

The Quiet and Easy Passage of Christ's Purchased People Through Death to Glory.

by John Gill

Christ's purchased people must pass through death to glory, but their passage is always safe and quiet due to the greatness of the arm of the Lord.

Scripture: Exodus 15:16, Psalm 23:4, Isaiah 35:10, 1 Corinthians 7:23, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Ephesians 1:14, 2 Timothy 1:12, Hebrews 9:27, 1 Peter 1:13, Revelation 5:9

Topics: "Redemption", "Death"

Description

John Gill preaches about the quiet and easy passage of Christ's purchased people through death to glory, drawing parallels between the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea and the believer's journey through death. He emphasizes that Christ has redeemed a distinct people, who will safely navigate the river of death, aided by God's almighty power. Gill reassures that this passage is generally peaceful, as spiritual enemies are silenced, and believers can trust in God's promises for eternal life. He highlights the importance of faith in Christ, who leads His people to their eternal inheritance, ensuring that none will be lost. The sermon encourages believers to face death with hope and assurance, knowing they are under the care of their Redeemer.

Transcript

THE QUIET AND EASY PASSAGE
OF
CHRIST'S PURCHASED PEOPLE
THROUGH DEATH TO GLORY.

A Sermon,

Preached to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, in Carter-lane, Southwark.

EXODUS 15:16

Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm, they shall be as still as a stone, till thy people pass over, O Lord; till the people pass over which thou hast purchased.

THESE words are part of the Song which Moses and the children of Israel sung at the Red Sea, after they had passed safely through it, and the Egyptians were drowned in it: a song. worthy of notice, being the first and most ancient song that is on divine record; for though there were doubtless songs of praise to God sung before this by the people of God, there being ever more or less occasion for them; yet this is the first the scriptures give us any account of a song that only concerned the children of Israel, and their then present case and circumstances; but what was typical of other things, and had respect to times to come.

Moses the penman of it, and who was an instrument in the hand of God of the deliverance sung in it, was a type of Christ the Redeemer of his people. Israel, who shared in this deliverance, and joined with Moses in singing this song, were a typical people, a figure of the church of God, called the Israel of God, (Gal. 6:16) consisting of whatsoever nation; whom God has chosen, Christ has redeemed, and the holy Spirit effectually calls and sanctifies; and the redemption and salvation, the subject-matter of this song, was typical of redemption and salvation by the precious blood of Christ: a song this, that not only respects the then present situation of the people of Israel, but looks forward to future times, and reaches to the kingdom of Christ in all ages of the world, to the end of the, even to eternity itself; as appears from the close of it; The Lord shall reign for ever and ever; a song the like to which will be sung by the church and people of God in the latter day, upon a similar occasion; the destruction of Egypt, spiritually or mystically so called; the ruin of the antichristian Pharaoh; the conquest that will be made by the saints over the beast, his image, his mark, and. the number of his name; when they will stand upon a sea of glass, as Israel of old by the Red sea, with the harps of God in their hands, and sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb: (Rev. 15:2, 3) and indeed this song of Moses and the children of Israel, at the Red sea, may with sufficient propriety be called the song of the Lamb, or of Christ; since he is the principal person concerned in it, and to whom it is sung he being the Redeemer of Israel, in a literal sense, and the author of that salvation, the praise of which they now celebrated.

He is the Angel of the Lord, (for Jehovah the Father is never so called) who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and sent him to Pharaoh, to demand the dismissal of the children of Israel; and it was he that did all the signs and wonders by him in the land of Egypt, and in the plains of Zoan; it was he that brought Israel from thence, and went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. He is the same Angel of the Lord, that went before the camp of Israel, who removed behind them at the Red sea, and looked through the pillar upon the Egyptians, troubled their host, took off their chariot-wheels, returned the waters of the sea upon them and covered and drowned them in it; on account of all which this song is directed to him; and all the characters in it agree with him.

He is the strength and song of his people, in whom they have peace and joy, righteousness and strength; he is become their salvation, the author of spiritual and eternal salvation; he is their Lord and God, and exalted by them; he is a Man of War, inured to it, expert in it, and has fought the battles of his people for them with all their spiritual enemies, and has got the victory over them. The Lord of Hosts, of armies above and below, is his name; his right hand has displayed its glorious power in the destruction of Pharaoh and his host; and will still more gloriously display the same in the ruin of antichrist and all his powers. he is preferable to all others for the holiness of his nature, both divine and human, in which he is glorious; and for the matter of his praise, the glories and excellencies of his person, the blessings of his grace, and the great things done by him: in many of which he is fearful, tremendous and terrible, and in all to be feared and revered and for his works which he did both before and in his incarnate state; which are wonders, amazing and surprising, and especially the great work of our redemption: and he it is that had led forth the people of Israel out of Egypt, in mercy; and was leading them into Canaan's land, and guiding them thither

in his strength; and who brings forth all his people out of worse than Egyptian bondage, and leads and guides them safely to his holy habitation in heaven.

The former part of this song, to ver. 13. in the letter of it, respects things past, real facts, what were already done, for which praise is given. The latter part from thence is wholly prophetic, and contains a prediction of future events, of the dread of Israel that should fall on several nations as they passed along, who would hear what great things had been done for them, and by them; and of their quiet and easy passage over the river Jordan into the land of Canaan; and of their firm and sure settlement in it, ver. 14-17, all which had its certain accomplishment.

It is said, the people shall hear and be afraid; that is, the nations of the world in general; for the affair of the plagues of Egypt, and the deliverance of the children of Israel from thence, their passage through the Red sea, and the drowning of Pharaoh and his arms in it, were heard all over the world, and struck a panic in all the nations of it; see Deut. 2:25, sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina; the land of the Philistines adjoining to Canaan, and through which, in the common way, the road of the Israelites lay to it; and so they would be, and were in great concern lest they should suffer by them: then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the people of Idumea, then governed by dukes who upon the tidings of the wonderful things done for Israel in Egypt, at the Red sea, and in the wilderness, were surprised, and astonished, and filled with fear, Deut. 2:4, the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; as it did on Balak king of Moab, and on his princes, which literally fulfilled this prophecy, Num. 22:2, 3, all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away; as their heart did melt through fear when they heard what God did for Israel against the Egyptians and the Amorites; and understood they were on their march toward their land, to invade it, and dispossess them of it, as appears from Joshua 2:9, 11, 12; with this compare the case of the kings of the earth, when Egypt, spiritually or mystically so called, will be destroyed, and the people of God saved out of it, Rev. 18:2, 4, 9, 10; next follow the words which have been read; fear and dread shall fall upon them; upon all the nations in general, and upon those before mentioned in particular, and especially on the Canaanites: By the greatness of thine arm, they shall be as still as a stone, till thy people pass over, O Lord; till thy people pass over which thou hast purchased; the people of Israel, to whom it is said (Deut. 32:6) of God, is not he thy father that hath bought thee?

They were a people in a sense purchased by him; being redeemed by him out of Egypt, and wonderfully taken care of by him in providence whilst these passed over the river Jordan, in order to go into Canaan's land and possess it; their enemies awed by the power of God, visible in what he had done for them, were like stocks and stones, stood stupefied and immoveable; had not power to act or stir a foot in their own defence, or against Israel, come to invade them; nor in the least to molest them, nor to attempt to stop them in their passage through the river, nor dispute it with them but were as stupid as stones having no spirit or courage left in them; see Joshua 3:15-17, and chap. 5:1, which may be considered as an emblem of the quiet passage of Christ's purchased people through the ford or river of death, to the Canaan of everlasting rest and happiness.

And in this view of things I shall endeavour a little to improve the words of our text, by observing, I. That Christ has a people, and these are a purchased people. II. That this purchased people must pass through death to glory, and will pass through it safely. III. That this their passage, as it is always safe from their spiritual enemies, it is, generally speaking, quiet and easy from them: they are not suffered to disturb them. IV. That this is owing to the greatness of the arm of the Lord, or to his almighty power.

I. That Christ. has a people which are his purchase; concerning whom may be observed the following things. 1. Who the people are that are Christ's, and are purchased by him. These are men; for as for angels, they cannot come into the account of purchased ones; the evil angels Christ has nothing to do with as a Saviour, nor they with him; the good angels, though they are the objects of electing, yet not of redeeming grace; though Christ is the head of election to them, yet not the author of the redemption of them: for as they never were in bondage, they cannot be said to be redeemed, or bought again; besides their nature is incapable of dying, or of such a passage as the purchased people of Christ are obliged unto: but the purchased people are men, the sons of men, with whom the delights of Christ were from everlasting; whose person and cause he espoused, and for whom he undertook as a surety to obey, suffer and die in their room and stead; and by so doing to redeem and save them.

In order to which he took on him their nature, and not the nature of angels, and in that nature made a purchase of them; ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men; (1 Cor. 7:23) of whose race they are, and among whom they live, and to whom they are liable to be servants, whom Christ has bought with the price of his blood but then these are not all men, or all the individuals of mankind for they are redeemed from among men, and out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation; (Rev. 14:4 and 5:9) and therefore cannot be all men, or all of every kindred, tongue, people and nation; if Christ had made a purchase of all men, all would be saved, for his purchase cannot be lost: indeed we read of some, that deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction; (2 Peter 2:p but it is not clear that our Lord Jesus Christ is there meant, or the purchase of his blood there spoken of; but rather, that the God of Israel is intended, and his peculiar dealings in providence with that people, on account of which he is said to buy them: but supposing that Christ and his purchase are designed, this may be understood not of his real purchase of those who were eventually destroyed, but of their former profession of him as the Lord that had bought them, which they supposed and claimed, though it was not really so.

The people of Christ are a distinct people; distinguished by the love of God to them, by his choice of them to eternal life, and by the covenant of grace into which they are peculiarly taken, and are interested in all the blessings and promises of it: and by the effectual vocation of them: and as they are a distinct people in Christ's intercession, for whom he prays, and not for the world; so in redemption by his blood, they are a peculiar people, whom he has redeemed from all iniquity; to whom he has a peculiar right, for whom he has a peculiar value; on whom he bestows peculiar blessings; and whom he admits to a peculiar nearness to himself: they were indeed the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood; (Acts 20:28) that church of which he is the head, and for which he has given himself, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; even the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; that is to say, the elect of God: these and every one of them are bought by Christ, and all of them, their souls and bodies; and though the redemption of them is of their souls principally and chiefly, yet of their bodies also; wherefore being not their own, but bought with a price, they are under obligation to glorify him that bought them, in their body and spirit, which are his: (1 Cor. 6:19, 20) these are they which are called the purchased possession; (Ephes. 1:14) not heaven, as some have thought, to which redemption cannot with any propriety be ascribed; but a people for the Lord's possession, which he has bought for that purpose; nor are any but persons ever said to be purchased by Christ; which leads me to observe, 2.

That Christ, and he alone, is the purchaser of these people. The Son of God was appointed the redeemer of them in eternity, and was sent in the fulness of the to redeem them; and Christ has redeemed his people from sin, law, hell, and death; the Lamb has redeemed them, or bought them again by his blood;

being God over all, blessed for ever, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; the only potentate, whose is the earth and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein; he was able to make this purchase, and none but a divine person was equal to it; wherefore God is said to purchase the church with his blood, and as he was able to make this purchase, he was willing to do it; God in his infinite wisdom found him, and pitched upon him to be the ransom-price of his people; upon which he said concerning them, Deliver them from going down to the pit: (Job 33:24) and Christ voluntarily agreed to be that ransom, and said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; (Ps. 40:7, 8) and accordingly he did come in human nature, in the form of a servant, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many; (Matt. 20:28) and indeed by his becoming man, and so our God or near kinsman, the right of purchase and redemption belonged unto him.

If a man, according to the Levitical law, could not redeem himself when sold, his uncle, or his uncle's son, or any near of kin, might do it; and so the redemption and purchase of inheritances belonged to such, as in the cases of Boaz and Jeremiah. Thus Christ, partaking of the same flesh and blood with his people, and they being sold, and in a state of bondage; the right of redemption or purchase devolved on him, as it was agreed it should in the counsel and covenant of grace and peace; and accordingly he has actually made the purchase: he has purchased the church with his blood; the thing is done; ye are bought with a price; this has been testified in due time; full proof is to be, and has been made of it.

But I go on to observe, 3. The price with which these people are purchased by Christ; the purchase-money that was laid down for them, or given as a valuable consideration on their account: and this is sometimes said to be the flesh of Christ, which he gave, for the life of the world; (John 6:5) for the obtaining and securing the life of his chosen ones, even his whole human nature, which he took in union with his divine person; and so is said to be made flesh; (John 1:14) or a partaker of the same flesh and blood with his people; in which flesh or human nature he was put to death, and so obtained eternal redemption for them.

Sometimes his blood is represented as the purchase-price; not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish: (1 Peter 1:18, 19) he is said to purchase the church with his own blood; (Acts 20:28) and to redeem us unto God by his blood; (Rev. 5:9) which was a sufficient price, since it was the same blood with ours; for he partook of the same flesh and blood with ours; it was not the blood of bulls and goats which was given as the purchase-price; but it was the blood of a man, and the blood of an innocent person, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.

It was the blood of the harmless and innocent Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, either of original or actual sin, and so fit to be the ransom-price; and besides, what gave it its value, virtue, and efficacy, is, that it is the blood of him that is God as well as man, and both in one person; the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and so as it has a virtue to take away sin, and cleanse from it, has an intrinsic worth and value in it to make a purchase of all God's elect.

Sometimes the life, which is in the blood, the life of Christ, is made to be the ransom-price: he laid down his life for the sheep; (John 10:15) which his father gave him, and made his care and charge; his life went for theirs, and for the redemption of them; he gave his life a ransom for them: (Matt. 20:28) yea, he is said to give himself, "a ransom-price" for all (1 Tim. 2:6) his people, Jews and Gentiles, men of all nations, ranks and classes; and all sorts of sinners, greater and lesser; even his whole human nature, soul and body, as in union with his divine person, which were given, as for a sacrifice and offering for the sins of men, so for the ransom of them.

And how great must this be! we sometimes hear of a king's ransom, given either by a king, or for one; such is the ransom of Christ, it is given by him the King of kings, and is no other than himself; and it is given for his people, who are made kings and priests, to God by him; which must needs be a great one. Now it may be proper to inquire, 4. To whom this price was paid for the purchase of these people. Not into the hands of Satan; for though he is the god of this world, he is so by usurpation; and though he works effectually in the children of disobedience, and even leads captive God's own people, in a state of unregeneracy; yet he has no rightful claim unto them, nor just possession of them; and therefore, as there was no necessity of making a purchase of them from him, so neither has any been made: they are indeed ransomed from the hand of him who is stronger than they, even the strong man armed, in whose power they were whilst in a state of nature; but then this is done by power; and though in consequence of a price paid, yet not into his hands, but into the hands of another; and so the prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive is delivered.

But the price of Redemption is paid into the hands of God, into the hands of divine justice. Christ has redeemed his people unto God (Rev. 5:9) by his blood; by giving himself an offering and a sacrifice unto him; by fulfilling his law, and satisfying his justice. God has a sovereign right unto them, and a sovereign disposal of them, and could give them to whom he will; and he gave them to his Son: thine they were, and thou gavest them me, (John 17:6) on condition of his making his soul an offering for sin; or giving himself to redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people. (Titus 2:14) God is he against whom they have sinned, and whose law is broken by sin: for sin is the transgression of the law; (1 John 3:4) and the dishonour done to that must be removed, and the honour of it repaired and restored; and Christ, by his obedience, sufferings and death. has magnified the law, and made it honourable.

Justice by sin is injured and offended; and the judge of all the earth will do right and insist upon a full satisfaction to his justice; and therefore Christ is set forth to be the propitiation for sin, to declare the justice and righteousness of God; which is glorified by Christ. being made sin and a curse for his people, and by laying down his life a ransom-price for them. Sins are so many debts, and they are exceeding numerous; more than ten thousand talents are owing, and man has nothing to pay with; he has run into debt with God, and to him must the payment be made, either by himself, or by his surety; and now Christ, the surety of his people, in paying off their debts, has put a valuable consideration for them into the hands of God, to whom he has made the payment; and so he has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that lay against them.

To conclude this head of discourse, let us briefly consider, 5. The nature of this purchase. It is a special purchase; a peculiar people that Christ has redeemed; a special people that he has purchased; a special price which he has laid down for them, and which arises from his special love of them, and from whence flow special blessings and favours to them. It is a proper purchase: there is a purchasing or buying things in an improper sense, which is done without money, and without price; so grace, and the blessings of it, are bought of Christ; that is, by making application to him, they are freely had and enjoyed but this purchase is made with a price; ye are bought with a price; (1 Cor. 7:23) though not with the price of gold and silver, and such like corruptible things; yet with the price of Christ's blood, with his flesh, his life, himself, as has been before observed.

It is a legal purchase, good and valid, and against which no objection can be laid; it is a sufficient price that is given, what was agreed to by the parties concerned; by God, to whom it is paid, who is satisfied with it; by Christ, who engaged to give it, and has made payment of it; nor can any thing be alleged to invalidate the purchase either by law or justice; nor can any one, for the future, lay any claim to the persons

purchased, but he to whom they of right belong; who has a most clear and indubitate right and title to them; as by his Father's gift, who gave them to him to be his portion and inheritance, so by his own purchase: wherefore he claims an interest in them on this account, saying, I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine; (Isai. 43:1) and they are neither their own, nor an other's, but the Lord's; and as they are not the vassals of Satan, they ought not to be the servants of men, but serve and glorify the Lord, and him only.

As the purchase Jeremiah made of the field of his uncle's son was firm and valid, when the evidence of the purchase was subscribed and sealed, the witnesses taken, and the money weighed and paid; so the purchase which Christ has made is much more so, being sealed with his blood, and testified in due time the everlasting gospel, the evidence of this purchase; the scriptures are the writings which contain it, shew and prove it, It is a full and complete purchase; it is a purchase of the whole election of grace; of all the children of God scattered about in the world; of all the Lord's people that ever have been, are, or shall be, in it: these may truly be said to be the pearl of great price, which Christ the merchant-man came into this world to seek for, and found; and finding it, sold all that he had, shed his blood, parted with his life, and gave himself for it, and bought it: and it is the greatest purchase that ever was made, or can be made, and which none else could ever make; such as are possessed of the greatest riches, None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever; (Ps. 49:6-8) it must do so, for any thing that they can give as a redemption-price for it; they are not able with all they have, and had they the whole world, and all that is in it in their possession, they would not be able to purchase one single soul, or give a sufficient ransom-price for it: whereas Christ has purchased the whole church of God, thousands and millions of the souls of men; even a great multitude out of all nations, kindred, people, and tongues, which no man can number.

But I proceed to consider, II. The passage of this purchased people over Jordan's river, or through the ford of death; and the necessity of it, and their safety in it. 1. Death is a passage from this world to another; out of the into eternity. It is a going from hence elsewhere says our Lord, the Son of man goeth; that is, he is about to die, as it is determined; (Luke 22:22) which is going the way of all the earth; and he expresses his own death by departing out of the world, and going to the Father; and the apostle Paul signifies his desire to die in the same language; namely, to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better (John 13:1; Phil. 1:23) than to stay in this world.

Death is like taking a journey or a voyage, and it is a long one; it is a man's going to his long home, (Eccles. 12:5) and a long one it is; for he goes the way, and to the place whence he shall return no more; the place that knew him, or the people of it, shall know him no more there; he will not return to the same place, situation, and circumstances in which he was before. Death is sometimes represented as a passage through a low, lonesome, and dark valley; though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; (Ps. 23:4) and here the emblem is, passing over a river, and crossing from shore to shore, wading in the midst of it, in order to get to land; particularly a passing over the river Jordan to get into Canaan's land.

Now, 2. This passage is altogether necessary; it must be, there is no avoiding it: it is the way that all men go, all the inhabitants of the earth, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, good and bad; it is become necessary by the decree of God, which is infrustrable: it is appointed for men, for men in general, for all men, once to die, (Heb. 9:27) or to go through a change equivalent to it. This is the statute-law of heaven, and must be obeyed: the grave is the house appointed for all living; (Job 30:23) and all are brought unto it, and laid in it: though the grave of some is very different front that of others: yet there are receptacles for

the dust of all, into which they are conveyed; and good men as well as others are brought to the dust of death: and there is a necessity of it; the time drew nigh that Israel must die; (Gen. 47:29) that truly good man, that plain, honest-hearted man, Jacob; that gracious man, so powerful and prevalent in prayer, Israel; he must die as other men, as his ancestors Abraham and Isaac before him did; and the time was just at hand, according to the course of nature, and by the appointment of God, when he must submit to the stroke of death: and this is the case of all, the most pious and useful: Your fathers, where are they?

They are all gone from hence, they have all passed over Jordan, they are all departed into another world, an endless eternity: And the prophets, do they live for ever? (Zech. 1:5) No, they live but for a short time: when they have done the work they were sent to do, they are called home to their father's house, to inherit the promises. Indeed the death of good men is different from that of others: different in the manner of their dying, being in faith, in hope, in comfort: and different in the issue and end of it, eternal life and happiness: hence Balaam, a wicked man, desired to die the death of the righteous, and that his last end might be like his; (Num. 23:10) but die they do, and must; and even though Christ has died for them, and by dying has abolished death.

Through Christ's death indeed they become dead to sin, and live unto righteousness; they live a spiritual life, which will never be extinct; and they will never die the second death but then they are not exempted by Christ's death from a corporal one; they are delivered from it as a penal evil; it is not a curse, but a blessing to them; the sting of it is taken away; and they receive no hurt and damage by it; yea it is of advantage to them, as they hereby get rid of a body of sin and death and as it is an outlet from sorrow and distress, and an inlet to everlasting peace and joy.

However, it is necessary and unavoidable; as there was no other way for the Israelites to enter into the land of Canaan, but by passing over the river Jordan; there is no other way of going to heaven, of entering into the everlasting rest, into eternal life, but through the ford of death: I say, there is no other way in the ordinary course of things; for though there have been two persons, and but two, Enoch and Elijah, who went to heaven by a translation and assumption of soul and body at once, yet these were extraordinary instances; and even these passed through a change somewhat similar to death, as those will, that will be found alive at the personal coming of Christ: but though this is, and will be the case of all the Lord's purchased people, yet, 3.

This their passage is attended with the utmost safety there is no danger in it; no evil is to be feared from it: as all the people of Israel passed clean over Jordan, perfectly, completely; not one was lost or missing in the passage over it; so all Christ's purchased people pass safely through death to eternal glory; none ever were lost in it; nor will any be missing at the great day, when Christ makes up his jewels, and takes the account of them, to see that all are safe. There is nothing of the saints lost at or by death, not even their bodies; though the dead are said to be not, (Jer. 31:15) yet they are not annihilated; they are not in the land of the living, nor in the same form and condition they were; but they are not reduced to nothing; they are indeed returned to dust, from whence they were; but then that dust is something; and the dust of the saints is precious dust, and is under the special and peculiar care of Christ, who engaged, agreeable to the will and injunction of His divine Father, to raise it up again at the last day; (John 6:39) and this is his fixed resolution and determination; I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: (Hosea 8:14) and this will be done at the last day; these dead men shall live again; and as sure as Christ's dead body was raised again, so sure shall theirs, and be fashioned like to his glorious body.

The dead in Christ, upon his appearance, will rise first; and happy those, that will have a part in this first resurrection; they shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years, and the second death shall have no power over them; and when it will most clearly appear that they have been no losers, but gainers by death; their corruptible, dishonourable, weak and natural bodies being raised incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual ones: and as at death their bodies are not lost, and in the issue suffer no loss, but gain advantages; so their souls immediately go to heaven; they are carried at once by angels into Abraham's bosom; they are in an instant with Christ in paradise: this made the apostle Paul desire to depart out of this sinful world, knowing he should be immediately with Christ, in the full enjoyment of him; in which felicity the spirits of just men made perfect in death continue in a separate state until the resurrection-morn; when they will be all brought with Christ, and be reunited to their bodies, and live for ever with him: so that though all the Lord's purchased people pass through Jordan's river, they all come safe at last in soul and body to Canaan's land; nor shall any one of them be lost or missing; they are ordained to eternal life, and shall possess it: whom God predestinates he glorifies; they are put into the hands of Christ, and are under his care, and he has engaged to keep them, and does keep them, and will present every one of them to his Father, saying, Lo, I, and the children thou hast given me; (Heb. 2:13) they are purchased with the price of Christ's blood, and his blood shall not be shed, nor the price of it paid in vain; they are united to him, and are one with him, and because he lives, they shall live also; (John 14:19) they have his spirit; and grace as the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession; (Ephes. 1:14) wherefore there is no danger, nor need there be any fear, in their passage to heaven and glory; and even was there a shipwreck in it, as in death there is none, though in life there may, with respect to troubles and distresses; there may be what is similar to one; yet like Paul, and the mariners with him in such a circumstance, some on-board, and some on broken pieces of the ship, they all come safe to land. (Acts 27:44) Which leads me on further to observe, III.

That for the most part, or generally speaking, the purchased people of Christ have a quiet and comfortable passage over the ford of death, into the land of promise and rest. As when the children of Israel went out of Egypt, not a dog was suffered to move its tongue against them; nor any person to give them the least molestation or disturbance; so when they passed over Jordan's river to go into the land of Canaan, none of the Canaanites appeared to stop their passage, or dispute it with them, but were as still as a stone till they passed over; and when they heard what a wonderful passage they had, the waters of Jordan being dried up until they were clean passed over, their hearts melted within them.

And so it is commonly with the saints in the hour of death; their spiritual enemies, who have given them so much uneasiness in life, are not suffered to distress them in their last moments. As, 1. The sins and corruptions of their nature, which dwell in them, and are of all the worst enemies they have; for a man's enemies are the men of his own house, (Mic. 7:5) as these are they are inmates with him, and yet at enmity with him, and give him a great deal of trouble and vexation; they hinder him from doing the good he would, and put him upon and urge him to do the evil he would not; and so break in upon his peace and comfort: they are the law in his members warring against the law of his mind, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin; which greatly grieves him, and makes him cry out, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

But the believer perceiving his dissolution drawing nigh, spies deliverance from it through Jesus Christ our Lord; (Rom. 7:23-25) which makes him thankful, and fills him with Joy unspeakable and full of glory. Now he sees those Egyptians that made his life bitter, and brought him into bondage, and induced a spirit of bondage on him, all dead on the sea-shore; having no power over him, and much less any influence to

bring him into condemnation and death; now, those croaking toads as Dr.

Goodwin called them in his dying hour, he finds and feels falling off from him; and in a short time will hear no more their croaking language, or their disagreeable noise and sound: nor is he in any fear from them, having a comfortable view of the free and full forgiveness of his sins through the blood of Christ; and of his justification before God, and acceptance with him through his pure and perfect righteousness. 2. An evil heart of unbelief is often very distressing to the saints in their present situation: unbelief is a sin that easily besets them; entwines about them, and entangles them; insinuates itself into them, and greatly bereaves them of their peace and comfort, and God of his glory.

Their unbelieving hearts, by reason of sin, condemn them, and fill them with doubts and fears concerning their eternal state, and make them very uneasy and uncomfortable; though God is greater than their heart, and knows all things; (1 John 3:20) what love he has in his heart towards them; what provision he has made in covenant for them, and the great salvation his Son is the author of on their account. But often so it is, when they come upon their dying-beds, their unbelief goes off, their doubts and fears are dissipated, and their faith increases, and so their spiritual peace and joy in believing; and they are able to say with the apostle, I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day; (2 Tim. 1:12) and though there may not be in all dying saints, the like degree and exercise of faith, or such as amounts to a full assurance, or holy triumph of it; yet there are some actings of it, and which are attended, more or less, with peace and comfort: These all died in faith; (Heb. 11:13) in the faith of God, as a covenant-God; in the faith of Christ, as the only Redeemer and Saviour; and in the faith of future glory and happiness: and even a good hope, through grace of these things, is attended with spiritual joy and comfort; and this the good man has in his death; for when the wicked is driven away in his wickedness, the righteous hath hope in his death; (Prov. 14:32) and it is such a hope as makes not ashamed, and is never disappointed. 3.

Satan is a very busy adversary with his temptations in the present life; and the best of men are not free from them, and are often galled and grieved with them; and sometimes they have their conflicts with him on their dying-beds; but they come off more than conquerors through him that has loved them. And when this enemy of souls comes in like a flood, threatening to carry all before him, and swallow up the faith and hope of the children of God, and fill them with darkness, doubts, and fears, and black despair; the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him; (Isai. 59:19) the person, blood, righteousness and sacrifice of Christ, and baffles all his designs, and secures the peace and comfort of the saints.

And God can, and sometimes does, chain up this lion and stop his mouth, so that not one hideous roar of his shall be heard while the believer is passing over Jordan's river, or through the ford of death. 4. The terrors of death are frequently taken off of Christ's purchased people when they come to die; yea, even such who through fear of death have been all their life-time subject to bondage, are then delivered from it; (Heb. 2:15) who have been greatly distressed on account either of the pains they shall endure on a death-bed, or of the agonies of their dying moments, or of what shall follow after; these fears have all vanished and disappeared, when death has come in view.

Instances of this kind have been many, and well known: many a timorous soul in health, when they are upon the shores of eternity, just ready to launch into it, and are in the full view of it, have sat and sung, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord; (1 Cor. 15:55-57) and if you mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, you will observe that the end of that man is

peace; (Ps. 37:37) not only that his end or death issues in eternal peace; but the last end he makes is a peaceful one, or attended with spiritual peace.

I will not peremptorily say, that this calm serene and peaceful frame of soul attends every dying saint; but I believe for the most part it does, if not always. For though the believer may have his darkness, doubts and fears, and many conflicts of soul whilst on his dying-bed: yet usually these are over and gone before his last moments come, and death does its work and office upon him; and from the gracious promises of God to be with his people even unto death; and from the scriptural accounts of dying saints; and from the observations I have made through the course of my life; I am of opinion that, generally speaking, the people of God die comfortably; their spiritual enemies being made to be as still as a stone, while they pass through the floods of Jordan, or the cold streams of death.

IV. This is ascribed to the greatness of the arm of the Lord, or to his almighty power. There were many things which contributed to make the passage of the Israelites over the river Jordan easy and comfortable, and which encouraged them to it; and somewhat similar to them the people of God are favoured with oftentimes in their passage through death; which are of singular use and service to them. As, 1. It was no small encouragement to the people of Israel in their passage over Jordan, to see the priests of the Lord go before them, and their feet stand firm and sure on dry ground in the midst of it.

So when private christians behold their faithful guides and ministers stand fast in the faith, both in life and at death; whose faith they follow, and the end of whose conversation they consider; it greatly animates and encourages them to look to and trust in the Lord and Saviour, they do; who is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever; (Heb. 13:7, 8) when they observe that they abide steadfastly by the doctrines of the gospel they preach throughout the whole of their lives; and when they come to die, these are the support of their souls, and by means of which their feet stand firm in Jordan's river, and they stagger not in the view of death and eternity; this gives a lift to weaker saints, and is a means to encourage them to follow them cheerfully, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Besides, ministers of the gospel, as they are useful in their public ministrations to speak comfortably to the people of God, which is a principal branch of their work, even to assure those that believe in Christ of the pardon of their sins through his blood, and of their justification by his righteousness, and of eternal life as the free gift of God through him; so they are often serviceable to the saints in their last moments, by speaking a word in season to them; which tends to encourage their faith and hope, and to increase their joy and peace in believing, and to direct their views to that glory they are hastening to, in the hope of which they rejoice and are glad. 2.

Another thing which served greatly to encourage the people of Israel to follow the priests through Jordan's river, was the ark of the covenant which they bore before them as they passed through; and which ark was a type of Christ, and of the law being fulfilled in him, and of the covenant of grace made with him. And a sight of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness and as the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness, and of an interest in the covenant of grace, and the blessings and promises of it, and of an interest in God, as a covenant-God, and in Christ as the mediator of it, will set a soul above the fears of death, and cause it to pass cheerfully and comfortably through it; as it did David, some of whose last words, a little before his death, were these; Although my hope be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. (2 Sam. 23:5) 3.

Not only the priests of the Lord, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth, went before the Israelites when they passed over Jordan, but the living God himself was among them; and which was manifest from that wonderful display of his power in parting the waters, and causing them to stand up on an heap, for them to pass through on dry ground; which must be a great inducement to go on cheerfully into the midst of it, fearing nothing: nor can any thing be a greater encouragement to saints in their last moments, and when upon the brink of eternity, than to have some plain manifestations of the presence of God with them, and the displays of his love and grace to them: hence says David, Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. (Ps. 23:4) And this God, who is the God of his people, and their guide in life, will be their God for ever and ever, and will never leave them nor forsake them; and he will be their guide unto death; (Ps. 48:14) until they come to it, and will then be their guide through it; so that it must be safe and comfortable walking through Jordan's river, when God is with his people as their God and guide: and which he has promised to be, and they may depend upon. 4.

A sight of the waters of Jordan divided; those that came down from above rising up and standing on an heap; and those that came from the sea of the plain failing, being cut off, and the midst of the river appearing to be dry ground, must needs give the people of Israel courage to venture into it, and follow the priests in it. And so when the believer has a view all difficulties in his passage removed, which before presented to him, and all his doubts and fears scattered, and his objections answered, death is no more formidable to him; he meets it with pleasure, and passes through it with boldness and cheerfulness; having no fearful apprehensions of danger in, or hurt from it, of being overwhelmed with the floods of it, or of perishing in his passage through it.

But, 5. The stillness of the enemies of Christ's purchased people, while they pass over, is attributed to Jehovah's arm; who has such an arm as no creature has; hast thou an arm like God? (Job 40:9) no, none has; kings are said to have long arms, because their power is large and extensive, they can come at persons and things out of the reach of others; but their arm is not to be compared with the arm of the Lord, of whom it is said, thou hast a mighty arm, strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand; (Ps. 89:13) so mighty, as not to be resisted by any: so strong as to crush his most potent enemies; and so high, as not to be reached by any of them, or hindered from striking a fatal blow: and which, the higher the hand is, or is lifted up, comes with the greater force.

On this mighty arm the purchased people of Christ lean, whilst they are passing through the wilderness of this world, and are coming up out of it: and so go on safely, cheerfully, and comfortably: it is on this they are borne, and carried all their days, even to old age and hoary hairs; by the mighty power of this arm they are preserved from their enemies; they are kept through faith unto salvation, and they are conducted safely through the dark valley of death, and over this river Jordan into the land of uprightness.

And it is owing to this that their enemies are as still as a stone, while they pass over; the arm of the Lord is greater than theirs; his power is infinitely superior to what is in them; their hands are held, their mouths are stopped, their clamours are silenced; they are not suffered to move their lips, to bring any charge against the saints, and much less exert any lower over them. Jehovah subdues their iniquities, removes all the objections, doubts and fears of an unbelieving heart; rebukes the tempter, and stills the enemy, and the avenger; (Ps. 8:2) and so a safe, easy, and quiet entrance is ministered abundantly, richly, plenteously into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:11) But; I shall now close this discourse, by observing the use that may be made of it. I.

This may serve to put us in mind of death, and to expect it; it lies in our way to the heavenly Canaan; there is no entrance into the one, without passing through the other: if therefore we are looking for the blessed hope laid up for us in heaven, or are waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith; we should live in a continual expectation of death, and should frequently meditate upon it, and endeavour to make it familiar to us; that when we come to the brink of this river, we may not be surprised and intimidated with its swelling floods. 2.

This may have a tendency to take off the fears of death, which often attend the people of God, when their thoughts are led to dwell upon it; they are fearful what frame of soul they shall then be in; they are afraid their graces will be weak, and their enemies strong; their sins will stare them in the face; their hearts will fail through unbelief; Satan will be busy with his temptations, noisy and clamorous within his charges; and the terrors of death will set themselves in array against them.

But when they observe, that God has promised his presence with his people; that he will never leave them in life nor in death; will be their God and guide to it, and through it: will silence all their enemies, and make them as still as a stone; they have then nothing to fear, but may say as David did in the view of death, and with respect unto it, I will fear no evil. (Ps. 23:4) 3. This may encourage the weakest believe, and assure him, that he shall go safely and even quietly through this dark valley, and over this swelling river; who is sometimes ready to argue after this manner, that if he has run with the footmen, and they have wearied him; either striving to keep pace with fellow-saints of the same class with him, or to get before them, but through the weakness and weariness of the flesh has not been able; or striving with the corruptions of his nature, and endeavouring to overcome them, is wearied by them; then how can he think to contend with horses, or horsemen; to enter the lists with those that are above his match, with Satan and his principalities and powers? and if in the land of peace wherein he trusted, he has been wearied and distressed in a time of health and outward prosperity, which he promised himself a continuance of; then how shall he do in the swelling of Jordan? (Jer. 12:5) or in the hour of death, when that shall appear formidable and terrible to him? but God can abate this swelling, and bring down its rising waves and floods, and make it smooth and quiet; yea, divide its waters, and form a path of dry land between them to pass through, easily and safely; or, in other words, remove the seeming difficulties in the passage, and make it a comfortable and pleasant one. 4.

This may instruct us to look beyond death and the grave to the heavenly glory. As on the other side of Jordan's river lay a most delightful and fruitful country, the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey; so on the other side of death, and the grave, lies a land of promise, a land of rest, a land of uprightness; a better country than this earthly one, abounding with heavenly fruit, and rivers of pleasure; and where there is fulness of joy; and which the Elysian fields can give us no idea of; but faith gives us a glimpse of them, being the evidence (Heb. 11:1) of those unseen glories and invisible realities; wherefore let us look by faith, not at things which are seen, which are temporal, but at things which are not seen, which are eternal; (2 Cor. 4:18) and let us gird up the loins of our minds, and be in a waiting posture, expecting to enjoy those everlasting things; and hope unto the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13) 5.

This may assure the Lord's purchased people, such who have any reason to believe that they are purchased with the blood of Christ, that as they shall safely and quietly pass over Jordan's river, so they shall most certainly possess the promised land, and inherit everlasting life; for Christ will surely see the travail of his soul; he will never lose his purchase; the price of his blood can never be paid in vain, as it so far would be, if any of those he has purchased should come short of eternal glory and happiness.

Beside, such have not only Christ's purchase to trust unto, and depend upon for their security; but they have the Spirit, and his grace, as the earnest of their enjoyment of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession: (Ephes. 1:14) wherefore it may with the greatest assurance be concluded, that the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (Isai. 35:10)

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