight in woman,  
nor in the world joy,  
nor of aught else thinks,  
save of the rolling of the waves;  
but ever weariness has  
[95] he who on the deep ventures.  
The groves increase with flowers,  
towns appear fair,  
the plains seem beautiful,  
the world hastens on:  
[100] all these admonish

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- the prompt of mind  
to go on journey;  
those who so think,  
on the flood-ways,  
[105] far to depart.  
So also the cuckoo exhorts,  
with mournful voice,  
the summer's warden sings,  
sorrow announces  
[110] bitter in its heart.  
The man knows it not,  
the favour'd mortal,  
what some endure,  
who their exile traces  
[115] furthest set;  
for now my thought wanders  
o'er my breast's recess;  
my spirit,  
with the sea-flood,  
[120] over the whale's home,  
wanders wide,  
earth's regions  
come again to me:  
eager and greedy  
[125] yells the lone bird,  
urges on the whale-way  
nathless suddenly,  
over ocean's flood:  
for to me more exciting are  
[130] the Lord's joys,  
than this dead life,  
transient in the land.  
I believe not  
that its earthly wealth  
[135] will stand for ever.  
Ever either one  
of three things,  
ere it take place,  
will be doubtful;—  
[140] disease, or age,  
or hostile sword,  
from the fated to departure  
life will expel;  
therefore that to every man  
[145] of after-speaking,  
praise animating,  
last words is best:  
that he work,  
(ere he must away)  
[150] act on earth,

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- against the hate of foes;  
by estimable deeds,  
against the devil;  
so that him the sons of men  
[155] may after praise,  
and his fame thenceforth  
live with angels  
for evermore,  
in the blessing of eternal life,  
[160] joy with the good.  
Days are pass'd away,  
all the pomps  
of earth's kingdom;  
kings are not now,  
[165] nor emperors,  
nor gold-givers,  
such as were of yore,  
when they most among themselves  
glories perform'd,  
[170] and in most lordly  
power liv'd:  
fall'n is this splendour all,  
joys are pass'd away;  
the weaker remain,  
[175] and this world hold,  
enjoy in toil.  
Glory is humbled,  
the honours of earth  
wax old and sere:  
[180] as now every man  
throughout mid-earth;  
age comes on him,  
his face waxes pale;  
hoary-lock'd he grieves,  
[185] knows that his friends of old,  
sons of noble ones,  
are to earth committed;  
may not his body then,  
when life escapes him,  
[190] nor sweets consume,  
nor pain feel,  
nor a hand move,  
nor with its mind think:  
though the grave will  
[195] strew o'er with gold  
a brother his brother's,  
heap for the dead  
with various treasures,  
he will not that take with him.  
[200] May not to the soul

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that is full of sins  
gold be for help,  
before God's terror,  
when he ere hides it,  
[205] while he here lives.  
Great is the dread of the Creator,  
for the mould shall them return:  
he establish'd  
the rugged depths,  
[210] earth's regions,  
and heaven above.  
Foolish is he who his Lord dreads not,  
death comes to him unsolicited:  
happy is he who humbly lives,  
[215] to him comes mercy from heaven;  
the Creator his mind strengthens,  
because he in his might believes.  
A man shall govern with strong mind,  
and that with firmness hold,  
[220] and certain towards men,  
in its ways pure.  
Every man ought  
moderation to preserve  
towards his friend,  
[225] and towards his foe  
though he will him  
of fire full,  
or on the pile  
burned,  
[230] one become his friend.  
Fate is hard,  
the Creator mightier  
than any man's thought.  
Let us consider  
[235] where we may have a home,  
and then think  
how we may thither come,  
and then also prepare ourselves,  
that we may go thereto,  
[240] into the eternal  
happiness,  
where life depends  
on the Lord's love,  
joy in heaven;  
[245] therefore be to the Holy thanks,  
that he us hath honour'd,  
the Chief of glory,  
the Lord eternal,  
in all time.