

THE FLOOD

Genesis 7

Noah's spiritual condition was expressed in and proved by his practical obedience. Nothing can take the place of obedience to God. All of our privileges and opportunities of grace are intended to be manifested in daily obedience. Noah's obedience was thorough. He did "according to all that God commanded him." The Word of God was the standard by which he lived.

While building the ark, Noah was the object of much laughter and ridicule. With ridicule, reproach, scorn, argument and pity, friends joined with foes to turn him from his purpose. The thoughtless said he had gone crazy. The practical said they were sure of his good intentions and perfect sincerity, but really he was entirely mistaken and wasting both time and money which could be put to a much better use. Noah listened politely but continued building. Many, no doubt, wondered about his mental condition. To Noah, however, only one thing mattered, and that was to do God's will.

At the appointed time God said unto Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." This was both a divine invitation and command. This invitation was timely. It was given on the finishing of the ark and, therefore, not too soon; also, seven days before the flood and, therefore, not too late. God's interventions in behalf of His people are always timely. His invitation was special--addressed in particular to Noah, comprehensive, gracious, urgent and final. This call from the Lord was personal and specific. He was commanded to enter the ark, not just come near it or walk around it.

It is in this divine invitation that the familiar word, "come," occurs in the Bible for the first time. It is found some 600 times in the rest of the Bible. It is noteworthy that God said "come" into the ark not "go." We have here the suggestion that God would be with him there.

Noah was not carried into the ark nor compelled to enter it. He went in of his own free will in obedient faith, being convinced of the goodness of God's purpose for him. All eight persons must have entered of their own free will. Yet, God's purpose through them for the world was carried out perfectly. The situation is exactly the same with believers in Christ. All come of their own free will in obedience to the Father's command and the Spirit's invitation. Yet, the numbers of those who come will be found in the end to fulfill exactly the eternal purpose of God.

Only faith could obey the command to leave a world, which was going on as usual and face confinement in the ark. Noah and his family were not being invited to a scene of luxury and comfort. They had to leave behind their homes and property and face a situation in which nothing but their barest necessities would be provided. The exigencies of the situation demanded this. The ark and its occupants would require all of Noah's attention so long as he was in it.

Noah possessed the only righteousness which is acceptable to God, the gift of righteousness appropriated by faith. The only true righteousness is that which is accounted to be so by God. The only righteousness which is acceptable to God today is the righteousness of Christ, worked out in a spotless life on earth, made available to sinners on Calvary and applied to them by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel in response to faith.

God's statement to Noah, "For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," emphasizes the divine observation. The thought of God watching His servants is at once a joy and a responsibility, an inspiration and a warning. When the life is wholly surrendered to God and lived in genuine sincerity, the thought of "Thou God seest me" is a delight. In the Word of God we are told that God is "well pleased" with His faithful servants. The thought that a life can give pleasure to God is one of the greatest incentives to holy living.

Righteousness is a divine requirement. The Old Testament is concerned with this requirement. It remained for New Testament times to reveal the provision of a perfect righteousness in Christ Jesus. Here God proclaimed Noah's righteousness before his contemporaries. When a man's ways please the Lord, God always lets other people know it.

God's Word constantly reminds us that God speaks and man listens; God commands and man obeys. The Bible is at once the standard and the guide of life, and no life or service is possible unless it is ever subject thereto. When God commanded Noah, his obedience was unquestioning and immediate. Noah did not trifle with the divine summons or delay obedience in the least.

The invitation and command to enter the ark was given to Noah seven days before the rain descended. It is easy for one to understand how God's servant would be ridiculed by his contemporaries. If there had been daily newspapers in those days, perhaps the following note would have appeared prior to the flood: "Yesterday afternoon the madness of our esteemed friend, Noah, who for 120 years has been preparing for a rainy day, took a new turn. Together with his family and representatives of the animal creation he moved inside the ark which he has been constructing, and we counsel all our readers who want a bit of fun to go and see the vessel in which he sits self-imprisoned."

Noah and the members of his immediate family entered the ark "because of the waters of the flood." They did so not because the waters had already appeared, but because they were coming. Likewise, the believer flees to Christ for refuge because he believes the Word of God, which warns him of the judgment to come.

Both clean and unclean beasts were taken into the ark also. Clean animals were those which might be eaten and sacrificed; whereas, in the case of the unclean ones, neither was permitted. This distinction was made under the law in order to teach a practical lesson on the difference between holiness and unholiness. Condition and character made no difference in the matter of entering the ark; so, Christ's invitation comes to the apparently clean, the religious and respectable, as well as to the gross sinner. Outside of Christ no one is clean in God's sight.

After Noah entered the ark "the Lord shut him in." During his long life Noah must have heard many doors shut, but there was never a slam before or since that meant so much as that one did. It made all the difference between the saints inside and the sinners outside, between safety and destruction, life and death. Surely Noah must have felt sad at heart that not a single person, outside his own family, to whom he had preached so faithfully and earnestly had taken his advice or heeded his warnings; for not one of them went with him into the ark. He was not dependent upon himself for safety, but upon the Lord. Noah was safe because he had

entered the ark. It was a divine and not a human fastening that guaranteed his perfect shelter. Those whom God protects never need have any fear. Noah went into the ark and God shut him in, but he was not one whit more safe than the man God has put in Christ because he has believed. To have God put you in Christ, you are just as safe from judgment as this man was as across the mountains he sailed while that storm was raging and before the water abated. There was nothing but death and destruction outside, but Noah was saved and safe on the inside because God had shut the door.

When God shut Noah in, He shut the others out. It was just as impossible for them to get in as it was for Noah to get out. That is the sad part. After Noah was shut in, nobody else got into the ark.

No Christian should entertain the idea that he is not eternally safe in Christ. Once born again, he cannot contrive to be unborn, nor can he change his Father any more than he could in the natural sphere. Shut in by the Father to security and assurance, he cannot pass out again through a door barred by God Himself, and indeed no more than Noah did does he wish to leave his refuge for the raging seas of sin and destruction outside.

It rained for forty days and nights. The waters increased and prevailed exceedingly. This great judgment did not cease until it had accomplished the whole purpose of God in sending it.