



Rescue me and deliver me in Your righteousness; turn Your ear to me and save me.

(Psalm 71:2)

²³ They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; ²⁴ These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. ²⁵ For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. ²⁶ They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. ²⁷ They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. ²⁸ Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. ²⁹ He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. ³⁰ Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. ³¹ Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! (Psalms 107:23-31)

I was raised in an environment far removed from the sea; however, if I could have been convinced to part with my old familiar Blue Ridge Mountains and head out to sea in the Navy, it would have been this majestic hymn that would have compelled me to the decision. I envy the Navy for the beauty of their official hymn, but the sentiments expressed are not limited to the hearts and minds of those who “*go down to the sea in ships*” but to all who know and trust in that Providential Hand that overrules the Sea of Life, who orders the billows and tempest of life, and causes the breakers to cease their roaring.

This glorious hymn was composed by William Whiting for one of his students who was about to embark on a sea voyage to America in 1860. The only tune worthy of the lyrics is that composed by John B. Dykes in 1861 – Melita. The name is after the Island of Malta upon which Paul and all others (200 plus souls) were saved from the ravages of an unusually brutal storm upon the sea after many days struggle. *⁴² And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: ⁴⁴ And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land. ¹ And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. (Acts 27:42-44, Acts 28:1)*

It should be noted that this horrific storm arose on the sea after leaving an island

of absolute peace and calm called, The Fair Havens. God punctuates our lives with alternations of safety and comfort with moments of danger and fear. If it were not so, how could we truly appreciate those moments of safety and comfort? Without the howling north wind, how could we know the peaceful solitude of an open fire on the hearth!

This Navy Hymn was sung at the funerals of at least three Presidents of the United States – Franklin Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan. To many Navy patriots, it was the last song of the Chaplain's Service in their memories just before embarking on great sea battles and Naval engagements along the islands of the sea. Many never heard another hymn this side of Jordan Banks.

Eternal Father, Strong to Save

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who biddest the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

Lord, guard and guide the men who fly
Through the great spaces in the sky.
Be with them always in the air,
In darkening storms or sunlight fair;
Oh, hear us when we lift our prayer,
For those in peril in the air!

Aloft in solitudes of space,
Uphold them with Thy saving grace.
Thou Who supports with tender might
The balanced birds in all their flight.
Lord, if the tempered winds be near,
That, having Thee, they know no fear.

O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy Word,
Who walked on the foaming deep,
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood
Upon the chaos dark and rude,
And bid its angry tumult cease,
And give, for wild confusion, peace;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

O Trinity of love and power!
Our family shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect us wheresoever we go;
Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

Eternal Father, strong to save, Whose arm hath bound the restless wave, Who biddest the mighty ocean deep Its own appointed limits keep; Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee, For those in peril on the sea! No one can call upon their father like a child who is in great danger or need. It is not begging to call upon our earthly fathers for help in time of trouble – it is merely that which is ‘expected.’ The same is true for the Christian who calls, in time of mortal danger (or solitude) upon his Father in Heaven. It should be with a high degree of reverence that we do so. God is not our ‘daddy;’ He is our Father, and, above all else, He satisfies that title in Eternity. He could not be our eternal Father were we not able to enjoy His LOVE and PRESENCE in eternity.

Our Father is, indeed, strong; but unlike an earthly father whose strength diminishes with age, our Father in Heaven is not only strong, but all-powerful. He calls forth the gales of the sea, and with His Word, He causes them to be silent. He has set, on the dawn of Creation, the ocean limits that the sea does not overcome the boundaries of dry land the Lord made for our habitation. Yes, our Father does hear us when we cry unto Him and He hears most audibly when we waft up our prayers under mortal danger. When Peter, at the bidding of Christ, step out on the waters of the Sea of Galilee, he walked on water until he took his gaze off Christ and looked into the danger of the swirling tide. It was then that he began to sink. What could he do? He could do nothing! He needed a hand that was above the Sea and stronger. In desperation, he called out, “Lord, save me!” That was not a very fancy or well thought out prayer, but it came directly from the soul of Peter – and it was the kind of prayer the Lord ALWAYS hears.

Lord, guard and guide the men who fly Through the great spaces in the sky. ... Aloft in solitudes of space, Uphold them with Thy saving grace – The second and third stanzas are a relatively recent edition, added in the 1930s with the dawn of Naval Aviation as a primary striking and defensive arm of the Navy. These two stanzas are often omitted at the funerals of non-aviators. The most important words in the entire hymn are the last words of the third stanza; *having Thee, they know no fear*. For if we have the saving Grace of God, there should be no fear in our hearts, for nothing that counts can be harmed. This is a constant theme for a reason; we need a constant reminder that as long as it is well with our soul, all is indeed well.

O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard And hushed their raging at Thy Word, Who walked on the foaming deep, And calm amidst its rage didst sleep; Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee, For those in peril on the sea! When we call upon the Lord, we are calling upon a Veteran of many storms of the sea. He did walk upon the sea as if it were made of glass. He did sleep in the hull of a ship throughout the raging tumult of the storm. He has been on every path into which our feet wander. He is surprised by nothing. He is the eternal WAY, TRUTH, and LIFE. In both perils of body and soul on the sea of life, He hears our prayers. He knows our need before we ask. He is WITH us!

Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood Upon the chaos dark and rude, And bid its angry tumult cease, And give, for wild confusion, peace; Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee, For those in peril on the sea! That Divine and Holy Spirit that officiated over the Deep at Creation, and still officiates in the lives of the saints of God, has been our guide from ancient times to follow Christ. The angry billows of the sea are frozen at His power, but it is not the outward surges of the waves that are calmed always, but the storms within the hearts of men – calmed and able to deal with the storms and chaos of life.

O Trinity of love and power! Our family shield in danger's hour; From rock and tempest, fire and foe, Protect us wheresoever we go; Thus evermore shall rise to Thee Glad hymns of praise from land and sea. The dangers we confront in life are not removed at our prayers, but are made subordinate to the faith we have in God to help us to overcome

them. In so doing, like the good soldier in basic training, we grow stronger to deal with even greater challenges of life. Sadly, we do not often hear reference to the Holy Trinity in modern churches. They have forgotten the Father God that conceived; the Word that created that which was conceived; and the Holy Spirit that "*brooded over the face of the deep.*" A child may be fearful of going out into the storm, but when held in the arms of his father, he is willing and able to endure it. The same is true for the saint. He may be fearful of dangers, but he knows of his Father who is with him. The Father is unafraid, so neither is the child afraid.

In the Anglican Orthodox Church, we share a fellowship and band of brothers and sisters upon which the sun never sets – either literally or figuratively. Glad hymns are lifted on high from the bush country of Africa, from Pakistan, from southern Europe, from the Americas, and from the islands of the sea of the south Pacific. We find ourselves in one Great Cloud of Witnesses. Will you join with us in that old-time and primitive religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which has been sealed and consummated by our Lord Jesus Christ?