



## Oh, How Blest Are Ye Whose Toils Are Ended

**Text: Simon Dach (1605-1659)**

**Tune: Choralbuch, Stuttgart, 1744**

As we contemplate the end of the Church Year and its focus on the end of days on this earth and Christ's return to judge the living and the dead, we often consider our Christian brothers and sisters who have already died in the faith. We thank God for their witness to us, but most importantly, for His gracious gift of salvation and their faith which received all Christ did for them. Because of this, it is not inappropriate to sing with the blessed dead in mind. The hymn, "Oh, How Blest Are Ye Whose Toils Are Ended" is one such example, one that is a dialogue between us on earth and the saints in heaven.



Simon Dach

This hymn was written by Simon Dach, born July 29, 1605. Dach was blessed with an outstanding education, attending the Cathedral school at Königsberg, the town school at Wittenberg, and the Gymnasium at Magdeburg. After completing Gymnasium, where he studied theology and philosophy, he returned to Königsberg where he became a private tutor. In 1633 he was appointed assistant at the Cathedral school and then its Conrector in 1636. In 1639 he was appointed

to the University's faculty, teaching poetry. He was later made Dean of the philosophy faculty and eventually Rector of the University. He died at Königsberg while still serving on the University faculty, entering eternal rest April 15, 1659.

Dach was a gifted poet and hymnwriter, writing some 1,360 poems and about 165 hymns, though very few of either are known or remain in popular use today. However, he was one of the best hymnwriters of his time, writing hymns that were personal and

contemplative and always pointed the singer to Christ. Almost all of his hymns were written to help the Christian prepare for death, the present hymn being no exception.

When Dach wrote "Oh, How Blest Are Ye Whose Toils Are Ended," it was written to be sung in alternation between choir and congregation. However, when Henry Wadsworth Longfellow translated this hymn in the mid 19th century, he only translated the stanzas for the congregation. The Rev. Kenneth E. Runge, sainted Pastor of Zion Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Detroit later found the hymn in its original German version and translated the choir's stanzas. As the congregation sings about life in this world, the choir, as the blessed dead, sings of the joys that are theirs in heaven. The full text of the hymn is as follows.

### *Congregation*

Oh, how blest are ye whose toils are ended.  
Who through death have unto God ascended!  
Ye have arisen  
From the cares which keep us still in prison.

We are still as in a dungeon living,  
Still oppressed with sorrow and misgiving;  
Our undertakings  
Are but toils and troubles and heartbreakings.

Ye meanwhile are in your chambers sleeping,  
Quiet and set free from all your weeping;  
No cross or sadness  
There can hinder your untroubled gladness.

Christ has wiped away your tears forever;  
Ye have that for which we still endeavor;  
To you are chanted  
Songs that never to mortal ears were granted.

Ah, who would not then depart with gladness  
To inherit heaven for earthly sadness?  
Who here would languish  
Longer in bewailing and in anguish?

Come, O Christ, and loose the chains that bind us!  
Lead us forth and cast this world behind us!  
With Thee, the Anointed,  
Finds the soul its joy and rest appointed.

### *Choir*

*Truly, we to glory have arisen  
From all cares that held us in a prison  
Earthly toil ended,  
We unto our God are now ascended.*

*We no more as in a dungeon wander;  
God has taken us to heaven yonder.  
Tears and frustrations  
Are the sum of earthly expectations.*

*Oh, our destiny, how blest! How wondrous  
To be free from earthly pain so ponderous!  
Naught but rejoicing  
Fill us now, our thanks and praises voicing.*

*Ah, what words, what language shall we borrow  
To describe our freedom from all sorrow!  
Naught else but singing  
Of the angels in our ears is ringing!*

*In the world man's heart is torn with anguish,  
Constantly his soul in pain must languish;  
But Jesus' merit,  
Death a door has made, Life to inherit.*

*Dearest friends, we say farewell with gladness;  
May our death not cause you grief and sadness.  
By Christ invited,  
Someday we again shall be united!*