

Devotional Thoughts :: Passage over the Jordan of Death By David Harsha

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Passage over the Jordan of Death

from WANDERINGS OF A PILGRIM
By David Harsha, 1856.

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." Isaiah 43:2

"How sweet the hour of closing day,
When all is peaceful and serene,
And when the sun, with cloudless ray,
Sheds mellow luster o'er the scene!
Such is the Christian's parting hour,
So peacefully he sinks to rest;
When faith, endowed from Heaven with power
Sustains and cheers his languid breast."

As the Christian pilgrim is about to leave the wilderness of this world forever, he has to cross a dark stream. The Jordan of death rolls between this world and the Celestial Canaan. Before they obtained full possession of the promised land, the Israelites lead to pass over Jordan; so every traveler to the Canaan above must cross over the river of death, before he is admitted into the courts of paradise, and obtains possession of the heavenly inheritance. In the third chapter of Joshua we have an interesting account of the Israelites' passage over Jordan. We there read as follows: "When the people set out to cross the Jordan, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. Now it was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge, the water began piling up at a town upstream called Adam, which is near Zarethan. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the city of Jericho. Meanwhile, the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Lord's covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by them. They waited there until everyone had crossed the Jordan on dry ground." Joshua 3:14-17

Now, all this is typical of the believer's triumphant passage over the Jordan of death. When the fainting Christian pilgrim comes to the brink of this last swelling stream, over which all must pass, Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who bears the everlasting covenant on his shoulders, goes before and rolls back the surging waves, that the ransomed soul may pass safely over into glory. In the prospect of dissolution, the saint may say, with a Christian poet—

"A swelling Jordan rolls between,
A timid pilgrim I;
But grace shall order all the scene,
And Christ himself be nigh.
He shall roll back the foaming wave,
Command the channel dry;
No sting has death, no victory grave,
With Jesus in my eye."

What we design in the few following pages, is, to comfort the timid Christian in the prospect of death; to show that Jesus is with believers in the dark valley; to cite some of the last words of eminent saints, who, sustained and cheered by the Savior, have passed over Jordan with songs of triumph; and to contemplate the happy termination of the Christian pilgrim's journey, and his joyful entrance upon the rest above.

1. THE PRECIOUS RELIGION OF JESUS AFFORDS THE STRONGEST CONSOLATION TO THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIM IN THE VIEW OF DEATH. There is no reason why he should dread its approach. Its terrors are subdued; its sting is extracted; it is a disarmed enemy. Death cannot harm the child of God; but for him to die is gain. To such it is the beginning of everlasting, celestial joys- the daybreak of a glorious eternity. It is only a peaceful slumber in Jesus- an entering into

o the joy of the Lord. It is but to depart from a land of sorrow and bereavement, and be with Christ, in those happy regions where God shall wipe away all tears from the eye. To the Christian, "death has changed its nature and its name. Call it no more death; it is the sweet sleep of the body, deposited in its earthy bed, under the eye of the Redeemer, until the morning of the resurrection."

Many pious Christians are held in bondage by the fear of crossing the river of death. Their feelings with regard to this subject are not what they should be. They ought to rise above the fear of dissolution; for Christ has delivered us from this bondage. He has achieved this victory by the assumption of humanity- by destroying the works of the devil, and by passing through the swelling Jordan in our nature. "Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he deliver those who have lived all their lives as slaves to the fear of dying."

The Savior has warmed the cold grave for his disciples. He has made an easy way through the swellings of Jordan for the faithful followers. Why, then, fellow pilgrim, are you afraid to cross this stream when the channel is dry? when you see the footprints of your Redeemer in the bottom? when death is but a sure step into glory? Surely there is no ground for dismay to the believer in that solemn hour which terminates his earthly pilgrimage; but every reason for joyfulness. "For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down—when we die and leave these bodies—we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands."

There is no condemnation to the believer; for, being justified by faith, he has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has peace during his pilgrimage; he has peace in the hour of death. In Christ, he obtains a complete victory over death and the gloomy grave. Washed in the atoning blood of the Savior, and clad in the snowy robe of his righteousness, he can shout forth joyfully, upon a dying bed, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. How we thank God, who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

It is Jesus, the sinner's Friend, who disarms death of its terrors- who makes a dying bed so easy to the believer. Hence many a once timid pilgrim has been able to say in his last moments, "Is this dying? Is this the enemy that dismayed me so long, now, now appearing so harmless, and even pleasant?" O, how reviving that,
"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast I lean my head,
And breathe my life out sweetly there."

2. CHRIST IS WITH HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE IN THE MIDST OF JORDAN. His precious promise is "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." In their passage through death, the Lord upholds and cheers the souls of his ransomed ones by the endearing manifestations of his gracious presence and wonderful love.

"How happy is the dying saint,
Whose sins are all forgiven;
With joy he passes Jordan's flood,
Upheld by hopes of heaven.
The Savior, whom he truly loved,
Now cheers him by his grace;
A glory gilds his dying bed,
And beams upon his face."

Hence, thousands of God's children have been enabled to exclaim, while descending into the shadowy valley, "Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me."

It was the soul-ravishing manifestation of the Savior's presence and love that made the martyrs so joyful at the stake; and it is this that has made many a departing saint burst forth with rapturous joy in such language as this: "O! why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly!" O what amazing mercy does Jesus often bestow upon his faithful follower in the darksome valley, and in the deep Jordan, when the cold hand of death is upon him!

"Jesus, the vision of your face
Has overpowering charms;
Scarce shall I feel death's cold embrace,
If Christ be in my arms."

3. We now proceed to cite the DYING SAYINGS of a few eminent, pious Christians, who have been wonderfully sustained by divine grace during their passage over the Jordan of death. We mention the following glorious examples—
Donald Cargill: "This is the most joyful day that ever I saw in my pilgrimage on earth. My joy is now begun, which I see shall never be interrupted."

Luther: "Into your hands I commit my spirit; God of truth, you have redeemed me."

Thomas Holland: "Come, O come, Lord you bright Morning Star! Come, Lord! I desire to be dissolved and to be with Jesus, Jesus, you."

John Flavel: "I know that it will be well with me."

Alexander Henderson: "I am near the end of my race, hastening home, and there was never a school boy more desirous to have the play, than I am to have leave of this world."

Thomas Cartwright: "I have found unutterable comfort and happiness, and God has given me a glimpse of heaven."

John Locke: "O the depth of the riches of the goodness and knowledge of God."

James Evans: "In Jesus I stand."

Augustus Toplady: "I believe God never gave such manifestations of his love to any creature, and allowed him to live."

John Tennent: "Welcome God and Father! Welcome sweet Lord Jesus! Welcome death! Welcome eternity. Amen. Lord Jesus, come, Lord Jesus."

Samuel Finley: "I see the eternal love and goodness of God. I see the love of Jesus. Oh, to be dissolved, and to be with him! I long to be clothed with the complete righteousness of Christ."

Dr. Waddell: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Ralph Erskine: "Victory, victory, victory."

John Wesley: "The best of all is, God in with us."

Felix Neff: "Adieu, adieu. I am departing to our Father in perfect peace. Victory, victory, victory! by Jesus Christ."

Dr. Bogue: "I am looking to that compassionate Savior, whose blood cleanses from all sin."

Dr. Nevins: "Death! Death! Now come, Lord Jesus- Dear Savior."

To Dr. Waugh one said, "You are now in the deep Jordan; have you any doubt that Christ will be with you?" He replied, "Certainly not! Who else? Who else?"

D. H. Gillette: "O that I had strength to shout! I feel so happy. O, the precious Savior; what is the world to me? All its vanity? Give me Jesus. Do not weep for me, I am going home."

Alexander Proudfit: "When will this lingering conflict end? Oh, for a speedy and easy transition! Oh for deliverance from this corruptible body- this body of sin and death! Come, blessed Jesus, dear Savior, come! come! I long to depart."

J. H. Rice: "Mercy is triumphant!"

Dr. Nettleton: "It is fit to trust in the Lord."

Robert Anderson: "Peace! peace! How gracious God is in so making it all peace!"

Elisha Macurdy: "The Savior is all my comfort."

Thomas Cranfield: "A few more sighs, and then— " Wilberforce Richmond: "The rest which Christ gives is sweet."

Mrs. Hannah More: "Jesus is all in all. God of grace, God of light, God of love: whom have I in heaven but you? It is a glorious thing to die." Her last word was, "Joy."

Mrs. Isabella Graham: "I have no more doubt of going to my Savior, than if I were already in his arms."

Thus, we have presented a few dying sayings of several pious Christians who passed the river of death upheld by divine grace. Innumerable other similar cases might be cited; but these are sufficient to show with what great mercy and loving kindness the Lord generally deals with his people in the hour and article of death. Although many of God's children have not enjoyed such bright, sensible manifestations of his gracious presence in their dying moments- although they may have gone to heaven under a cloud, yet their passage over the Jordan of death was as safe as that of the most joyful believer.

In the matchless dream of Bunyan, we have an admirable description of the triumphant passage of the pilgrims over Jordan. There we find that the most timid got over as safely as the most fearless. The last words of Ready-to-halt were, "Welcome, life." The last words of Feeble-mind were, "Hold out, faith and patience." The last words of Despondency were, "Farewell, night! welcome, day!" Even his daughter, Much-afraid, "went through the river singing; but no one could understand what she said." But how transporting were the last words of Mr. Standfast! "This river," said he, "has been a terror to many; yes, the thoughts of it also have often frightened me; but now methinks I stand easy, my foot is firmed upon that

on which the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the covenant stood while Israel went over Jordan. (Joshua 3:17) The waters indeed are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the convoy that waits for me on the other side, are as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are ended. I am going to see that head which was crowned with thorns, and that face which was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be, with him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of his shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me sweeter than all perfumes. His voice to me has been most sweet, and his countenance I have more desired than those who have most desired the light of the sun. His words I used to gather for my food, and for antidotes against my faintings. He has held me, and has kept me from my iniquities; yes, my steps has he strengthened in his way."

4. Here we see THE HAPPY TERMINATION OF THE CHRISTIAN'S PILGRIMAGE ON EARTH. His sorrowful days are ended. He has fought the good fight; he has finished his course; he has kept the faith; he has obtained the victory; he has crossed the swellings of Jordan, and gone to receive an immortal crown. But who can describe the glories which encircle the saint, safely landed on the happy shores of Immanuel's land?

"In vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death;
The glories that surround the saints,
When yielding up their breath.
One gentle sigh their fetters breaks;
We scarce can say, They're gone,
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne."

Now the Christian traveler has reached his everlasting home- that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Now the trying scenes of earth are passed, and the wanderer, raised above the storms of life, steps upon another shore; he enters a land, blooming with immortality, and illuminated by the effulgent beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Now he is ever with the Lord. Now he is seated with Immanuel on his heavenly throne. Now he is arrayed in the shining robes of glory, and drinks of the rivers of pleasures at God's right hand.

When we contemplate the past suffering condition, and the present felicitous state of such a one, we may truly say— "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white. That is why they are standing in front of the throne of God, serving him day and night in his Temple. And he who sits on the throne will live among them and shelter them. They will never again be hungry or thirsty, and they will be fully protected from the scorching noontime heat. For the Lamb who stands in front of the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe away all their tears."

O happy termination of the pilgrim's journey on earth! O blessed beginning of his felicity in heaven!

'Tis past- the voyage of life is o'er,
The wanderer hails another clime;
On perils borne to yonder shore,
He views afar the waves of time.
The storm that muttered o'er his head,
The flame that quivered round his path,
Are sweetly hushed; the cloud has fled,
And gone the angry lightning's scath.
'Tis past; and grief is changed to songs
That angel-cordons love to hear;
The harp that to delight belongs,
In softest murmur soothes his ear.
For secret sighs that rent his breast
There's peace to seraphs only known-
The tear that told the heart, oppressed,
Is gemmed upon the eternal throne.
Blessed voyager! how happy thou,
Safe moored within the port of peace;

Once heir of death— immortal now,
Of pain— your toils forever cease.
O, may I, too, thus sweetly rise,
Thus tread yon bright empyrean free,
With joy regain those native skies,
Secure at last in love like thee."

Re: Passage over the Jordan of Death By David Harsha, on: 2007/7/20 0:32

Thank you Christian for posting this and to the other thread with Mike's.

These two threads will come to help my daughter when the time comes, as her husband is passing, but the timing is up to the God.

He needs our prayers and so does he. He is devout catholic, but at times like these, I pray Jesus comes through to him in a knowledge that HE is the only one he will stand before.

Lord bless you and Mike for these posts.

Annie

https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?mode=viewtopic&topic_id=14907&forum=45&start=0&viewmode=flat&order=0