

24 - The Valley of the Shadow of Death

Now at the end of this valley was another, called the Valley of the Shadow of Death; and CHRISTIAN must needs go through it, because the way to the Celestial City lay through the midst of it. Now this valley is a very solitary place; the prophet Jeremiah thus describes it: "A wilderness, a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; a land that no man (but a Christian) passeth through, and where no man dwelt" (#Jer 2:6).

Now here CHRISTIAN was worse put to it than in his fight with APOLLYON, as by the sequel you shall see.

I saw then in my dream, that when CHRISTIAN was got to the borders of the shadow of death, there met him two men, children of them that brought up an evil report of the good land, making haste to go back (#Nu 13:32), to whom CHRISTIAN spake as follows:

Chr. Whither are you going?

The Two Men. They said, "Back, back; and we would have you do so too, if either life or peace is prized by you."

Chr. "Why, what is the matter?" said CHRISTIAN.

Men. "Matter!" said they; "we were going that way as you are going, and went as far as we durst; and indeed we were almost past coming back, for had we gone a little farther, we had not been here to bring the news to thee."

Chr. "But what have you met with?" said CHRISTIAN.

Men. Why, we were almost in the Valley of the Shadow of Death (#Ps 44:19 107:10); but that by good hap we looked before us, and saw the danger before we came to it.

Chr. "But what have you seen?" said CHRISTIAN.

Men. Seen! why the valley itself, which is as dark as pitch. We also saw there the hobgoblins, satyrs, and dragons of the pit; we heard also in that valley a continual howling and yelling, as of a people in unutterable misery, who there sat bound in affliction and irons; and over that valley hangs the discouraging clouds of confusion; death also doth always spread his wings over it; in a word, it is every whit dreadful, being utterly without order (#Job 3:5 10:22).

Chr. Then said CHRISTIAN, "I perceive not yet, by what you have said, but that this is my way to the desired haven."

Men. "Be it thy way, we will not choose it for ours." So they parted, and CHRISTIAN went on his way; but still with his sword drawn in his hand, for fear lest he should be assaulted.

I saw then in my dream, so far as this valley reached, there was on the right hand a very deep ditch; that ditch is it into which the blind have led the blind in all ages, and have both there miserably

perished. Again; behold, on the left hand there was very dangerous quagmire, into which, if even a good man falls, he can find no bottom of his foot to stand on. Into that quag King David once did fall; and had no doubt therein been smothered, had not he that is able plucked him out (#Ps 69:14).

The pathway was here also exceeding narrow, and therefore good CHRISTIAN was the more put to it; for when he sought in the dark to shun the ditch on the one hand, he was ready to tip over into the mire on the other; also when he sought to escape the mire, without great carefulness, he would be ready to fall into the ditch. Thus he went on, and I heard him here sigh bitterly; for besides the dangers mentioned above, the pathway was here so dark, that oft times when he lift up his foot to set forward, he knew not where, or upon what, he should set it next.

About the midst of this valley I perceived the mouth of hell to be; and it stood also hard by the wayside. Now, thought CHRISTIAN, what shall I do? And ever and anon the flame and smoke would come out in such abundance, with sparks and hideous noises (things that cared not for CHRISTIAN's sword, as did APOLLYON before), that he was forced to put up his sword, and betake himself to another weapon, called "All Prayer" (#Eph 6:18). So he cried in my hearing, "O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul!" (#Ps 116:4). Thus he went on a great while; yet still the flames would be reaching toward him. Also he heard doleful voices and rushings to and fro; so that sometimes he thought he should be torn in pieces, or trodden down like mire in the streets. This frightful sight was seen, and these dreadful noises were heard, by him for several miles together; and coming to a place where he thought he heard a company of fiends coming forward to meet him, he stopped, and began to muse what he had best to do. Sometimes he had half a thought to go back; then again he thought he might be halfway through the valley. He remembered also how he had already vanquished many a danger, and that the danger of going back might be much more than for to go forward: so he resolved to go on. Yet the fiends seemed to come nearer and nearer; but when they were come even almost at him, he cried out with a most vehement voice, "I will walk in the strength of the Lord God"; so they gave back, and came no farther.

One thing I would not let slip; I took notice that now poor CHRISTIAN was so confounded, that he did not know his own voice. And thus I perceived it: just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stept up softly to him; and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him—which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put CHRISTIAN more to it than anything that he met with before, even to think that he should now blaspheme him that he loved so much before! Yet could he have helped it, he would not have done it; but he had not the discretion neither to stop his ears, nor to know from whence those blasphemies came.

When CHRISTIAN had travelled in this disconsolate condition some considerable time, he thought he heard the voice of a man, as going before him, saying, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me" (#Ps 23:4).

Then was he glad; and that for these reasons:

First, because he gathered from thence that some who feared God were in this valley as well as himself.

Secondly, for that he perceived God was with them, though in that dark and dismal state; and why not

with me, thought he, though, by reason of the impediment that attends this place, I cannot perceive it? (#Job 9:11)

Thirdly, for that he hoped (could he overtake them) to have company by and by. So he went on, and called to him that was before; but he knew not what to answer, for that he also thought himself to be alone. And by and by the day broke; then said CHRISTIAN, "He hath turned the shadow of death into the morning" (#Am 5:8).

Now, morning being come, he looked back; not out of desire to return, but to see by the light of the day, what hazards he had gone through in the dark. So he saw more perfectly the ditch that was on the one hand, and the quag that was on the other; also how narrow the way was which lay betwixt them both. Also now he saw the hobgoblins, and satyrs, and dragons of the pit; but all afar off, for after break of day they came not nigh. Yet they were discovered to him according to that which is written, "He discovers deep things out of darkness and brings out to light the shadow of death" (#Job 12:22).

Now was CHRISTIAN much affected with his deliverance from all the dangers of his solitary way; which dangers, though he feared them more before, yet he saw them more clearly now, because the light of the day made them conspicuous to him. About this time the sun was rising—and this was another mercy to CHRISTIAN; for you must note that, though the first part of the valley of the shadow of death was dangerous, yet this second part, through which he was yet to go, was, if possible, far more dangerous: for from the place where he now stood, even to the end of the valley, the way was all along set so full of snares, traps, gins, and nets here, and so full of pits, pitfalls, deep holes, and ledges down there, that had it now been dark, as it was when he came the first part of the way, had he had a thousand souls, they had in reason been cast away. But, as I said just now, the sun was rising. Then said he, "His candle shines on my head; and by his light I go through darkness" (#Job 29:3).

In this light therefore; he came to the end of the valley. Now I saw in my dream, that at the end of this valley lay blood, bones, ashes, and mangled bodies of men, even of pilgrims that had gone this way formerly: and while I was musing what should be the reason, I espied a little before me a cave, where two giants, POPE and PAGAN, dwelt in old time, by whose power and tyranny, the men whose bones, blood, ashes, etc., lay there, were cruelly put to death. But by this place CHRISTIAN went without much danger; whereat I somewhat wondered. But I have learnt since, that PAGAN had been dead many a day; and as for the other, though he be yet alive, he is, by reason of age, and also of the many shrewd brushes that he met with in his younger days, grown so crazy and stiff in his joints, that he can now do little more than sit in his cave's mouth grinning at pilgrims as they go by, and biting his nails, because he cannot come at them.

So I saw that CHRISTIAN went on his way; yet at the sight of the old man that sat in the mouth of the cave he could not tell what to think, especially because he spake to him—though he could not go after him—saying, "You will never mend, till more of you be burned." But he held his peace, and set a good face on it; and so went by, and received no hurt. Then sang CHRISTIAN:

"Oh, world of wonders !—I can say no less—
That I should be preserved in that distress
That I have met with here! Oh, blessed be
That hand that from it hath delivered me ú
Dangers in darkness, devils, hell, and sin,

Did compass me, while I this vale was in:
Yea, snares, and pits, and traps, and nets, did lie
My path about, that worthless silly I
Might have been caught, entangled, and cast down:
But since I live, let Jesus wear the crown!"

Jer 2:6, Nu 13:32, Ps 44:19 107:10, Job 3:5 10:22, Ps 69:14, Eph 6:18, Ps 116:4, Ps 23:4, Job 9:11, Am 5:8, Job 12:22, Job 29:3

“Neither did they say, ‘Where *is* the LORD, Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, Who led us through the wilderness, Through a land of deserts and pits, Through a land of drought and the shadow of death, Through a land that no one crossed And where no one dwelt?’” (Jer 2:6 NKJV)

“And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature.” (Nu 13:32 NKJV)

“But You have severely broken us in the place of jackals, And covered us with the shadow of death.” (Ps 44:19 NKJV)

“Those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, Bound in affliction and irons—” (Ps 107:10 NKJV)

“May darkness and the shadow of death claim it; May a cloud settle on it; May the blackness of the day terrify it.” (Job 3:5 NKJV)

“A land as dark as darkness *itself*, As the shadow of death, without any order, *Where* even the light *is* like darkness.”” (Job 10:22 NKJV)

“Deliver me out of the mire, And let me not sink; Let me be delivered from those who hate me, And out of the deep waters.” (Ps 69:14 NKJV)

“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—” (Eph 6:18 NKJV)

“Then I called upon the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!"” (Ps 116:4 NKJV)

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

“If He goes by me, I do not see *Him*; If He moves past, I do not perceive Him;” (Job 9:11 NKJV)

“He made the Pleiades and Orion; He turns the shadow of death into morning And makes the day dark as night; He calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on the face of the earth; The LORD *is* His name.” (Am 5:8 NKJV)

“He uncovers deep things out of darkness, And brings the shadow of death to light.” (Job 12:22 NKJV)

“When His lamp shone upon my head, *And when* by His light I walked *through* darkness;” (Job 29:3 NKJV)