

CROSSING THE JORDAN

NO. 2039

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*“Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals. For within three days you shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God gives you to possess it.”
Joshua 1:10, 11.*

THE story of the passage of the Jordan might instructively be used in many ways. It was a very wonderful event. It occurred on the tenth day of the first month—on the same day of the year as the passage of the Red Sea. Of that glorious miracle it was the fortieth anniversary and you may very properly join the dividing of the Red Sea to that of the Jordan, for so the Holy Spirit has done in the one hundred and fourteenth Psalm—“The sea saw it and fled: Jordan was driven back.”

I am going to use the passage of the Jordan as our forefathers used to employ it, namely, as a type of our passage out of this world into the place appointed for our rest. Canaan is only measurably a type of that better land, for the Canaanite was still in the land and Israel had to fight many a battle to obtain possession of the country. In our more perfect Canaan there are no enemies to encounter, no sins to struggle with, and no powers of darkness to conquer. Still, I think the type, if imperfect, has been so long established in the Christian Church and has yielded so much of edification to godly people, that I may safely use it.

We cannot afford to give up such a hymn as—

*“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.”*

Nor can we cease to sing with Watts—

*“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Stand dressed in living green;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood
While Jordan rolled between.”*

The Israelites, before they crossed the Jordan, had notice given them. The officers went through the host with the message, “Prepare you victuals. For within three days you shall pass over this Jordan.” The Lord often favors His people with notice that the time of their departure is at hand. He has fixed the hour of our entrance into rest and it can neither be postponed by skill of physician nor hastened by malice of foe. No Satanic force can hurl us to the grave before our time—

*“Plagues and death around us fly,
Till He bids we cannot die.”*

In due time there comes a whisper in the ear of the Believer, “Rise up and come away.” Mr. Bunyan describes the pilgrims as tarrying on the shore of that river which parted them from the celestial country until a post came to one and another, announcing that the silver cord must be loosed and the golden blow be broken. Father Honest and Mr. Ready-to-Halt and Christiana and the rest of them received each one a call from the hill country and passed over the black water to the golden strand—where the shining ones stood to meet them.

Perhaps some of us may get no such summons. For we may be taken away on a sudden. Many good people daily pray against sudden death and there are legitimate reasons for so doing. But to a child of God it is of small consequence, for death will never find him unprepared if he is living in communion with God. If we walk in the light, as He is in the light,

an abundant entrance will be ministered to us into eternal glory even if we should fall dead in a moment. The change would simply mean going from the lower room of our Father's house into an upper chamber more bright and beautiful—but still a part of the same house.

A few Sunday evenings ago, when I was unable to preach to you, my beloved and esteemed friend, Mr. Newman Hall, most generously occupied this pulpit and his sermon touched upon Heaven and the joyous entrance of the saints into the immortal state. One of our sisters was greatly rejoiced by that sermon. She went home and in going into her bedroom she fell down and entered in a second into rest. Possibly that sermon was to her a stray note from the harps of angels to call her Home. We, too, may have such a speedy summons. Or we may have months of waiting. What matters? Let the angelic convoy appear when our best Beloved shall see fit—it shall be no question of preference with us whether the Master shall call us today, tomorrow, or in twenty years.

Let Him call us at cockcrow, or at midnight, or midday, we will answer Him, "Here am I. For You did call me." We will enter into the joy of our Lord and be forever with Him. When God's children have their candle lighted for them and they know that it is time to go upstairs, they feel glad to end their pilgrimage and rest in Jesus. We are all of us much nearer Home than we think. It will be greatly wise to talk with our last hours and to anticipate that time when the message shall come, "Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan."

May the Holy Spirit make our meditation profitable in view of our end! We shall observe the tenor of this notice. And then observe the sequel of this notice. May we have Divine Grace given us to understand what we speak and hear and to make use of it for our everlasting benefit.

I. First, OBSERVE THE TENOR OF THIS NOTICE. Notice that there are three leading words in it—"prepare," "pass over," "possess." "Prepare you victuals. For within three days you shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land."

The first word that came to them was, "Prepare." Be in journeying order. The soldier carries his rations with him when he has to make a quick march—"Prepare you victuals." Children of God, be ready to go from this world. Let not your roots strike deep into this earthly soil for you must in due time be transplanted. And the more roothold you get to this world, the worse it will be for you. Hold everything with a loose hand. The soldier in a foreign land must not settle down and begin to gather surroundings about him which would naturalize him in the country. He is an alien, tarrying till his prince shall call him back to the home country.

You cannot be in exile long. Heaven is prepared to receive you. Be ready! Your heart is in Heaven—send your best goods there—where they will be safe from moth and rust. Have about you what little things you want for spending money but make the best of your way through this Vanity Fair. Keep in marching order. Be prepared at a moment's notice to start on your way. But inasmuch as he said, "Prepare you victuals" did he not mean, "Begin to feed on food of that sort upon which you are henceforth to live"?

The manna would cease in three days and never fall again. After they crossed the Jordan, they would feed on the corn of the land. Manna was the staple of their wilderness food. But they had eaten other things as well, for they had flocks and herds. They were to prepare, not manna, for that would not keep above a day but such food as ordinarily they would subsist upon when they entered upon their estates. O children of God, get good meals of spiritual meat, the kind of meat which you will live upon hereafter. Feed much on the love of God and the glorious Truths which are laid up in Christ Jesus. Care nothing for the husks of human thought and carnal eloquence but take to the solid meat, which is to be your dainty nourishment when you dwell in the Presence of God forever.

I wish that professing Christians were more cautious about what they feed on. I am afraid that some professors, if they hear a sermon, are satisfied whatever the sort may be. They do not care what the doctrine may be if a clever man talks prettily and gratifies their ear. Some people can eat sawdust and make a meal of shadows. I could almost wish it were true of them that they could drink any deadly thing and it should not hurt them. For assuredly they do drink very deadly things when they go to the tavern of modern thought. But I would say to you this morning, feed on Christ, feed on spiritual food, feed on the pure Truth of God's Word and feed your souls on nothing else.

Know the taste of what you eat and let it be as clear and definite as that of butter and honey so you may readily refuse the evil and choose the good. Joshua meant—Stand ready, for the time is getting very short. There is not long to wait. Very soon you will have traversed the stream and landed on the far shore. Even now you can catch a glimpse of the

palm trees of Jericho on the other side. But in three days you shall gather their fruit. Beloved, how would you feel if you knew that, within three days, you must die? Would you welcome the news?

Are you quite sure that it would please you? Remember the wife and family and the business and all that! Can you bear the snapping of the ties which bind you to this life? Have you learned so to live in this world that you are not of it? Could you cheerfully say, "Forever with the Lord. Amen, so let it be"? Oh, that God may keep us so watchful that the shortest summons may be long enough!

The exhortation given in the thirteenth verse is one which may be useful also to us. "Remember the Word." It is a grand help for going over the Jordan, if we will remember the Word of the Lord. Our faith enables us both to live and to die on the promise of God. "Remember the Word which Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded you, saying, The Lord your God has given you rest and has given you this land." If a man forgets the Word of the Lord and comes to die, he dies in a pitiable plight. For without the light of the Word, he takes a leap in the dark. If a man can refresh his memory with the grand Truths of the Covenant, if he can come to the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, then he may die bravely.

Israel might go down the shelving banks of the rushing river because the Lord had given the nation a promise concerning the other side. I said to a dying friend, "Have you no fears"? "Fears!" he said, "How can I have any? You have fed me upon such solid food that I am not afraid to die. Jesus bore my sins in His own body on the tree and I am accepted in Him." Neither will you be fearful, Beloved, if you have provided for your journey such food as the Lord has stored up in His Word.

But then he said also, third chapter and fifth verse, "Sanctify yourselves." If we knew we were to die in three days, should we not wish to put our hearts, our thoughts, our families, into a better state? I remember a Sister, by no means superstitious, who, when she came to die, was very earnest that all her linen and everything about her body, should be white and clean. And I somewhat sympathized in her feeling because I knew that it was only the outward expression of her inward desire to be purely arrayed as to her spirit. Since we may die suddenly, let us purify ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Let us pray our Lord to wash us again.

And, as our dear Brother prayed just now, "may the dust of our last day's march be taken from our feet!" If there has been any neglect of duty let us be quick to perform that which has been delayed. Beloved, in the prospect of going Home, sanctify yourselves. May the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier, so cleanse us that we may be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

The next word was, "Pass over this Jordan." They were not called to linger on the brink, nor to sit with their feet in the stream but to cross over it. Israel had been forty years in the wilderness and surely that was long enough. Some of you have been fifty, sixty, seventy, perhaps eighty years in the desert. But when the summons shall come, you will have no more marching over the burning sand and no more fear of the fiery serpents and scorpions. "Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan" will put an end to the wilderness tramping. Life is long enough if we have had Divine Grace enough. He lives long that lives well. He who has served his God with all his heart will not wish to linger a moment after his life-work is done. You are not called to linger on the bed of sickness for ages but to pass over to your rest.

And notice, the call was not to go down into the Jordan to stop there. Blessed be God, we are not going down into the grave to be lost there. But we make use of it as an open door to Paradise. Our spirit shall mount triumphantly to Christ and even the poor body, after it has lain a while in the dust, shall rise again in the glorious image of Christ. The grave is the refining pot which puts away the dross from the gold. Death, before we knew the Savior, was like a vast cavern into which there were many footprints but all the tracks led inward—none came forth from the gloomy abode of the shades.

But now, by the power of our Lord's resurrection, looking into the cave we perceive that He has pierced the hills of darkness and made a way for us to the other side. We go into what looks like a dark den but we come out at the other side into the land that flows with milk and honey. "You shall pass over this Jordan."

Our text reads like a promise—"Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan." Some of them might have said, "How?" They saw no apparent means—no bridge, no pontoons, no ferry. Ah, but says Joshua, "Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan." And the word was true. Do you say, "I do not see how I am to be helped to die"? The Lord

will give dying grace in dying moments. He comes in when the need is pressing. Those who have wrestled earnestly in life shall march off triumphantly in death. Jehovah Shaddai is God All-sufficient.

He knows how to take you through the river. Let not your heart be troubled. It is not yours to make a way through the deep waters—that remains with God alone. It is yours to obey—it is His to provide. Sometimes you are so foolish as to try your hand at providing and then you neglect the obeying and as a consequence you fail both in the providing and the obeying. Mind your own business and the Lord will perform His Word. Israel marches, Jehovah clears the way—and a glorious result is brought about.

Somebody might have said, “We cannot pass over Jordan, for the current is furious and the river is unusually swollen.” In the spring, at the time of barley harvest, Jordan overflows all its banks and becomes a river which only the very strongest of David’s heroes could ford. So some child of God might say, “But my prospect in dying is darker than that of any other Believer. I shall suffer more pain, more depression, more poverty. And thus to me Jordan overflows all its banks.” Yes, yes. But still you shall go over it, for the Lord has said it and none of His words shall fail. You shall cross the swollen torrent and smile at your own fears.

While I was thinking this over, I said to myself, “Why did the Lord bring His people to Jordan at the time when the snow was melting on the Lebanon and therefore the river was more full and the current more strong than usual?” There was ample reason. It was then that the early harvest was ripening throughout the country. Suppose there had been no corn in the fields ready for reaping, how would the children of Israel have been fed when they were across the river and the manna had ceased? Their food stood in the fields ready to be gathered and immediately they ate of the produce of the land.

God knows the best time for His saints to die. We look at some ugly circumstance connected with their departure and we forget other and infinitely more important matters which make it a thing to be rejoiced in. So you, dear Friend, need not fear to pass over the Jordan though it has filled all its banks, since there is a reason for it and a graciously sufficient one. God will give you extraordinary help in extraordinary trial and glorify Himself in you.

“Oh,” but they might have said, “We cannot pass over Jordan because there is Jericho right in front of us and of course the inhabitants will call in the Jebusites, who are not far off at Jerusalem and these will fetch in the Hivites and the Amorites and all the other nations. And these will hotly dispute the passage of the river and it will be out of the question to force our way through that torrent and fight up the other bank against such foes.”

Such a fear would be most natural. When Caesar tried to land in England what did the Britons do? They rushed into the water off Dover to meet the Romans and they fought with them in the surf of the sea. It was natural that brave men should fight the invaders in the water and not suffer them to tread their soil. Do you suppose that the Canaanites were less brave than the ancient Britons? Had there not been a spell upon them they would have pressed back Israel in the river itself and would not have allowed them to enter the land.

Yet Israel passed over Jordan at the appointed time. God had said “You shall go over,” and they did go over. And no Canaanite, Hivite, or Jebusite, dared to molest them. So the poor child of God sighs, “Alas, when I come to die, Satan will meet me, temptations and doubts and fears will rush upon me.” We read in the third chapter of Joshua, sixteenth verse, “And the people passed over right against Jericho.” Fear not, O trembling heart. God can so deal with evil spirits and with the doubts of your own spirit that they shall be still as a stone till you have passed over.

No demon shall dare to peep or mutter. No doubt or fear shall venture near. We read, “All the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.” Not an arrow or a stone came from over the walls of Jericho. Glory be to the name of the Lord! He made the hearts of Israel’s enemies to melt so that no more courage remained in them. Thus far upon the second word, “You shall pass over.”

The third word was “possess.” They were to pass the river to possess the land which God had given them. We possess nothing here. Those goods which we think we possess melt away like an icicle from a hot hand. Like birds on the plowed field which are gone the moment we clap our hands, so do riches take to themselves wings and fly away. Such things are poor stuff to call possessions. But we have on the other side of Jordan treasures worth owning. By a Covenant of salt, God has given us in Christ Jesus everlasting rest, triumph, happiness, glory.

There was in Palestine a portion of land for each man of Israel—so is there in Heaven a heritage appointed for each one of the Lord’s people. There is a crown in Heaven that nobody’s head can wear but mine, a harp that nobody’s hand

can play but mine and a mansion that no man may enter but myself alone. I believe the same of each of you, my Brothers and Sisters, who are in Christ Jesus. There is a Heaven for all the saints but there is also special joy and delight for each one of the redeemed—in my Father's house are many mansions. You have to go over Jordan but you are not going away from home, you are returning to your Father's house.

You are not going to a land of toil and poverty, sorrow and death. You are going to be forever with the Lord, where no evil can reach you. If, then, the message should come to your ear today, "Within three days you shall pass over this Jordan," say to yourself, "It is well, for I shall behold the face of Him I love and meet with those who are redeemed by His blood."

Thus I have spoken to you upon the tenor of this notice. But I hear the bell strike the quarter and therefore the voice of time bids me hasten on to a second most important matter.

II. I want you now to OBSERVE THE SEQUEL OF THIS NOTICE, or what followed upon the summons. I shall try to show what will follow to you who are in Christ, when you receive your notice to depart—what will happen to you?

The first thing that happened to Israel was this—a singular faith was bestowed. I can hardly believe that the people under Joshua were the children of those unbelieving Jews whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Throughout the early chapters of Joshua, it is recorded that they believed Joshua, whatever he said to them. He had strange and strong things to utter but they did not doubt or demur. What pleases me most is that when he spoke to the Reubenites and told them what they had to do, they said, "Whosoever he is that does rebel against your commandment and will not hearken unto your words in all that you command him, he shall be put to death—only be strong and of a good courage."

Think of that! They took upon themselves to encourage Joshua, saying, "only be strong and of a good courage." They admonished the bravest of captains—even they who were but of the rank and file. Some of God's very poor and tried people are occasionally so full of faith and courage that they try to cheer up their minister. The children instruct the fathers. I like to see them thus returning the compliment for it shows that they are in a happy condition themselves. If their simple cheer should seem superfluous to Joshua, yet it showed the honesty of their hearts and the fullness of their confidence in God.

There was not a doubt or a fear throughout the whole camp. Now, Beloved, when the children of God come to die, those of them who have been poor, trembling things before, receive new courage and strength and even minister comfort to those who are stronger than themselves! It is brave to see how Mr. Ready-to-Halt puts his crutches away when he is going over Jordan. Mr. Feeble-Mind bids them bury his feeble mind in a dung-hill, for it would be of no use to anybody. The Lord will give us more Divine Grace and we shall wonder at ourselves that we could have been aforesaid so distrustful.

"At eventide it shall be light." It is wonderful to see how God's babes in Christ shoot up to six feet six in a short time. I do not know what change death itself makes in the soul. But I believe that a little before death a wonderful advance is often made by the Believer. The man of God matures at a marvelous rate—even as these Israelites, who had been so prone to murmur—were now filled with a unanimity of faith which is perfectly amazing. May God thus brace up our faith when the time comes.

Next, a special assurance was given. See the fifth verse of the third chapter—"Tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." When they should come to the last day of the three, great wonders would be seen. The Lord is always working marvels. But when we come to cross the Jordan we shall see His wonders as never before. You have not seen the Lord yet, Beloved, as you will see Him as the great Wonder-worker. You have had a faint view of your God, sometimes, and this has made you feel like David when he danced before the ark. But you shall soon have another and a clearer view and then you will long to mount like an angel and veil your face in His nearer presence.

You shall have such wonders revealed to you and in you, both of grace and glory, that your soul shall be ravished with delight. You shall see Jesus and His love shall be more fully revealed to you. You shall begin to hear things which it is not lawful for a man to utter and you shall feel glory begun below. Your death day shall be your heavenly wedding day and your last day on earth shall be the best day you have ever spent on it. When you come close to Heaven in point of time, Heaven will come close to you in point of joy. With a strong faith and a delightful assurance for that faith to feed upon, you will be blessed, indeed.

Next, note that the people had with them a conquering leader. Joshua was at their head to encourage and direct them. When you and I shall pass over Jordan we shall have Jesus with us. Joshua is but another form of that dear name in which we triumph. He says, "Be of good cheer. Because I live, you shall live also." He it is who cries, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you." If our Joshua should seem to leave us, it will be on the flowery hill-side, or in the gardens of delight. But He will not even appear to do so when the dark waters flow at our feet and we are called upon to pass through the stream.

Blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ, He never forgets His own. He is always with us but He is most clearly so when our last trouble is upon us. He is gone away into the hill country to make ready the house where we shall shortly be at home. But He will surely come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be, also. Therefore, be not afraid, for Jesus is with you. Did I hear you say—

*"Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul would stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor fear the terror as she passed"?*

Yes, Jesus will come and meet you and you shall forget that you are dying for the eternal life shall come streaming into your soul. The candle of your mortal existence shall expire without much note, for the glory of the Lord shall have risen upon you. The moans of expiring will be swallowed up in the harmonies of the celestial choirs.

But what next? The Israelites had a clear guidance afforded them. Read the fourth verse of the third chapter. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord went before them and a distance was set between them and the priests bearing the ark so that they might show reverence to it and might clearly see it as their guide. Thus said Joshua to them, "When you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall remove from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that you may know the way by which you must go: for you have not passed this way heretofore."

You have been through many experiences but to die will be a new one. You have traversed certain roads more than once or twice but this road is new to you and can only be trod once. Once and for all you must cross this Jordan—therefore the Divine Presence shall go before you and show you the way. The Lord will surely direct your steps. Do not begin saying to yourself, "What shall I do in sickness?" You will be guided by Him who bore our sorrows and infirmities. "But what shall I do when the pulse is faint and low and the death-sweat beads the brow?"

Jesus will show you what to do, for He also died. He knows what faintness, pain, thirst and fever mean, for He has felt the same. In death, Divine Grace will be magnified to the uttermost. Some children of God are always delighted at the idea that Christ may come and that they shall never die. I would be delighted if the Lord would come at once. But as to dying or not dying I do not care a jot. I think that of the two, it might be preferable to die, because those who die will have a kind of fellowship with Christ in His death which will not be experienced by those who never sleep in the tomb.

They that are alive and remain till His coming will miss the privilege of actually passing through the tomb as the Savior did, though even they must be changed. Brothers and Sisters, we traverse a road which has known the feet of the Crucified. Where should the dying members rest but with their dying Head? Why should I fear to sleep where Jesus went to bed? Did He not leave the sheets behind? He laid the napkin by itself that mourners might wipe their eyes. But He laid the grave clothes by themselves, that we might find in the grave a bed well furnished for our slumber. Oh, yes, you shall have Divine direction when the darkness gathers about you!

With Israel a forerunner led the way. Was not that a glorious spectacle when the priests took up the golden staves and with them lifted the ark upon their shoulders and then in stately march carried it down to the river? No Israelite had to tread a novel path, or to make a road for himself. Our great High Priest has gone down to the river before us and has touched its waters with the soles of His feet. "He has tasted death for every man." He went into the depths of death and slept three days in the heart of the earth. The Ark of the Covenant leads the way and we have only to follow.

Nor did the Forerunner quit the scene, for the Divine Presence remained. The priests went on till they came to the river bed and descended the hollow, going on to the very center of it. There they stopped till all the host had passed over. Hour after hour the priests remained with the holy burden on their shoulders—they stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan. First came the Reubenites and the half tribe of Manasseh marching by in military order and then all the

other tribes in succession. But the priests remained like statues, still bearing the ark, till the last Israelite had gone clean over Jordan.

There stood the emblem of a Covenant God, with its Mercy Seat, its sacred Law and the rod of government. The Lord Jesus will go before you as your great High Priest, your Propitiation and your Covenant. And He will abide with you in the last solemn article until you are safely on the shore of the land of promise. The feeblest and least of all the host shall climb the celestial hills on the other side and sing of everlasting love.

O Lord, my God, when my last hours shall come, let my eyes behold the Lord Jesus and the Covenant ordered in all things and sure—

*“When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death and Hell’s destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan’s side!
Songs of praises
I will ever give to You.”*

In consequence of the priests going down into the river the stream was dried up. Wonderful sight it must have been to behold the waters roll back, and stand in a congealed heap! No less so if, as some think, the torrent rolled back some thirty miles so that the Israelites could look right up a long roadway of dry river-bed. At the place where the great crystalline heap was piled up what an extraordinary wonder met the eye! Thus there was a broad passageway for the multitudes of Israel to go marching through and to effect the crossing rapidly.

Suppose, when you come to die, the Jordan should turn out to be no river at all. What if you should go over dry-shod? Why should it not be so? It has often been the case with the Lord’s chosen. Many make a joyful exit. A Sister used to be much troubled about dying. She knew where she was going but she dreaded the passage. She died in her sleep and in all probability never knew when she passed from the one state to the other till she found herself among the angels. Death is a pin’s prick to many.

How many sing themselves into glory! And some, who could not sing themselves, have made others do so while they forded the stream. Surely we misrepresent Death—he is to the Believer no skeleton form but the angel of the Lord come to gather the flowers of the Lord’s garden. Death has lost its terrors. “The sting of death is sin,” and that is forgiven. “The strength of sin is the Law,” and that is fulfilled. The black waters have failed, we pass over Jordan dry-shod.

Then notice, the people were very quick in crossing. Death is short work. According to the tenth verse of the fourth chapter, we read—“And the people hastened and passed over.” They did not hurry because they were afraid but they hastened because they were many and would desire be all over before the sun went down. They were eager to take possession of their country and confident in marching upon Jericho where the first of their foes were entrenched. They went through the river at a quick march and came upon the other side at the same rate. Of course it would take a considerable time with so vast a number to cross, but they were all moving on in an orderly and rapid manner.

After all, what is the act of death? “What?” cries one, “is there not a terrible amount of pain connected with death?” I answer—No. It is *life* that has the pain. Death is the end of all pain. You blame death for a disease of which he is the cure. You imagine a thing called death which does not really exist. In the twinkling of an eye we shall be up and away!—

*“One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks—
We scarce can say, ‘He’s gone,’
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the Throne.”*

Therefore, because you will hasten to pass over, you need not be alarmed at so short a trial, which will actually turn out to be no trial at all.

We read in the ninth verse of the fourth chapter, that the Israelites in traversing the Jordan left a memorial behind. Before they had quite passed out of the river bed, a number of chosen men took twelve of the great masses of rock which lay in the bottom of the river and piled them on end upon each other, to remain as a perpetual memorial that Israel had been there. You also will bear your testimony in departing—you will set up your memorial for your children after you and they shall say, “Our father died in sure and certain hope of being with Jesus.”

Perhaps some unconverted ones will be saved, after you are dead and gone, by your last testimony. Even if your deathbed should not be so bright as some, even its clouds may not be without their effect. A holy man had prayed much for his boys and girls but never saw them converted and this, with the troubles which grew out of their waywardness, made his last hours to be sadly clouded. For this cause he was sorely troubled, for he feared that it would confirm his sons in their unbelief.

But mark how the Lord worked! They buried their father and when they were met together, the eldest son turned to his brothers and remarked upon the sorrows which had weighed down their father at the last. "Brothers," said he, "if our father, who was so good a man, was so troubled in death, what will become of us when we die?" This most reasonable remark was the means of the conversion of the brothers. I would like to die in the dark if it would bring all my people to the Savior. Would not you? Apart from this, no doubt we shall set up stones in the midst of Jordan and witness that the Lord is a faithful God.

One thing more—they also raised a memorial on the other shore. Twelve men took from the river twelve stones and bore them on their shoulders before the ark. Can you not see them with their loads and the ark coming up after them from the riverbed? They piled these twelve stones upon each other in Canaan. You and I, when we get to Heaven, shall take our memorials with us and pile them up. We will make known to angels and principalities and powers the manifold wisdom and goodness of God to us in life and death.

I hope to begin to preach before long, not to this little congregation of six thousand but to countless multitudes of the redeemed in Heaven. Myriads of angels will come together to hear how God made a worm to thresh the mountains and helped a sinner to declare his love. You will stand with your groups about you and shining ones will linger to hear of your salvation, your trials, your joys and your achievements, or rather of what the Lord has worked for you and by you. And so God will be glorified and the other side of Jordan will be adorned with memorials to the measureless Grace of God.

You will have to turn this subject over in your meditations—I have only been able to give you the rough outline of a sermon. Read the whole narrative with care and may God bless it to you!

But, dear Friends, suppose you are not the people of God. You will have to die all the same. One of these times you also will have to pass over the torrent. What a different lot will be yours! You will have to leave your possessions behind. A sage said to a worldling, when he looked over his beautiful gardens, "These are the things that make it hard to die." You will have to leave everything which you call your own here. And you have no possessions over yonder. You have no Joshua to be your leader, no priest to be your forerunner, no God in covenant to hold the ground for you—you have, in fact, nothing to overcome the bitterness of death. The floods will carry you away. The torrents will hurry you to the dead sea.

Even now, when you are a little ill and in pain, you become dreadfully frightened. If in the land of peace wherein you trusted they have wearied you, what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? The dark stream will not be dry for you. Dare you take the dreadful plunge? Mark how the black current rushes down to that dreadful sea of death! Are you resolved to be swept down to that place of desolation?

The Lord have mercy upon you before you are drifted into the abode of the accursed! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. For he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." So says the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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