

A way hitherto unknown

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[0 : 00] Now resuming our studies in the book of Joshua, I want to turn with you tonight to words we'll find in verse 4. Not that we will confine ourselves to an exposition of these words, but look at them in their context.

Verse 4, and at the end of the verse, For ye have not passed this way here to four. We have not passed this way here to four.

We have in this chapter one of the most interesting events in the whole history of Israel. Their history of course throughout has been a most interesting study.

We've followed them from Egypt right through the 40 years of the wilderness journey. We've seen the times of sorrow, times of joy, times of trial, times of victory, times of defeat.

We've heard their murmuring. And we've seen the faithfulness of Moses, the patience of Moses.

And the wonderful works of God manifested towards his own people over these years.

[1 : 14] Now we have arrived on the very banks of the River Jordan. The promised land is stretched out before them. That land which was the object of their hope right through all their journeys.

They were always waiting for the day when they would reach this point in their history. This meant of course the end of their journeys and the beginning of a new life.

Yet there was still one obstacle to be overcome. There were all these obstacles that we noticed together in their wilderness journeys. And here they are now on the very banks of the Jordan.

But the waters of Jordan had to be crossed. And these circumstances of course were very new to them. Although they had great experiences.

And although they had learnt much of the Lord's faithfulness and the Lord's goodness. There was here a new experience. And you know friends, this is what is true in the life of faith.

[2 : 21] His mercies are new every morning. The life of faith is one lived daily in newness. There is a newness in one sense in every moment of our lives as we go on.

But there are particular experiences that are ours on life's way. That stand out if you like. And we are very conscious of the newness of what is happening.

The uniqueness if you like. Of what is happening to us. It is true that even as believers at times we can feel that things are pretty mundane unless we are careful.

We shouldn't feel that way. But we do at times. And yet then God comes. Perhaps with a trial. Perhaps with some particular problem.

Perhaps with a visitation and providence that brings us along. Physically and mentally. Or perhaps he comes so unexpectedly with a visitation of joyous fellowship with himself.

[3 : 28] And each time he comes. In whatsoever way he comes. There is something new about it all. Because there is nothing stale if you like about God. He is ever new.

And when he blesses. He blesses with newness of life. Friends this is what happens when he blesses the soul initially. When he calls out of darkness into life.

He says behold I make all things new. And he makes new men in Christ. Those who have adieu with his enemies. And who were under the power of sin.

And with new creatures in Christ. They are brought out of darkness into life. There is a new creation. Created a new in Christ Jesus. And so there is a new life.

There is a new volition if you like. In their lives. There is a new purpose. There is a new end in view. Oh it is wonderful to be in Christ my friend. Let us all ask ourselves tonight.

[4 : 29] Do we know anything. Of this experience of being. A new creature in Christ. And being renewed every day. Day by day in the inward man. Having renewed experiences.

Of God in our lives. Or are we living just on that mundane plane. Where each day we get up. Well we just expect the same thing.

Go to work. Come back home at night. Watch television for a while. Go out for a night. Go out for a meal. Come back home. Then it's another week over. Same thing again. Monday morning.

Back to work. With very little. As it were. of true and real satisfaction. real satisfaction. Derived for and from anything that we do. How different it is.

When we are in the hand of God. And when God is leading us. When God is guiding us. When we have God as our refuge and our strength. When we know the newness that is found in fellowship with him.

[5 : 27] We can expect anything. We should be waiting expectantly upon the Lord. And upon his work. To be performed in ourselves.

And in others. And in the world around us. Remember the psalmist says, Thy wait for God. My soul doth wait. More than thee that for morning was. My soul waits for the Lord.

What was he waiting for? He was waiting for a manifestation of the power of God. In his own life. In the lives of others. He knew his God was alive. Friends.

This is what is true of our God. He is the living God. Christ lives. And because he lives. We live. And shall live. Well this was the message of God.

To the people of God at this time. You have not passed this way. Here to forth. This is a new experience for you. And this is a new experience for ourselves. There are so many ways.

[6 : 22] In which we could apply this truth. To ourselves. On life's way. The circumstances they had at that moment. Were quite new to them. They were. For example.

Their nearness to the land of promise. Standing down in the banks of the river. They had not passed indeed. That way. Before. We have not passed.

This way before. We are here tonight. In circumstances. That were never ours before. Because the past is over.

And this is a new time. The moment that is ours now. In you. And God is speaking to us. At this moment.

In mercy. As he spoke. To the Israelites. On this very occasion. Let us notice then. That here. The people of God.

[7 : 18] Had a new experience. Now. All God's people. Are in his hands. Our times. Are in his hands. Now.

Some of God's people. Are comparatively free. From trials. There are some Christians. There are some Christians. Who know very little of trials. That doesn't make them less. Christian.

There are others. Who are. Often in deep water. Immersed. If you like. In the depths. The God's billows. Are going over them. God has a purpose in that.

But it is true of all of us. That. God takes us. As individuals. Along. A particular. Way. That is suited to us.

He knows us. He knows our frame. He knows our temperament. He knows how much we can. Bear of trial. He knows the strength. Or weakness.

[8 : 16] Of our faith. And so on. And so he brings us along. His own way. According to his. His own purpose and wills.

Now God's people were here. Entering on a way. That was new and mysterious. And it may be. I don't know. That may be some of God's people. Among ourselves tonight here. Who are experiencing.

In a very real sense. That they are. In a new way. That is. Something new. In their lives. That is mysterious. To them.

And is a problem to them. Perhaps there is someone here tonight. Who has never as it were. Been in the depths before. And it may have been. That you have criticized.

Those who were often in the depths. I remember very well myself. I remember very well myself. When having not had been in much depth of trouble or trial.

[9 : 13] I used to question. The experience of those who were. That is no longer so. We can be so wrong. We can be so wrong.

My friends. You see. It may be because we have had things comparatively easy. That we can become very spiritually proud. As it were. And not recognize.

The hand of God. In the lives of others. Blessing them in the depths. Maturing them in the depths. And it may be that God has to put us.

As he really has. Through such experiences. That we may sympathize. That we may understand. Maybe some trial that is yours tonight.

That was never yours before. There may be some sense of sin. That heather too was unknown to you. You no longer. Are so prone to point the finger as you were.

[10:10] There. Aren't we all prone to do that. Unless God in his mercy keeps us. Conscious. Of our own weakness. And when he does that.

What we say is. There go I but for the grace of God. Lord who could stand. If thou shouldst mark iniquity. None of us could my friends. It may be that someone here tonight.

Is conscious of failure. And yet is commanded to obey. There's a conundrum for you if you like. The word of God.

Which is true. Which is holy. And demands our obedience. Is pressing in upon us as it were. And conscious of our failure. In the past.

We have to press on to do the will of God. To fulfill his word. And that may be something that you're experiencing. It may be that you hoped to find peace.

[11:13] And what have you found? Greater trial. Dis-peace instead of peace. Unrest. Our friend.

Remember we are all in God's hand. And he knows what is best for us. And let us. If it be that we are being tried as never before. Let us remember.

What the man of God said. Though he slay me. Yet will I trust in him. And that's faith. That is faith. Does it matter what God has for us.

If he be with us. Does it matter what the trial may be. And as I say. As I utter these words. I realize. There is a danger of our forgetting.

What that may involve for any of us. But at the same time. As we look in faith to the God. Whose word we have. We know. That he causes all things to work together.

[12:12] To the good of those who love God. All things working to our good. The difficulties. As well as. The joys. The sorrows with the joys.

All things work together. To our good. And we know that Jordan is very often used as a. An illustration of death. Passing over Jordan into the promised land.

And it may be. That someone here. Is faced with the reality of death. As never before. The reality of the.

The fearfulness. Of passing over if you like. From life. This life. Into the. Into the next.

The river Jordan. In full spate. Was a trial. Of the faith. Of God's people of old.

[13:10] And it may be. That God. Has brought you and me. To face. The reality of death. Are you here tonight? And that is true of you. Perhaps you're unconverted.

And it has never really come home to you. That you must die. Oh yes it has. But you've pushed it out of your mind. But tonight. You know. That yes.

You must die. And it's an awful thing to fall into the hands. Of the living God. If you were to die tonight. What is your hope? What will you do in the swellings of Jordan my friend?

This is the question Jeremiah puts. Is it not Jeremiah? And that is a fearful thing. To face the reality of death.

Without the knowledge of God in Christ. And I would beseech you tonight. If this is something that you are experiencing.

[14:13] That you will turn. Even now. To the revelation God has given. Of his love and mercy in Jesus Christ. Lay hold of him. Who says I came. That they might have life. And have it more abundantly.

He is the one who conquered death. And the grave for his people. And through faith in him.

Through looking to him. And believing in him. We can say. Oh death.

Where is thy sting? Oh grave. Where is thy victim? Where are the terrors of Jordan? As we look to Jesus Christ. And the fact that he died for us. He went to the grave for us. He rose again.

He lives evermore. That is our hope. As we face. The reality. Death. That Christ has conquered death.

He has conquered the grave. He lives. And though we should pass through the valley of the shadow of death. We need fear no evil.

[15:07] For thou art with us. That is faith. Do you have this faith? Rest not until you do my friends. Rest not until you can face life and death.

And say I am not afraid. Why should I be? Because my lives are hid with Christ in God. He that is found in the secret place of the most high. Who sang together there.

Or that as we sing these psalms. We would stop to think what we are singing. How beautiful that psalm 91 is. We need not be afraid for terror of the night.

Nor for the arrow that will fly by day while it is light. His faithfulness. Shall be a shield and a buckler to us. And it may be that there is a believer here tonight.

And God. Because he is God. Has brought the reality of death very clear. Or close to you. And as you face the reality of it.

[16:09] You realize what a lonely moment that is going to be. Humanly speaking. What a dark moment that is going to be. But that is only humanly speaking.

My believing friend. You must not look at the human side altogether. Yes. You must look at that. But in faith. Lay hold of the promises of God. In one sense.

We shall be alone there. But in another sense. We are not going to be alone. Because Christ is going to be with us then. I will never leave you. Nor forsake you. As we pass through the waters. He will be with us. As we pass through the fires. He will not forsake us. I spoke of darkness. How can it be dark.

If he who says I am the light of the world. Be present there. He will lighten our darkness for us. And we shall enter into rest. I don't know.

[17:17] But it may be that there are some here entering into what was hitherto. Without the bounds of their experience. And indeed God is saying you have not passed this way heretofore.

Which brings me to my second point. Which is this. Did we notice there was here a need for preparation? There was a need for preparation.

And Joshua said unto the people. Sanctify yourselves. For tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. And Joshua speak unto the priests saying.

Take up the ark of the covenant. And pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant. And went before the people. You will notice. As we consider this need for preparation. How Joshua himself prepared. For the crossing. Without hesitation. Immediately after the spies returned. It would seem he began. To prepare. For the crossing.

[18:28] He. Acted in faith. We see this man of God. Taking over. Where Moses had left off. According to the command of God. Conscious of his own inadequacies.

Conscious of his own limitations. Nevertheless. Knowing. The limitless power of God. He begins to act. And prepare. For this wonderful.

Victory. If you like. In crossing over the Jordan. You will notice. That as he was confronted. With this great obstacle.

And great difficulty. Which was. The Jordan in full spate. Because it was the time. Of the. Of the. Of harvest. And the river.

Was full to its brim. As he. Was confronted. With the same. He didn't ask time. To allow for the Jordan. As it were. To subside.

[19:25] And then act. When things would be easier. And we inclined to do that. And we inclined to pray. When a difficulty arises. Lord. Give me time.

Lord. Help me. For a time. And then maybe. Tomorrow or next week. Things will be easier. No. We must act now. This is what Joshua does. The problem is there.

And it's not going to go away. Indeed. It mustn't. Because God. Is going to. Prove. Not only to Joshua. And to the Israelites. But to his very enemies.

That he is God. And that's what we must remember. When we're called. To serve him. When we're called. In faith. To go on. Against all opposition. And obstacles.

It's to the glory of God. God. This is what's wrong with us today. We are so. Prove. To think of ourselves. And our own circumstances. And what will happen to us.

[20:20] And what will so and so say. And so never ask. What we should be concerned about. Is the glory of God. This is our chief end in life. The glory of God. And the enjoyment of him forever.

And we enjoy so little of God. Because we glorify him so little. He didn't. On the other hand. Asked for a different route.

In order to avoid. The difficulty. And the enemy. That was immediately. Awaiting him. In the city of Jericho. That was just across the water. Oh no.

Joshua is a man of faith. And in faith. He prepares for battle. Without argument. Without delay. He prepares. To meet. The difficulty. And the enemy. And so the officers commanded.

The ark. Be kept in view. That is what happens next. The people are told that. The ark of the covenant.

[21 : 19] Is to be kept in view. There was to be a space. Between the ark. And the people. Now we may ask. Why was it. That this.

Space. Between the ark. And the people. Was commanded. It wasn't just by chance. That this happened. God commanded. That it should be so. Well there was one. Specific reason.

And it was this. That the people. Would see. The ark. And we'll notice that. As we go on. In a moment. But there was also. This in it. That. As the people.

Would see the ark. They would also recognize. The fact. That the ark. Was going before them. In other words. That God. Was going before them.

Because. The ark. Was the symbol. Of God's presence. With them. And of course. It also. Emphasized the sacredness.

[22 : 12] Of the ark. That it had to be separate. If you like. From the people. So. There was this. Arrangement. For what was. To be done. Next day.

Then. There was the command. To the people. To cross the Jordan. Joshua tells them. You must. Sanctify yourselves. You must.

Be sanctified. There is no. Crossing of the Jordan. Without. Sanctification. And friends. I could apply that. First of all.

To the fact. Of our. Taking Jordan again. As. As death. As so many do. And I'm not going to. Dwell too much. Upon that. This evening. But just taking it. In passing.

In that way. We know. That it is written. That without holiness. No man shall see the Lord. Nothing shall enter heaven. That defile it. Now.

[23 : 06] God's people know that. And we. We sense. Our own unholiness. Our own unpreparedness. The most sanctified. Here tonight. Feels that.

God. And this is one of the great fears. That confronts. The saint. As. He or she. Approaches the end. Of their pilgrimage. In this world.

It's not so much. Death itself. There has. As the fact. That they feel so unprepared. For that place. Where there is nothing. But God. In his holiness. In his beauty. In his perfections.

So. From the word of God. The saint of God. Learns the necessity.

The importance. Learns that it is imperative. That they be sanctified. But it may be. That there are some people. Here tonight. I don't know. Who are of the opinion.

[23 : 59] That they're going to get. To heaven. Somehow. Rather. Sometimes. Some way. And yet. God tells us. That there is nothing.

In heaven. But holiness. And perfection. How can we go. Into such a place. My friends.

Unprepared. This is why. It's so necessary. For us to believe.

Now. And seek. The grace of God. To prepare us. For that place. We not only need. To be justified.

We need to be sanctified. We not only need. To be acceptable.

To God. But we need. To be prepared. By God. To enter that place. Because. Where you and I.

Able to enter in. Without sanctification. That place. Where God dwells.

In his holiness. Would be. The most uncomfortable. Place imaginable. To us. We couldn't abide.

His presence. Who shall abide. His presence. Only the sanctified.

[24 : 54] My friends. That's why I. Exhort you tonight. To seek the Lord. Seek to be prepared. For heaven. Because we'll soon. Leave this world. And go to meet God.

Who is holy. Who is just. Who is true. Sanctify. Yourselves. Ah. But one argues. We can't sanctify ourselves.

That's the work of God's grace. Those of us. Who glory in the doctrines. Of. Calvinism.

For lack of a better word. Are inclined. Perhaps. To overstep ourselves. There a bit. The Arminian. On the other hand. He emphasizes. That he's going to do. Everything himself.

There's a happy. In between. State. As it were. Condition. Of mind. And soul. That is so important.

Yes. God sanctifies us. But God's word. Again and again. Emphasizes.

[25 : 49] The importance of. You and I. Sanctifying ourselves. Come out. From among them. And be separate. It. Abstain from all manner. Of evil.

Shun that. Which is offensive to God. Live in a manner. That is pleasing to God. We cannot excuse. Any form of sin. In the lives of any of us.

We must flee from it. As that which is offensive to God. And detrimental to our own. Spiritual welfare. We must see it as that. Which is opposed to God. In our own sanctification.

We must see it as that. Which is damaging. And ruinous to us. And we must seek. For that. And cleave to that. Which is good. Have your affections. As for the things. That are above.

Where Christ is. You didn't expect. To be sanctified. If you are wallowing. In the filth of this world. You didn't expect. To be sanctified. If your mind is preoccupied. With worldly things.

[26 : 46] Continually. And you needn't be surprised. If perhaps you become. The plaything of the devil. Because you see. We are not. Sanctifying ourselves.

As we ought. This is the command given. To these people. They must sanctify themselves. Before they cross over. Jordan. Jordan. And so the people.

Folded their tents. And followed the priests. To the brink of the Jordan. Now as I've already said. It was the barley harvest. And the Jordan was full.

And this surely. Was a severe test. Of faith. Would they. Hesitate. And fear. Or would they.

Advance. In faith. Having done. According to the commands of God. Having. Prepared. As best they can. Sanctifying themselves. Getting rid of. Everything that would come between them.

[27 : 46] And being pleasing to their God. He must go forward. Believing. That what God had promised.

He would do. Is that not our. Weakness. We look. Within ourselves. We look around.

Us. In the world. We see everything so difficult. So impossible. Can God. Furnish.

A table. In the wilderness. Can he provide. For us. Remember that was the cry. Of the Israelites. A boat. He did. God has given us.

Great and precious. Promises. My friends. You and I must. Not only believe them. But act upon them. In that God says it. It will be. If God says so.

[28 : 44] It cannot but be. Now the priests were not expected. To act on blind faith. But they must act on what God has promised. And so.

They ask. They have to step into the water. And this they do. They step into the water. And what happens? Suddenly. The rush of water. Is backed up if you like.

It isn't just stopped. But the water is backed up. All the way. Back to the city of Adam. Now some scholars believe.

That this city was. Thirty miles away. You might think. Well. Why was it necessary for God. To stem the water. Thirty miles back. To allow the children of Israel.

To pass over. Well if we ask that question. We're forgetting. The large multitude of people. That made up this. Glorious. People of God.

[29 : 42] There were about two million souls. Involved in what was happening here. It wasn't just half a dozen people. It was the. Great. Gathering.

Of God's people. About two million. And if they are to pass over. They need a very. Wide expanse.

To pass over on. And they get that. God knows exactly. What is necessary. And God does what? He demonstrates his power. On behalf of his people.

You know. There are all sorts of. Answers given as to. How this happened. People use this. This argument. And that argument.

And so on. But friends. Why do we have to look. For arguments. To prove the word of God. God's word. Tells us.

[30 : 37] About our God. He's the almighty one. Who created all things. Out of nothing. By the word of his power. This is the God. Who has led the children of Israel. Out of Egypt. Through the wilderness. And they're now on the very.

Brink. Of. Of. Of. Of the promised land. Is he not going to act. For them now. Is he not going to demonstrate. His power. On behalf of Israel. At this juncture. Of course he is.

And this is what he does. And let us remember. This is the God. Who is our God. Let us. Believingly come to him. In prayer. Expectantly. Waiting upon him.

Providing we do his will. Providing we sanctify ourselves. Providing we. Plead the promises of God. And expect him. To demonstrate his.

Saving power. On behalf of us all. You can imagine. What the Canaanite spies. Were thinking. As they watched this wonderful phenomenon.

[31 : 37] Before their very eyes. Imagine the fear. That would enter them. As they saw. The God of Israel. Working on behalf of his own people. To the glory of his own name.

In a matter of hours. All the kings round about. Would have heard. Of what had taken place. Remember. These people were going into.

This new land. To fight many battles. But God was with them. And God was for them. And that was a lesson.

God was teaching these kings immediately. That the people who were entering the land. Were no ordinary people. They were his. They were precious in his sight.

He was for them. And not one of their gods. Could do anything on their behalf. And it is so still. Our God is the Lord. By whom the heavens created were.

[32 : 33] He alone can recreate the soul. He alone. He alone. He alone. He alone. Can make a new creation.

A man new in Christ. He alone. Can build up Jerusalem. And gather the dispersed of Israel into one.

And he shall do it. To the praise and glory of his name. What I believe happened here was a special act of God. You don't have to go looking for any scientific answer.

To how it happened. There's something wrong with our faith. I'm not saying that God didn't. That God worked contrary to science. That's not what I'm saying at all. He used natural phenomena to bring it about.

God. But it was his act. It was his work. And the timing was exact. That moment.

[33 : 32] Was the moment that he had purposed. And it was so. And we must remember that that is true always. In regard to the works of God. He's not dictated to by man.

By you or me or anyone else. The wall of water. Was built up.

And as it's. Generally accepted. It more than likely. Probably was held in place. For a whole day. In order to allow them all. To pass over. And once they were over.

The waters immediately cascaded back. And in all this. God was glorified. God was magnified.

God. Joshua himself of course was exalted. But you see also. Israel was encouraged. They were entering. A new faith.

[34 : 31] They needed encouragement. They needed strengthening. So do we. We need. To be encouraged.

By our God. And this he does. How often friends. As we look back in our lives. When we were at our lowest. God.

Intervened. And encouraged us. And brought us. To this moment. Hitherto. The Lord hath helped us. The Lord of us. Hath mindful things.

And he. Will bless us still. Surely that is. What we ought to say tonight. Tonight. We have not passed this way. Here to fall.

But what God is saying is this. I am with you. He manifests himself to them. He takes them through. We believe that the crossing of Georgia represents for us the passing.

[35 : 30] If you like. From one level of Christian experience to another. You see this is what is true. The Christian progresses. Day from strength.

And where it goes still forward. And to strength. And there is progression in the Christian life. There is a passing of one. From one level to another. And we believe it is also a picture of passing.

Or entering into spiritual warfare. To claim. What God. Has promised. That is what we see here.

Because. The battling of the children of Israel. Wasn't over once they crossed Georgia. Indeed it was only beginning. It was only beginning.

It means. We believe. A lesson learned. Also.

[36 : 31] That of. The end of. A life lived. By the principle of human effort. And the beginning of a life lived.

By the principles of faith. And obedience. And obedience. You see as Christians. We can. Believe. That we can do. A lot. Of ourselves. But God. In his own wonderful way.

Teaches us. That without him. We can do nothing. And brings us to the place. Where we live. By the principle of faith. By the principle of faith. And obedience. And I believe.

If we can learn anything from the book of Joshua. We will learn that. That this is the principle. That conquered the land for them.

[37 : 29] And will conquer it for us also. Of course. That doesn't lay aside our responsibilities. I've already sought to emphasize how Joshua prepared everything he possibly could.

He did what he saw was necessary. But having done that. He trusted in the Lord. And they got over dry shot.

Dry shot. Friends. May we trust in the Lord. God. Or. You see. We are so prone to.

Believe that. A thing is right. If the majority believe it. We know all about that. I didn't go into this.

Various ways in which that is. Shown in our modern age.

But here is one sphere. Friends. Where. That is not necessarily true at all. Indeed it is not true. We know that the majority. In our day. Refuse to believe. In the God of the Bible.

[38 : 31] In the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the Christ of God. We refuse to accept. A life lived by faith. In the strength of God.

And yet God's word proves to us. That those who do. And they are in the minority among ourselves. At this present moment. They know the secret of the Lord.

And they have. That which is. Priceless. That is. They have life. Everlasting through faith. In Christ. And may God grant us.

The grace. Whereby we may. Find out for ourselves. The reality. In this present day. Of the victory. Of the victory. That belongs. To those. Who indeed live. By the principle. Of faith. And obedience. And who go on.

[39 : 31] And to perfection. May God bless his own word. Let us pray. We ask thee to bless us. Lord this night. And thy word to us. We pray thee to bless.

All of us. Young. And old. All of us. As individuals. known.

To thee. As no other knows. All Lord. Bless. And pity us. Shine on us. With thy faith.

Bring us. To the obedience of faith. Bring us. O God. To know. In our daily lives.

The victory of faith. Bring us to know. Above all. That our lives. Are safe. Our souls.

[40 : 29] Are safe. In Christ. Pardon us. For Jesus sake. Amen.