

The Swelling of Jordan

by J. Wilbur Chapman

The sermon warns of the dangers of sin and the importance of faith in Jesus Christ, urging listeners to respond to God's call and avoid the judgment that awaits those who reject Him.

Scripture: 2 Kings 5:14, Jeremiah 12:5, Luke 15:4, John 3:16, James 2:10

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Judgment And Refuge"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the significance of the river Jordan in the Bible, symbolizing experiences that stand between us and our future. He emphasizes the importance of fulfilling all the commands of God to attain light, peace, power, and eternal life. Chapman warns about being in caves of sin like dissipation, infidelity, and morality, and the consequences of standing in terror before God without refuge when the waters of judgment rise.

Transcript

TEXT: "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"--Jer. 12:5.

High up in the mountains of Anti-Lebanon a famous river was born which was to play so important a part in the history of God's people that it would not have been strange if the birds of heaven had chanted their praises when first it began its journey. From four different places in the mountain the stream starts. Then the four streams become one, and in a single channel the river makes its way across the plain.

There are two chief characteristics which must be borne in mind. The first is that a part of its journey is through a rocky country, and caves are on either side of the river, sometimes one above another; frequently three caves are to be seen one above another. The other characteristic is that it overflows its banks in all the time of harvest. These two things must be kept in mind if the text would teach its lesson.

There are certain people who will always remember the river Jordan--the children of Israel first of all, because it separated them from the Promised Land; and while scripturally Canaan does not stand for Heaven, yet in the mind of many it does, and the Jordan typifies an experience which stands between us and the future. Naaman will remember it, for when he came as a leper to the servant of God he was bidden to wash seven times in this river. At first he rebelled against the thought, finally he entered the stream, bathed twice, three times, four, five, six times, and was still a leper; but you will remember the word of the Lord, seven times must he bathe, and when the seventh plunge was taken, behold, his flesh was as the flesh of a little child! No man need expect to have light and peace and power or eternal life until

he has fulfilled all the commands of God.

The wild beasts frequently make their way to these caves as a place of refuge. When the waters begin to rise they are driven out, when they go to the higher cave, and then to the highest of all, and the waters constantly rising fill this cave and they are overpowered and put to death. They are an illustration for us. Men of to-day are in caves of different sorts; some in the cave of dissipation, others in the cave of infidelity, and still others in the cave of morality. One day the waters of judgment will begin to rise, and it will be an awful thing to stand in terror before God, driven forth without refuge.

I

Dissipation. "I am in the clutch of an awful sin," wrote some one to me recently, whether man or woman I cannot tell, but this was the story:

Three years before the writer had been free, and then in an unguarded moment had gone down. Now came the pathetic cry, "I am helpless and hopeless." I do not know what the sin was, but it makes no difference; any sin can bind us if we but yield to it. Under the subject of dissipation I do not speak of drinking as the worst of sins, because it is not the worst, by any means. I had a thousand times rather admit to my home the drunkard who has been cursed with his appetite than to admit there the man who is lecherous, who possibly stands high in society and in the business world, but whose sin is great and whose heart is vile beyond description. I speak of drinking because it is the most common of sins.

John B. Gough cries out concerning this sin, "I do not speak of it boastingly," said he, "for I have known what the curse of strong drink is; I have felt it in my own life and seen it in others, but I say the truth, let the bread of affliction be given me to eat, take away from me the friends of my old age, let the hut of poverty be my dwelling place, let the wasting hand of disease be placed upon me, let me live in the whirlwind and dwell in the storm, when I would do good let evil come upon me--do all this, merciful God, but save me from the death of a drunkard." When he would speak in such language, God pity the man who yields to such a sin.

It may be that gambling is your weak point. When I was in Colorado a young man who was a graduate of Harvard, the honor man of his class, and who had recently buried his wife, sat at the gambling table, staked his last dollar and lost it; then deliberately put up his little child and lost her; and then, in despair, blew out his brains and sent his soul to hell. When such a man of culture and training would go down under such a sin, God pity the man who yields to it.

Or it may be licentiousness, that sin which makes men lower than the beasts of the field, from which one can scarcely break away. I do not know what the sin may be that clutches your life, but if you have given way to it and rejected Christ, how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan, when the waters rise higher and higher and you are without Christ and without hope?

II

Some are in the cave of infidelity. That there are honest skeptics in the world we all believe, and the honest skeptic is one who says, "I cannot believe as you do, and I do not know that I would if I could, but if your hope is any comfort to you, then cling to it and go down to your grave trusting in it."

The dishonest skeptic is the man who sneers at my faith, who laughs at the old-fashioned religion, who says that once he believed in it but has grown away from it, seemingly forgetting that the greatest men the

country has ever produced have been humble followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Infidelity does not satisfy. It leaves an aching void in life and mocks us in death. Besides, it is deceiving and the talk of the infidel orator is deceiving. Said one of the most eloquent not many years ago, "When I think of the Christian's God and the Christian's Bible, I am glad I am not a Christian. I had rather be the humblest German peasant that ever lived, sitting in his cottage, vine clad, from which the grapes hang, made purple by the kiss of the sun as the day dies out of the sky, shod with wooden shoes, clad in homespun, at peace with the world, his family about him, with never a thought of God--I say the truth I had rather be such a peasant than any Christian that I have ever known." And when he said it the people cheered him. It was, however, but the trick of an orator. Let us change the sentences and give a new ring to the thought. "When I think of what infidelity would do I am glad I am not an infidel; how it would rob me of the hope of seeing my mother and meeting again my child; how it would take me in despair to the grave and send me away with a broken heart--I say I am glad I am not an infidel. I had rather be the humblest German peasant that ever lived, sitting in his cottage, vine clad, from which the grapes hang, made purple by the kiss of the sun as the day dies out of the sky, clad in homespun, shod with wooden shoes, at peace with the world and at peace with God, his family Bible upon his knees, the look of ineffable joy in his face and singing that grand old hymn of Luther's, 'A mighty fortress is our God'--I had rather be such a German peasant than to be the mightiest infidel the world has ever known," and so I would, a thousand thousand times. God pity you if you allow yourself to put Christ out of your life and stand in the midst of the rising floods with no hope in him! How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

III

Some are in the cave of morality. It seems a strange thing to have a word to say against it, only when we remember that he that offends in one point is guilty of all, and when we remember God's word as he has declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things written in the Book of the law to do them."

Then the question for the moralist is this, "Have you ever offended in one point?"

A splendid steamer was launched on Lake Champlain. She made her way safely across the lake and started back, when a storm came upon her, the engines were disabled and she drifted to the rocks. "Out with the anchor," said the captain, and the command was obeyed, but still she drifted, and although the anchor was down she crashed against the rocks with an awful force, and all because the anchor chain was three feet too short. Your morality so far as it goes may be a good tiling, but it does not reach the standard of God, nor can it until you are safely united to Christ; and if you have put him out of your life and stand alone in the midst of the rising floods, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

Sin is a terrible thing. It not only blights our hopes and prospects for the future, but it wrecks the strongest characters. One has only to open his eyes to see, if he will but look abroad, what dreadful havoc this awful evil hath wrought in the world, and yet the wonderful thing is that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life," and no matter how dreadful the wreck or how awful the ruin, Jesus Christ comes seeking to save that which was lost.

Major Whittle used to tell the story of the aged Quaker named Hartmann whose son had enlisted in the army. There came the news of a dreadful battle, and this old father, in fear and trembling, started to the scene of conflict that he might learn something concerning his boy. The officer of the day told him that he

had not answered to his name, and that there was every reason to believe that he was dead. This did not satisfy the father, so, leaving headquarters, he started across the battlefield, looking for the one who was dearer to him than life. He would stoop down and turn over the face of this one and then the face of another, but without success. The night came on, and then with a lantern he continued his search, all to no purpose. Suddenly the wind, which was blowing a gale, extinguished his lantern, and he stood there in the darkness hardly knowing what to do until his fatherly ingenuity, strength and affection prompted him to call out his son's name, and so he stood and shouted, "John Hartmann, thy father calleth thee." All about him he would hear the groans of the dying and some one saying, "Oh, if that were only my father." He continued his cry with more pathos and power until at last in the distance he heard his boy's voice crying tremblingly, "Here, father." The old man made his way across the field shouting out, "Thank God! Thank God!" Taking him in his arms, he bore him to headquarters, nursed him back to health and strength, and he lives to-day. Over the battlefield of the slain this day walks Jesus Christ, the Son of God, crying out to all who are wrecked by this awful power, "Thy Father calleth thee," and if there should be but the faintest response to his cry he would take the lost in his arms and bear them home to heaven. Will you not come while he calls to-day?

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