



Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 36: 1890

by

Charles Spurgeon

About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 36: 1890* by Charles Spurgeon

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Lama Sabachthani?

A Sermon

(No. 2133)

Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, March 2nd, 1890,

C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—Matthew 27:46.

THERE WAS DARKNESS over all the land unto the ninth hour": this cry came out of that darkness. Expect not to see through its every word, as though it came from on high as a beam from the unclouded Sun of Righteousness. There is light in it, bright, flashing light: but there is a centre of impenetrable gloom, where the soul is ready to faint because of the terrible darkness.

Our Lord was then in the darkest part of his way. He had trodden the winepress now for hours, and the work was almost finished. He had reached the culminating point of his anguish. This is his dolorous lament from the lowest pit of misery—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I do not think that the records of time or even of eternity, contain a sentence more full of anguish. Here the wormwood and the gall, and all the other bitternesses, are outdone. Here you may look as into a vast abyss; and though you strain your eyes, and gaze till sight fails you, yet you perceive no bottom; it is measureless, unfathomable, inconceivable. This anguish of the Saviour on your behalf and mine is no more to be measured and weighed than the sin which needed it, or the love which endured it. We will adore where we cannot comprehend.

I have chosen this subject that it may help the children of God to understand a little of their infinite obligations to their redeeming Lord. You shall measure the height of his love, if it be ever measured, by the depth of his grief, if that can ever be known. See with what a price he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law! As you see this, say to yourselves: What manner of people ought we to be! What measure of love ought we to return to one who bore the utmost penalty, that we might be delivered from the wrath to come? I do not profess that I can dive into this deep: I will only venture to the edge of the precipice, and bid you look down, and pray the Spirit of God to concentrate your mind upon this lamentation of our dying Lord, as it rises up through the thick darkness—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Our first subject of thought will be *the fact*; or, what he suffered—God had forsaken him. Secondly, we will note, *the enquiry*; or, why he suffered: this word "why" is the edge of the text. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, thirdly, we will consider *the answer*; or, what came of his suffering. The answer flowed softly into the soul of the Lord Jesus without the need of words, for he ceased from his anguish with the triumphant shout of, "It is finished." His work was finished, and his bearing of desertion was a chief part of the work he had undertaken for our sake.

I. By the help of the Holy Spirit, let us first dwell upon THE FACT; or, what our Lord suffered. God had forsaken him. Grief of mind is harder to bear than pain of body. You can pluck up courage and endure the pang of sickness and pain, so long as the spirit is hale and brave; but if the soul itself be touched, and the mind becomes diseased with anguish, then every pain is increased in severity, and there is nothing with which to sustain it. Spiritual sorrows are the worst of mental miseries. A

man may bear great depression of spirit about worldly matters, if he feels that he has his God to go to. He is cast down, but not in despair. Like David, he dialogues with himself, and he enquires, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him." But if the Lord be once withdrawn, if the comfortable light of his presence be shadowed even for an hour, there is a torment within the breast, which I can only liken to the prelude of hell. This is the greatest of all weights that can press upon the heart. This made the Psalmist plead, "Hide not thy face from me; put not thy servant away in anger." We can bear a bleeding body, and even a wounded spirit; but a soul conscious of desertion by God it beyond conception unendurable. When he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it, who can endure the darkness?

This voice out of "the belly of hell" marks the lowest depth of the Saviour's grief. *The desertion was real.* Though under some aspects our Lord could say, "The Father is with me"; yet was it solemnly true that God did forsake him. It was not a failure of faith on his part which led him to imagine what was not actual fact. Our faith fails us, and then we think that God has forsaken us; but our Lord's faith did not for a moment falter, for he says twice, "*My God, my God.*" Oh, the mighty double grip of his unhesitating faith! He seems to say, "Even if thou hast forsaken me, I have not forsaken thee." Faith triumphs, and there is no sign of any faintness of heart towards the living God. Yet, strong as is his faith, he feels that God has withdraw his comfortable fellowship, and he shivers under the terrible deprivation.

It was no fancy, or delirium of mind, caused by his weakness of body, the heat of the fever, the depression of his spirit, or the near approach of death. He was clear of mind even to this last. He bore up under pain, loss of blood, scorn, thirst, and desolation; making no complaint of the cross, the nails, and the scoffing. We read not in the Gospels of anything more than the natural cry of weakness, I thirst." All the tortures of his body he endured in silence; but when it came to being forsaken of God, then his great heart burst out into its "Lama sabachthani?" His one moan is concerning his God. It is not, "Why has Peter forsaken me? Why has Judas betrayed me?" These were sharp griefs, but this is the sharpest. This stroke has cut him to the quick: "My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?" It was no phantom of the gloom; it was a real absence which he mourned.

This was *a very remarkable desertion.* It is not the way of God to leave either his sons or his servants. His saints, when they come to die, in their great weakness and pain, find him near. They are made to sing because of the presence of God: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." Dying saints have clear visions of the living God. Our observation has taught us that if the Lord be away at other times, he is never absent from his people in the article of death, or in the furnace of affliction. Concerning the three holy children, we do not read that the Lord was ever visibly with them till they walked the fires of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace; but there and then the Lord met with them. Yes, beloved, it is God's use and wont to keep company with his afflicted people; and yet he forsook his Son in the hour of his tribulation! How usual it is to see the Lord with his faithful witnesses when resisting even unto blood! Read the Book of Martyrs, and I care not whether you study the former or the later persecutions, you will find them all lit up with the evident presence of the Lord with his witnesses. Did the Lord ever fail to support a martyr at the stake? Did he ever forsake one of his testifiers upon the scaffold? The testimony of the church has always been, that while the Lord has permitted his saints to suffer in body he has so divinely sustained their spirits that they have been more than

conquerors, and have treated their sufferings as light afflictions. The fire has not been a "bed of roses," but it has been a chariot of victory. The sword is sharp, and death is bitter; but the love of Christ is sweet, and to die for him has been turned into glory. No, it is not God's way to forsake his champions, nor to leave even the least of his children in the trial hour.

As to our Lord, this forsaking was *singular*. Did his Father ever leave him before? Will you read the four Evangelists through and find any previous instance in which he complains of his Father for having forsaken him? No. He said, "I know that thou hearest me always." He lived in constant touch with God. His fellowship with the Father was always near and dear and clear; but now, for the first time, he cries, "why hast thou forsaken me?" It was very remarkable. It was a riddle only to be solved by the fact that he loved us and gave himself for us and in the execution of his loving purpose came even unto this sorrow, of mourning the absence of his God.

This forsaking was *very terrible*. Who can fully tell what it is to be forsaken of God? We can only form a guess by what we have ourselves felt under temporary and partial desertion. God has never left us, altogether; for he has expressly said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"; yet we have sometimes felt as if he had cast us off. We have cried, "Oh, that I know where I might find him!" The clear shinings of his love have been withdrawn. Thus we are able to form some little idea of how the Saviour felt when his God had forsaken him. The mind of Jesus was left to dwell upon one dark subject, and no cheering theme consoled him. It was the hour in which he was made to stand before God as consciously the sin-bearer, according to that ancient prophecy, "He shall bear their iniquities." Then was it true, "He hath made him to be sin for us." Peter puts it, "He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Sin, sin, sin was every where around and about Christ. He had no sin of his own; but the Lord had "laid on him the iniquity of us all." He had no strength given him from on high, no secret oil and wine poured into his wounds; but he was made to appear in the lone character of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world; and therefore he must feel the weight of sin, and the turning away of that sacred face which cannot look thereon.

His Father, at that time, gave him no open acknowledgment. On certain other occasions a voice had been heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; but now, when such a testimony seemed most of all required, the oracle was dumb. He was hung up as an accursed thing upon the cross; for he was "made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree"; and the Lord his God did not own him before men. If it had pleased the Father, he might have sent him twelve legions of angels; but not an angel came after the Christ had quitted Gethsemane. His despisers might spit in his face, but no swift seraph came to avenge the indignity. They might bind him, and scourge him, but none of all the heavenly host would interpose to screen his shoulders from the lash. They might fasten him to the tree with nails, and lift him up, and scoff at him; but no cohort of ministering spirits hastened to drive back the rabble, and release the Prince of life. No, he appeared to be forsaken, "smitten of God, and afflicted," delivered into the hands of cruel men, whose wicked hands worked him misery without stint. Well might he ask, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But this was not all. His Father now dried up that sacred stream of peaceful communion and loving fellowship which had flowed hitherto throughout his whole earthly life. He said himself, as you remember, "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Here was his constant comfort: but all comfort from this source was to be withdrawn. The divine Spirit did not minister to his human spirit. No

communications with his Father's love poured into his heart. It was not possible that the Judge should smile upon one who represented the prisoner at the bar. Our Lord's faith did not fail him, as I have already shown you, for he said, "My God, my God": yet no sensible supports were given to his heart, and no comforts were poured into his mind. One writer declares that Jesus did not taste of divine wrath, but only suffered a withdrawal of divine fellowship. What is the difference? Whether God withdraw heat or create cold is all one. He was not smiled upon, nor allowed to feel that he was near to God; and this, to his tender spirit, was grief of the keenest order. A certain saint once said that in his sorrow he had from God "necessaries, but not suavities"; that which was meet, but not that which was sweet. Our Lord suffered to the extreme point of deprivation. He had not the light which makes existence to be life, and life to be a boon. You that know, in your degree, what it is to lose the conscious presence and love of God, you can faintly guess what the sorrow of the Saviour was, now that he felt he had been forsaken of his God. "If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do?" To our Lord, the Father's love was the foundation of everything; and when that was gone, all was gone. Nothing remained, within, without, above, when his own God, the God of his entire confidence, turned from him. Yes, God in very deed forsook our Saviour.

To be forsaken of God was *much more a source of anguish to Jesus than it would be to us*. "Oh," say you, "how is that?" I answer, because he was perfectly holy. A rupture between a perfectly holy being and the thrice holy God must be in the highest degree strange, abnormal, perplexing, and painful. If any man here, who is not at peace with God, could only know his true condition, he would swoon with fright. If you unforgiven ones only knew where you are, and what you are at this moment in the sight of God, you would never smile again till you were reconciled to him. Alas! we are insensible, hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, and therefore we do not feel our true condition. His perfect holiness made it to our Lord a dreadful calamity to be forsaken of the thrice holy God.

I remember, also, that our blessed Lord had lived in unbroken fellowship with God, and to be forsaken was a new grief to him. He had never known what the dark was till then: his life had been lived in the light of God. Think, dear child of God, if you had always dwelt in full communion with God, your days would have been as the days of heaven upon earth; and how cold it would strike to your heart to find yourself in the darkness of desertion. If you can conceive such a thing as happening to a perfect man, you can see why to our Well-beloved it was a special trial. Remember, he had enjoyed fellowship with God more richly, as well as more constantly, than any of us. His fellowship with the Father was of the highest, deepest, fullest order; and what must the loss of it have been? We lose but drops when we lose our joyful experience of heavenly fellowship; and yet the loss is killing: but to our Lord Jesus Christ the sea was dried up—I mean his sea of fellowship with the infinite God.

Do not forget that he was such a One that to him to be without God must have been an overwhelming calamity. In every part he was perfect, and in every part fitted for communion with God to a supreme degree. A sinful man has an awful need of God, but he does not know it; and therefore he does not feel that hunger and thirst after God which would come upon a perfect man could he be deprived of God. The very perfection of his nature renders it inevitable that the holy man must either be in communion with God, or be desolate. Imagine a stray angel! a seraph who has lost his God! Conceive him to be perfect in holiness, and yet to have fallen into a condition in which he cannot find his God! I cannot picture him; perhaps a Milton might have done so. He is sinless and trustful, and yet he has an overpowering feeling that God is absent from him. He has

drifted into the nowhere—the unimaginable region behind the back of God. I think I hear the wailing of the cherub: "My God, my God, my God, where art thou?" What a sorrow for one of the sons of the morning! But here we have the lament of a Being far more capable of fellowship with the Godhead. In proportion as he is more fitted to receive the love of the great Father, in that proportion is his pining after it the more intense. As a Son, he is more able to commune with God than ever a servant-angel could be; and now that he is forsaken of God, the void within is the greater, and the anguish more bitter.

Our Lord's heart, and all his nature were, morally and spiritually, so delicately formed, so sensitive, so tender, that to be without God, was to him a grief which could not be weighed. I see him in the text bearing desertion, and yet I perceive that he cannot bear it. I know not how to express my meaning except by such a paradox. He cannot endure to be without God. He had surrendered himself to be left of God, as the representative of sinners must be, but his pure and holy nature, after three hours of silence, finds the position unendurable to love and purity; and breaking forth from it, now that the hour was over, he exclaims, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" He quarrels not with the suffering, but he cannot abide in the position which caused it. He seems as if he must end the ordeal, not because of the pain, but because of the moral shock. We have here the repetition after his passion of that loathing which he felt before it, when he cried, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the holiness of Christ amazed at the position of substitute for guilty men.

There, friends; I have done my best, but I seem to myself to have been prattling like a little child, talking about something infinitely above me. So I leave the solemn fact, that our Lord Jesus was on the tree forsaken of his God.

II. This brings us to consider THE ENQUIRY or, why he suffered.

Note carefully this cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is pure anguish, undiluted agony, which crieth like this; but it is the agony of a godly soul; for only a man of that order would have used such an expression. Let us learn from it useful lessons. This cry is taken from "the Book." Does it not show our Lord's love of the sacred volume, that when he felt his sharpest grief, he turned to the Scripture to find a fit utterance for it? Here we have the opening sentence of the twenty-second Psalm. Oh, that we may so love the inspired Word that we may not only sing to its score, but even weep to its music!

Note, again, that our Lord's lament is an address to God. The godly, in their anguish, turn to the hand which smites them. The Saviour's outcry is not *against* God, but *to* God. "My God, my God": he makes a double effort to draw near. True Sonship is here. The child in the dark is crying after his Father—"My God, my God." Both the Bible and prayer were dear to Jesus in his agony.

Still, observe, it is a faith-cry; for though it asks, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" yet it first says, twice over, "My God, my God." The grip of appropriation is in the word "my"; but the reverence of humility is in the word "God." It is "'My *God*, my *God*,' thou art ever God to me, and I a poor creature. I do not quarrel with thee. Thy rights are unquestioned, for thou art my *God*. Thou canst do as thou wilt, and I yield to thy sacred sovereignty. I kiss the hand that smites me, and with all my heart I cry, 'My God, my God.'" When you are delirious with pain, think of your Bible still: when your mind wanders, let it roam towards the mercy seat; and when your heart and your flesh fail, still live by faith, and still cry, "My God, my God."

Let us come close to the enquiry. It looked to me, at first sight, like *a question as of one distraught*, driven from the balance of his mind—not unreasonable, but too much reasoning, and

therefore tossed about. "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Did not Jesus know? Did he not know why he was forsaken? He knew it most distinctly, and yet his manhood, while it was being crushed, pounded, dissolved, seemed as though it could not understand the reason for so great a grief. He must be forsaken; but could there be a sufficient cause for so sickening a sorrow? The cup must be bitter; but why this most nauseous of ingredients? I tremble lest I say what I ought not to say. I have said it, and I think there is truth—the Man of Sorrows was overborne with horror. At that moment the finite soul of the man Christ Jesus came into awful contact with the infinite justice of God. The one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, beheld the holiness of God in arms against the sin of man, whose nature he had espoused. God was for him and with him in a certain unquestionable sense; but for the time, so far as his feeling went, God was against him, and necessarily withdrawn from him. It is not surprising that the holy soul of Christ should shudder at finding itself brought into painful contact with the infinite justice of God, even though its design was only to vindicate that justice, and glorify the Law-giver. Our Lord could now say, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" and therefore he uses language which is all too hot with anguish to be dissected by the cold hand of a logical criticism. Grief has small regard for the laws of the grammarian. Even the holiest, when in extreme agony, though they cannot speak otherwise than according to purity and truth, yet use a language of their own, which only the ear of sympathy can fully receive. I see not all that is here, but what I can see I am not able to put in words for you.

I think I see, in the expression, submission and resolve. Our Lord does not draw back. There is a forward movement in the question: they who quit a business ask no more questions about it. He does not ask that the forsaking may end prematurely, he would only understand anew its meaning. He does not shrink, but the rather dedicates himself anew to God by the words, "My God, my God," and by seeking to review the ground and reason of that anguish which he is resolute to bear even to the bitter end. He would fain feel anew the motive which has sustained him, and must sustain him to the end. The cry sounds to me like deep submission and strong resolve, pleading with God.

Do you not think that *the amazement of our Lord, when he was "made sin for us"* (2 Cor. 5:21), led him thus to cry out? For such a sacred and pure being to be made a sin-offering was an amazing experience. Sin was laid on him, and he was treated as if he had been guilty, though he had personally never sinned; and now the infinite horror of rebellion against the most holy God fills his holy soul, the unrighteousness of sin breaks his heart, and he starts back from it, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken *me*?" Why must I bear the dread result of contact I so much abhor?

Do you not see, moreover, *there was here a glance at his eternal purpose, and at his secret source of joy?* That "why" is the silver lining of the dark cloud, and our Lord looked wishfully at it. He knew that the desertion was needful in order that he might save the guilty, and he had an eye to that salvation as his comfort. He is not forsaken needlessly, nor without a worthy design. The design is in itself so dear to his heart that he yields to the passing evil, even though that evil be like death to him. He looks at that "why," and through that narrow window the light of heaven comes streaming into his darkened life.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Surely our Lord dwelt on that "why," *that we might also turn our eyes that way.* He would have us see the why and the wherefore of his grief. He would have us mark the gracious motive for its endurance. Think much of all your Lord suffered, but do not overlook the reason of it. If you cannot always understand how this or that grief worked toward the great end of the whole passion, yet believe that it has its share in the grand "why." Make a life-study of that bitter but blessed question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Thus the Saviour

raises an inquiry not so much for himself as for us; and not so much because of any despair within his heart as because of a hope and a joy set before him, which were wells of comfort to him in his wilderness of woe.

Bethink you, for a moment, that the Lord God, in the broadest and most unreserved sense, could never, in very deed, have forsaken his most obedient Son. He was ever with him in the grand design of salvation. Towards the Lord Jesus, personally, God himself, personally, must ever have stood on terms of infinite love. Truly the Only Begotten was never more lovely to the Father than when he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! But we must look upon God here as the Judge of all the earth, and we must look upon the Lord Jesus also in his official capacity, as the Surety of the covenant, and the sacrifice for sin. The great Judge of all cannot smile upon him who has become the substitute for the guilty. Sin is loathed of God; and if, in order to its removal his own Son is made to bear it, yet, as sin, it is still loathsome, and he who bears it cannot be in happy communion with God. This was the dread necessity of expiation; but in the essence of things the love of the great Father to his Son never ceased, nor ever knew a diminution. Restrained in its flow it must be, but lessened at its fountain-head it could not be. Therefore, wonder not at the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

III. Hoping to be guided by the Holy Spirit, I am coming to THE ANSWER, concerning which I can only use the few minutes which remain to me. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What is the outcome of this suffering? What was the reason for it? Our Saviour could answer his own question. If for a moment his manhood was perplexed, yet his mind soon came to clear apprehension; for he said, "It is finished"; and, as I have already said, he then referred to the work which in his lonely agony he had been performing. Why, then, did God forsake his Son? I cannot conceive any other answer than this—*he stood in our stead*. There was no reason in Christ why the Father should forsake him: he was perfect, and his life was without spot. God never acts without reason; and since there were no reasons in the character and person of the Lord Jesus why his Father should forsake him, we must look elsewhere. I do not know how others answer the question. I can only answer it in this one way.

"Yet all the griefs he felt were ours,
Ours were the woes he bore;
Pangs, not his own, his spotless soul
With bitter anguish tore.
"We held him as condemn'd of heaven,
An outcast from his God;
While for our sins he groaned, he bled,
Beneath his Father's rod."

He bore the sinner's sin, and he had to be treated, therefore, as though he were a sinner, though sinner he could never be. With his own full consent he suffered as though he had committed the transgressions which were laid on him. Our sin, and his taking it upon himself, is the answer to the question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?"

In this case we now see that *His obedience was perfect*. He came into the world to obey the Father, and he rendered that obedience to the very uttermost. The spirit of obedience could go no farther than for one who feels forsaken of God still to cling to him in solemn, avowed allegiance, still declaring before a mocking multitude his confidence in the afflicting God. It is noble to cry, "My God, my God," when one is asking, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" How much farther can

obedience go? I see nothing beyond it. The soldier at the gate of Pompeii remaining at his post as sentry when the shower of burning ashes is falling, was not more true to his trust than he who adheres to a forsaking God with loyalty of hope.

Our Lord's suffering in this particular form was appropriate and necessary. It would not have sufficed for our Lord merely to have been pained in body, nor even to have been grieved in mind in other ways: he must suffer in this particular way. He must feel forsaken of God, because this is the necessary consequence of sin. For a man to be forsaken of God is the penalty which naturally and inevitably follows upon his breaking his relation with God. What is death? What was the death that was threatened to Adam? "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Is death annihilation? Was Adam annihilated that day? Assuredly not: he lived many a year afterwards. But in the day in which he ate of the forbidden fruit he died, by being separated from God. The separation of the soul from God is spiritual death; just as the separation of the soul from the body is natural death. The sacrifice for sin must be put in the place of separation, and must bow to the penalty of death. By this placing of the Great Sacrifice under forsaking and death, it would be seen by all creatures throughout the universe that God could not have fellowship with sin. If even the Holy One, who stood the Just for the unjust, found God forsaking him, what must the doom of the actual sinner be! Sin is evidently always, in every case, a dividing influence, putting even the Christ himself, as a sin-bearer, in the place of distance.

This was necessary for another reason: there could have been no laying on of suffering for sin without the forsaking of the vicarious Sacrifice by the Lord God. So long as the smile of God rests on the man the law is not afflicting him. The approving look of the great Judge cannot fall upon a man who is viewed as standing in the place of the guilty. Christ not only suffered *from* sin, but *for* sin. If God will cheer and sustain him, he is not suffering for sin. The Judge is not inflicting suffering for sin if he is manifestly succouring the smitten one. There could have been no vicarious suffering on the part of Christ for human guilt, if he had continued consciously to enjoy the fall sunshine of the Father's presence. It was essential to being a victim in our place that he should cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Beloved, see how marvellously, in the person of Christ, the Lord our God has vindicated his law! If to make his law glorious, he had said, "These multitudes of men have broken my law, and therefore they shall perish," the law would have been terribly magnified. But, instead thereof, he says, "Here is my Only Begotten Son, my other self; he takes on himself the nature of these rebellious creatures, and he consents that I should lay on him the load of their iniquity, and visit in his person the offences which might have been punished in the persons of all these multitudes of men: and I will have it so." When Jesus bows his head to the stroke of the law, when he submissively consents that his Father shall turn away his face from him, then myriads of worlds are astonished at the perfect holiness and stern justice of the Lawgiver. There are, probably, worlds innumerable throughout the boundless creation of God, and all these will see, in the death of God's dear Son, a declaration of his determination never to allow sin to be trifled with. If his own Son is brought before him, bearing the sin of others upon him, he will hide his face from him, as well as from the actually guilty. In God infinite love shines over all, but it does not eclipse his absolute justice any more than his justice is permitted to destroy his love. God hath all perfections in perfection, and in Christ Jesus we see the reflection of them. Beloved, this is a wonderful theme! Oh, that I had a tongue worthy of this subject! but who could ever reach the height of this great argument?

Once more, when enquiring, Why did Jesus suffer to be forsaken of the Father? we see the fact that *the Captain of our salvation was thus made perfect through suffering*. Every part of the road has been traversed by our Lord's own feet. Suppose, beloved, the Lord Jesus had never been thus forsaken, then one of his disciples might have been called to that sharp endurance, and the Lord Jesus could not have sympathized with him in it. He would turn to his Leader and Captain, and say to him, "Didst thou, my Lord, ever feel this darkness?" Then the Lord Jesus would answer, "No. This is a descent such as I never made." What a dreadful lack would the tried one have felt! For the servant to bear a grief his Master never knew would be sad indeed.

There would have been a wound for which there was no ointment, a pain for which there was no balm. But it is not so now. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Wherein we greatly rejoice at this time, and so often as we are cast down. Underneath us is the deep experience of our forsaken Lord.

I have done when I have said three things. The first is, you and I that are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and are resting in him alone for salvation, *let us lean hard*, let us bear with all our weight on our Lord. He will bear the full weight of all our sin and care. As to my sin, I hear its harsh accusings no more when I hear Jesus cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" I know that I deserve the deepest hell at the hand of God's vengeance; but I am not afraid. He will never forsake *me*, for he forsook his Son on my behalf. I shall not suffer for my sin, for Jesus has suffered to the full in my stead; yea, suffered so far as to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Behind this brazen wall of substitution a sinner is safe. These "munitions of rock" guard all believers, and they may rest secure. The rock is cleft for me; I hide in its rifts, and no harm can reach me. You have a full atonement, a great sacrifice, a glorious vindication of the law; wherefore rest at peace, all you that put your trust in Jesus.

Next, if ever in our lives henceforth we should think that God hath deserted us, *let us learn from our Lord's example how to behave ourselves*. If God hath left thee, do not shut up thy Bible; nay, open it, as thy Lord did, and find a text that will suit thee. If God hath left thee, or thou thinkest so, do not give up prayer; nay, pray as thy Lord did, and be more earnest than ever. If thou thinkest God has forsaken thee, do not give up thy faith in him; but, like thy Lord, cry thou, "My God, my God," again and again. If thou hast had one anchor before, cast out two anchors now, and double the hold of thy faith. If thou canst not call Jehovah "Father," as was Christ's wont, yet call him thy "God." Let the personal pronouns take their hold—"My God, my God." Let nothing drive thee from thy faith. Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim. As for me, if ever I am lost, it shall be at the foot of the cross. To this pass have I come, that if I never see the face of God with acceptance, yet I will believe that he will be faithful to his Son, and true to the covenant sealed by oaths and blood. He that believeth in Jesus hath everlasting life: there I cling, like the limpet to the rock. There is but one gate of heaven; and even if I may not enter it, I will cling to the posts of its door. What am I saying? I shall enter in; for that gate was never shut against a soul that accepted Jesus; and Jesus saith, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The last of the three points is this, *let us abhor the sin which brought such agony upon our beloved Lord*. What an accursed thing is sin, which crucified the Lord Jesus! Do you laugh at it? Will you go and spend an evening to see a mimic performance of it? Do you roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel, and then come to God's house, on the Lord's-day morning, and think to worship him? Worship him! Worship him, with sin indulged in your breast! Worship him, with sin loved and pampered in your life! O sirs, if I had a dear brother who had been murdered, what would

you think of me if I valued the knife which had been crimsoned with his blood? —if I made a friend of the murderer, and daily consorted with the assassin, who drove the dagger into my brother's heart? Surely I, too, must be an accomplice in the crime! Sin murdered Christ; will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God; can you love it? Oh, that there was an abyss as deep as Christ's misery, that I might at once hurl this dagger of sin into its depths, whence it might never be brought to light again! Begone, sin! Thou art banished from the heart where Jesus reigns! Begone, for thou hast crucified my Lord, and made him cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" O my hearers, if you did but know yourselves, and know the love of Christ, you would each one vow that you would harbour sin no longer. You would be indignant at sin, and cry,

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Lord, I will tear it from its throne,
And worship only thee,"

May that be the issue of my morning's discourse, and then I shall be well content. The Lord bless you! May the Christ who suffered for you, bless you, and out of his darkness may your light arise! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 22.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—313, 299, 22 (Part II).

Noah's Faith, Fear, Obedience, and Salvation

A Sermon

(No. 2147)

Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, June 1st, 1890,

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."—Hebrews 11:7.

THE APOSTLE COULD NOT AVOID mentioning Noah; for in him faith shone forth eminently. He has placed him in due order of time after Abel and Enoch; but he had also another reason for the arrangement. These three ancient believers are declared in Holy Writ to have pleased God. Of Abel, it is said that God testified of his gifts. Enoch, before his translation, had this testimony, that he pleased God: and Noah "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Again, it was meet that Noah should follow close upon Enoch, as one of two who are described as having "walked with God." "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him"; and we read in the sixth chapter of Genesis, verse eight, that Noah also "walked with God." These two spent their lives in such constant communion with the Most High that they could be fully described as walking with God. Oh, that we may, through almighty grace, be so pleasing unto the Lord that we may abide in fellowship with him!

We may take pleasure in thinking of Noah as a kind of contrast to Enoch. Enoch was taken away from the evil to come: he saw not the flood, nor heard the wailing of those who were swept away by the waterfloods. His was a delightful deliverance from the harvest of wrath which followed the universal godlessness of the race. It was not his to fight the battle of righteousness to the bitter end; but by a secret rapture he avoided death, and escaped those evil days in which his grandson's lot was cast. Noah is the picture of one who is the Lord's witness during evil days, and lives through them faithfully, enduring unto the end. It was his to be delivered from death by death. The ark was, so to speak, a coffin to him: he entered it, and became a dead man to the old world; and within its enclosure he was floated into a new world, to become the founder and father of a new race. As in the figure of baptism we see life by burial, so was it with this chosen patriarch; he passed by burial in the ark into a new life. In Enoch we see a type of those of God's people who will go home peacefully before the last closing struggle. Ere the first clash of swords at Armageddon, such Enochs will be taken from the evil to come. But in Noah we see those who will engage in the conflict, and bear themselves bravely amid backsliding and apostasy, until they shall see the powers of evil trodden under their feet as straw is trodden for the dunghill. The fire-flood will devour the wicked, and only the righteous shall inherit the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let these few words stand as the preface to my discourse; and now let us carefully consider Noah's faith, trusting that the Holy Spirit may bless its teaching to our own souls.

I. First, notice that in Noah's case **FAITH WAS THE FIRST PRINCIPLE**. The text begins, "*By faith* Noah." We shall have to speak about his fear—being "moved by fear"; we shall also remember his obedience, for he "prepared an ark to the saving of his house." But you must take distinct note

that at the back of everything was his faith in God. His faith begat his fear: his faith and his fear produced his obedience. Nothing in Noah is held up before us as an example, but that which grew out of his faith. To begin with, we must look well to our faith. May I pass the question round these galleries, and put it to you also in this vast area? Have you faith? Let each one hear the question in the singular number. "Hast thou faith? Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Art thou resting in the promise of a faithful God?" If not, thou art nothing as to spiritual things. Without faith thou art out of the kingdom of grace, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter if thou hast no faith. But if thou hast even a trembling faith, thou hast the root of the matter within thee. Even if other gracious things be not in thee as yet, they will be ere long produced by faith. Faith is the acorn, from which the oak of holiness will grow. Faith is that handful of corn, the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon. Without faith it is impossible to please God, but with faith we become "accepted in the Beloved."

Notice, first, that *Noah believed in God in his ordinary life*. Before the great test came, before he heard the oracle from the secret place, Noah believed in God. We know that he did, for we read that he walked with God, and in his common conduct he is described as being "a just man, and perfect in his generations." To be just in the sight of God is never possible apart from faith; for "the just shall live by faith." It is a great thing to have faith in the presence of a terrible trial; but the first essential is to have faith for ordinary every-day consumption. Hast thou faith in God as to thy daily bread? Hast thou faith as to thy children and thy house? Hast thou faith about thy trade and business? Hast thou faith in the God of providence?—faith in the God who answers prayer? Is it habitual with thee to roll thy burden upon the Lord? If it be not so with thee, what wilt thou do when the floods break forth? Faith will not come to thee all of a sudden, in the dark night, if thou hast shut it out through all the bright days. Faith must be a constant tenant, not an occasional guest. I have heard of Latter-day Saints, and I do not think much of them: I far more admire Every-day Saints. Thou needest faith this Sabbath-day: have it, and come to the communion-table with it. But thou needest faith on Monday, when the shutters are taken down to begin another six days' trading. Thou wilt need faith the next day; for who can tell thee what will happen? To the end of the week thou wilt need to look to the hills whence cometh thine help. Thou needest faith anywhere and everywhere. A man of God alone in his chamber still needs faith, or solitude may be a nest for temptation. When the servant of Christ is at his ease, and has no work pressing upon him, he has need of faith to keep him, lest, like David, he fall into temptation, and commit folly. Rest days or work days, we alike need faith. By faith Noah did everything before he entered the ark. This is an important observation, though it may appear a very simple one. I could not omit it; for I feel that a practical work-day faith is what we most of all need. Men think that they need faith in building a temple; but faith is also needed in building a haystack. We need faith for ploughing, for buying, for selling, for working, quite as much as for praying, and singing, and preaching. We want faith on the market as well as in the prayer-meeting. We wish everywhere to please God, and we cannot do it anywhere unless we have unfeigned faith in him. The Lord teach us to have faith seven days in the week!

Note, next, that *Noah had faith in the warning and threatening of God*. Faith is to be exercised about the commandments; for David says, "I have believed thy commandments." Faith is to be exercised upon the promises; for there its sweetest business lies. But, believe me, you cannot have faith in the promise unless you are prepared to have faith in the threatening also. If you truly believe a man, you believe all that he says. He who does not believe that God will punish sin, will not believe that God will pardon it through the atoning blood. He who does not believe that God will

cast unbelievers into hell, will not be sure that he will take believers into heaven. If we doubt God's Word about one thing, we shall have small confidence in it upon another thing. Sincere faith in God must treat all God's Word alike; for the faith which accepts one word of God and rejects another is evidently not faith in God, but faith in our own judgment, faith in our own taste. Only that is true faith which believes everything that is revealed by the Holy Spirit, whether it be joyous or distressing. Noah had, in this case, received a promise; but, as the dark background to it, he had listened to the terrible threatening that God would destroy all living things with a flood: his faith believed both the warning and the promise. If he had not believed the threat, he would not have prepared an ark, and so would not have received the promise. Men do not prepare an ark to escape from a flood unless they believe that there will be a flood. I charge you who profess to be the Lord's not to be unbelieving with regard to the terrible threatenings of God to the ungodly. Believe the threat, even though it should chill your blood; believe, though nature shrinks from the overwhelming doom; for, if you do not believe, the act of disbelieving God about one point will drive you to disbelieve him upon the other parts of revealed truth, and you will never come to that true, child-like faith which God will accept and honour. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark." With solemn awe believe the bitter word of judgment, that the word of mercy may be sweet to you.

Furthermore, *Noah believed what seemed highly improbable, if not absolutely impossible*. There was no sea where Noah laid the keel of his ark: I do not even know that there was a river there. He was to prepare a sea-going vessel, and construct it on dry land. How could water be brought there to float it? O mad old man! how canst thou play the fool on so huge a scale as to build a three-decked vessel of vast dimensions where no waters can ever come? Yet he was bidden of the Lord to do it, and he was persuaded that the Lord's command involved no blunder. The floods would fill the valley, rise up the hills, and prevail above the tops of the mountains. He believed all this, although it did seem an unlikely thing. That faith which believes in the probable is anybody's faith: publicans and sinners can so believe. The faith which believes that which is barely possible is in better form; but that faith which cares nothing for probability or possibility, but rests alone in the Word of the Lord, is the faith of God's elect. God deserves such faith, "for with God all things are possible." Not probability, but certainty, is the groundwork of faith when God has spoken. Noah believed firmly, and therefore prepared his ship on dry land, quite as cheerfully as he would have built it by the sea.

At times you and I are assailed as to our faith in the Bible, by people who say, "How do you make that out? It is in the Scriptures, certainly, but how do you reconcile it with science?" Let your reply be—We no longer live in the region of argument as to the Word of the Lord; but we dwell in the realm of faith. We are not squabblers, itching to prove our superiority in reasoning, but we are children of light, worshipping our God by bowing our whole minds to the obedience of faith. We would be humble, and learn to believe what we cannot altogether comprehend, and to expect what we should never have looked for, had not the Lord declared it. It is our ambition to be great believers, rather than great thinkers; to be child-like in faith, rather than subtle in intellect. We are sure that God is true! Like Noah, we stagger not at the Word of God, because of evident improbability and apparent impossibility. What the Lord has spoken he is able to make good; and none of his words shall fall to the ground.

Note well, that *Noah believed alone, and preached on though none followed him*. There were no other believers, if you except his wife and his sons and daughters. There were eight in all; but

I am afraid that some of these rather believed in father Noah than in the living God. Noah shone as a lone star. He stood like yonder solitary column in the midst of a ruined temple. He believed with an unbuttressed faith. How pleasant it is to associate with our fellow-believers! It is a great refreshment for a solitary Christian to get into a large congregation, and to feel in unison with the child's hymn—

"Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
A great assembly worship thee!
At once they sing, at once they pray,
They hear of heaven and learn the way.
I have been there, and still would go,
'Tis like a little heaven below."

But how would you fare if you were alone, or were surrounded by those who called you a fool for believing in the Lord? To dwell where everybody is sceptical is as injurious to faith as for a man to live where the yellow fever is raging. To have your faith pulled to pieces, and held up to ridicule, is an ordeal which some cannot stand. What if you should be like Noah, a preacher of righteousness; how stern the duty of being a solitary witness! He preached for one hundred and twenty years, and at the end of it not one person was ready to go with him into the ark. His own family was saved, but nobody else—not a solitary one. What a trial! How it has made my heart glad, during the month of May, to see and propose for church-fellowship no less than sixty-nine! But if I had to preach for a year with no converts, what should I do? I hope I should persevere, in the name of the Lord God; but what a trial! What if life were prolonged for one hundred and twenty years, and after all that preaching nobody believed your word! That would be an infliction indeed. Many people may have been converted under Noah, and may have died before the deluge came; but he had not one convert in the ark with him. His wife had not even a servant to help her in domestic work, and his sons' wives had to wait on themselves. There was not even a boy to clean the shoes, or help feed the animals. Many were called, but only the eight were chosen. Noah had preached apparently in vain, and yet he believed with none the less of dogged resolve. The old man was not to be moved. That ark of his would float; he knew it would. The world would be destroyed; he was sure of it; as sure as if he had seen it. "Things not seen as yet" were to his faith substantial and evident.

Noah believed through a hundred and twenty solitary years! It was a long martyrdom. Our life is quite long enough for the trial of faith. Even if a man lives to be eighty, and has sixty years of that life spent in the exercise of faith, it is only by almighty grace that he holds out. Noah lived two of our lives in this way. If a little flood had happened and moved his ark a little, he would have had some evidence for his faith; but there was no flood at all; and his ark lay high and dry for a century and a quarter! How few could endure this! Yonder dear friend has been praying for the last six months, and the Lord has not heard him, and he begins to doubt whether the Lord does hear prayer at all. You are not much like Noah. You can hardly believe for one hundred and twenty days. "Alas!" says one, "I have prayed for my husband these twenty years!" It is a long time to wait; but what would you do with a hundred added on to it? Years made Noah's faith more mature, and not more feeble. This grey father of the age went on with his preaching, went on with his intercession, and, without a doubt, waited for God in his own time to justify his servant before the eyes of men.

Once more: *Noah believed even to separation from the world.* See Noah and his family entering the ark! I do not think I should have selected the ark as a place of residence myself, nor would you

have chosen to live in a place pitched within and without with pitch, with only one door and one window to it, and a great menagerie of birds, and beasts, and reptiles inside it. Whether that window ran all round the top just under the roof, so as to let light into the whole structure, I cannot tell; but I have no doubt that the jeering world said to Noah, "Well, old man, you have built a prison for yourself, and the sooner you go inside and shut yourself in the better; for we have had enough of your preaching!" When the good man and his family went in, and the Lord shut the door, they were dead to the world. Had Mrs. Noah been like some of you she would have said, "The girls cannot go out to any more parties, and our sons are shut out from all society. We are out of the world, and shall soon be forgotten." Yes, yes, and Noah was glad of it, since it was the Lord that shut him in. When the Lord shuts you off from the world, you are best alone. Nowadays professors have not faith enough to dwell alone. They want two or three doors in the back of the ark, so that they may slip out every now and then, and do a little pleasuring with the world, and then glide back again and look like saints. As to being shut in with God and separated from the world—religious and irreligious—how few will endure it! How little is ever heard of that cry—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate!" "You might as well be dead," cries one, "as be out of society." Exactly so: and that is what the child of God looks for. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "Buried with him by baptism into death." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." That separatedness which Noah took upon himself so willingly was involved in his salvation; for if he had lived with the world, he would have died with the world. Only in separation is salvation.

Thus have I worked out the idea that the first principle which actuated Noah's heart was faith in the living God.

II. Secondly, FEAR WAS THE MOVING FORCE. Faith was the living principle, but fear was the moving power; for the text puts it, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, *moved with fear*." Faith moulded him, but fear moved him. How was this? "I thought," says one, "that perfect love casteth out fear." Yes, fear of a certain sort; but there is another fear which perfect love embraces and nourishes.

Noah had no evil fear. He had not a servile fear: he was not afraid of God as a culprit is afraid of a judge, or a convict of the hangman. He knew whom he believed, and was persuaded that he had a favour towards him. Noah had not a careless fear, as some here have. Fools say, "We never shall be saved, and therefore it would be useless to care about it. We may as well gather the rosebuds while we may. There is no heaven for us hereafter, let us make the best of the present." No, Noah was a witness against such sensual carelessness. He so believed, that fear came upon him, and that fear made him act as God bade him. Beware of the unbelief which enables you to trifle; for trifling with eternal things is the suicide of the soul. Noah, on the other hand, had not a despairing fear, as some have. They say, "There is no hope. We have gone too far in sin already to dream of pardon and favour. We may as well let things take their course." Beware of the poison-cup of despair. While life lasts hope lasts; and we beseech you not to lie down in sullen hopelessness. Noah was a stranger to this paralyzing fear: he bestirred himself, and built an ark. Some allow a presuming fear: "If I am to be saved," say they, "I shall be saved; and if I am to be lost, I shall be lost. I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and so I will have my fling, and go into sin even as I please." Noah never spoke thus; for with his fear he had a good hope. He prepared an ark. He knew that none could save him but God; but as God bade him prepare an ark, an ark he prepared, and thus he was saved and his house.

What kind of fear was that of Noah? Well, *Noah had a loyal reverence of God*. He feared him as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and when he went about through the wicked world Noah often said to himself, "I wonder the Judge of all the earth does not destroy these rebels, who dare to be so vile and violent." When he saw their gluttony, their infidelity, their lasciviousness, their oppression of one another, *the preacher of righteousness had a holy fear of judgment*. Often his righteous spirit indignantly cried, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" He wondered how God could be so long-suffering. When it was revealed to him that God was going to destroy the whole race from off the face of the earth by a flood, he said to himself, "I thought he would." He felt exceedingly afraid; for he knew that when God once makes bare his arm for vengeance, the pillars of the earth must shake, and the stars of heaven cease their shining. Thus the holy man of God passed the time of his sojourning here in fear. Who among us would not fear if we were to consider at this time the holiness of God, and the provocations inflicted upon him by our guilty race? What sin defiles this earth! Oh, the wrath to come! How awful will the judgment be! It has not come yet; it may not come for years; but, when the Lord begins to deal with men in justice, how will that day burn as an oven! "Who may abide the day of his coming?" Noah by faith heard the cries of men and women swept from their feet by the torrent. He heard the cries of strong swimmers in their agony yielding to the overflowing death, and sinking to their doom. Do you wonder that his heart sank within him, and that he was moved with fear? He had a holy awe of God, and a solemn dread of the judgments which sin was drawing down upon the giddy world.

Noah had a very humble distrust of himself. I wish we all had such a fear. Let us fear God because of his greatness; let us fear ourselves because of our sinfulness. Let us fear lest we should fall into sin, and perish with the rest of the sinners. Let no man say, "I shall never fall." Alas! those are the most likely to slip. Did you never note that those who seem least likely to fall into a sin are the very people who commit it? You would not have dreamed that sober Noah should be found drunk; nor that righteous Lot should commit incest; nor that David, whose heart smote him when he only cut off the lap of Saul's garment, should be guilty of murder; nor that Peter, who said, "Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I," would have denied his Master with oaths and cursing. Ah, friends! we may not trust ourselves; but we ought to stand in daily fear lest we be guilty before God. Here was Noah filled with such a holy fear of himself, that he took care to do what the Lord bade him, even to the most minute particular. He did not choose another sort of wood, nor alter the shape of the vessel, nor make more stories, nor more windows, nor more doors; but he distrusted his own judgment, and leaned not to his own understanding. He did exactly what he was told to do, and thus left the consequences with the Lord who commanded him. He feared his own wisdom: for he knew that man is like to vanity, and no more to be relied upon than the mist of the morning.

Fear made Noah hew the trees and square the timbers, and wield the axe and the hammer. Fear wrought in him diligence and speed. It made him despise the observations of onlookers, and build for his life in brave defiance of the spirit of the age, and the judgment of the wise. Perhaps I speak to persons who are in fear of the wrath to come. I rejoice that you have faith enough to fear. By the way of that faith which brings you unto fear, you will be brought out of it. Believe God in justice till you tremble; then see that justice vindicated in the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, and rest in the mercy of God, which, through the cross, comes justly down to guilty men. A holy fear will put wings upon your heels, and help you to fly to Jesus. Moved by fear, may you be drawn and driven to the Lord Jesus!

III. Thirdly, OBEDIENCE WAS THE GRACIOUS FRUIT. Faith and fear together led Noah to do as God commanded him. When fear is grafted upon faith, it brings forth good fruit, as in this case.

Noah obeyed the Lord exactly. How often does the Scripture say, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he"! See again and again, "Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him." Those who have faith in God should show it by a holy fear, which makes them zealous to leave nothing undone which is commanded of the Lord, and to add nothing of will-worship to the perfect law of God. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it;" was the wise word of the Virgin. Obey the Lord with all your mind and all your heart, in the way of faith, if you would find salvation. Prove that you have grace, by your accurate obedience.

Noah obeyed the Lord very carefully. God said to him, "Make an ark"; and we read in answer thereto that he *prepared an ark*. There was careful preparation, and not hurried, thoughtless activity. He prepared the right materials; he prepared the different parts so as to fit together: he prepared his mind, and then prepared his work. In seeking the Lord, let us exercise our best thoughts. People do not go to heaven in the fashion of "hop, skip, and jump." Carelessness cannot tread the highway of holiness. If you would know the way to hell, you may shut your eyes and find it: a little matter of neglect will surely ruin you—"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" But if you desire to go to heaven, I beg you to remember that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." There must be determination, thought, care, attention; and faith must work with all these to produce obedience to the will of the Lord. Men are never right by accident, nor obedient to the Lord by chance; preparation of heart is wanted, and this the Lord must give. Alas! I fear some of you will miss eternal life, for you trifle about it! If you had a business to settle which involved the gain or loss of ten thousand pounds, how particular you would be; but when your whole soul is at stake, how many take up such matters at haphazard and risk eternal destruction! Not so Noah: he was precise in his obedience, and careful to remain so.

Noah obeyed at all costs. To build the huge vessel called "the ark" must have cost Noah a great deal of money and labour. He could not get everybody to work at the absurd task of building a vessel on dry land. As they would be laughed at, his workmen would be sure to demand extra pay. Possibly he had to pay double wages to every wright employed on the ark. The patriarch was content to sink all his capital and all his income in this singular venture. It was a poor speculation—so everybody told him; and yet he was quite willing to put all his eggs into that one basket. God had bidden him build, and build he would, feeling that the divine command insured him against risk. Can we do the same?

Noah went on obeying under daily scorn. The men of that generation mocked him. He went out and preached to them; but many would not hear him, for they thought him mad. Those who did listen to him said to each other, "He is building a vessel upon dry land: is he sane? We are scientific, and therefore we know how absurd his preaching is; for none ever heard of the world being drowned by a flood." They called his warning "an old wives' fable," and he himself was "an old fossil." Doubtless he was the frequent subject of sarcastic remark. I cannot reproduce the letters that were written about the sturdy patriarch, nor can I recount the spiteful things which were said by the gossips; but I have no doubt they were very clever, and very sarcastic. Those productions of genius are all forgotten now; but Noah is remembered still. For all the scorning of many he went on obeying his God: he stuck to the lines on which God had placed him, and he could not be turned to the right hand or to the left, because he had a real faith in God.

Noah's obedience followed the command as he learned it. I admire his going into the ark without a question. All the cattle and the beasts and flying things are in the ark with him, and he does not pray to be let out. We may equally admire him for coming out again when called upon to do so. After we have once been shut in, some of us had rather stop in. We are not fond of changes. We grow accustomed to a certain line of things, and find in use a second nature; and we wish to remain as we are. It is so safe in the ark, and we are so peaceful, so conscious of being in the hollow of God's hand, that we fear to come forth into a world so lately cursed. Noah came out without a question, and the first thing he did was to build an altar to the Lord, and so to prove that he was at home with God. Oh, for faith that will obey God anyhow and anywhere! You remember how God said to Elijah, "Hide thyself"; and away went the prophet to the brook Cherith, where none saw him but the fowls of heaven. A brave prophet like Elijah finds it hard to be in hiding; yet he does not disobey. Presently comes the command, "Go, show thyself"; and out he comes from his exile and stands before King Ahab, according to the word of the Lord. Whether God bids his true servants show themselves or hide themselves, they do his will at once.

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to dare and die."

The will of the Lord is to be done by his servants, whether on earth or in heaven. If he saith, "Go," they go; if he saith, "Stay," they abide in their places. Oh, for such a faith as this! It was easier for Noah to build the ark than to render so complete an obedience; but the Lord wrought in him by his grace.

IV. And now I come to my last point, upon which hear me patiently. RESULTS DID NOT FAIL TO COME. One hundred and twenty years preaching, and no converts remaining! One hundred and twenty years building a ship, and yet no water to float it! One hundred and twenty years warning people that God is about to destroy them, and yet no flood! Surely, the good man's life is a failure. No doubt wise folks said of him, "He is a good old man, but he is uncharitable, and has become an alarmist." Some style him a "pessimist," others say, "He is a bigot"; others, again, affect to deplore that the good man has made such a great mistake, and is wasting his influence under a delusion. I hear fine gentlemen saying, "Do not take much notice of the old gentleman. No doubt he is a very good man, but at the same time he is only one, and his views are very peculiar. He has gone on chopping this logic for one hundred and twenty years, and the world is not drowned yet: it is really too ridiculous." The wilder spirits meet him in the morning, and they say, "Well, father Noah, when is this flood coming? The country would be improved by a good soaking. You have raised our expectations so long, that it ought to pour when it does come. You ought to have minded the old saying, 'Never prophesy till you are sure.'" Thus would they jest at the preacher of righteousness; but Noah knew what he was at, and was not silenced. All that he did was simply to repeat his warning, and go on with his ship-building. God's time was coming on: the storm was gathering, and before long the deluge would end the mirth of the godless.

What did come of it? The first result was, *He was saved and his house*. Oh, that God would give to every preacher of righteousness this full reward—himself and his house! O my brothers in the ministry, there is no greater joy for us than to know that our children walk in the truth! Perhaps some of you fear the Lord; and yet he has never given you your Shem, Ham, and Japhet. Alas! it may even happen that she that lieth in your bosom does not yet know the Lord. Nevertheless, be you faithful to your God, and to the souls of men. Hold the truth, if you stand alone. Even if in your own house you find your worst foes, hold on, and never doubt. Do not come down a stop or two

as to holiness, nor seek a lower platform upon which to meet more cordially an ungodly world. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the power of the ever-blessed gospel. That is the one business of your life; and I believe that if you have faith in the Lord as to your family, your beloved ones shall be given you as a prey. Remember the Philippian jailer, to whom Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*" Do not rest content with half the promise. Grasp firmly the words, "and thy house." Have you an Ishmael? then get alone, and, like Abraham, cry to God, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" God will hear your prayer and bless Ishmael also. Oh, what a privilege it will be if you yourself and all your house are saved!

The next result was, that *he condemned the world.* Read, "By which he condemned the world." "Ha! ha! ha!" they said, "we judge the old man to be out of his mind." But he was their judge. The merriest jest that flashed forth at the banquet of wine was pointed with a sarcasm about old Noah and his dry-land ship; but all the while he was solemnly judging and condemning that ribald world. The Lord had made him serenely bear witness against iniquity; yes, and even to sit on the throne and condemn the world. I do not read that Noah ever entered into any dispute with the men of his times. He never argued or cavilled, much less did he wish them ill; he simply believed and told them the truth, kept his own faith intact, and went on building his ark; thus practising what he believed. In this way he condemned those who criticized him. Ah! you may laugh, ye worldlings; but the man of God is your master after all! His preaching condemned them: they know the way, and wickedly refused to run in it. His warning condemned them: they would not regard it and escape. His life condemned them, for he walked with the God whom they despised. Most of all, the ark condemned them. Did none of them ever say, as he passed it in the morning, "This is the strangest fabric that ever was. There is not, in all the world besides, such another thing as this. Yet Noah is no fool. He can make a bargain, as I found to my cost, when he was buying nails, and I tried to get double their value from him. The man is cool and calm, shrewd and sharp. He bought my wood upon the hill; but he first made an accurate estimate of the timber in it, and its worth: he bought as well as any man could do. How is it that on this one particular point he is so strange?" Did not such men at times think that there must be something in it after all? If they did not think so, at any rate the fact that Noah carried out his principles to the full, and invested all he had in the building of this strange ark, would have forced them to conviction if they had not been hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. How his faith condemned them! When the floods began to rise, and the door was shut, how the sight of the ark condemned them! I can imagine, when the water began to get knee-deep, there would be frightened ones around the ark door; but it could not be opened, since God had shut it. When the ark began to float, some of them fled to the sides of the mountains; and what a condemnation the sight of the floating ark was to them! Noah could not help them then. The day in which they might have entered was gone by. If they ever saw Noah look out of the ark, how the face which once pleaded with them would condemn them! Oh, my hearers, how often have I warned you to flee from the wrath to come! I have warned you of those dread waves of fire, and of that horrible tempest, which will sweep over all the earth, and destroy ungodly men and their works. How often have I spoken of the pit which God hath digged for the wicked, into which your feet will slide in due time unless you seek the Saviour! May be, in those days of terror, the face of the preacher will condemn you, as you remember how he looked at you with earnest love, but you would have none of his pleading, and chose to perish in your sin. Your blood shall be upon your own heads. It is a solemn thought, that one lone man condemned a world. It was one against millions! Yet the one condemned the millions. If God is with a man, though that man be

only one, he is in the majority. Men of the world wilt soon become a weeping, wailing, and despairing company; but he that stands alone for God shall be had in honour, and shall both judge and condemn the guilty world.

The last thing Noah earned by his faith was this, *he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*; for God said of him, when he bade him come into the ark, "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." God declared him righteous; not righteous by his works, although his works, following upon his faith, proved him to be righteous; but righteous by his faith. He believed God, and found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He received the righteousness which God gives through Jesus Christ to all them that believe. Wrapt in this he stood before the Lord, justified and approved. By faith he was adopted and became a son, an heir. For him the promise of the woman's seed, though it was all the Bible that he had, was quite enough. The woman's seed, and the Lamb's sacrifice, which Abel had seen, these were almost all the revelation he had known. He had no Pentateuch, no Psalms, no Gospels, no Epistles; but he so believed that little Bible of his, that he expected that Christ in him would bruise the serpent in the world. God honoured his faith, and he condemned the world. He lived when the rest perished; he was secure in his ark when the myriads were sinking in the deluge: he became "heir of the righteousness which is by faith" when others were condemned. May God make us all so, and unto his name shall be the glory through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis 6:5—22; Hebrews 11:1-7.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—913, 652, 504.

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