

A Cure For Spiritual Alzheimer's

Pastor James Richards

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Of Israel. As they're crossing the Jordan river. Getting ready to battle the people of Canaan. To conquer God's enemies and receive the land that God had promised them. And so, beginning in verse one, chapter four of Joshua.

If you want to follow along.

When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan. The Lord said to Joshua. Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe of man. And command them, saying, take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan. From the very place where the priests feet stood firmly.

And bring them over with you. And lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight. Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel. Whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. And Joshua said to them.

Pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan. And take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder. According to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel. That this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, what do these stones mean to you?

Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel. A memorial forever. And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded.

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And took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan. According to the number of tribes of the people of Israel. Just as the Lord told Joshua. And they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged. And laid them down there.

And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan. In the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day. For the priests bearing the ark. Stood in the midst of the Jordan.

Until everything was finished that the lord commanded Joshua to tell the people. According to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. The people passed over in haste. And when all the people had finished passing over the ark of the Lord. And the priests passed over before the people, the sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and of the half tribe of Manasseh.

Passed over armed before the people of Israel. As Moses had told them. About 40,000 ready for war. Passed over before the lord for battle to the plains of Jericho. On that day, the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel.

And they stood in awe of him. Just as they had stood in awe of Moses all the days of his life. And the Lord said to Joshua, command the priests bearing the Ark of the testimony to come out of the Jordan. So Joshua commanded the priests, come up out of the Jordan. And when the priests bearing the Ark of the covenant of the Lord.

Came up from the midst of the Jordan. And the soles of the priests feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place. And overflowed all its banks. As before, the people came up out of the Jordan on the 10th day of the first month. And they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.

And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan. Joshua set up at Gilgal. And he said to the people of Israel. When your children ask their fathers in times to come. What do these stones mean?

Then you shall let your children know. Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you. Until you passed over. As

the Lord your God did to the Red Sea.

Which he dried up for us until we passed over. So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty. And that you may fear the Lord your God forever. Let's pray. Amen.

Father, we acknowledge that you are the almighty God. Nothing is impossible to you. God, we thank you for the times that you intercede on our behalf. That you act in ways that show us your great power, your love for us. And father, I pray that as we go through life.

That we'd remember the things that you've done for us. That we would give you glory, that we would fear you, respect you because of your great power. And, Lord, we face many things. I just pray that this passage would be an encouragement to us as we go through it. I would also pray for Davy and Natalie's family.

God, knowing how difficult it must be to lose such a wonderful young couple, early twenties, committed to serving the Lord, understanding the danger, but going anyway. And, lord, now they're with you. And a great reward. And we thank you for them. But comfort their family.

I pray in Christ's name. Amen. Okay, Memorial Day. And we remember. And in my mind, when I remember presidents.

Ronald Reagan was the best president that I've experienced in my lifetime. And yeah, he had false, but he did so many good things. It turns out that President Reagan was a prolific, prolific letter writer. I know that to be a fact because we have one out in the hallway that he wrote to the previous pastor, Newt Razor, on his 50th anniversary in this church. And you can see it out there in the hallway if you go out after church.

He wrote a personal letter to a little pastor in a little town called Copeland beach, congratulating him on 50 years of wonderful service. And he wrote thousands of letters. I heard, but probably in my mind, the greatest one he wrote was the last one he wrote. And I won't read the whole letter. And if you were around at the time, you

may remember it, but I'm going to read a portion of it dated November 5, 1994.

My fellow Americans, I've recently been told that I am one of the millions of Americans who will be afflicted with Alzheimer's disease. Upon learning the news, Nancy and I had to decide whether, as private citizens, we would keep this a private matter or whether we would make this news known in a public way. In opening our hearts, we hope this might promote greater awareness of the condition. He goes on to talk about how they'd shared personal things in their life that encouraged people. Then, he says, perhaps it will encourage a clearer understanding of the individuals and families who are affected by it.

At the moment, I feel just fine. When the time comes, I am confident that with your help, Nancy will face it with faith and courage. In closing, let me thank you, the American people, for giving me the honor of allowing me to serve as your president. When the Lord calls me home, whenever that may be, I will leave with the greatest love for this country of ours, an eternal optimism for his future. I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life.

I know that for America, there will always be a bright dawn ahead. Thank you, my friends. May God always bless you, Ronald Reagan. And for you that were reading the news at the time, you understand that Ronald Reagan gradually lost the ability to remember even the basic things, not even knowing who his wife was as a result of the disease that he contracted. Alzheimer's disease.

And to me, losing your mind, I think, is one of the hardest things that someone can face in life, even worse than losing your health. It should cause us to cherish the ability to remember the important things in life that we all experience. And so this memorial day weekend, I'd want to encourage each of us to remember those who have given their lives for us. And obviously, it was designed, first of all, for the military people who fought on our behalf. But it also means that we thank God and remember our family members who have gone on before us, and we choose to do that.

As sad as Alzheimer's is, though, failing to remember spiritually, failing to remember spiritually is just as dangerous to our faith. I believe that many Christians have spiritual Alzheimer's that they forget the things that God has done for them in their life. And it leaves them dazed and confused when they're confronted with the surprises, the difficulties that they face in life. If we want to be spiritually strong and sharp, it's important that we remember the things that God has taught us that he's shown us. That's easy to say, isn't it?

But it's hard to do. And I think we experience that on a day to day basis. Where did I put my keys? When are you coming home? On and on and on.

It's easy to forget. Many people use aids to help them remember. And I would like to suggest one. I was going to get a big rock and put it here, but I didn't. But I want to suggest that you can use a rock as an aid to your memory.

Just like God commanded Joshua and the Israelites to remember what he had done at the Jordan river. And so as we look at what happened to them, we see how God used twelve rocks, twelve different individuals had to go into the river and probably shoulder a huge rock. He probably didn't pick the wimps in each tribe, okay? Because they not only had to carry it out of the river, they had to carry it to Gilgal, which might have been a few miles. And the Jordan river was in flood stage.

And they were on their way to the promised land to do battle against the Canaanites that God had sworn that he would take out of that country so he could give it to them. So God told the priests to go into the river with the ark. And as soon as they stepped into the river, even though it was in flood stage, the waters dammed up and it became dry ground. And the people crossed over in that dry ground again. When they had safely crossed over, the twelve men went back into the river to get the rocks to bring them out, to set up a monument, a memorial for all of Israel, that they would remember what God had done for them.

We see why God does this. In verse six and seven, and also verse 21 and 23, he says that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, what do

these stones mean to you? Then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.

So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever. And what we see here is a miraculous intervention of God in the lives of these, these people. As they were preparing to go into battle against nations more numerous and more powerful than they were. I can imagine that every one of us understands what a great encouragement that would be as they're preparing to face an enemy, not knowing what is going to happen. But they see the power of God and something that cannot be explained other than miracle.

And I'm sure at times when they were in the battle and they were wondering if they were going to win or not or whether they would be defeated, it had to have helped them to remember that the God who called them into that battle is also the God who is powerful, who had stopped the waters of the Jordan. I can just imagine people saying, wait a second. If God dammed up the Jordan so we could cross over on dry ground, he can take care of this problem we're facing today. Makes sense, doesn't it? In the same way, memories can be powerful weapons in our battle against the devil, the world and self.

And the more we remember what God has done, the more encouraged we should be and the more sure that he is going to take care of us again, we see that the stones were to be a lasting memorial for all of Israel. In verse seven, it was also to be for their children. In verse 21 and 22. And also in verse 24, it says, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever and often what happens in our life. God allows us to come into difficult situations and beyond our strength, our wisdom, our ability.

And then we see the hand of God that takes care of everything for us. And that's wonderful and that we should rejoice and celebrate. But it's not just for us. It's for our children, and it's for even people around us that see what we are going through in our lives. God gives a twofold purpose for the memorial in verse 24, so that all the peoples

of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty.

And to show others that our God, who we worship and serve, is a powerful God. That's one of the purposes of your testimony, to share what God has done for you, whether it turned out the way you wanted it to or not. That God was faithful in the midst of that. And second, to remind us to fear the Lord our God forever, meaning we acknowledge who he is and we give him the respect that he deserves in our life. Too often, and I have experienced this, and I'm sure you have, too, too often, we're like the Israelites after God delivered them out of Israel with a mighty demonstration of his power.

And if you read just after that, Miriam's song, they dance before the Lord. What did they sing, Jason? After they crossed the red sea, the horse and rider thrown into the sea. We used to sing that at Dhola every Sunday night. The horse and rider thrown into sea.

They celebrated this victory that God had given them. And then three days later, they're crying, no, we're in the desert. We don't have any water. We don't have any food. We're going to die.

We'd be better off back in Egypt. And they did that over and over and over for 40 years. God got so sick and tired of their wine. And he says, hey, none of you guys are going into the promised land that are over 20. Because they did not trust in the Lord.

They didn't remember his great power, the things that he had done for them before he was able to do for them. Then they had no faith when they faced the hardships on the way they promised land.

Instead of crying out, instead of crying, they should have been remembering what God had done for them. Our God is able, no matter what we're facing, to take me through that desert in my life. Now that they're entering the promised land, God gives them a physical reminder because they're going to face a lot of hardships, a lot of battles, and there's going to be times that it's not going the way they thought it would go, but he gives them this memorial to remind them that he is the almighty God, and they need to look to him before they look to anything else, and that he is able to deliver them,

whether by life or by death. And so we need to set up memorials in our life to help us stay focused during the hard time. And if you want to, you can put some stones in your backyard, and this is the time that God delivered me.

If you don't put it where you need to mow your grass or anything, but you could do that. But there's other ways of doing that. I was touched many years ago by an example that Jerry Cook, in his book love, acceptance, forgiveness, being christian in a non christian world. He shared about an associate pastor of his, a young man. His wife delivered a little boy.

And when the little boy was born, he had a fatal heart condition. No one that had that condition had ever lived beyond a week or two. There was nothing to be done. In that first week, they heard about a doctor who had found a surgery that he thought might help in Portland, Oregon. And so the little boy went in for open heart surgery a week old, slid his chest open, did the surgery, and the boy lived.

And that surgery is still available for whatever disease that was, but the rest of that boy's life. And when I read the book, he was in his teens when he would take off his shirt, there was this scar that went from here to here. And his dad would remind him that was the time that God saved your life, reminding him of the power of God. And we have that opportunity in our lives, because if you're walking with Christ and if you're trusting him at all and you're demonstrating any faith, I guarantee you there's been times that God has come through for you in a miraculous way. And you knew that it was the Lord.

It was not you. And that's to encourage you on your walk with the Lord. But we're also to share that with our children and our children's children. We can do the same thing when we purposely remember God's miraculous power in our life. And again, we may not set up stones as memorial, but we can memorialize events by writing them down.

I was visiting with Michelle this morning, and is it okay if I share your story? And her dad's having problems with his cell phone? She said, send it to me, and he lives in Arkansas. Send it to me. We'll get it updated, and we'll send it back.

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But she dreaded going into the phone place with guys trying to sell contracts and phones. And so she prayed, oh, God, give me someone that cares that isn't just trying to use me to make a sale. So she got to the Verizon store, and guess who waited on her? Luke Berger, Anne's grandson. Luke grew up in this church.

Luke loves the Lord. He spent 3 hours with Michelle helping get the phone set up for her dad and answered a prayer. And I told her, she needs to write that down and remember that she had prayed and God had come alongside, done that. I know. For me, when I was pastoring in Cottonwood, Idaho, I was there four years.

I wrote over 200 articles for the local paper, one every week. And sometimes it was hard to come up with something to write about, but God always gave me something to write about. But when we left Cottonwood and I left behind that writing gig, so to speak, I was praying. I said, God, what was that all about, writing all of those articles? I don't know that it really impacted anybody's life or not.

And I felt like the Lord said, well, they're for you and for your family to remember what I've done in your life. And so God made it so that I could put it in a book form, 75 of the 200 articles. And the purpose? I have not made any money on this book. I lost a lot of money, okay?

But that wasn't the purpose. The purpose was in some way to share what God has done in my life in different kind of stories with a spiritual application. And hopefully someday my grandchildren will have that book and actually read it, and it might encourage them to walk with the Lord. And we're trying to pass on our faith to the next generation, and we need to be intentional in that. And the purpose is that our words will testify to our offspring that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that they might fear the Lord their God forever.

I know many of your personal testimonies of how you came to Christ, and many of you came out of a lot of sin and a lot of brokenness and a lot of heartache. And what an amazing demonstration of God's power to take somebody out of lives like that and bring them into the joy of the Lord, into a future that will last for all eternity. And we

need to remember that before we leave this morning. There's one more thing that we should remember. Many people believing that the Jordan river is a symbol of death for the Christian came to life through the Red Sea.

They were baptized into Moses, it says, as they crossed the Red Sea, 40 years of wilderness, trials and temptations and struggles and seeing God work, 40 years of hardship until they finally come to the Jordan river. And in crossing that, many believe it's symbolic of you and I as Christians, crossing out of this life into the next life, our promised land, heaven, with the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's not easy. And even though we may be confident I'm going to be with the Lord, often there's a fear of what's death going to be like. How am I going to handle it?

Will there be a lot of pain? Will there be struggle, whatever? Well, even then, we need to remember Jesus Christ. Paul, as he was facing death, he wrote to his young protegee, Timothy said, remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound.

Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. And notice, he didn't say that I may attain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, that they may obtain the salvation again. We saw a wonderful example of this with this couple, Davy and Natalie, and they got married. She was 20. Her dad is a state senator in Missouri.

And they knew it would be dangerous. So we said, well, go over there and visit first before you decide. And they did. And she decided that she wanted to go and minister in a place that's probably maybe one of the most dangerous places on our planet today. And she said, as a young 20 year old, I just want to live a life that is intentional, for the glory of God.

Turns out they were under attack for 3 hours in Port au prince. The police were called. The mission tried to intervene with a ransom, and nothing happened. And that group went into the house eventually and killed them and another young man that was

haitian. Obviously, the family sorrows and weeps for their children, but Natalie's dad stated confidently they entered heaven together.

He had that hope, and it was based on the work that God had done in his life. It wasn't just pie in the sky. It's knowing that our God who saves us is able to save us, even in a face of hardships. We face hardships, trials, and even death in this world. But we can remember that Jesus Christ overcame them all.

Overcame them all. He was faithful even unto death. And when we remember the love of Jesus this morning and we pray that he will be glorified in our lives, we remember him, what he's done for us, what he's prepared for us, the fact that he never leaves us or forsakes us. And even if he leads us through deep waters, he'll be there with us to receive us unto himself. Let's pray.

And then Jason's going to come up and sing a song crossing over the Jordan. Father, we just thank you, God, for the things you've done in our life. Little memories, Father, how wonderful you were. God, we were at our wit's end. We didn't see any way through the mess that faced us.

And yet you came through. And we give you the glory, Father. We confess that we forget easily the next problem that comes up. Instead of remembering that you're the Almighty God and that you're faithful and that we can trust you. I do again pray for this.

The family of Davey and Natalie. Thank you. They knew the risk when they went there. They were willing to take it because they loved the people in Haiti. And I pray that in some way, their death would not go to waste, but in some way, it would start to bring peace into that troubled nation.

In Christ's name, amen.