

At Anchor Laid

103 L. M.

A propitious gale longed for.

1 AT anchor laid, remote from home,
Toiling, I cry, 'Sweet Spirit, come!
Celestial breeze, no longer stay,
But swell my sails and speed my way.

2 'Fain would I mount, fain would I glow,
And loose my cable from below;
But I can only spread my sail,
Thou, thou must breathe th' auspicious gale.'

Lloyd Hymnal: I like this sung to the tune; Sessions, hymn 38t, Sacred Harp, or Retreat, hymn 113, Old School Hymnal, 11th Edition

The author accredited with this hymn poetry is Augustus Toplady. He is best known as the author of "The Rock of Ages," Being born in 1740 he died in 1778 at the age of 38. While on a visit in Ireland in his sixteenth year he was awakened and converted at a service held in a barn in Codrington. The sermon text was Ephesians 2:13 **"But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."**

We do not know what was on the author's mind and heart when he wrote this hymn; but as I read the text that led to his conversion, I see a relationship to the hymn. He was **"far off"** before his conversion and is **"made nigh by the blood of Christ"** in the new birth.

"AT anchor laid, remote from home," Let's look at some definitions:

- Anchor means: to hold fast, or to be fixed in place. (We are held fast in the eternal work of Jesus Christ)
- Laid is a verb, in the past tense, and means: has been put in place (We were chosen in Christ before the foundations of the world were laid)
- Remote means: far apart in distance and/or time (This world is not our home, our home is far off in the eternal heaven)
- Home means: the place in which one's domestic affections are centered. Domestic means: of or relating to the home, to be tame, no longer wild (the born again sinner is tamed and no longer in rebellion to God)

Being born again, we understand that Christ has placed us in the ark, (the old ship of Zion), the church. Just as Noah and his family were sealed in the ark, shut in, and thus saved from the destructive wrath of an offended God; so we are sealed in Christ, born again to eternal life, and saved from eternal damnation, and the eternal lake of fire, by the finished work of Christ.

"At anchor laid" There is one difference in a natural ship sailing upon the sea; and the church of Jesus Christ sailing upon the sea of life in time. Our anchor is not dropped down attaching us to the earth, but rather, the cords of God's love are let down from heaven, and we are anchored from above, in the eternal heaven, in the Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as we see demonstrated in: **Heb 6:17** ***Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.***

"**remote from home**," Being born again and resting in the hope, that he will one day be with the Lord in the Eternal Heaven, he realizes that this world is not his home. This leads us to the scripture in: **2Co 5:6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.**

"**Toiling, I cry, 'Sweet Spirit, come!'**" Toiling means: hard and continuous work; exhausting labor or effort, battle, strife or struggle. Thinking of toiling; we remember the Disciples of Christ in a ship on the sea. Christ had commanded them to enter a ship and go over to the other side after the feeding of the 5,000. In **Mr 6:48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them:** Like the disciples struggling with the sea as the contrary wind would carry them away from their destination, or sink the ship; So it is with God's people in the struggles of life, against sin and ungodliness that would take us in the wrong direction and sink us into an eternal damnation. Thinking about this struggle we remember the scripture: **Php 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.** Thus we see this picture of the born again sinner toiling, in the struggle to live the Christian life, and crying "**Sweet Spirit, come!**"

Sweet Spirit is capitalized and denotes the Holy Spirit which Jesus declared He would send when He left this world and returned to his place, on the throne of God, in the eternal heaven.

Going back to Toplady's history again; being told he was dying of consumption at the age of 38, He rejoiced and declared "**the sooner I will be with my Lord**" We understand; the struggles of living the Christian life keep us in remembrance of our need of Christ. We toil in these struggles and desire, more and more as we age, to be wafted away from this world of sin and sorrow. We long to be freed from this body of death as Paul described in: **Ro 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**

"**Celestial breeze, no longer stay, But swell my sails and speed my way.**" Toiling and struggling in life here we begin to desire for Christ to come and deliver us. In our toiling and struggling, we have the full assurance of the promise of Christ in: **Joh 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.** Thinking upon this scene we understand better the desire for the Lord to come.

"**Fain would I mount, fain would I glow, And loose my cable from below;**" As we consider these lines, we get the picture of this sinner, who is struggling along in the Christian pilgrimage in life, filled with the hope of eternal life. He declares "**fain would I mount, fain would I glow**" In so doing he is saying, I will rise above sinning and carelessness and let the light of Christ shine brightly in my life. I understand that I can't remove myself from this life, but trusting in the One who is able to save to the uttermost, I gladly loose myself of things earthly, that there be no hindrance in my life when the Lord calls me home.

"**But I can only spread my sail, Thou, thou must breathe th' auspicious gale.**" Auspicious means: promising success; propitious; opportune; favorable: (the surety of our salvation)

The born again sinner understands that God, only, holds the breath of all living in His hand. **Job 12:10 In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.** He understands that God, only, is able to save the soul and body from eternal damnation. **Mt 10:28 And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** He understands that this salvation and eternal life is given through the finished work of Jesus Christ. He understands that only at the command of the risen and exalted Christ is there any way to be loosed from this earth and mortality. He understands that though he lets his light shine and though he is ready to be offered up, he must wait upon the bidding of his Saviour.

Let's go back to the anchor and view it in the eternal perspective. We let the anchor down to hold our ship in place. When it is time to move we take the anchor up. That is exactly what Christ has done for us. When we were born again, the anchor was let down to earth, and we were secured in Christ's finished work. When time is no more and it is time for us to move into eternity, Christ will pull the anchor up by coming and fetching us home, into the eternal rest (no toiling) of salvation.

What a great and glorious hope is set forth in this hymn. What an understanding of the marvelous workings of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ. What an understanding of the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in life's journey, and in the passing from this life into eternity. God help us to look upon these words, and sing, and worship the Lord in Spirit and in Truth. ***Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.***

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

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