

The Man Who Lives Down At The Beach, Or Possess Nothing

**An excerpt from the talk by Vernon Howard,
given on 09-26-80, Side 1 at 9 minutes**

Have any of you in this room ever deliberately tried to refuse to love your pain of feeling trapped? You love your pain of being trapped because that is your life. And somehow, when we get trapped by a condition, we say to ourselves, "It is better to be in this self-enclosed situation – quarreling with a spouse, wandering around, never settling down – it is better to be in this condition than to face something unknown."

There it is. See, we came right back to it again. You won't sit at home right in the middle of that domestic quarrel, you won't sit at home all by yourself right in the middle of that internal quarrel and just endure the pain. You immediately come up with an answer, and every ten thousand answers is a lie, one of the lies being, "Someday things will be different."

See, you still think that you are apart from your conditions. You know very well, all of you here, you are where you are tonight, seated here internally and externally, because this is the choice you have made.

Until you begin to make the choice to change the way you see life, which means to change yourself, I tell you, you're going to stay right where you are, and you're going to get harder, and you're going to get scarer. Nothing will change.

Now, that's an introduction to something else we're going to go into. We're talking about insecurity. The insecurity that is bred – Did all of you notice that you changed a little bit? Did you notice that you followed me on that? Did you see that?

We're talking about the insecurity that you breed and repeat because you want to close your eyes – and I'm going to use the word – you want to close your eyes and crab about life. Little crabs. Big crabs. Right description, right?

All right. Now, listen carefully to an explanation of the condition, and then we'll go beyond that. We're talking right now, as I said at the beginning, about various things: insecurity, possessiveness, repetitious behavior.

Here is a man: he lives down at the beach, in a nice little cottage down at the beach. And he lives there alone. The waves are right down at the bottom of the surf there, and the winds come through. He lives in a nice place, but the waves are right there, and the winds are pretty heavy. And for a while he doesn't notice much; he is just getting acquainted to the place he moves into. But after a while he begins to notice something. And I'm talking about a law of life. And I'm going to interrupt myself from time to time to explain as I go ahead with this illustration.

He begins to notice that the waves and the winds automatically bring things to him. The waves bring in driftwood and they bring in seafood. And he goes down to the surf just a few feet below the cabin there, and he gets pretty shells, beautiful shells.

So the waves bring things to him which he picks up and brings up to his yard. Driftwood is very pretty. And the wind also brings things to him. He notices some different kinds of vegetables are beginning to sprout out in his yard out there because there's been farms up there, and the wind brings the vegetable seeds down, and they begin to grow out in his yard. All sorts of things come that are useful to him that he can use.

And it delights him. He is delighted that something is coming to him. Do you get delighted when something comes to you? A smile, a compliment, a little money, a little companionship. You get pleased with yourself and with life, do you not?

So he was quite pleased with himself that all these things came. But he was a human being. And this human being – man – said to himself, "How nice. I've got all this driftwood coming in and all the pretty shells which maybe I can sell or at least enjoy myself. And I have these vegetables growing out in the garden which nature has provided. They came my way. Events – the wind and the sea – brought these objects to me. And I enjoy them."

As I said, he was a human being. And being a human being, he next thought as follows: He said, "However, I don't want to lose these. I want to possess them now. And I want to continue to possess them. So I better make some plans to not lose them."

Already he is afraid. When you say, "I'm going to make plans to not lose something," you're already afraid, aren't you? Already you're suffering. So he said, "I'm going to get enough driftwood to build a fence around my property," which he did. Lots of wood came in. Very pretty. He put a big fence all around his property. And then he sat on his porch one day, and he said, "Now I am secure. These things have been brought to me. Now I am safe."

Then the storm came along. The winds came along and knocked down the fence and carried away the vegetables and the seashells and the seafood and all the things that he had stacked up around his yard and took them away. And he was mad. And he was angry. And he was scared. And he shook. And he looked around for someone to blame, but he couldn't see anyone to blame. So what did he do? What you do. He turned to self-hatred.

When you don't understand how to behave in a situation, I will guarantee you that you will turn to self-whipping, self-laceration. You will hurt yourself and hate yourself because there's no one else perhaps at the time that you can blast out at.

So along came the divorce; along came the firing from your nice, cushy position down there at the factory; along came the loss of something or someone valuable to you; along came older years, and you no longer have

your youth that you put a fence up around.

Well, the man, seeing this, said to himself, "All right. I'm going to regain what I had. I'm going to fight for myself." In the wrong way, of course. So he went and got some more driftwood, and he allowed the time for the wind to bring the vegetable seeds into his yard again. And he got more seashells. And all the things came into his yard again. And he built it up again. And this time he built up the fence twice as high. And he secured himself twice as much as before. And he shook twice as much as before. And when the wind and the waves and the next storm blew it down, he was even more in despair than he was before. And he screamed to himself, "Why can't I control life?"

And it went over and over and over again. And each time he drove himself madder and madder and madder. He hated everything and everyone. Because – listen, listen to me – because he was beginning to see something he didn't want to see: that he didn't have control. For Heaven's sakes, who said he had to have control?

I know the answer to this question. Whoever told you that you as an individual with an individual mind and acquired thoughts – who told you you had to control life? Have you ever gone out on a windy day and tried to command the wind to stop or gone out and told the waves to not beat like that against the shore?

You're doing it with events. Those waves and that wind are the events in your life that come to you. And when they're favorable, you smile, and you cheer, and you say, "Now I'm going to feel secure at last. Thank Heaven. Heaven is on my side at last."

Along comes the family blowup and the crisis and the heartache and the pain, the weariness with the fight. Are you understanding now what you're doing wrong, what you're trying to do that can't be done? You haven't got it yet, but you're on the track of it now.

So the man became what all human beings became: a man who smiled a lot on the outside when something came his way and then scowled a lot and hated a lot when the storms came and took it away. He couldn't take the come and go of it. Till one day.

Here's what we're after: One day he was sitting on his porch, bitter and hard and scared. "If I'm not the controller of my life, then who am I?"

Wrong question just to begin with! Never ask that question! "Why can't I control my wife, and why didn't she do what I want her to do?" "Why is my husband such a brute?" Which he is. He is a brute because he is a brute. And you married him because you're a brute. Same thing.

He was sitting on his porch one day – like we are – in despair. And all of a sudden the wind blew in a nice, clean piece of white paper. It came from anywhere. He didn't know where it came from. It could have come from anywhere.

And he looked down at the piece of paper out in his yard, and he went and picked it up. One side was blank. He looked on the other side, and there

were just two words on the other side. And he shook his head at the two words. He didn't know what they meant. So he carried it back to the porch and sat down, looked at it again and wondered where it had come from, who had sent it. But he did sense that it was a personal message for him. And he looked at the words. And he finally read them aloud. And the two words said, "Possess nothing."

Oh, that is a hard saying. "Possess nothing." Boy, if you carry that to an extreme, look and see what that means. Possess not even my own life? It said possess nothing! Possess not the seashells that the winds of circumstance brought in; possess not the driftwood that the sea brought in. Whoever said you have to possess anything? I will tell you here tonight that you don't even possess your own life. And thank God we don't need to.

Let's see what happens. The valuable things come into our life through the winds and the sea; the woman comes into our life, and the marriage comes into our life, and the position and the phony respectability. All those things come into our life, including thousands of thoughts and feelings that seem to give us position and security. They all come into our life. And because no one ever told us any different, we say, "Ah. Now I've got it. That is me. The marriage is me. The good position of fifty-thousand dollars a year is me. That promise of a better future – that is me. I can hang on to that."

There is no one within you or within me or within any other human being on earth who can possess anything. Not even your own life. You don't own your own life. You never owned it. And any attempt to possess it through intellectual tricks will make you scared and hateful when the wind blows them away again. If you don't own anything, how can you lose anything? How can you lose anything if you never had anything in the first place – which you don't, but you imagine you do, and you think you do. And you set up fences around you. Your angry little fences of possessiveness.

You're scared, aren't you? Will you dare to go out someday and, right in the middle of your terror of doing it, tear down the fence? Don't try to hold anything at all. If you do that, I'll tell you what will happen to you. A marvelous thing will happen to you.

What will happen is you live in your cottage – which represents our life, of course – and the waves come up and take something away. You will be aware of it going away, but it won't have any effect on your internal self at all. If something comes to you, what you call good fortune, you won't get elated now. You won't get elated anymore, because you see that it has no connection with who you are at all.

There is no one there who can acquire or lose anything. I am telling you the truth, a marvelous truth. But you have to dare to do it. When you let go of even a small thing because you understand it, there will, of course, be a wrenching. There will be the blank space where you will wonder whether you did the right thing or not. I will tell you, if you ever find yourself in a position where you absolutely do not know what to do next, you are in a right position.

The world knows what to do, doesn't it? Bomb the enemy capital, sign a phony peace treaty, make a lot of money, lie, live a lie, a religious lie. The world has the answers, and everyone goes around slaughtering each other. And for every person who uses a gun, there's a million who use bullets coming from right up here. Are you willing, then, to let go of your supposed life in order to find something that can never be touched by events, by people?

Well, you know very well who the worst enemy is. You're living with him. You're living with her. There's where the enemy is, because this is where you say to yourself, "That good thing that comes my way must be possessed, must be protected at all costs."

You're protecting a hoard of counterfeit jewels. They're glass. See, you can't spend them. All you can do is protect them and pay the price of having something that is valueless, that has no lasting meaning to you at all.

Now, listen, we start where we are. Now we can start where we are tonight, beginning to understand that we don't have to be at the mercy of events anymore, of circumstances anymore. And you understand that you can't rejoice over what you call benefits, because if you do, then you'll be sad when they go away, which they will do, because this is the law. Now you can be above that law by understanding it. Then people will continue to come into your life, and they will leave your life. They will go out of your life, but you will remain untouched by any false attachment to them at all.

Now, listen, you can learn to talk consciously to all these false ideas that come into you, and you can simply tell them that they are – listen to the word, please – that they are useless. That is, trying to hang on to what you have had. That thought is a useless thought. Can you see the difference between something that's useless and useful? It is useful to say that, to say that they are useless.

Now, I know very well that you only have it mentally so far, that you don't understand it. And I know that you're going to continue to be scared until you understand the mistake. That's what we're doing here. Do you understand that? That we're here to understand the error. And when we understand the error itself, the solution comes all by itself, which is for you to be in a position where you're sitting on the porch of your house – Look, if you're sitting there spiritually secure, and you see the wind blow something into your yard, or the waves bring something up, you look at it, and you see it as an event, and you're not attached to it. And when the wind and the waves take it away, you see it go away, and you're not attached to it. You are not attached to time changes.

Shall I say it? Yes, I'll say it. Your immortal spirit and mind – your immortal spirit is looking out at time and being unaffected by it because immortality is never affected by time events.

You had better get into the spiritual suspicion that we've been talking about – spiritual suspicion at the start that there is something more, there is another way to handle approaching events than the way you are now

handling them. And that spiritual suspicion will put you through vast new experiences, experiences you've never had before, where you would vow that if you would take down your fence, it will be the end of you, that you would be desolate.

Give up knowing how to rescue yourself. That is your enemy. You know how to rescue yourself, and you plan this, and you plan that for protection or for security, and nothing ever changes.

There's a spiritual, magical disappearing act which a few people have attained, and you can be one of those people by causing yourself to disappear. Marvelous magic. You'll understand exactly what I'm talking about when you do it. Oh, how your chattering will slow down and stop. Oh, how your anxiety will disappear. You've got something that is above the time of the wind and the waves, something that understands it.

And now – listen, please – now you can be a person who is pleasant for you to live with. Wouldn't you like that? Wouldn't you like to live with a pleasant person called yourself instead of the crab? You've been told how.