

Ye have not passed this way heretofore (Quality: Good)

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Preacher: Wood, Clement (1920-2010)

- [0 : 00] In dependence upon the Lord for all needed help, I venture to draw your prayerful attention to two short clauses.
- Joshua chapter 3, verses 3 and 4. Joshua chapter 3, verses 3 and 4.
- The last clause in both verses. Go after it. For ye have not passed this way heretofore.
- Verse 3, last clause. Go after it. Verse 4, last clause.
- Ye have not passed this way heretofore.
- [1 : 22] The long journey of forty years in the wilderness was now at its appointed end.
- And the Israelites being gathered at Shittim, the last camping place in the wilderness, and now removing to Jordan.
- With the land flowing of milk and honey before them. And yet, a river.
- And yet, walled cities. And yet, mighty enemies.
- And yet, powerful foes. But, God is with them.
- [2 : 45] Their God is their God. We go back over a period, and I would estimate about 800 years.
- When almighty God called out one man. Out of the land of darkness.
- God's promise. Brought him to the promised land that he, God, promised to give to Abraham and to his seed.
- Abraham, by faith, went out, not knowing whither he went, but as directed by God.
- God is now, entering into the land. Yet, as we read in the Acts, in the ministry of Stephen, there was not a foot's breadth of that land that he could call his own.
- [4 : 12] Then we read these three wonderful words. Yet, he, God, yet he promised.
- Not a foot's breadth to call his own. No heir, no son as yet. No seed, but God.
- But, God. Oh, the trial of faith. And, yesterday, in meditating on this, my mind went to the words of Jeremiah the prophet, concerning the Almighty, the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name.
- Great in counsel. Mighty in work.
- But, it's God's time. But, it's God's time. Not our time. It is not for me to enlarge in detail on the trial of Abraham's faith, well known.
- [5 : 49] And, how that despite the deadness of Sarah's womb, the years that are passing, yet God, in that set time, in his way, according to his word, visited Sarah.
- And, she was blessed with a son. But, even then, later in life, take now, thy son, the promised one, thy only one, thy loved one.
- Take him. Offer him up. All the steps of faith. All the trial of faith. All the blessings of Jehovah Jireh.

All the sight that dear man had of Christ. And, Isaac too. And, some don't think we've perhaps overlooked that. Isaac, let free, set free, standing and watching, as the rat is slain, and offered in his stead.

By deflection. Blessed trial of faith. When the Lord blesses the sinner, and favours him with the sight of Christ, and that this dear Saviour died for us.

[7 : 17] But, I must not tarry. I must move forward. But, just trace through the impossibility to man. And, you may have impossible things in your experience.

Is, and again, I referred to Jeremiah, is anything too hard for the Lord? Now, we don't say that lightly. Isn't it easy to quote scripture?

Is it easy to believe? Is it easy to rest in it when the cloud is dark? When the way is rough? When you're alone? When the tempter tempts you?

When you're pressed? When you're beginning to sink? My friend, blessed be God. Faith is indestructible. But, it's no easy matter, is it?

And, praise God for that. 430 years in Egypt. But, God said, the promised land.

[8 : 21] Flowing with milk and honey. And, the longer they tarried there, the worse their lot became. Harder under the taskmasters. And, it seemed an impossibility.

Did God forget? Did God take no notice? Didn't God care? The devil would tell you that your God doesn't love you anymore. That your God doesn't care for you anymore.

But, beloved friend. I am sure that is in Egypt. I've heard their cry. I've come down to deliver them. I know their sorrow.

But, another step forward. Their deliverance. Their long journey. And, despite. Their sin of unbelief.

And, remember this. Many Israelites perished in the wilderness. Died in their sin is most solemn.

[9 : 23] I've often thought. We tend to overlook. When they murmured against God. And, fiery serpents were sent to bite them.

And, God made a way of healing. But, you know. We read much people of Israel died.

Many died. I was going to say outside the blood. Under the wrath of God. And, as we journey. And, we look back.

And, we hear from time to time. Of those we've known. In whose heart. And, in whose life. As far as we know. And, we're not the final judge. There's no evidence of divine life.

And, we're spared. And, we think. Yes. Despite our sin. In the sight of God. Despite all his love toward us.

[10 : 23] And, our dreadful sins. We're spared. Has not dealt with us. As we deserve the wrath of God.

But, now. The end of the journey. The appointment of heaven. God says he will give. His people. The land. And, God has said.

He's going to give his people heaven. And, he's going to bring them there. And, there won't be one missing. Will you? It's your name.

In the Lamb's book of life. But, further friend. Moses dies. Jesus. And, this is a word too.

When, we look back in our lives. When, dear saints. Pastors. Preachers. Deacons. Men of God. Mothers in Israel. Oh yes.

[11 : 18] Mothers in Israel. We mourn the lost. We feel. How can we go on? Moses, my servant is dead. Now. Therefore. Arise.

Go over. This. Joy. Here is the promise. As I was with Moses. So, I will be with thee. I will not fail thee.

Nor forsake thee. They come now then. To what we might say. Yes. We do say it. That.

And, some mountable. River. And, it was. At the time of barley harvest. When the Jordan. Over. Over. Over. Over. Floated.

Banks. An impossible barrier. Wait. My soul. Wait. You have come now.

[12 : 16] Or it may be. In your future path. To a fresh trial. Perhaps greater than ever. You have been thrown. But look back.

Has thy God failed thee? Has there been no Red Sea in the way? Has not God made the water stand up as a heap on either side?

Have not you dear soul been brought through? No. Men can stack bricks. And men can stack faith. But God stacks water, you know. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Trembling faith will plead it. Oh for grace to rest in it and be at peace in the midst of the storm.

Now I like that little illustration of two artists that were asked to paint a picture depicting peace. One was a very beautiful scene of a, I think it was a lake or a stream and trees and that.

[13 : 22] But it was a noise. The other was extraordinary. It was of a tree and trees and you could see there was a gale blowing, a storm.

And in the tree was a bird singing. Now they acknowledge it was that one that illustrated real peace. The other, beautiful as it was, could set forth stagnation.

Singing in the night. Songs in the night. Rejoicing in the Lord, the one that loved. Assured that he will not fail thee or forsake thee, friend.

Oh I, I know the devil's attacking me now. He says, you're a fine one. You don't live up to what you're preaching. Devil, I try to.

Devil, there's one thing you can't get, can't deny. That this poor sinner, though his faith may be ever to try, but there's still a clinging to Jesus.

[14 : 25] But it's sweet, friend, when faith is in such exercise to trust your God. Trust him.

And to be able to put all things into his dear hand. And, you know, I use some very simple illustrations, but I remember my little girls when they would teach it, trying to knit.

And they got in such a tangle, and don't we get in a tangle? And what did they do? Run to my mother and put it right in, the whole lot in her hands. I believe that's just what we've got to do, friend.

And they went and told Jesus. Beautiful, isn't it? Beautiful. They went and told Jesus. But I'm wondering again.

Here is Israel. Here is this great Jordan. Overflowing. But here is their God.

[15 : 29] Yes, the pillar of cloud, as we believe, ceased at the death of Moses. How is Israel to know how to go forward?

Where to go forward? When to go forward? The direction here is in our text.

When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priest, the Levites bearing it, then, not before, ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.

We've got to be very careful about this little word, it. Let's look at it spiritually. Secondly, this sets forth sweetly, in its fullness, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Wonderful. The fullness in him. But I said there's a danger, a great danger, what I call an it religion, instead of a Jesus religion.

[16 : 48] I speak with reverence. Let me explain. Later in Israel's history, in the days of Eli, when there was, religion was a low ebb, wasn't it?

The Philistines came up against them, oh, we'll get the ark. It will save us. It, without Christ, will not save you, friend. Now, don't misunderstand this.

It's right that you should spend your life, as far as you can, in the house of God, and under the truth. But it, coming to and fro the sanctuary, sitting under just the it, won't save you just as much, as the foolish virgins, proved, they had no oil, no work of grace in the heart, no Christ, for their salvation.

So, I name this, we need to be warned, against artificial religion. But, oh, dear fellow pilgrims, struggling on as you are, crushed sometimes, helped at times, singing at times, sighing at other times, oh, what a strange path it is.

It is Christ. And what a mercy it is, when all our troubles and trials, providential and spiritual, just as it were, drive us into the very arms of Christ.

[18 : 24] And you can't find any help anywhere else. No help anywhere else, but in a precious Jesus. Now, they were to watch them.

And not now, the pillar of cloud, and I just referred to that, because, lately, I don't know if you noticed it, but I'm very fond of, watching the weather, and there have been some most, magnificent, cloud, formations.

Saw it away on holiday, and, seen it in, since I've been back, and the, changing patterns of cloud. But the pillar of cloud never changed.

Why? Because it set forth God, an unchange, a pillar. And you know, the devil couldn't touch it. Man couldn't touch it. And all the time, Israel were under that pillar, stayed, or moved as directed, they were in the right place.

And now, though that has been withdrawn, they are bidden, and directed, as to, what to do. They are to look, they are to watch, there's the ark.

[19 : 37] The ark, that in the wilderness journey, was in the centre of the camp, surrounded, by the tribes. But now, it is going before them.

Carried, by the priests. Think, if memory serves me right, there are about, four, special occasions, when the ark, was carried in this way, here, and then of course, round the walls, of Jericho, and when brought back, to Jerusalem, by David, not on the new car, watch against that brethren, watch against the new car, don't you bring it in, God's displeasure, will be on it.

But when later, according to the word of God, they brought it back, so, and then later, when the ark was brought, into the temple, that Solomon had made, solemn, occasions, in the history, of Israel.

You say, well we have no ark, we have no literal, ark, as they did, no. But can you bear, to think beloved, of taking any step, going to the sanctuary, preaching, or hearing, praying, or praising, or singing, without the ark, is not, a prayer, that Lord Jesus, draw near, keep me, close to thee, so, go, after it.

They want to go, in front of it. Great danger. You see, some people, can decide, what they're going to do, and then, they pray about it, pray God's blessing on it, that, to my mind, is going in front of it.

[21 : 45] On the other hand, they want to go, without it. And we can be guilty there, making decisions, taking a step, without prayer, thinking, oh, yes we can deal with that.

Rather, may we, be constantly, under the exercise, and concern, of Moses, the man of God, if I now have found, grace in thy sight, then it wasn't the if, of doubt, it was an assurance, I have found, grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find, grace in thy sight, if thy presence, go not with me, carry us not up hands, my presence, that's what I want, Lord, my presence, shall go with thee, and I will give thee, wrath, or dear old deacon, of my old cause, a most humble man, I hear him now, and tears rolling down, his cheeks sometimes, he was a very dear man, in thy presence, I am happy, in thy presence, I am secure, in thy presence, all affliction, I can easily endure, you know, we shrink, from the valley, of the shadow of death, we shrink, from the den, of lions, we shrink, from that fiery furnace, from that cross, so heavy, from that cup, so bitter, but, if Christ, is there, and he will be, with you, dear child, it will be a spot, of heaven,

I am not preaching, like me, friend, it is, through deep waters, it is many struggles, but your head, will be kept above it, above those, those great waves, sometimes you feel, you are going down, but he will save you, he will help you, go, after it, and then, as I think, on these words, you may say, well, how can I go, after Jesus Christ, well, surely first, go to him, go and tell him, how you need him, go and pour out, your poor heart, go and tell him everything, ah, you say, but, look at all my sins, look how I failed, can he still, receive me, not that we are to speak, lightly, of sin, rebellion, or backsliding,

God forbid, we shall suffer for it, but he will never forsake us, go to him then, go to him, with all your burden, with all your temptation, with all your perplexity, and go to him, with all your sin, go to him, yes, just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood, was shed for me, and that thou bids me, come to thee, oh, Lamb of God, I can't, friend, do you know, what it is to be, in such a state, and such a place, providentially, and spiritually, in the two together, that all you feel, you can do, is you're just, cast, upon Jesus Christ, and you come then, in God's time, to walk out, that wonderful word, the eternal God, is thy refuge, and underneath, are the everlasting arms, and you thought you could, there could be nothing, under you, perhaps, but hell itself, darkness, and despair, but no, thy God, you'll never, dear child of God, sink, beneath those, everlasting, arms, till my dear people, sometimes, with that wonderful word, out of the depths, have I cried, unto thee,

O Lord, and you know, that cry, it may be, only a groan, a sigh, but, however deep, that depth, however dark, you may be, that cry, still reaches heaven, isn't it wonderful, and I believe, there's more prayer, in that, than what we feel, sometimes, in our, long worded prayers, friend, go after it, go to him, and pray for grace, Lord, help me, to follow thee, to be obedient, to thy command, to the word, that thou hast spoken, to the promise, that thou hast given, I want to go, the other way, Lord, choose thou the way, and still lead on, Lord, leave me, till I say, Father, thy will be done, go, after it, after, following, in obedience, thy Lord, in the way, that, he has set, and I was going to say, in the example, that he has set, that we might, as we follow him, be more like him, indwelt by the spirit, the spirit of Christ, within us, that grace, to be separate, from the world, and for that closer, walk with God, that larger communion, with him, whom our soul, loveth, and though,

[28 : 00] Lord, I tremblingly, go forward, hast thou not said, fear not, fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I will help thee, yea, I will strengthen thee, yea, I will uphold thee, with the bright hand, of my righteousness, and I've sometimes, spoken of that, the foundation, there's seven clauses, in that promise, the foundation, is the center one, I am thy God, for the present, fear thou not, that's the first, for I am with thee, second, be not dismayed, that's your present, God is a, a very present, help in trouble, but you say, ah, but it's the future, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee, with the right hand, of my righteousness, yea, and strengthen thee too, blessed be God, oh friend,

I, I know, when the sun shines, when the way is quiet, we may speak, of these things, but I believe, we know a little, of them in our experience, I go back, to now, of course, nearly a year ago, saw so much, that the hand, of almighty God, that we were prevented, going to America, having this investigation, the surgeon, being called, by the medical specialist, saying to me, now we're going to, keep you in, it's a Friday, we're going to, operate on, Monday, go after it, I thought he was, with me friend, I felt, a little quietness, the day before,

Mr, dear Mr. Ramsottom, had preached, for our Thanksgiving, services, and spoke, of the Lord of hosts, and then the God of Jacob, wonderful, isn't it, you think of it, the Lord of hosts, and yet, the God of, doesn't have the God of Abraham, he is of course, the God of Abraham, but the God of Jacob, worm Jacob, the worthless one, the, oh the weakest one, it's wonderful, you know, but the morning, of that operation, early morning, I, just felt, well I felt, quiet, I felt, I could say, I could say, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, is able to keep that, which I committed unto him, against that day, I felt I could leave, my unconscious body, as it were, under the operation, in the hand of my God, and yes, Lord, could it please thee, to draw near, could it please thee, to give me, just a sweet sense, of my love, a kiss of my mouth, when suddenly, this was brought, from heaven, into my soul, his right hand, is under my head, and his left hand, doth embrace me,

Lord, that's too good for me, it can't be for me, seal it, confirm it, our friend, for about half an hour, the Lord so favoured me, with such sweet meditation, on his hand, his help, and his embrace, what did I see, in that word embrace, while he was yet, a great way off, his father saw him, and ran, and had compassion, and fell on his neck, and kissed him, embrace, my friend, embrace, go after it, I needed it, it wasn't an easy path, to come through, nor of a, my dear one, either, and I name it, go after it, friends, yes, and you see, the river divide, or as of course, in the case of the Jordan, the waters coming down, from the mountains, held up like a wall, and that just, drained away on the right, and there's the way through, yes, but look, when Israel reached, the Red Sea, when Israel reached, the Jordan, it wasn't until, they got there, and particularly, with the Jordan, that the feet, of the priest, touched the water, that it was divided,

God, if it had been his purpose, could have had it, all open for Israel, to pass through, no, it's for the testing, of our faith, and it's for the, venturing of our faith, isn't it, when Israel, God said to Israel, of old, to Moses, speak unto the children, of Israel, that they go forward, but Lord, how can I go forward, but forward, if God says forward, forward you must go, and the Lord, will make the way, and he did so, for Israel, in a most marked way, wonderful way, go after it, go after it, see the way, made open, then further, they want to come, close to the ark, this speaks to us, of reverence, solemnity, friend, there's, much, light, frothy, religion today,

[33 : 57] I want to be kept, from it, at the same time, I want to be kept, from just a, shall I say, a mere, outward appearance, of a mournful face, which is, just as bad, perhaps, if it's, if it's, hypocrisy, but, you know, I know this, if the blessing, is from heaven, friend, it will have a, solemn effect, upon our spirit, it did so, for Jacob, at Bethel, and right, through the word, of God, a solemn sense, and yet, you might say, well, while it says, this distance, and I feel, that is what's, signified here, there is a way, let us therefore, come boldly, to the throne of grace, but that boldly, doesn't mean, arrogantly, proudly, self-sufficiently, God forbid, it means, to come, in all your need, in all your sinfulness, in faith, come, just as you are, to that throne of grace, then, let me just observe this, ye have not passed, this way, heretofore, it's a new way, a new experience, and a way, that, in, and I'm sure, our beloved friends, who have united, with you, and we, send them to you, with all our love, we do, and pray, that God will bless them, in your midst, and I'm sure, that, they, coming as, to, hear, a sense, of the Lord's direction, and the,

Lord's blessing, and, yet, it's, a new path, away, that some, three or four years ago, never contemplated, and you, and I, I mean, I would never have thought, I would have moved, from Tunbridge Wells, but, heretofore, this is, God directs, isn't it, that there is a new path, there is a new experience, yet, this God, is, our God, and, there was to be a remembrance, the twelve stones, were to be taken out, of the, midst of the Jordan, where, the feet of the priest, stood bearing the ark, a monument, was to be set up, it's lovely to set up, monuments, isn't it, I don't mean, literal monuments, I mean, spiritual monuments, your Ebenezer, your Bethel, your Jehovah Jireh, your Mishpah, sacred spots, aren't they, when you set up, your, these, stones, and, so the church, what's all this about, brethren, encourage the children,

I'm sure you do, I know your dear pastor does, and your dear teachers too, well, what do you mean by it, we need grace, and wisdom, to answer those questions, and to speak to them, of God, tell them about, what God has done for you, helped you, and then of course, there were the twelve stones, to be taken from the bank, and put right in the middle of Jordan, so that it would be, seen in the clear waters, that's just where, the ark, carried by the priesthood, and all the people passed over, no one, was, drowned in that flood, it would remain, it would remain, dry, till they were all, passed over, even not for, their pastor, this way, heretofore, the experience, in the way, spiritual experience, may come in here, as some of you, look back, as I do, on the days, of first love, well of course, we have to say, that when we came, before the church, we had not passed, this way, heretofore, but what a season, of blessing it was, how the Lord, appeared for you, and delivered you, from all your fears, and just opened your mouth, to speak a little, of his love, and, and blessed your soul, but, church membership, responsibility, profession of faith, if not walk this way, heretofore, who is sufficient, for these things, and when, you're brought into, deeper trial, and some of the, younger members,

I don't mean by, age necessarily, but by experience, the tribe, they, where's that love, where's that zeal, I feel to be, a worse sinner, than ever, and, Satan tempts, and, the trials, come in the way, I sometimes liken it, to, the first blade, the blade, first the blade, and then the ear, and I understand, in the meantime, the farmer, will, pass the harrow, over the field, I would say, man, what are you doing, you're uprooting, the lot, you'll destroy it, no, says the wise farmer, I'm going to, deepen the road, it's painful, but it's profitable, you're not, pass this way, here too far, and then, a little later, in using that illustration, the ear, you see, when there was the blade, there wasn't a sense, of the char, but now, there's a walking, into Romans chapter 7, that the inward conflict, the flesh, and the spirit, you're not, walk this way, here too far, but the Lord, is teaching, and what is it, is that he's going, to bring forth fruit, what is the purpose, of the wheat, is for the grain, they're not interested, in the char,

I know the straw, can be useful, but taking the general picture, is the grain, isn't it, and when is that grain, ready for the harvest, when it's fully developed, and it's loosening, from all the char, and when God, finishes that work, in your soul, you will be loosened, from the things, of this world, and prepare, for glory, now just, one more word, on these two clauses, and there we must, leave the subject, with you, Jordan, is often likened, to the river of death, now there's no thought, with that, whatsoever, but, let me say this, there is a, limitation, in this way, remember, when, Israel, passed through the Jordan, it wasn't, into rest, and peace, it was into warfare, it was into battle, against all these tribes, there, named in the reading, but at the same time, we may speak, of the swellings, of Jordan, and the river of death, and that last river, that last enemy, now friend, what a comfort, here is the ark, and it stands, in the midst, till all, have gone, over, oh death, where is thy sting, oh grave, where is thy victory, thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord,

[42 : 09] Jesus Christ, Christ, I am persuaded, that neither, death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able, to separate us, from the love of God, which is in Christ, Jesus our Lord, oh that the Lord, will give us grace, to live to his honour, and to his glory, to be absolutely, entirely, surrendered, to Christ, submissive, to his will, to present our bodies, a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service, for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain, go after it, and friend, this is the way to heaven, it's by the way of the cross, it's by the way of Christ, it's by the way of blood, it's by the way of salvation, it's by the work of the spirit, it's by precious faith in your soul, yes, and they shall never perish, and be brought to glory, at last, yes, be a strange path at times, with mercy, and with judgment, my web of time he were, and he in the deuce of sorrow, and lusted with his love,

I'll bless the hand that guided, I'll bless the heart that plant, when thrown in highest glory, in Emmanuel's land, my dear pastor used to say, the best, the best, is yet to be, if such, the sweetness of the streams, and they are sweet, what must the fountain be, where saints and angels, draw their bliss, immediately, from thee, Amen.

Amen. Amen. For our closing hymn, I would mention that, tea will be ready, in the school room, immediately, after the service, and we do hope, that as many of our friends, as possible, will join us, the evening service, commences at six o'clock, and the collections, today, are for the cause, and as it is our custom, now, to give out our notices, midweek, I would add that, God willing, Mr. Fincham, will preach, this coming Lord's Day, both morning, and evening, our weekly, prayer meeting, will be held, on Monday evening, at 7.15, our pastor, will preach, on Wednesday evening, at seven o'clock, also, the following Lord's Day,

September the 20th, both morning, and evening. May we never help, to conclude our service, this afternoon, with hymn number 462, Guide me, O their great, Jehovah, pilgrim, through this, barren land, I am weak, but thou art mighty, hold me, with thy, powerful hand, bread of heaven, feed me now, and evermore, hymn 462, am ambos, and dever be held, both to the power, and have a■e, metaphor, and are The Many Michos,