

UNTRODDEN WAYS

NO. 1057

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1872,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For you have not passed this way heretofore.”
 Joshua 3:4.*

THEY had come out of Egypt, they had gone up and down in the wilderness, but they had never before crossed the Jordan. It was new ground to them, a new difficulty, and a new series of events lay before them. As a fresh emergency had arisen, they had new orders direct from the Lord their leader, and Joshua and his officers were busy going throughout the host to communicate the divine directions. Beloved, when it shall be our lot to come into new positions we shall always obtain renewed guidance from the Spirit of God, if we will but wait upon Him for it and cry, “Show me your way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path.”

It is a most important matter with all of us who are believers in Christ that our faith should be in a thoroughly sound condition. It is not only grievous to ourselves, but dishonoring to God, when our faith falls to low ebb. To see a distrustful Christian is to see a man who is robbing God of His glory. Since the Holy Spirit so vehemently cries, “Comfort you, comfort you my people; speak comfortably to Jerusalem,” we may safely come to the conclusion that it is solemnly important that the saints should be comforted, and that for them to lose their comfort is a very grievous thing.

He glorifies God most whose faith staggers least. To maintain faith in full vigor is therefore a most important matter. Now, there is one very severe trial of faith which will happen to us all, and probably has already occurred to most of us. It is that of a change of trials, a passing into new territory, an entrance into novel circumstances. There is a conservative tendency about most of us, so that we build our nest and would fain live and die in it. Even if we are ill at ease in our present circumstances, this feeling—

*“Makes us rather bear the ills we have
 Than fly to others that we know not of.”*

Some spirits are given to change, and would almost leap from the pan into the fire, but others of us take root deeply and dread transplanting. We know the present, and we dread the unknown tomorrow. We are familiar with wilderness tribulations, but we shudder at the Jordan, which lies before us, and the giants, and the chariots of iron, which are yet to be encountered. We are not given to change, but are far more likely to settle upon our lees. We would fain abide where we are, and make no experiment of novel circumstances.

This principle is so strongly developed in certain minds, that they have even been afraid to learn truths which are new to them. From the milk diet of their spiritual infancy they are unwilling to be weaned, even though strong meat awaits them. They were not taught certain sublime truths in their early days, and therefore, they wish not to be instructed now. Like the aged man in Solomon's proverb, they are afraid of that which is high. The doctrine of election—they see how full of comfort it is, but not having heard it preached before, they feel afraid to hear it and accept it now. That “wine on the lees well refined” they will not drink, because heretofore it has not been poured into their cup.

We have known such persons to be suspicious of spiritual attainments, they have been so long victims of doubts and fears so long that they are now afraid to believe, as for full assurance, they are as much alarmed at it as if it were a crime rather than a grace, they regard it as dangerous presumption, and

put it far from them. Holy courage, brave reliance upon God, fervent zeal, confidence in prayer, unspeakable joy—these and such like blessings are to their timorous souls perilous things which had better be let alone. The high attainments which some of God's people have possessed of access to the throne of grace, of close communion with God, of insight into the secret of the Lord—these things our dear brethren have thought to be too good for them, too precious for present enjoyment, and they have even suspected that those who profess to enjoy them were likely to have been deceived, or were carried away by carnal excitement. Because they have not yet gathered the grapes of Eshcol they will not believe that such clusters exist, because they had not passed this way heretofore they doubt whether there is, indeed, a highway of holiness undisturbed by ravenous beasts.

The fear of that which is new is even more powerful when we are called to enter upon new labors. We become accustomed to our present service, which at first was difficult, continual exercise therein has made it easy to us, and therefore, when the Lord calls us to something else, we are afraid to venture. We feel as if we were quite competent for the work we are now doing, whereas we ought to know that even there, "Our sufficiency is of God," and we are not able even in that to do anything of ourselves, but we are afraid to sail upon seas which we have never navigated before, even though our unerring Pilot steers the ship in that direction. Like Jonah, we would sooner go to Tarshish than bear testimony for God in the streets of Nineveh, and like the man of God at Horeb, we complain that we stammer and are slow of speech, and we are ready to forego the honor of the Lord's service if we may escape its responsibilities. Ah, dear brethren, this is of the flesh, it is altogether contrary to the course of faith, yet how frequent a temptation it is with the people of God!

And, beloved, when this fear takes the shape of a foreboding of coming trial, it is even more common and crushing. We have sometimes to look forward to a period of sickness. Already it may be the disease has commenced to prey upon us, already consumption has weakened our strength by the way, or a more acutely painful disease is tearing at our vitals, and therefore we naturally expect that month after month our pain will greatly increase, and come to an alarming height. When death appears to be near, we persist in imagining that there is something terrible about departure out of this world unto the Father. Though tens of thousands of Christians have passed away with songs upon their lips, yet we are still afraid to ford the stream, though Jordan's banks have been made to ring ten thousand times with triumphant shouts, yet still we linger shivering there, and think it a dreadful thing to die. Forebodings, then, of pain, decay, and death, too often haunt us because we have not passed that way heretofore.

To many the fear of poverty is very bitter, they dread the infirmities of old age, they are dismayed in prospect of the desertion of friends, or the loss of beloved relatives in whom their heart is wrapped up. All these things, because as yet we are new to them, are apt to exercise an influence over our faith of the saddest kind. To help those who are so exercised shall be my aim this morning, hoping that the Lord may have sent by me comfort for His mourners, to make the faces of His afflicted to shine.

First, we shall utter certain words by way of *consolation*, then, others by way of *direction*, and lastly, a few more by way of exciting *expectation*.

I. First, let us consider thoughts suggestive of CONSOLATION. Let us turn first to the case of the children of Israel. They were certainly where they had never been heretofore. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, none of them had even passed the Red Sea. They were a fresh generation, born in the wilderness, so that they had not the recollections of the Red Sea as a preparation for their present circumstances. They saw before them now a river which was full to the brim, owing to the melting of the snows of Lebanon, it was both deep and broad, how were they to cross it? They had no apparatus, there was not a boat in all their tents.

Suppose they did cross it, there was a walled city within view frowning upon them on the other side, and behind the walls were many powerful and ferocious enemies. Suppose they should conquer the men of Jericho, the whole land was full of cities equally strong, "walled up to heaven" they said, and therefore, apparently impregnable. Their case was one that might naturally excite a thousand fears, but faith drove all fears away. God sent them His consoling word at the time when their faith was about to

be tried, and sustained by its power, they did not show the slightest sign of wishing to turn back, but they advanced straight on at God's bidding, and the Lord came to their rescue by drying up the river, casting down the walls of Jericho, routing their adversaries, and ultimately giving them the whole of the land from Dan to Beersheba as their inheritance. Now, are you in such a case as that? Are you just now where you have never been before as to trials? Are the demands upon your strength more heavy than at any former period of your career? Is there now a tax upon your faith such as never exercised it before? Come, then, let us talk together, and may the words be words of comfort.

Remember, whether your way in providence be new or old, *it is not a way of your own appointing*. A higher power than yours has led you to your present place. The people of Israel could have said, "We moved from this place to that, and from that to the next, but we never went without being led on by the fiery cloudy pillar, and here we are just at the brink of Jordan, but we did not come here in a willful spirit, but we were guided here, JEHOVAH Himself went before us." Feeling this they felt secure, and we may unite with them. Surely the Lord cannot make mistakes, eternal wisdom cannot err.

Your path, my dear brother, and the path of all the saints, has ever been directed by the unerring skill of the great Father, and therefore it must be right. Providence cannot have placed us in a wrong position, it must be right for us to be just where we are, ay, though the armed men were binding us to cast us into Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, heated seven times hotter than before, we are in the right place if God has brought us there. He has never erred yet, either in guiding a star in its orbit, or in directing the chaff from the winnowing's hand, and He cannot err in steering the course of one of His people. "Say you unto the righteous it shall be well with him," for "the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delights in his way." "My times are in your hand."

Desperate, therefore, though your position may appear to the eye of fear, yet faith knows that God has put you in the best possible position for you to be in at this moment. If it were better, taking everything into account, for you to be in heaven today than where you are, you would be there. God will do the best possible thing for His people. If it were better for them that there should be no devil and no death, there should be neither devil nor death, but to heaven should they be caught up at once. Infinite, unspeakable, boundless love arranges all our pathway, and infinite wisdom joins in the decree.

Note, again, *your present pathway is new to you, but it is not new to your God*. Everything that happens today, or will happen tomorrow, is new to us, because we can only live in the present moment, and even though we endeavor to project ourselves a little forward, yet it is generally in a wrong fashion, so that we do not see the truth of coming events, seeing not, but only imagining that we see. But all things are present to the eye of God.

Tomorrow—there is no such thing with JEHOVAH! Yesterday—there is no such thing! Past, present, future—these are human words! "NOW" is God's word, and it comprehends all. He who should look upon a country from a star, taking a bird's-eye view, would have all parts equally before him, while he who traverses it with a slow step leaves a portion of the territory behind him, and another part is yet before him. So is it with man. Creeping like an insect from leaf to leaf he leaves something behind, and has something yet before, but God looking down upon all things at once, serenely fills His own eternal "Now," and sees our ages pass.

The peculiar troubles of today, which are exercising you, dear child of God, your heavenly Father was cognizant of ten thousand years ago, and nothing about them comes upon Him by surprise. The Lord has no emergencies, He is never at the end of His resources. O beloved, it makes my heart smile while I mention such a notion, it is a childish folly, indeed, to think that the infinite God who fills all, and sustains all, can ever meet with anything that to Him shall be hard. Rest, then, O fellow pilgrim, in this confidence, that the new road to you is an old road to God.

Moreover, there is one view of this thought which ought to be very encouraging to the sorrowful, namely, that He who is at your Father's side, the Man of love, the Crucified, has, in His practical sympathy with you, actually walked this pathway of yours. That God has seen it is consoling, but that Christ has trodden it is richest comfort!—

***“In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows bears His part.”***

You may see all along the way the blood-stained footsteps of Him who gave His feet to the nails. Right down to Jordan’s brink, and through the flood, and up the hither shore, there are the marks of the goings of Him who loved the sons of men and bore their sorrows in His own person for their sakes. Courage, my brethren, where Jesus has been we may go. He leads us through no darker places than He went through before, and His having gone through them has sown them with light. We thought them novel places of trial, but they are no longer so since our covenant head has traversed them.

Remember, also, *the trials which seem new to us are not new to God’s people*. Joshua said to the tribes, “You have not passed this way heretofore,” but their forefathers had gone through the Red Sea, which was much the same thing, and perhaps on a greater scale still. Do not, therefore, say or imagine that your woes are peculiar. Others have suffered as much as you are enduring. Ask your fathers, the elders of the Christian church, whether these griefs of yours are new, and they will smile and tell you that they have done business on the same deep waters, and that the waves and billows which go over you have also covered their heads. Dream not that a strange thing has happened unto you. If it be strange to you it is only to you strange, for the rest of God’s saints have suffered the same.

But suppose our position should be new, the labor new, the affliction new, *it is no sort of reason why it should be any more dangerous*. It is folly to be alarmed at new things because they are new. There may be less danger, my dear brother, after all, in the trial you dread than in that which you are bearing today. You dread poverty, do you? It is an evil, but it may not be such an evil as that which at this present moment bows your spirit down. Care to keep abundance is more gnawing to the heart than the scantiness of penury. Poverty in the experience of God’s people has proved to be an evil in the midst of which men are capable of great rejoicing. You tremble at approaching sickness. But peradventure there will come with the sickness such joy unspeakable to your soul, that the spiritual joy will far outweigh the increased bodily infirmity. It is clear, then, that a change is not always for the worse, and altered circumstances do not necessarily involve more burdens. Your trial is new, but not therefore the more perilous. Go on, and be not alarmed.

And suppose that being new, it were dangerous, one thing is very clear, namely, *that fear will not diminish the danger*. To fret, and worry, and mistrust, will that prepare you for what is coming? Will it help you to lie on the sick bed and be patient, if you now begin to fret because you are going to be bed-ridden? Will it aid you to die to begin this day to “Feel a thousand deaths in fearing one?” No, brother, if the worst comes to the worst, nothing can sharpen your sword so well for battle as faith in the ever-living God. What if I must weep tomorrow, yet will I sing today, and perhaps my song will gather such force, that some of its stanzas will overleap to tomorrow, and I may sweeten my sighs with my psalms. While we may, let us rejoice in the Lord, and not begin to exercise ourselves about unborn troubles.

I saw in the monastery of the monks of La Trappe a few days ago, a grave which they had dug in their garden, not that any one of them was dead, but it was a profitable and amusing exercise to take a turn at digging the grave of some friend who might die. A happy family, truly, in which the brothers have a grave in readiness for the next who shall depart. I would like to have filled the hole up at once, for surely it is time enough to dig graves when our friends are dead, and even so it is time enough to prepare for troubles when troubles come. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” is the voice of inspiration. Let us not import from tomorrow the miseries which God has mercifully screened us from today.

Further considerations may also console us. *Hitherto and up to this moment we have found our God to be faithful to us*. These present crosses which are now upon our shoulders, we say we would rather always bear them than have new crosses, but is this wise? Do you not recollect when these very crosses were themselves new? They fit our shoulders now, somehow or other we have adapted our back to the burden, or God has adapted the burden to the back, and we do not like changing the load, though a few

years ago we were just as reluctant to bear it. Our present crosses were new once, and God gave us strength to carry them. Today's grief will only be new for today and for a little time to come, it will soon grow old if we live long enough, and we shall become as used to the new trial as to the old.

As today we have learned to wing our way joyously under the broiling sun of summer, so by and by we shall sit upon the bare bough in the desolate winter and cheerfully sing of the coming of spring. Press on, press on, you warriors of the cross, the new foes shall be as the old. The novelty of sorrow is but of the hour, the hour will wear it out as it wears out itself, and we shall receive strength to bear up under all.

Moreover, beloved friends, should we become distrustful while passing by a way which we have never trodden before, if we recollected *that progress implies a change of difficulties and trials?* Who wants to be like a blind horse going round a mill forever and ever, feeling the lash of the same whip at the same place, and dragging the same machinery round without advancing? No, let us advance. And what if in going on we meet with sterner trials? then so let it be, for we shall receive richer grace. Towards the heaven of God we vehemently desire to make progress by His grace. The trials of manhood are not at all the same as those of a child. There are diseases of childhood from which we are quite free when we come to manhood, and there are difficulties and trials both of the body and of the mind which will come upon us in riper years which children know not, yet we are very glad to get out of childhood and into manhood. When a stroke means knighthood no one wishes to avoid it, and if trial brings higher degrees of grace who desires to shirk it?

Perhaps I would weary you were I to continue much longer in this strain, but let me remind you that if there come new trials; *they generally end the old ones.* It is quite certain that if we are troubled with a west wind, if a rough east wind should blow, we shall not be troubled with the west wind any longer. Heat and cold will not both torment us at the same moment. When the children of Israel were in the desert they had one set of trials, there was the hot sand beneath their feet, and the Amalekites pursuing them and attacking them, and therefore, at any rate whatever there might be in Canaan, they would be out of the desert and away from desert inconveniences.

If they had the Gergashites to fight with there would be no Amalekites. So there is something of gain to be set over against any possible loss. Let every child of God recollect that. When the Lord calls us to a change of position, and brings out a new burden, He removes the older load. We shall not tomorrow be pressed with the weight of today. I do not know what my trials may be seven years from now, but I do know that the trials of the month of June, 1872, will not then disturb me. When we bow beneath the infirmities of age, we may rest assured that we shall not be annoyed by the temptations of boyhood, nor molested by the vexations of middle life. In advancing, there are prospects of gain as well as of loss.

Moreover, although we have not passed this way heretofore, *the path runs in the right direction.* The children of Israel had their faces set towards the Promised Land. If they had been called to cross a Jordan which led them into the bondage of Egypt, there would have been something to distress them, but they were traveling to the land of brooks and rivers, which flowed with milk and honey. Men of faith among them would say one to another, "We pitched our tent each night all through the wilderness a day's march nearer to our rest, and now there is only one more day between us and the land of promise, therefore let us not fear." How brave they must have felt when Canaan was just in view. Courage, brothers and sisters! The way may be rough to us, but it is the King's highway, leading to the New Jerusalem—

*"Yet the dear path to Thine abode
Lies through this horrid land,
Lord, we would keep the heavenly road,
And run at Thy command.
Our souls shall tread the desert through
With undiverted feet,
And faith and flaming zeal subdue
The terrors that we meet.*

*Our journey is a thorny maze,
But we march upward still;
Forget the troubles of the way,
And reach at Zion's hill."*

II. In the second place a few sentences of DIRECTION.

Wherewithal shall a man be guided when he comes to a way which he has not passed heretofore? When our way is devoid of familiar footprints, what shall we do?

The first direction is this, *be most concerned to hear the word of the Lord and obey it.* Notice that this chapter seems taken up with, "The LORD said unto Joshua," and "Joshua said unto the people of Israel." It must have struck you in reading it that it is full of commands. The only details are the taking up of the stones of memorial, heaping them on the shore, and the setting up of other stones in the Jordan, otherwise, all the verses are repeated commands from the Lord, and the record of the nation's obedience thereto, from which we may gather that in time of trouble our chief inquiry ought not to be—"How should we get through this?" but "What is our duty while we are in it?" "How would God have us act under these circumstances?" Depend upon it there is no temptation more perilous than that of supposing that self-preservation screens us from duty, and that obedience may be suspended while we provide for ourselves. Remember the words of the hymn—

"'Tis mine to obey; 'tis His to provide."

Would you take the Lord's work into your own hands? You cannot do it. Attend to your own. If you were at this very moment in the worst trouble that ever befell a son of Adam, I do not believe wiser advice could be given to you than this, "Trust in the LORD and do good, so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." Be it yours to hear what God the Lord shall speak, and to do what He bids you, all will come right then. The chief point in every dilemma is to wait till you hear the Master's voice.

The next direction is, *distinctly recognize the presence of the covenant God of Israel with you.* The ark which went before the people, had three-fourths of a mile of distance between it and the people, in order that they might see it, because had they been nearer to it the front rank might have seen it, but the rest would not, but now there was a space put between it and the people that they all might see it before them as they went on their march. We never travel so sweetly over the rough ways of this life as when we see that God, the living God, the God of the covenant, the God of the mercy seat, the God of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the God of the reconciliation by blood, is with us, and fulfilling His promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Is God with us? What more do we want?

Omniscience, omnipotence, and infinite love, are all these leading the van? Then we will not fear to follow, though it were into Hades itself, for if JEHOVAH led the way His saints would be safe even there. Treasure up that direction. Do not think so much of the presence of friends in trouble as the presence of God in trouble. "Fear not"—what is the next word?—"I am with you: be not dismayed."—what is the next sentence? "I am your God." The richest consolation you can have is that which is derived from the presence of the Lord God of the covenant.

Note the third direction. *Dismiss from your soul the anxiety which arises from the idea that you are the keeper of the divine life within your soul.* "Strange direction," you say. Yes, but let me explain it. When the children of Israel marched through the wilderness some tribes were before and some were behind the ark, as if they were guarding it, but on this occasion the ark went far ahead of them, as though God had said, "You, My people, are no protection to Me; I guard you." Now in the time of danger the priests who carry the ark advance into the very teeth of the enemy, and into the bed of the Jordan, and there they stand, as though the eternal God threw down the gauntlet to all the hosts of Canaan and said, "Come and contest it with Me if you can. I have left My people behind, I alone will meet you, I have come up alone, unattended, and I defy you all."

It will often happen that in the time of trouble our worst fear is this, "I am so afraid that I will not be able to preserve the grace of God in my heart." Get rid of that, dear brother, for the right question is not will you preserve the grace of God? but will the grace of God preserve you? Man, be assured of this, that God's grace will take care of him upon whom it lights. There may be a sense in which we are to preserve the divine life, for there is a watchfulness which each man must render to his own soul, but far higher, and above that, is the truth that the Lord is our keeper, the Lord is our shield upon our right hand. The Lord himself will go before you; he shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings shall you trust, and instead of saying in such a trial, "Shall I be able to keep the grace I have?" rather say, "I have received the grace of God, and it will sustain me, and make me more than conqueror."

As further directions let me briefly say, beloved, if you are now about to enter into a great trouble, *do not hurry*; make no rash haste. We often, when we are afraid of a thing, dash into it like a moth dazzled by the candle's flame. We become so disturbed in our minds that we do not act wisely and prudently, but fall into that haste which brings no good speed. The children of Israel did not rush pell-mell to Jordan to swim across, but they waited while the priests went on before, and tarried till the ark stood still in the midst of Jordan. Everything was done deliberately. Ask grace to do the same. Be calm. If the grace of God does not make us calm in the time of peril and suffering, we have some reason to question whether it is healthily operating upon our spirits at all.

But next, while you do not hurry, *do not hesitate*. Not one man of all the tribes said, "I must wait and see others cross, and know whether the road is really open." At the moment the trumpets sounded the advance they all went on, asking no questions. A brave man that first priest must have been who went right up to the brink of Jordan and put down his foot. It must have been a noble sight to see the water suddenly roll right away in curling waves till it made a great wall of sparkling crystal up towards the right. He was a brave man who stepped there first and passed along the novel way which God had newly fashioned. His was the first foot which had trodden the bottom of that ancient river, the river Jordan. Be brave, also, my dear brother, and go straight on, though it were a river of fire instead of water. If JEHOVAH bids you the way is right, hesitate not.

There is one direction which we must not omit, because it is put by itself for special observance—it is this, "*sanctify yourselves*." Whenever we are in new trials a voice speaks out of them, saying, "Sanctify yourselves." I suppose the Israelites washed themselves with water and practiced the ceremonial rights which made them clean, so the child of God should come afresh in time of trouble to the precious blood of Christ. He should also ask for grace that he may purge out the old leaven. Our trials are not punishments, for all the punishment of sin was laid on Christ, and God will not punish us for whom Jesus was a substitute, but they are sent as paternal chastisements, and also as loving hints and indications to us that there is something in us to be put away.

What is the voice of your present trial, beloved? What is the voice of the trial that you are dreading? I cannot interpret its special note, but I know that its general meaning is this, "Sanctify yourselves." Do we expect soon to be laid aside from active service? Then let us work for Jesus while we can. Do we reckon upon a speedy death? Then let us with both hands serve the Master in the vineyard while life remains in us. May we be more than ever set apart unto God. If we expect poverty or desertion of men, we may feel that the Lord is weaning us from the poor dainties of earth, that He may fill us with the ineffable delights of heaven. "Sanctify yourselves." That is the voice of God to every man who is led by a way which he has not passed heretofore.

III. Lastly, a few sentences by way of exciting EXPECTATION.

Before us rolls this river, full to its brim. Beyond the river, contention and strife await us, let us lift up our hearts to God and trust Him, and what shall then happen? Why, first, *we shall discern the presence of the living God*. Did you notice in this chapter how Joshua puts it in the tenth verse? "Hereby shall you know that the living God is among you." The men of this world have no living God. They will hardly endure the name of God, they talk of *nature*, the forces of nature, the laws of nature, and so on. They have banished the Lord from their philosophy.

I am afraid there are some professing Christians with whom things go so smoothly, that they seldom recognize the hand of the living God. Now, O tried believer, that you are coming into a new trouble, shall you know that there is a God, a God who acts, a God who interposes for His people, and actually works for them. We have not a God who will hear and then refuse to put out His hand to help us, who will look upon us, but will not come to our succor. You might have continued in your present circumstances without discovering what you know now, namely, that the Lord whom you serve will deliver you with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. Anything which gives us an opportunity to see our God is worth having. Even the light of the fiery furnace, if no other light can reveal that fourth who is like the Son of God, is a precious light. It is worth while treading the blazing coals to have a visit and a sight of that mysterious but beloved personage. Thank God that trouble is coming, for now, as through a glass, shall you behold the glory of the Lord.

What next will happen? Why, in all probability *the difficulty in your way will cease to be*; for while the children of Israel saw the living God, they also saw a totally new and wonderful phenomenon. The Red Sea, it is true, had been dried up, but that generation had not seen it. It was a new thing to them when the river Jordan was made dry for them to march through it.

I have seen in my short life some very singular and remarkable things, but I cannot now narrate them. I have often heard persons say, in reading "*Huntington's Bank of Faith*," that it was a Bank of Nonsense. I do not believe it. I think there is much in that, that any Christian man could have written, and I believe that if many of us were to detail our experiences, they would be quite as wonderful, and that others would say of them, "We cannot receive it, there must be some coloring about it," and the writings of novelists are not one half as interesting as the actual lives of Christians would be, if they were written out at length. God does interfere in ways which could not have been prognosticated by those who best understand the science of probabilities. You do not know what is going to happen, a trouble is coming, it will come, but there will come with it a mercy which will swallow it up. "The flood," say you, "the flood is before me, it overflows its banks." It is there and yet it is not there, for lo, when you shall come to it, it shall have disappeared—

***"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."***

It has been well up till now, it shall be well to the end. You have not a changing God to deal with, remember that. Shall the God of our childhood, who nursed us when we could not help ourselves, leave us when we come to second childhood? God forbid. Shall He who loved us before the world was leave us when we come into peril? It cannot be. "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you." Rest assured of this that God has resources you have never dreamed of and difficulties shall only put you into a position to see new displays of JEHOVAH'S power and grace. God flings down the challenge every day to Satan and to sin, and says, "Here is My child; I put him in a new position today; see if you can overcome him now." Tomorrow God will issue the same challenge, and so on to the end.

Perhaps this new trouble has come because Satan has said, "Put forth now Your hand and touch his bone, and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face," But God is saying, "Try him, try him," only with this view, that He may get glory by causing our weakness to overcome all the strength of hell through grace divine.

Is this all that we have to expect? No, beloved, we shall see such deliverances that *we shall be prepared for future trials*. Observe this, Joshua said, "Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites." Sometimes a trouble when we are marvelously brought through it, becomes a kind of stock-in-trade for

us, we look back upon it when the next affliction comes, and we say, “No, I am not afraid, the God who helped me on that occasion can help me now.”

How we may bless God for great afflictions, for now all that are coming will be little troubles in comparison. He has brought us through the Jordan. Come on, you Hivites! Come on, you Jebusites! Come on, you Gergashites, behold how God has given you as driven stubble to our bow, we will drive you before us, and say destroy them, for He who divides the Jordan is a God with whom nothing is impossible. Be glad then, beloved if the Lord strangely exercises you, He is trying your muscles and bracing them up for greater feats, as sacred athletes, you shall do marvelously in the presence of that crowd of witnesses who compass you about. Rejoice and be glad that thus the Lord prepares you more fully to glorify His name.

Lastly, and this is best of all, and will please the children of God most—all that is coming to you *will magnify Jesus in your eyes*. On that day when Israel went through the river God began to magnify Joshua, and oh, when we pass through deep waters of affliction, how the Lord magnifies His Son Jesus in our souls! Jesus is very dear to every child of God, but to the most tried He is the most precious. You who have had Him with you when everyone else has left you, know what a dear friend He is, you who have been nursed by Him when your bones have come through your skin, know what a beloved physician He is, you who have been succored, and fed, and led, and guided by Him when all around has been a wilderness to you, know what a good shepherd He is, and you who have been upon the brink of death and have seen all things melt away, know how blessedly He is immortality and life, and what a fullness dwells in Him sufficient to fill the soul when all created joys are gone.

O Lord God, if it will magnify Jesus do what You will with Your people. Not one of us would flinch and try to make provision for the flesh if Jesus can be made great. For any other reason less than this we would not say as much, but for Jesu’s glory, for the magnifying of His name, if only You will give us strength we will not dread martyrdom though it is by fire. Anything for Jesus, everything for Jesus. Does not your heart say so, my brother? I know it does if you are loyal to your Savior, and therefore, today you will shoulder the new cross, you will grasp the fresh weapons of the changed warfare, you will take up the new tools in a fresh corner of the vineyard, though “you have not gone this way heretofore.” If it be for Jesus’ honor for us to advance, who desires to loiter? “Forward,” then, is the message of today to all the soldiers of Christ. Great Joshua, lead you the way! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOSHUA 3, 4.

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