

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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1 Jesus lives! The vict'ry's won!
Death no longer can appall me.
Jesus lives! Death's reign is done!
From the grave Christ will recall me.
Brighter scenes will then commence;
this shall be my confidence.

2 Jesus lives! To him the throne
high o'er heav'n and earth is given.
I shall go where he is gone,
live and reign with him in heaven.
God is faithful; doubtings, hence!
This shall be my confidence.

3 Jesus lives! For me he died;
hence will I, to Jesus living,
pure in heart and act abide,
praise to him and glory giving.
All I need God will dispense;
this shall be my confidence.

4 Jesus lives! I know full well
nothing me from him shall sever.
Life nor death nor pow'rs of hell
part me now from Christ forever.
God will be a sure defense;
this shall be my confidence.

5 Jesus lives! And now is death
but the gate to life immortal;
this shall calm my trembling breath
when I pass its gloomy portal.
Faith shall cry, as fails each sense:
Jesus is my confidence!

Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-1769)

The Song of Victory

“[T]he saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 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 our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Resurrection is not just a possibility, but it is the fact of which we boast properly. We in Christ sing this victory song through Him who is the firstfruits of them that slept. This was prophetically uttered by Isaiah when he wrote, “He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces” (25:8). The invasion of death came through Adam when he fell in the garden, and ever since is the mortal enemy of man. Human life has been ultimately conquered by death. Imagine this will happen in a moment measured by the twinkling in your eye. Death is actually overwhelmed or vanquished in victory. How is this victory over death of which we sing dealt such a blow? Our text asks a couple of interesting questions. First, “O death, where is thy sting?” Something happened to death’s awful sting. Where is that sting? Just remember our Lord disarmed death even to the removal of its sting. The venomous serpent of death was rendered fangless. Second question, “O grave where is thy victory?” An emptied grave reveals the work of the conqueror of death. The Saviour overwhelmed death, and the empty grave is there to prove it. Death has met its eternal defeat when Jesus Christ rose again.

Where did death get its sting? “The sting of death is sin.” Yes, all the destructive, damning, defeating, demented, dastardly, divisive things can be traced to the fountainhead of SIN. Sin is the villainous culprit supplying the sting to death. Yes, Mr. Death conquers his victims with his sting. Sin supplies the sting. Death comes calling by sins insistence. “Sin treacherously throws open the gate, and allows him entrance into the city. That is saying much for the evil of sin. But that is not all. That is not the worst. Death, the conqueror, entering in through sin—through sin opening the gates for him—compels the traitor to become his tool. He takes sin along with him in carrying out his conquest. He stings on account of sin; he stings by means of sin. Sin is his weapon as well as his warrant. Literally and emphatically ‘the sting of death is sin’” [Candlish]. Since sin is the sting used in conquering you, then hell is the fruit of its conquest. “The strength of sin is the law.” The law is the unchanging voice of God pronouncing guilt because of sin and condemnation as a result of sin. It is by the law that we have a knowledge of sin so we are not without excuse. The law says the soul that sins shall surely die. The wages of sin have not changed—it is still death. The law is holy, just and good. “Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.” The guilt of sin is in my head for by the law is the knowledge of sin; the corruption of sin is in my heart, so it governs my affections. Only Christ can be my substitute to take the penalty of my sin and impute to me His perfect obedience to the law for righteousness.

The Victor has come and destroyed him that had the power of death that is the devil. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The victory

over death is through the person of the victor Jesus Christ the Lord. The Victor has satisfied the holy demands of God the Father; He has fulfilled all righteousness; He has destroyed him that had the power of death; He was victorious over death, hell and the grave; He is at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us so “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” Therefore “we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

“Never did death meet with its over-match before it met with Christ, and He conquering it for us, and in our names, rising as our representative, now every single saint triumphs over it as a vanquished enemy, 1 Cor. 15:55, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Thus, like Joshua, they set the foot of faith upon the neck of that king, and, with an holy scorn, deride its power. ‘O death, where is thy sting?’ If it be objected that it is said, 1 Cor. 15:26, ‘The last enemy that is to be destroyed is death.’ And if so, then it should seem the victory is not yet achieved, and so we do but boast before the victory; it is at hand to reply, that the victory over death, obtained by Christ’s resurrection, is twofold, either *personal* and *incomplete*, or *general* and *complete*. He actually overcame it at His resurrection, in His own person, perfectly and virtually for us, as our head; but at the general resurrection of the saints (which His resurrection, as the first-fruits, assures them of) then it will be utterly vanquished and destroyed. Till then, it will exercise some little power over the bodies of the saints, in which respect it is called the *last enemy*. For sin, the chief enemy that let it in, that holds their bodies in the grave till the coming of Christ, and then it is utterly to be vanquished. ‘And then shall be brought to pass that saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.’ *Then*, and not till then, will that conquest be fully completed in our persons though it be already so in Christ’s; now incompletely in ours, and then completely and fully forever. For the same word which signifies *victory* doth also signify *perpetuity*, and in this place a final or perpetual conquest.... So that there is no reason why a believer should stand in a slavish fear of it” [John Flavel].

A little girl had attended the funeral of a preacher. After it was over she was observed skipping light-heartedly through the cemetery at dusk. Someone spoke to her, “Aren’t you afraid of this place?” “Oh, no,” she remarked, “I only cross through here to get home.” That is exactly what the child of God through Christ is doing, the Lord’s own are “crossing through to get home.”