



QUARTERLY | 4:22

The No Mores of Heaven



Bible Book
Overview
Nehemiah –
Ryan McKee

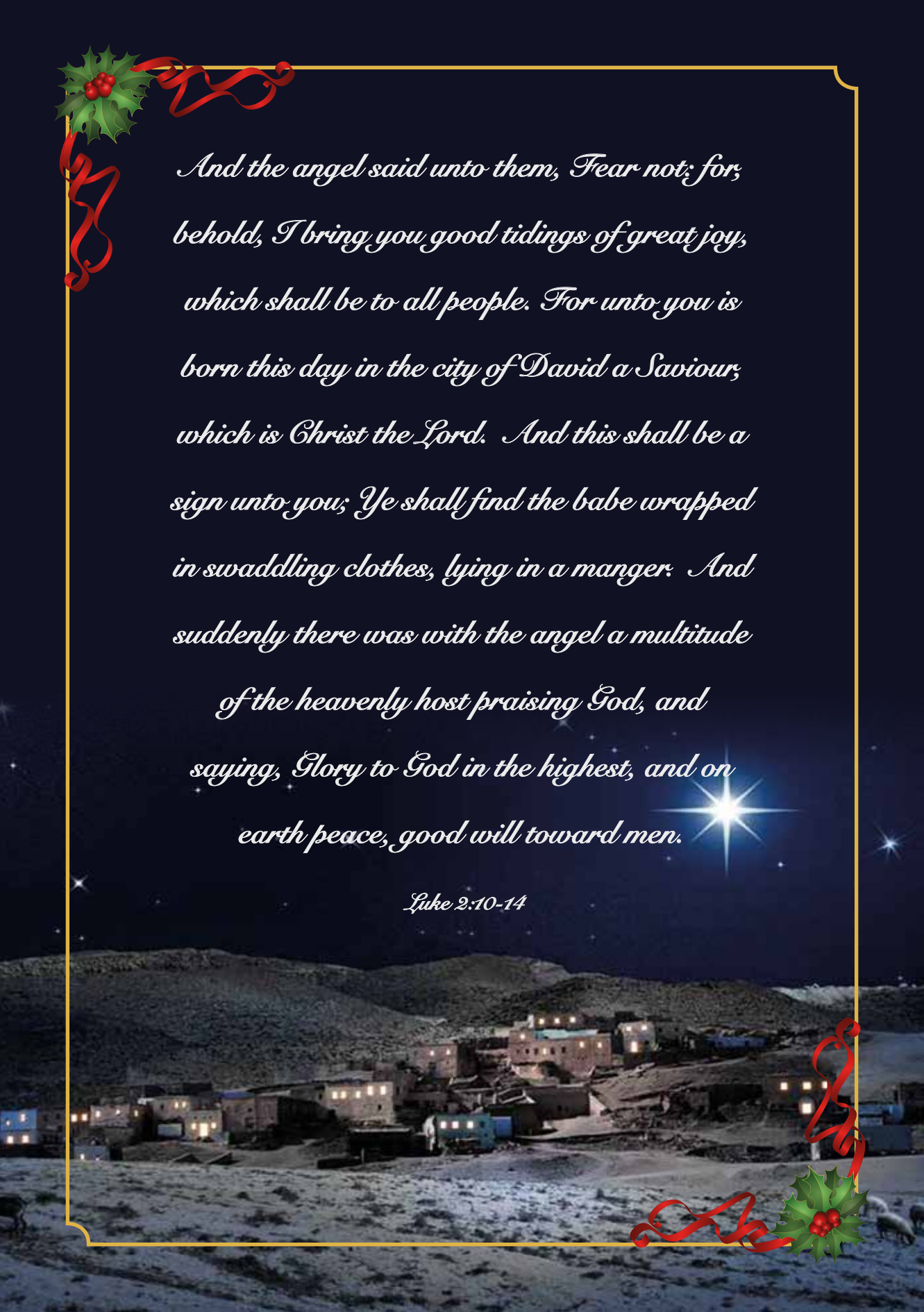


Nepal Radio
Station –
Andrew
Patterson



No More
Crying –
Gregory
McCammon





And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Luke 2:10-14

P5



P22



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The No Mores of Heaven

CONTENTS

- 02 **Christmas Verse**
- 03 **Contents Page**
- 04 **Editorial**
Ryan McKee
- 05 **News Page**
Andrew Patterson
- 06 **No More Sea**
Philip Gardiner
- 08 **No More Death**
Alan Smylie
- 10 **No More Sorrow**
John Gray
- 12 **No More Crying**
Gregory McCammon
- 14 **No More Pain**
Derrick Bowman
- 16 **No More Curse**
Jonathan Creane
- 18 **No More Night**
David Mook
- 20 **Bible Book Overview – Nehemiah**
Ryan McKee
- 22 **Ladies' Devotional – God of the Valley**
Jill Saunders

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WHAT IS A SAINT?

The word 'saint' is used five times in the Bible. In one instance, Aaron is described as a 'saint' of the LORD. The plural word, saints, is recorded ninety-six times.

From the words used in the Bible, the word 'saint' has, in general, the meaning of righteousness or goodness: to be chaste, clean and pure. There is also the further thought of consecration, divine claim and ownership.

From the use of the word in Scripture we can glean the following truths about saints.

a) The saint is someone who has been saved by the Lord.

Psalm 30:2-4 – "O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

Psalm 50:4-5 – "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

We become saints upon conversion. This is the identity of the Christian - he or she is a saint of God. It is a benefit and blessing of a person being in a covenant relationship with God. The practice of man bestowing sainthood upon people who have died has no warrant in Scripture. Rather, all who repents from their sin and exercises faith in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ has the right to call themselves the 'saints' of God. They can then rejoice in the following truths:

b) The saint shall not want for any good thing from his Lord.

Psalm 34:9 – "O fear the LORD, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him."

c) The Lord will keep His saints safe on their journey to Glory.

1 Samuel 2:9 – "He will keep the feet of His saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail."

d) The saint has a covering that is eternal.

Revelation 19:8 - "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

Thus, saints are to be marked by holiness, as the people of God. This has always been the standard for the saints in both the old and new testament eras (Leviticus 20:7 and 1 Peter 1:15-16).

Having outlined some of the verses that speak of Biblical saints, we can conclude that the word 'saint' is a:

Particular term - it is only used in the Bible for those who are true Believers (Ephesians 1:1-2).

Present term - it is used of those who are alive (Ephesians 2:19).

Peculiar term - it is used to describe not only a standing but also, an implied lifestyle. The Greek word for 'saint' comes from a base word meaning 'holy'.

Glory to God, and praise, and love
 Be ever, ever giv'n
 By saints below and saints above,
 The church in earth and heav'n.

(Charles Wesley)



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 Free Presbyterian Church
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NEPAL RADIO STATION

Having arrived in Nepal on 4th November, Rev. David Smith (secretary) and myself as treasurer, had the honour of representing the Let the Bible Speak Committee for the official opening of the new Christian Radio station. The opening was only possible because of the generous giving of our people to the appeal that we launched last year, and which exceeded our target of £30,000.

Its location is stunning, to say the least. Arriving by car approximately forty-five minutes outside Kathmandu, we immediately were able to see the impressive 75ft antenna (110KW) which is strategically placed on the roof of a 65ft hotel building set upon the side of a mountain. It has surpassed the expectations of all concerned as the FM signal is reaching close to the Chinese border, some 90-100km away. What a glorious opportunity this affords for the gospel to be heard by the countless souls



within that vast region.

The opening took place on Monday 7th, with some 50 people present, including the hotel owner and his wife. Please remember these folk in prayer as recently they have been asking questions and showing interest in the gospel message.

After a few words detailing the purpose of what we were doing, I had the privilege of cutting the ribbon and turning the key to open the door to what is an excellent facility - equipped with a recording studio with computers, an office for the station manager, and a sizeable battery pack for back-up power, if needed.

Please remember the

programs, as currently they are being aired from 7-11 in the morning with the view to increasing this to another three hours in the evening. Already, phone calls and emails have been received showing interest in the gospel and desiring to know more about the Lord Jesus. Programs are being aired both in Nepalese and English. The running costs per annum are expected to be close to £20k - this includes rent, licenses and three full-time workers for the radio station. For this new station we humbly plead the promise of Isaiah 55:11. I trust you will join with us.

Andrew Patterson





No More Sea

Planet Earth has often been referred to as “The Blue Planet”, a title adopted by the BBC for a series that was narrated by the famous agnostic and evolutionist, David Attenborough. Scientists tell us that about 71% of the earth’s surface is covered in water; it is no wonder, then, it is called the “Blue Planet”. Much of that surface water is, of course, the sea.

If the earth was one land mass prior to the Flood, then there were no seas dividing that land mass; rather, the land mass was surrounded by water. Some suggest that in the new earth (2 Peter 3:12–13; Isaiah 66:22) this will again be the case, with no seas dividing the land mass.

While we could spend time discussing the literal truth of the words, “no more sea” (Revelation 21:1), this great statement is full of great spiritual lessons.

1. No more separation

Those who have relatives

living across the seas will understand that the sea represents separation; it brings the feeling that our loved ones are far away. In common language we often use that term, “overseas” – far away and separated from us.

The “no more” statements in the book of Revelation speak of the removal of the sufferings of the present time.

When John was writing the book of Revelation he was on Patmos. The city of Ephesus where he had ministered was only sixty miles or so away from him. The city of Athens was only about two hundred miles away, but he could not visit those cities; he was separated from God’s people in those places, by the sea. Every day, as he

heard the crashing waves on the beaches of that island, he was reminded of separation.

The “no more” statements in the book of Revelation speak of the removal of the sufferings of the present time. The prospect of the Christian is the promise that one day the pain of separation will be gone.

There will be no goodbyes in heaven: there will be no physical separation from our Lord. There will be no geographical separation of congregations, and no separations on account of sad disputes!

The chapter that speaks of “no more sea” (Revelation 21) is the same one where we read of the city coming down from heaven. That city is clearly spoken of as the “bride” (Revelation 21:9). Praise God, there will be no disunity among the perfected bride in glory! What a contrast with hell – the place of everlasting separation. The very words that ought to give God’s people such comfort,

ought to trouble greatly the unconverted.

2. No more struggles

The sea was a place of great danger, especially in times prior to motorised boats and ships. What a struggle it was for those who were seeking to cross the seas!

Our lives here are full of mental, physical, and spiritual struggles! The hymnwriter presented us with this image when he said:

I've wrestled on toward heaven

'Gainst storm and wind and tide.

Praise God, the struggles of the believer will be no more in glory!

3. No more secrets

In Revelation 20:13 we read, "The sea gave up the dead which were in it." The sea is a place where many secrets are held. It is true that through history many wreckages have been found in the oceans and many mysteries solved to some degree, yet the seas still contain many mysteries.

The words, "no more sea", surely remind us that there will be no mysteries in glory. There are many things that greatly perplex us, as God's people.

In times of great trial, we may hold on as Job did,

saying, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). Yet, at the same time, we do not understand why the Lord has ordained for us to pass through various trials. We may believe that all things are working together for the good of His people (Romans 8:28) and yet we cannot discern what that good actually is! These things are so mysterious to us! We suffer from such infirmity that we struggle to understand why but, as Maxwell Cornelius said, "Sometime, we'll understand."

Right now, we feel like Peter when the Lord came to wash his feet; we are perplexed, but in glory, we will enter the fullest fulfilment of the words of Christ: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7).

4. No more sin

The prophet Isaiah said, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isaiah 57:20). Many of the unconverted are in a state of great unrest, their sin and guilt being continually brought to mind. Dear unconverted one, what an awful condition you are found in, yet our text presents great gospel hope.

It is the work of Christ that delivers the sinner from the waves of guilt. The child of God can be at peace as he

is brought to see that his sin and guilt have been taken by Christ. The peace that the assured Christian enjoys today is just a little foretaste of the wonderful things the Lord has in store for His people in glory. In heaven, there will no remembrance of our sin in any way; there will be nothing to disturb the blessedness of our eternal state.

Praise God, one day His saints will enter this reality: "No more sea!"

***In heaven,
there will no
remembrance
of our sin in any
way; there will be
nothing to disturb
the blessedness of
our eternal state.***



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Free Presbyterian Church,
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No More Death



The dark shadow of death is etched across the landscape of this world. It has been so since the Fall. The Bible teaches us this in Genesis chapter 3. Adam sinned and death came – cp. Romans 5:12 – “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” So, down through the centuries of time, we have death. All ages, all classes, colours, and creeds experience death. The Bible says: “For we must needs die (2 Samuel 14:14). “Man dieth” (Job 14:1). “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Hebrews 9:27). It is inevitable, it is inescapable, and it is unavoidable! While death has been everywhere in this world since the Fall, the Word of God speaks of a place where “there shall be no more death.” Why?

1. The Enemy has been Defeated

Death is an enemy – it is described in Scripture as, “the last enemy” (1 Corinthians 15:26). This verse goes on to say: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” The Lord Jesus Christ, by His death

on the cross and His resurrection the third day from the dead, defeated death. The hymn writer wrote:

Death cannot keep his prey,

Jesus, my Saviour!

He tore the bars away,

Jesus, my Lord!

Up from the grave He arose,

With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;

He arose, a Victor from the dark domain...

The enemy of death that people are facing day and daily in this world, leaving heartache and a terrible sense of loss in numerous lives, will one day be no more for all who enter heaven, because the Bible says that “there [in heaven] shall be no more death” (Revelation 21:4). But it is only so for those who enter heaven, and not everyone will be in heaven. Only those who are saved will enter heaven. The Bible says: “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it” (Revelation 21:24). Will you be there? Make sure you are saved, and then you

will be in that place where there is no more death.

2. The Entrance that is Granted

How wonderful it is to be granted an entrance into some place of great grandeur: a palace, a castle, a stately home! Maybe that has been so for you through the course of life, and you may have had cause to reflect upon your visits to such splendid surroundings. Maybe you have photographs of your visits there with family and friends. Most times, such visits come at a cost. We have to purchase a ticket or maybe someone else has purchased it for us and given it to us as a gift.

The grandest place we could ever enter is heaven. It is described as the “Father’s house” and there “are many mansions” there (John 14:2)! In the book of Revelation, especially in chapters 21 and 22, we have a view of the majesty and magnificence of heaven. As we read through these chapters it is hard for our finite minds to take in the splendours and the

glories of heaven that are described for us there. As we think of heaven, let us remember the price that the Saviour paid in order that sinners might enter such a wonderful place where “there shall be no more death” – the price of His precious blood shed on the cross, when the Lord Jesus Christ laid down His life for sinners. “So, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28). Cecil Frances Alexander wrote those beautiful words:

There was no other good enough

To pay the price of sin;

He only could unlock the gate

Of heav’n and let us in.

This is the entrance granted to all who trust in Christ as Saviour.

3. The Enjoyment Assured

The enjoyment of Heaven! This world is filled with sorrow. The joys of this world are fleeting and fading. The pleasures of sin are but for a season. But in heaven there is everlasting joy. The psalmist declared in Psalm 16:11: “In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” This is assured for every saved person. The traumas and tears of this world will be left behind, death forever removed, and it will be everlasting life: “joy

unspeakable and fully, of glory” (1 Peter 1:8). That is what those who have gone before us to heaven are experiencing. They would not swap places with us for a moment. This is what awaits us when we pass from this life because “there shall be no more death.” What must it be to be there?

This world is filled with sorrow. The joys of this world are fleeting and fading. The pleasures of sin are but for a season. But in heaven there is everlasting joy.

I remember my father had a saying when I was a boy, when we were out on a visit somewhere, and we got home: he would say – “Home, sweet home!” What joy it brings to our hearts, when we have been away from home, just to be back home again. In a far greater way what joy is the portion of the believer to be home in heaven!

A missionary, on the eve of sailing for home on his first furlough after five years

in the East, was taken ill, suddenly. The doctors gave him two days to live. But all his thoughts were fixed on home, his old parents, and the girl he loved and hoped to marry; moreover, he imagined he was getting better, instead of being at death's door. A mutual friend broke the news of his real condition to him. For a moment he seemed overwhelmed with the shock, then joy appeared to fill his soul as, with beaming face, he said calmly, “Ah, I was going home to my earthly home. Now I am going home to the heaven I've so often preached about.” What joy, what elation, for the soul saved by God's grace to be in the place where “there shall be no more death!” Will you be there? You will only be there if you are saved.



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No More Sorrow



Revelation 21:4 states: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, NEITHER SORROW...”

In this world we all know much about sorrow. The fact is sorrow plays a part in all our lives. No matter who we are, sorrow is the common lot of every one of us. The word “sorrow” in Revelation 21:4, literally means “grief” or “mourning”. Therefore, every day there are faithful saints of God who must pass through times of grief and mourning after losing friends and loved ones to the grave.

In Genesis 50:10 we read that after the death of Jacob there was great sorrow: “And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days.” Also, in Mark 16:10 we are told that after the Saviour died upon the cross that the disciples “mourned and wept.” What

sorrow filled the hearts of Joseph and his brethren when their father Jacob died. What sorrow filled the hearts of the disciples when the Saviour died upon Calvary’s middle tree. It is the natural thing to mourn and grieve when we come to bury our loved ones. We all know what it is to stand around an open grave, to say goodbye to a loved one and to mourn and grieve for a dear one who has passed away.

Therefore, one of the great blessings of heaven is that there will be no more sorrow, no more grief and no more mourning.

Sin, of course, is the reason why there is sorrow in this life. Adam’s Fall in the garden brought sin into this world and with sin death, and with death, grief and mourning.

The Bible says in Romans 5:12: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Therefore, all the sorrows that we face in life are a reality because of Adam’s transgression.

However, thank God that our Saviour who paid the price of our salvation with the shedding of His precious blood, has defeated death, and purchased for every saint of God eternal redemption – which means we have a home in heaven where there is no more sorrow.

Therefore, one of the great blessings of heaven is that there will be no more sorrow, no more grief and no more mourning. All sorrow will be banished when the child of God enters eternal rest. It is hard to imagine a place where there will be no more sorrow. And yet the wonderful promise of God’s Word is that all sorrow will end when we get home to heaven and see our Saviour

face to face. The moment the saint of God closes his eyes in death all his sorrows will cease – sorrow and mourning shall flee away. The hymn writer penned it well when he wrote those wonderful words:

*Some glorious morning
sorrow will cease;*

*Some glorious morning all
will be peace;*

*Heartaches all ended;
school days all done,*

*Heaven will open, Jesus
will come.*

*Sad hearts will gladden, all
shall be bright;*

*Goodbye forever to earth's
dark night;*

*Changed in a moment, like
Him to be,*

*Oh, glorious daybreak,
Jesus I'll see.*

*Oh, what a meeting, there
in the skies,*

*No tears nor crying shall
dim our eyes;*

*Loved ones united
eternally:*

*Oh, what a daybreak that
morn will be!*

*Some golden daybreak
Jesus will come;*

*Some golden daybreak,
battles all won,*

*He'll shout the victory,
break thro' the blue,*

*Some golden daybreak, for
me, for you.*

(Carl D. Blackmore)

***Heaven is a place
where there is no
sorrow, but hell
is a place where
sorrows will never
cease. Forever,
the unsaved will
mourn and lament
for all eternity.***

However, in the great eternity, sorrow will not end for all. As far as the unsaved are concerned, their sorrow will continue for all eternity. In Psalm 18:5 David speaks about the “sorrows of hell”. Heaven is a place where there is no sorrow, but hell is a place where sorrows will never cease. Forever, the unsaved will mourn and lament for all eternity.

In Luke 16:25 we read about the death of Lazarus and the rich man. The rich man who ended up in hell entered continual “torments” while Lazarus, at death, was “comforted”. In other words, the rich man’s sorrows continued while Lazarus’ sorrows ceased. What an awful thought – to be lost forever and to miss the blessings of heaven and the comfort of eternal bliss.

Child of God, let us rejoice every day that we are marching to Zion, the beautiful city of God. In Isaiah

51:11 we read these wonderful words: “Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.” Let us, as the saints of God, continue to “look up” for our “redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28).

Let me just finish by challenging the unsaved. Make sure when you come to face death that you enter the joys of heaven and not the torments and sorrows of a lost eternity.



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Free Presbyterian Church,
Northern Ireland.*

No More Crying



That is a strange sign outside glory's gate: "no more ... crying" (Revelation 21:4). At first glance it may seem deficient to describe one place by just stating it is unlike another place. It is like saying "white has no black." This is at the end of Scripture, too, where we might expect a more detailed positive account of the marvels of the land of "pure delight". Instead, we get this negative language of the absence of things: no more this and no more that. There is, however, good reason for Scripture to speak like this.

First, heaven is so unlike this present world that it cannot be declared in human language. The radiance of the promised paradise is unknown and unparalleled. It is, therefore, indescribable. Not since the dawn of the first day has any man perceived by ear, still less by eye, the wonderful things God has prepared for believers (Isaiah 64:4). Faith proclaims, "Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou

hast laid up for them that fear Thee" (Psalm 31:19), but words cannot adequately portray that goodness.

Not since the dawn of the first day has any man perceived by ear, still less by eye, the wonderful things God has prepared for believers (Isaiah 64:4).

The Bible does use a solitary positively shining word for that great goodness – "glory" (Hebrews 2:10). Heaven is an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17) but none among us really know what that glory is! It is as the good Ulster theologian, but poor grammarian, speaking of salvation, said: "It is better felt than telt." The truth is that while the joy of salvation

does have a "felt" aspect, it is nothing like being in heaven in the full enjoyment of the glory of God Himself. Peter said that he was "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1 Peter 5:1) and it is because that revelation is future that not even he, under inspiration, could make vivid what glory really is. Our present participation is only a participation in the sweetness of the promise. The partaking of the promise by faith has truly commenced. However, we must wait the appearing and revelation of Jesus Christ to really enter into it. There is a great gulf between tasting a treat (the promise) and sitting down to feast abundantly on it (the appearing in glory).

The Bible speaks, then, in terms of what we know and have experienced in this world and that is the pain and bitterness of life after the Fall. To give us some savour of the unparalleled single sweetness of glory, the Bible tells us of the removal of the bitterness of our present earthly condition.

All the bitter and seemingly innumerable experiences of life culminate in crying. This is a world of much crying whereas part of the sweetness of the world to come is that it is one of no more crying. All enter the world crying and leave crying, but saints enter the next world without crying, to never cry again. That is indeed no base part of the blessed bliss when the Holy Spirit says, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more ... crying” (Revelation 21:4). It does not paint the whole of what glory is, but it certainly conveys to us some sweetness of its essence.

That leads us to the second reason for this negative language: that is, that it is evangelically effective in gospel preaching and deeply comforting to the saints. Such language has a powerful rhetorical effect on the weary human soul. To tell a poor suffering and daily crying soul that heaven is a place where no crying exists can be a transforming and comforting message. If one, wholly ignorant of rural life, and weary of the all the hustle and bustle of city life, tired of its grime and turbulence, was told all that is completely gone in the countryside, he might make very serious preparation to go to such a place to live.

Such descriptions of glory in Revelation 21:4 and similar Bible texts make the

To tell a poor suffering and daily crying soul that heaven is a place where no crying exists can be a transforming and comforting message.

message of the hope of the gospel attractive and appealing. This truth of a place of no more crying surely ought to induce poor weary sinners to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ Who alone brings men into the tearless country. What hope it conveys to those who are sad and distressed and whose whole life seems to be one long cry. In the Psalms we see David, though a man of God, crying daily (Psalm 86:3). The hope of fullness of joy and unending pleasures in God’s presence must therefore have held great appeal to him. He knew he would only ever be satisfied when he awoke with God’s likeness and entered His blessedness. It therefore comforts us truly in our present state of unceasing tears. This world is a place of crying; heaven is not. What good news to him for whom tears have been meat night and day and whose bed is soaked with weeping (Psalm 6:6; 42:3). Surely that is a

motive to come to the way to heaven – the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely that must sustain us through this vale of tears with a joy which is, itself, “unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8). This “no more ... crying” sign, then, far from lacking and being insufficient, is rather light to those in darkness and hope to those in distress. It is the very sign the one “weary of [his] crying” (Psalm 69:3) wants to see.



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No More Pain



How many advertisements have you seen promising a pain-free life? Nobody likes to be in pain, so any product promising to remove pain seems very appealing. Whether on creams or pills, counsellors or physicians, millions of pounds per year are spent by individuals trying to chase this promise. Sadly, in this life, pain is simply a fact of life. Pain is the result of sin. The first time pain is mentioned in Scripture is after Adam and Eve fell into sin. Part of God's punishment on humanity was that women would have sorrow in bringing forth children. The Hebrew word for "sorrow", used in Genesis 3:16, is associated with physical and emotional pain. Human pain is the result of sin, but the Bible says that there will be a time when there will be no more pain because God will remove all of it.

In Revelation 21:4 the Apostle John tells of the new heavens and a new earth. Later in the chapter he tells

us that it is a place where God has made all things new and where God wipes away all the tears from the eyes of His people. It is only in this place where the promise will be fulfilled, that there will be no more pain. This means more than no more back pain or arthritis. There will also be no more emotional pain. The pain that comes from a drunken father or a drug-addicted mother will all be gone. The pain of lost loved ones, hurt feelings, and the emotional scars of this life will all be gone forever. It is hard to imagine because in this world there is so much pain and suffering

Human pain is the result of sin, but the Bible says that there will be a time when there will be no more pain because God will remove all of it.

that it is almost impossible to understand what it will be like when it is completely gone.

The great truth of Revelation 21:4 is that pain will be gone. Pain will be no more. As I write this article, my father-in-law (and retired elder from our congregation) Mr. Greg Munger, is suffering a great deal of pain because of a terminal cancer. By the time this publication goes to print, there is a good chance that he will already be with his Saviour. There is no medical procedure to remove his pain, and in fact, the most powerful medications he has been prescribed barely help his suffering. He lives daily with unbearable pain. However, he already is experiencing something of a heaven upon the earth in his own soul. He already knows a peace that passes understanding, so while his physical pain might be great, his emotional pain is not. He knows that it is well with his soul. The Lord, in His grace and mercy, has already started to remove his pain through the joy of the Lord,

but the physical pain endures. As a family member, it is difficult to watch a loved one hurting so much. It is hard to watch the grimace on his face when he tries to roll over or adjust himself in bed. It is hard to know that regardless of how much we might want to help, there is simply nothing we can do to help his pain. However, it is great to know that one day his pain will be no more. It will be gone forever because God Himself will wipe away every tear, and there will be no more pain.

Perhaps you live with chronic pain. Maybe you live with the enduring pain of a lost loved one or wayward child. Possibly you still suffer from the heart-wrenching pain of sinful parents or the emotional scars from your youth. In Christ, you can be assured of that fact that one day God will wipe away every tear and you will have no more pain.

This is a glorious truth, to be sure, but sadly it is not a truth that everyone will experience. It is only in the holy city, the new Jerusalem, where these things will be so. That place is reserved only for those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and have had their garments made white. God Himself will dwell with them and wipe away all their tears

and take away all their pain. Those who are unbelieving and die rejecting gospel truth will never know what it is like to have their pain removed. Instead, they will be cast into the lake of fire and will experience the second death which will be associated with pain and suffering for all eternity.

Possibly you still suffer from the heart-wrenching pain of sinful parents or the emotional scars from your youth. In Christ, you can be assured of that fact that one day God will wipe away every tear and you will have no more pain.

The promise of no pain is not a medical promise, regardless of what cream or potion you choose. No counsellor or psychologist can really take away the emotional pain in your heart. The pain you know as a result of sin and the curse is something that only God can take away. When we believe

on the Lord Jesus Christ, we can experience His peace in the midst of pain now – and look forward to freedom from pain in Heaven.



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No More Curse



The well-known Scottish theologian and Westminster Divine, Samuel Rutherford, once said, "Christ and His cross are not separable in this life, howbeit, they part at heaven's door. There is no strange place for crosses in heaven." There is no strange place for crosses in heaven because there is no more curse. There are no furrowed brows in heaven, no regrets, no second thoughts and no lost causes. It is a place where the effects of the curse will never be.

It is interesting to note that Scripture begins by giving us a glimpse into Paradise in Eden in the first two chapters of the Bible, in Genesis 1 and 2. Scripture also ends by giving us a glimpse into the heavenly Paradise in the last two chapters of God's Word, in Revelation 21 and 22. This shows us the unity and symmetry of Scripture. In the Paradise of Eden there were two people. In the Paradise of God's heaven there is a vast multitude which no man can number, redeemed by sovereign grace.

1. The Reason for the Curse

God said to Adam after the Fall in Genesis 3:17–18: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake ... Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee."

When our first parents disobeyed God, their fall was immediate, and they fell into a state of guilt and condemnation before God.

The reason for the curse was the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden. When our first parents disobeyed God, their fall was immediate, and they fell into a state of guilt and condemnation before God. They had been created perfectly in the image of God, but sin shattered everything.

"All mankind, descending from Adam by natural generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression" (The Westminster Shorter Catechism). That meant that the curse of sin has been passed to us all. That leaves no one righteous before God, but instead, lost and ruined. The penalty of sin was death, a sentence that all of us were born under.

2. The Remedy for the Curse

God's remedy for the curse centred upon a Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. You and I deserved to be cut off from the presence of God, eternally; our sin brings the curse upon our own heads. Praise God, that curse has been borne for us. Christ, the Lamb of God, the sinners' Substitute, died the cursed death of the cross. He became sin for us. At His botched trial the soldiers "made a wreath from a thorn bush" (Albert Barnes) and with that crown, pressed down upon the Saviour's head. The Lord Jesus wore

the very symbol of the curse (the thorns), and as our sins were laid upon Him, Christ was made a curse for us. He felt the pain and the smart of those cruel thorns and by dying the cursed death of the cross for sinners, the Lord Jesus removed the curse for us.

Galatians 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

The hymn reminds us:

*Death and the curse were
in our cup,*

O Christ, 'twas full for Thee!

*But Thou hast drained the
last dark drop –*

'Tis empty now for me;

*That bitter cup – love drank
it up;*

*Now blessings' draught for
me.*

To be hanged on a tree was branded by Jewish law to be a cursed death (Deuteronomy 21:23). In Esther 7:10 & 9:13 we read of Haman and his sons being hanged. We do not read of the prophets of the Old Testament being hanged, but the Lord submitted to go to the tree at Calvary and by dying the cursed death of the cross, the reproach and curse of sin are rolled away.

3. The Removal of the Curse

Sin's curse is removed by the blood of the Lamb. Christ's redemption and blood-shedding on the cross paid the ransom for the sinner's deliverance from sin's bondage and the removal of the curse. The price for our deliverance was the blood of Jesus Christ. Christ, the Lamb of God, came to take away the sin of the world, and He willingly submitted to be made a curse for us that He might redeem us. Mark the word, "from" in Galatians 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse." The Lord Jesus died to remove that curse for sinners.

*What voice is that which
speaks for me*

*In heaven's high court for
good,*

*And from the curse has
made me free?*

'Tis Jesus' precious blood.

Sin's curse is removed when you and I, as sinners, come in saving faith to Christ, by recognising our lostness before God, by repenting of our sin and receiving Christ as our Saviour, trusting in His blood to cleanse away every stain.

For us to be in the Paradise of God's heaven as seen in Revelation 22, we need the curse of sin removed.

There is no curse there, no devil, no sin, no temptation, and nothing that defileth shall enter in. Once that throne of God was a throne of judgement before which no sinner could stand, being under the curse of sin. Now, because the Lamb has "interposed His precious blood", that throne is a throne of grace for the saved soul.

What about you? To be in God's heaven where there is no more curse, you need the curse removed. You need the blood. May you be fully persuaded in the words of the following hymn:

*But this I know with all my
heart*

*His wounds have paid my
ransom.*



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No More Night



From the first day of the Creation week, as the Holy Spirit recorded it in Genesis 1, the world has alternated between day and night. The fundamental division that God made has persisted throughout the history of the planet, including during the cataclysm of the Great Flood. The rhythmic pattern of day and night that is the result of the rotation of Earth on its axis continues its inexorable march from the Creation to the end of the world.

In the fifth verse of the first chapter of the Bible and the fifth verse of the last chapter of the Bible are the beginning and ending of night. A leading feature of the Paradise of God that the Holy Spirit described in Revelation 22 is the abolishment of the cycle of day and night. People who inhabit the present world find it difficult to conceive of an existence in which the alternating periods of day and night no longer exist.

Nevertheless, the Scriptures present the character of the eternal state as one in which the sole source of light is the Lord God. Other sources of illumination are obsolete in the Paradise of God. The inhabitants do not need the light of the sun or candle flame. The eternal constant is the source of the light. It never dims or goes out.

“There shall be no night there” (Revelation 22:5). Physical changes from the dissolution of the heavens and earth that exist now will be substantial. The removal of night puts the end to the devices that track the moving of the days and weeks and months and years. There will be no clocks. There will be no calendars. There will be no weeks or months or years.

People live always in the awareness of the succession of moments. There is always an end in view. It may be the end of the hour for a student in class or the end of the week for the labourer or the end of the month or the

end of the year. It may even be the end of life. But in the place where there is no night, endings will vanish. It is “the land of fadeless day”, as one poet described it.

But in the place where there is no night, endings will vanish. It is “the land of fadeless day”, as one poet described it.

The Bible depicts night as a time for rest. When the Lord Jesus spoke of the death of Lazarus, He said that he slept. The disciples identified night with sleep and with rest. The night is a time for recovery through sleep. Those in this world must take time for rest. But in the land where there is no night, weariness disappears.

Those who inhabit Paradise serve the Lord continually,

but they do not become weary in doing so. They rest in peace, not in the concept of the sentiment that some apply to the deceased, but in the sense that they will never need to break from their labours.

The land where there is no night is the place from which God excludes all evil. It is Paradise.

The Bible depicts night as a time when evildoers carry out their nefarious schemes. The Lord Jesus said in John 3:19 that, “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” In verse 21, He said, “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” The land where there is no night is the place from which God excludes all evil. It is Paradise.

The disappearance of night in Paradise matches the position of the people of God with their estate. Paul wrote that believers in Christ, “are all children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness” (1 Thessalonians

5:5). In the place where there is no night, the people of God shine forth as the stars forever.

That destiny compels the people of God in the present world to behave as those who await the place where there is no night. The approach of that destiny led the inspired apostle to write to the Romans, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Romans 13:12). The approach of the day of which John wrote in Revelation 22:5, exhorts the followers of Christ to separate themselves from every aspect of the darkness.

To the Ephesian believers, the apostle Paul wrote, “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8). In a similar vein, he wrote to the Colossian believers of the One “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,

The people whom Christ has redeemed aspire to the coming of the day when there will be no decline and no shadow.

and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13).

The people whom Christ has redeemed aspire to the coming of the day when there will be no decline and no shadow. Their desire is an exhortation to those who have not trusted Christ to do so without delay and to join the train of those who long for the coming of the ceaseless day. The promise of Christ in the verses following Revelation 22:5 is that He is going to come quickly. Three times in the last verses of the Bible, the One Who is Alpha and Omega declared that He was going to come quickly. John bowed in humble expectancy to pray, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).



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Overview of the Book of **Nehemiah**

Background to the Book

In the book of Ezra there was a burden for the temple to be rebuilt. The first six chapters dealt with the first return of the exiles to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple.

The final four chapters dealt with the second lot of exiles returning to Jerusalem and the restoration of proper worship and conduct, before the Lord, in accordance with His Word.

In Nehemiah, we have the return of the third group of exiles to Jerusalem. Nehemiah is granted leave from his position as the king's cupbearer to return to the land and rebuild the walls.

Overview of the Book

The book can be divided into two parts:

Part one Chapters 1–7 – The reconstruction of the wall

Part two Chapters 8–13 – The restoration of the people

Background to Nehemiah

He was a cupbearer – meaning that he was responsible for tasting the king's wine to ensure that it was not poisoned. It was a position of great responsibility, trust, and privilege. However, he willingly laid aside that

position to become a worker in the place that the Lord had burdened his heart for – Jerusalem.

Ezra was a priest, Malachi was a prophet and Nehemiah was a layman, as it were. He was not in a spiritual office but was of spiritual character and possessed God-given leadership qualities that accompanied the burden he had for the testimony of God to be maintained and protected.

We can say that Nehemiah is a type of Christ in His ministry of restoration.

The Lord gave up the position of great honour and blessing to come to identify with the plight of mankind, as the God-Man. He came with a specific mission and fulfilled it. Just like the Saviour, Nehemiah prayed continually concerning the needs of the people among whom he ministered.

We can see also the hand of the Lord in providence in this book, as all things come together for the coming of the Saviour. The land is replenished with the Jewish people. The temple is rebuilt.

The city is reconstructed. God's purposes are coming to pass – just as He said they would.

Nehemiah's Prayer in Chapter 1

When Nehemiah heard about the state of both the city and the people of Jerusalem (1:3) we read that he “sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven” (1:4).

Notice some things about his prayer life:

He addressed God reverently – verse 5.

He prayed night and day, acknowledging and confessing his own sin and the sin of his people – verses 6–7.

He prayed using scriptural promises – verses 8–9.

He presented the people of God before the Lord – verse 10.

He prayed for the servants of God, and for himself, that God would step into his circumstances and cause him to have opportunity to do something to help the situation – verse 11.

Matthew Henry writes:

He concludes with a particular petition, that God would prosper him in his undertaking, and give him favour with the king; this man he calls him, for the greatest of men are but men before God; they must know themselves to be so (Ps. 9:20), and others must

know them to be so. He prays for ... mercy from God in his address to the king.

There is a great need in our land today for God's people to know the reality of what is going on around them and to get to prayer!

You will find in chapter 2 that Nehemiah was part of the answer to his own prayer. God called him to do a work that would rebuild the city and testimony of the people of God.

Problems in the Work of God

As Nehemiah set about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem there were several attacks focused upon him to try to stop the work of God.

Plan One (6:1–4)

Sanballat and Geshem tried to make it look as if they were organising a peace conference and they invited Nehemiah to it. It was to take place twenty miles away in Ono. God gave Nehemiah wisdom to realise that it was a plan to harm him. Nehemiah's reply was that he would not meet them as he could not interrupt his work. Four times the enemies made the request and each time Nehemiah's reply was the same.

Plan Two (6:5–9)

After the failure of the first plan the enemies tried to discredit Nehemiah. They claimed that the motive for doing the work was for Nehemiah to have power and control over the city. In

other words – he was building the walls to promote himself. In doing so, they hoped to distract him from the work. His response is found in verse 8 – “There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.”

Plan Three (6:10–13)

Nehemiah was told of a false plot to kill him. This was to place him in fear and thus, stop him completing the work. Nehemiah sought the face of God and perceived that it was nothing but lies. He continued in the work.

Notice what Nehemiah did to his enemies. He left them with the Lord (6:14).

The Importance of the Word of God

With the wall repaired in the space of fifty-two days, the Scriptures were brought before the people (8:2–3).

The Word was presented before all, old and young. The manner in which it was presented is detailed in Nehemiah 8:8.

It was read distinctly. They then “gave the sense”, meaning that they explained the Word. And they “caused them to understand the reading”, signifying that they applied the Word. Every preacher, evangelist and Sunday School teacher

should do the same.

Afterward, there was a great turning again unto the Lord. The blessing of the Lord fell upon His obedient people, and it started with the preaching of the Word.



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God of the Valley



Southern California was our destination this summer where we visited our son David and his wife, who live near the foothills of the San Bernadino and San Jacinto Mountains. Wanting to explore the area, we ventured up one of the local mountain roads which took us to about 7000 feet. The view was spectacular, with impressive peaks like San Gorgonio (11,503 feet) towering above us – but a bit challenging for someone with a bad head for heights!

Surrounded by mountains and valleys, I couldn't help but think of the pattern of our lives. Sometimes God's will takes us to the mountain top of blessing, where we do not doubt His presence, but when He leads us down into a valley, we can lose sight of His good hand upon us. Have you ever thought how important valleys are in your life? Think about this:

We are not built for the mountains ... we are built for the valley, for the ordinary stuff we are in and that is where we have to prove our mettle ... the height of the mountain top is measured by the drab drudgery of the valley; but it is in the valley

that we have to live for the glory of God. (Oswald Chambers).

It is in the “ordinary stuff” of life that we prove God's faithfulness from sunup to sundown, where we experience life's pressure – the hard work of being mortal – that teaches us many valuable lessons and exercises our faith. We tend to judge our circumstances by their elevation and get discouraged when life is not reaching the heights that we think it should. The advertising world encourages that thinking because it wants to cash in on man's dissatisfaction. God, on the other hand, wants us to use the ordinary to our spiritual advantage, instead of our being discontented with our lot. The apostle Paul told us how important contentment of life is. He called it “great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6).


C.H. Spurgeon said, “We find that most men confess that God is God of the hills, but they forget that He is also Lord of the valleys.” God's sovereign plan seems more often to keep us at a lower altitude, where there is less opportunity for carelessness and spiritual pride. We should

be thankful for that.

I came across a little book, “God of the Valleys”, written by Elsie Milligan, a missionary to Rhodesia in the 1930s. She shared this good thought:

In our Christian life we are led through varying experiences, some of them pleasant and delightful, some sad and sorrowful, some painful and perplexing, yet all of these are needed for our spiritual education – they are part of ‘His blest ways’, and in all of them the same loving Shepherd guides us, the same gracious Lord teaches us.

Psalm 23 contains the most famous of all Biblical valleys – “the valley of the shadow of death.” The Hebrew word here means darkness or dark shadows, so it is not limited to death itself. Shadows have a way of frightening us. They enlarge the object being projected and make its size look monstrous. Dark times can totally defeat us, but this comforting psalm reminds us that our good Shepherd



does not leave us in the dark valley, but He gently leads us around with His rod and staff to still waters, green pastures, righteous paths – places of soul restoration.

Shadows will loom, but I need “fear no evil” for God is with me.

When we are in a valley, we may be vulnerable to the temptation of the devil. With his well-rehearsed tactics, he waves attractive relief packages before us which promise health or wealth, success, or freedom – whatever the heart desires – to coax us to escape from our present state. But the Lord knows all about our struggles and when we keep our eyes upon Him, He promises to carry us through.

You have heard the expression, “You can't see the forest for the trees.” Some valleys are like that, so dense with foliage. Hikers need to heed well the signs and maps, or they can get disoriented. Sometimes our daily lives become so full of tasks, set-backs, responsibilities, deadlines, and issues that we can't see the way ahead and our view of the Lord is distorted. There are Christians who are asking, “Why?” They have fallen into a fearful pit and are overwhelmed with trials and are struggling to cope. I am thinking of those who have suffered a car accident,

cancer, a genetic illness, a birth deformity, the violence of wicked men, dementia, the death of a loved one, even the death of a child – months of anguish, years of crippling weakness, long times of crushing loneliness and despondency. Some of the choicest servants of God have passed through the deepest, darkest valleys, but the amazing grace of God kept them, with loving arms He embraced them, and with nail-scarred hand He led them out to tranquil pastures where He wiped away their tears, and breathed His blessing upon them, restoring their soul. Treading the valley made them strong. And even though it stretched their faith, they accepted God's will and found their joy in Him – not in their circumstances, relationships, or possessions.

“Mountaintops inspire leaders, but valleys mature them.” While Sir Winston Churchill's statement was uttered from a secular viewpoint, it contains biblical truth. On this side of heaven, God is “growing” us to spiritual maturity. Valleys are a key part of that growth. I leave you with an encouraging poem by late missionary and devotional writer, Mrs. Charles Cowman, who watched as the Lord slowly took her husband home. It was a difficult valley of tears for her, but God was with her. And He will be with you.

The Valley of Weeping

*I have been through the valley
of weeping,
The valley of sorrow and pain;
But the God of all comfort was
with me,
At hand to uphold and sustain.*

*When He leads through some
valley of trouble,
His omnipotent hand we trace;
For the trials and sorrows, He
sends us,
Are part of His lessons in
grace.*

*Well, He knows that affliction
is needed;
He has a wise gracious
purpose in view,
And in the dark valley, He
whispers,
“Hereafter you will know what
I do.”*

*As we travel through life's
shadowed valley,
Fresh springs of His love ever
rise;
And we learn that our sorrows
and losses,
Are blessings just sent in
disguise.*

(Mrs. Charles Cowman)



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