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Email: info@austin-sparks.net

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## A Christian's Anchors

*by T. Austin-Sparks*

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["Men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 6:16-20).

"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck..." (1 Tim. 1:19).

"Fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off." (Acts 27:29-32).]

It seems that this ship, whatever else it carried in cargo, carried a very good cargo of anchors. They put four out at the stern and then it says that the men lowered a boat on the pretext of putting some more out of the foreship, so they were well off for anchors. Evidently they were experienced in what can happen in the Mediterranean. Some of us have seen some of the storms in those waters and have seen the actual point at which this ship broke up, and we know exactly what it can be like.

But there never was a Mediterranean gregale to compare with what you have to encounter in a spiritual way when your soul's eternal welfare is at stake. The forces which are at work to bring a soul to ruin, to prevent a man or a woman reaching God's appointed and desired haven, are far greater and more terrible and persistent than anything that has ever been encountered in the natural realm of storms. Of course, you do not know that until you definitely set yourself in the direction of God's will. A great many people in this world seem to be getting along very well, with not very much trouble, and think that they are going (in that easygoing, carefree way) to get where God wants them to be. That is an illusion. Never yet has there been a definite and serious association with the will of God, the purpose of God, except there has been the rising of terrific conflict and tempest to make that realisation impossible, and I say when a man or a woman does seriously have an understanding with God that His will and purpose is to be realised in their life and that they are abandoned to Him for that, then such a life will know that it is not all plain sailing, easygoing. There will be forces which were not imagined arising to hinder that, to make that impossible.

The course of the salvation of a soul is the course of no less a conflict than all the forces of heaven and hell locked in battle over that soul. That is not exaggerating. Sooner or later it is found that we are not going to get through quite so easily. In the early stages of this story, these people thought they had gained their end - "the south wind blew softly". The thing seemed to be going very well. Oh no, that is not the experience of those who are really in union with God for His purpose, and we shall find that we need a good cargo of anchors before we are through.

If there is one thing that we shall need, it will be anchors. We are going to be put under terrific testing and strain and there has got to be some real holding power or we are going to be on the rocks spiritually, our destiny will be a shipwreck. There are those referred to in the New Testament as those who "concerning the faith have made shipwreck" (1 Tim. 1:19). That is a terrible possibility. But there are those referred to also as having, "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil" (Heb. 6:19). Well, anchors are an important part of our equipment, and in a very simple way I propose to mention to you four of the cargo of anchors absolutely necessary, but, thank God, provided for our security. "They cast four anchors out of the stern", and we shall find that the forces driving on, to carry us headlong to undoing, will have to be countered by these four anchors at least, but I think they will prove sufficient. They are very simple and I think I can say in a sense the New Testament as a whole is taken up with these four things.

## **1. Christ Died for our Sins**

The first is this - "*Christ died for our sins*" (1 Cor. 15:3). That is a statement of fact, that is a mighty and gracious provision of God for our security, for our safety under pressure, under strain, under the drive of the accuser, the one who is ever seeking to bring us under condemnation itself under which we all lie by nature which is a perfectly true thing about us. Until this great fact is something which is apprehended by us, by our faith, we are under condemnation by nature. The whole race lies under judgment by nature and Satan has the ground and the right to accuse, to raise the whole question of our standing before God and our acceptance with God, until we have taken hold of this anchor and made fast: "*Christ died for our sins*".

Now, have you got that assurance? We have just been singing:

"My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought,  
My sin, not in part, but the whole,  
Is nailed to His Cross and I bear it no more.  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!"

Now, you all sang those words. Did you sing it as true where you are concerned or just as a part of an evening form of worship?

You know, between an anchor and the vessel to be held there must be a connection. Some of you know that we have been doing a little in the North in seeking to help the men on the merchant ships of the conveys for which purpose we have a launch, and this being about the worst non-summer in our history! We have had some terrific storms and gales and in the course of only a few days I lost three anchors and I proved the tremendous value and importance of anchors. The gale got up, moorings were broken, and, not carrying more than two anchors, we put out the two anchors, a large one and a smaller one. One was on an iron cable; the other was on a rope, howbeit a fairly stout rope. The rocks were not many yards away, but the rope which was fastened to the larger anchor simply went in the course of a few hours like thread. That anchor was gone and that connection was broken. Now everything depended upon the cable and the other anchor and we had to do some praying and a lot of praying because naturally the situation was fairly hopeless, we have seen things happen there before. But, thank God, the anchor held and the cable held and that long storm was weathered. But I suppose we had better face it, that, though we prayed and trusted the Lord, we watched with an anxious eye what was going to happen.

I was saying that between the vessel or that which is to be held, there is a connection and the connection is faith and that faith has got to lay hold and keep hold firmly and continuously. The anchor is sure, it has entered into the veil, it is sure and steadfast. The anchor will not drag, the anchor will not break, will not give, but what about our hold, our faith in the fact that Christ died for our sins? If you and I will believe that firmly, we will weather the storm. It is not our faith that creates the fact and it is not our faith that is the final factor in our salvation, it is His work. His work is sure, complete, safe and utter. He has died for our sins. The weakness of the whole position is that we are so frail and impersistent in our hold on that fact. That anchor is all right, you need not worry about that anchor, but let us see to it that we are not making the great work of Christ, the positive, full, final work of Christ of none effect by our attitude towards it. Well, that is the first anchor, very simple, but we cannot get anywhere until we have taken that on - Christ died for our sins. Are you quite clear about it?

On another occasion, we dropped an anchor and when we came to take it up, we found that it had fouled (become entangled around) the cable and it was high water. The cable could not be pulled up and moved, what could be done? We had a few pulls, but we might just as well have tried to pull the bottom of the sea up. The anchor was well fouled. What could be done? Nothing! We had to go, we could not stay there all night, there was nothing to do but to let out all our cable and leave anchor and cable behind and clear off, and it was just after we had lost the other anchor, so we did not have another one. We had to take the voyage without an anchor. If the engine broke down, with no sail, we were at the mercy of everything.

An anchor is an important thing, a great deal depends upon an anchor. A lot of people have got their anchor fouled, it has got all tangled up, they are not clear about things. Are you quite clear on this matter, quite sure? Is it quite straightforward? "*Christ died for our sins.*" Now you believed once, perhaps, and you entered into the joy of that and you knew the joy of His salvation, but you have got all mixed up since, all tangled, and it is as good as not having an anchor at all to be where you are. You have lost your assurance, you have lost the confidence, the straightforwardness, of this salvation.

Well, you want to know what we did about that. Did we sacrifice our anchor and our cable? - and it was a long cable. Oh yes, just for a bit, we had to go, but we came back a day or so after at low tide

and we could see our anchor, the anchor could be reached and got clear. But we had a very pleasant experience. Someone nearby knew of our difficulty and what had happened, and when we came back we found he had cleared it for us and got it ready to be taken away, but that may not enter into our analogy. We have got to get clear, we have got to get this matter disentangled, we are not going to abandon this great fact of Christ's dying for our sins. We may have got into a bit of a tangle, a bit of a mess, and lost our absolute assurance and the transparency of our confidence, but we are not going to abandon that. No, let us come back.

We have a little Bible kiosk up North for the Forces and last week I was told of an American soldier who came into the kiosk and looked at the Bibles and Testaments and other things and then said to the one who was there: "What denomination do you belong to?"

"No denomination!"

"Oh, I suppose you are Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Salvation Army and all the rest mixed up: are you?"

"No, we just belong to the Lord!" Of course, this was all play because of something else going on. After a few minutes, he said: "Well, I will tell you the truth; I belonged to the Salvation Army but I am a backslider!"

Very well, the answer was, "You have no need that the way of salvation should be pointed out to you, you know what to do, you know where to go!" He said, "Yes; well, I may come back and see you again!"

"Oh, that is not the important matter, the thing is that you come back to the Lord." He said, "Very likely I will!"

He had got tangled up. Have you got away from the Lord, lost your assurance? Can you say something like that? No, go further than that. Not, "Very likely I will"; but, "I *will* come back!" Lay hold on that anchor again, get it clear; the anchor is there, it is still the same anchor as ever, still the same truth. It has not changed, it has not lost anything. You may have got mixed up; it is just the same now as ever it was. "*Christ died for our sins.*"

## **2. Christ Risen is Our Life**

The second anchor - Christ risen is our Life. That is the second anchor, and that carries things further in this way, that it changes the position from the objective to the subjective. Christ died for our sins - that is a glorious truth outside of ourselves altogether to be laid hold of, but Christ risen has become our Life, and that is not just something objective, that is something inward. When we have laid hold of His atoning work for our sins, when our faith has really apprehended that, then as the risen and living Christ by His Spirit He comes to reside within to be our Life, and that is a mighty thing. Oh, what we owe to the indwelling Christ, the indwelling Life of the risen Lord! How many storms we have really weathered because of that!

Ah, there are many here who are very ready to say, "Well, I know quite well I would never have come through but for the power of Christ within, but for the living Lord as my life!" Yes, we can say that, we know it. We know the stress of these fearful forces set against us, but we do know that "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4)? And why do you not believe that, you Christians? Why do we not hold on to that? Look back over a few years and see what storms you

have had, what tempests, the awful fury of the oppressor, the awful powers of evil and hell descending upon you for your undoing and destruction, and tell me: are you here tonight because you have been so strong and enduring and able to overcome? No, you know quite well that if it had been left with you, you would have been swamped and submerged and at the bottom long ago, but you are here. Why? Because Christ is your Life in an indwelling way, and if that can be at the end of five, ten, fifteen, twenty years, can't it be the same at the end of fifty years? Can't that truth land you safe at the end? Christ your Life. Why not hold it, lay hold of it, believe it. It is an anchor for the soul.

### **3. Christ Within Our Hope**

Anchor number 3 - Christ within our Hope. The apostle says: "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Col. 1:27). Do you know one of the titles of God in the New Testament is that He is the God of Hope? "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Rom. 15:13). The God of hope. There He is, the God of hope; here you are, between, the joy and the peace of being linked with Him by believing. The God of hope - and what a lot hangs upon that.

Go back to the beginning of your Bible, see how it opens; a world in ruin, in chaos, in darkness, in death, in desolation; the Spirit of God broods upon the face of the deep. What is He doing? Why brooding? Why has He not abandoned it, why has He not left it forever? No, He is brooding, He is the God of hope. Out of that ruin and chaos, He is going to make a cosmos of transcendent beauty, wonderful order. The God of hope!

A little later, God saw the wickedness of man that it was great in the earth (Gen. 6:5), there were none that did good - the days of Noah. God saw that the whole thing had got to be brought under judgment, but He is the God of hope and He secures the way of the realisation of His hope afresh in that ark. The ark is the symbol of His hope, it is a type of Christ in whom, through the storms of judgment and destruction, refuge, safety, security are found. He is the God of hope.

You go on through the Bible and you find again and again an almost hopeless situation. Israel, failing, breaking down, yes, almost hopeless, but God does not abandon hope, and if there is one story written in the history of this world which shows God as being the God of hope, it is the story of Israel. Yes, you can say all that you like about the Jews, speaking generally, and you may find there is a great deal of truth - I do not know that it is the right reaction to say that none of these things are true. Say what you like about the Jews, and you may find there is a lot of truth in it, but the reaction is this: does not that all the more show forth the grace of God? If there is yet to be hope, if there is yet to be salvation, then God is indeed the God of hope in the light of all that we can say about Israel or the gentiles - and there is a glorious future for both, because God does not despair. God never despairs. He is the God of hope. There is an anchor for you. The worst that we can say about ourselves may be true - God knows a great deal more than we know about ourselves as to the depths of sinfulness. He knows the worst, but He does not despair. He is the hope of hope, and the secret of our coming into the hope of God and the realisation of God's hope is "*Christ in you the hope of glory*". The opposite of glory is shame, and they that trust in the Lord shall not be ashamed. The God of hope, therefore the God of glory (Acts 7:2).

### **4. Christ Interceding, Our Assurance**

Finally, the fourth anchor - Christ interceding, our assurance. "He ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25), is the word. Here is Peter: Peter, all self-confidence and self-assurance: "though all forsake thee, I will not forsake thee... Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (Matt. 26:33,35), and in a few hours he is denying with oaths and curses that he even knew Christ. What a

collapse, what a breakdown! Well might Peter despair. The Lord had told him all about it before it happened. He said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). The words imply, they really state in the original, that Satan had secured Peter by asking, and he had obtained his request. The Lord was not saying, "Satan has asked to have you but he is not going to have you!" But, "He has got you to sift you as wheat." *"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not"*. Satan may shake, may sift, may have a lot of liberty given, may be allowed to lay on, may be the instrument of the Divine sovereignty to destroy that evil self-hood, self-confidence, self-assurance, self-fulness of ours, to destroy and bring us to the place where we know that it is only the grace of God that will get us through.

Satan is used to doing that work of God in us. But while he is doing it, it is an awful experience, this breaking down, this emptying out, this grinding to powder. Satan does his work thoroughly and, if he could, he would go beyond measure and utterly destroy. But for one thing, it would be despair, it would be utter destruction - but for one thing: "I have prayed for thee"! He ever lives to make intercession. There is an anchor in the hour of trial, in the hour of satanic pressure, in the hour of sifting, refining, in the hour of conflict, the hour when it seems that we are being brought to destruction and an end. What have we to hold us? "I have prayed for thee!" He ever lives to make intercession. Believe that when you cannot pray for yourself. Remember there is One praying for you whose prayer will be mightier than your prayer and will prevail.

When no prayer seems to be getting through, there is One whose prayer is already through. If this is a fact - the Word of God states it - and if it is a fact (and we ought to rule out 'if' altogether, but for argument we let it in), if it is a fact, then surely we owe far more than we can imagine to the fact that the Lord Jesus is living now to make intercession for us. Oh, how many times we must have come through purely on the strength of His intercession! He prevails in prayer for us, when there is no prevailing by us.

Christ died for our sins.  
Christ risen is our life.  
Christ within our hope.  
Christ interceding our assurance.

Well, put out your anchors and counter this drive of the forces of destruction by the work and the living Person and the glorious heavenly intercession of God's Son.