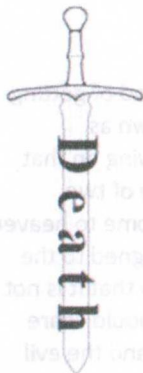


DEATH

The
mighty
weapon of
the Devil



The
mighty
weapon of
God

Now hell, its prince, the devil,
Of all their pow'r are shorn;
Now I am safe from evil,
And sin I laugh to scorn.
Grim death with all his might
Cannot my soul affright;
He is a pow'rless form,
Howe'er he rave and storm.
LH. 192:4

Now I will cling forever
to Christ, my Savior dear.
My Lord will leave me never;
With him I need not fear.
He rends death's iron chain;
he breaks through sin and pain.
He shatters hell's dark thrall;
I follow him through all.
CW 443:4

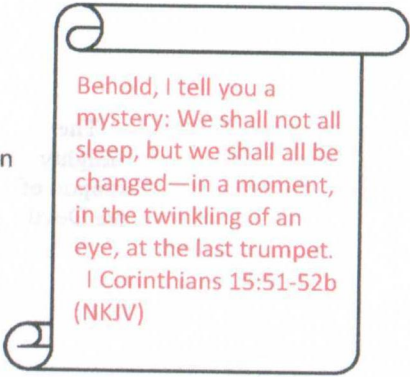
Part III God uses the death of the Christian as a mighty weapon

Hebrews 2:14-15 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself [Jesus] likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

The LORD God used the death of Jesus to crush the devil and destroy his death grip on mankind. The great weapon of death that the devil once had was now taken away by the greater weapon of Christ's death. All that remains now is to get the child of God safely home to heaven, and the LORD now uses the death of the Christian to bring the great gift of eternal life.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's Destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises
I will ever give to Thee.
L.H. 54 v. 3

There is, of course, a second method of getting the Christian home to heaven known as Judgment Day. Every soul that is living on that Last Day will be separated into one of two groups: sheep or believers to go home to heaven and goats or unbelievers to be assigned to the prison house of hell. Note carefully that it is not God's will that any human being should share confinement in hell with the devil and the evil angels. Jesus did His work of conquering sin, death, and the devil for everyone. It is not sin in general that sends a soul to hell but rather unbelief, the rejection of Jesus as Savior.



Behold, I tell you a
mystery: We shall not all
sleep, but we shall all be
changed—in a moment,
in the twinkling of an
eye, at the last trumpet.
1 Corinthians 15:51-52b
(NKJV)

We return to the topic here of how God uses the death of the Christian to overcome death, especially eternal death. We saw in Part 1 how the devil likes to use death as a club. But Jesus has ripped that club away from the bully's hand and replaces all the fears we once had with promises of blessings. Remember some of those old fears?

When will our death come? God tells us to be prepared for it (and Judgment Day) but He reassures us that our times are in His hands and that He has already determined the length of our pilgrimage in this evil world. He has established a perfect timetable, tailor-made in the best interest of each soul.

We humans would have a hard time living if we knew the exact date of our death or Judgment Day. On the one hand, we could easily become careless and procrastinate on spiritual matters, if the scheduled departure was far off in the future. On the other hand, if the date for leaving earth was in the near future, we could easily stop living a normal lifestyle. In His wisdom God has withheld the last date for our leaving the earth. There are times though when God gives us a clear warning as He did with King Hezekiah. He can use a health issue to let us know that the end on earth and beginning in heaven is near. Yet He may use an "accident" to bring quickly and suddenly our victory over death. The point is that He knows precisely what to do for each of us, and for each of our families.

Help me now set my house in order
That always ready I may be
To say in meekness on death's border:
Lord, as Thou wilt, deal Thou with me.
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
Thy peace may bless my dying day.
L.H. 598 v. 4

Will I die alone or will somebody be by my side? It is a great comfort to have at our death bed someone bringing Bible passages, godly hymns, and intercessory prayers. Yet the LORD promises that He will be at our side, even if no one else is. He promises comfort to get us through our final hours. We will not face death alone, but we will have for sure at our side the One Person, Jesus, Who has gone through death – and returned to life, to help us.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks,
and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!
L.H. 552 v. 8

Yea, though I walk
through the valley of
the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; For
You are with me; Your
rod and Your staff,
they comfort me.
Psalm 23:4 (NKJV)

What happens after death? We humans often have a fear of the unknown, and the death process presents to us the biggest unknown. Here again Jesus tells us what we need to know. When physical death comes to the Christian, there is a separation of body and soul. The soul of the believer returns to God and immediately is taken into heaven. The body returns to the earth to await the resurrection on Judgment Day and its reuniting with the soul for all eternity in heaven.

To set aside any fear of the grave, the Holy Spirit describes the body decaying in the grave as a sleep. The body cannot be lost in the death process, for it is tied by Baptism to the Resurrection of Jesus. The soul cannot be lost, for angels are assigned to carry it safely to heaven.

Some questions still linger. Will I outlive my money? Will I lose my mind? Again the Savior calms our fears with His promises.

Regarding our needs for daily living, Jesus promised:

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)

And while our minds might have memory issues, Jesus will always remember us:

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands" Isaiah 49: 15-16a (NKJV)

And thus I live in God contented
And die without a thought of fear;
My soul has to God's plans consented,
For through His Son my faith is clear.
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
Your peace may bless my dying day.

L.H. 598 v. 11 (updated English)

And thus I live in God contented
And die without a thought of fear;
to God's good plans I have consented,
my faith is focused, firm and clear.
By grace, in Jesus' name I say,
"Lord, you will bless my dying day!"

C.W. 678 v. 4

Jesus the Good Shepherd holds us in His powerful hands, and nothing can tear us away. The Savior uses His Word to nurture and preserve and His angels to serve and protect us. The Lord of life and mighty Victor over death has promised:

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39 (NKJV)

Because I live, you will live also. John 14:19b (NKJV)
Jesus is the Death of death. His victory is my victory.

Lo, Judah's Lion wins the strife
And reigns o'er death to give us life.
Hallelujah! Oh, let us sing His praises!

The power of death He brake in twain
When He to life arose again.
Hallelujah! To Him all praise be given!
Amen.

L.H. 211 v. 1 and 4