

Let Me Get Home Before Dark

It's sundown, Lord.

The shadows of my life stretch back into the dimness of years long spent.

*I fear not death, for that grim foe betrays himself at last, thrusting me forever into life,
Life with you, unsoiled and free.*

But I do fear. I fear that Dark Specter may come too soon – or do I mean, too late?

That I should end before I finish, or finish but not well.

That I should stain your honor, shame your name, grieve your loving heart.

Few, they tell me, finish well.

Lord, let me get home before dark.

*The darkness of a spirit grown mean and small, fruit shriveled on the vine, bitter to the taste of my
companions,*

burden to be borne by those brave few who love me still.

No, Lord. Let the fruit grow lush and sweet, a joy to all who taste;

Spirit sign of God at work, stronger, fuller, brighter at the end.

Lord, let me get home before dark.

The darkness of tattered gifts, rust-locked, half-spent or ill-spent;

A life that once was used of God now set aside.

Grief for glories gone, or fretting for a task God never gave.

Mourning in the hollow chambers of memory,

Gazing on the faded banners of victories long gone.

Cannot I run well unto the end?

Lord, let me get home before dark.

The outer me decays. I do not fret or ask reprieve.

The ebbing strength but weans me from mother earth and grows me up for heaven.

I do not cling to shadows cast by immortality.

I do not patch the scaffold lent to build the real, eternal me.

I do not clutch about me my cocoon, vainly struggling to hold hostage a free spirit pressing to be born.

But will I reach the gate in lingering pain, body distorted, grotesque?

Or will it be a mind wandering untethered among light fantasies or grim terrors?

Of your grace, Father, I humbly ask...

Let me get home before dark.

Robertson McQuilkin was a distinguished Bible school and college president for more than 20 years. But he may be best known for his early departure from office to care full-time for his wife who battled Alzheimer's for decades. His powerful resignation speech (which can be found online) and subsequent book (*A Promise Kept*) about what he learned from his sacrificial acts of love have encouraged countless people. You can catch some of the shape of Rev. McQuilkin's heart in this 1981 poem on the topic of contemplating death.