

THE MAN WHO SAVED THE HUMAN RACE

"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.

"Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness." II Peter 2:5.

Little is told us of the parentage of Noah, yet sufficient is revealed to indicate that he was the descendant of believing ancestors and the child of a God-fearing father. He began life at a time when it was growing harder and harder to live right. The world was very corrupt. Wickedness was in vogue; such wickedness as constantly burst into violence. God saw that the wickedness of man was very great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Violence is always the accompaniment of, or sequel to, moral corruption and spiritual decline. The crimes of violence which at present amaze and shock us, and give us a criminal record beyond that of any nation on the face of the earth, undoubtedly have a definite connection with the lack of faith and the forgetting of God by so many thousands of people.

I. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Genesis 6:8. This is the first thing that we are told about him. Grace is the foundation of every life that is well-pleasing to God. Grace is the source from which issues every blessing we receive. It was the grace of God and not the graces of Noah which preserved him from a watery grave.

II. Noah was a just man.

"These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:9. This does not mean that he was spotless and without sin. The faith by which he was justified rendered him just before God. From grace comes righteousness.

III. Noah was uncontaminated with the evils around him.

"These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:9. The word which is translated "perfect" means upright and genuine. It has no reference to the absence of sin. Uprightness is the result of being righteous before God through grace.

IV. Noah walked with God.

"These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:9. He is one of the two men of whom this statement is recorded. This implies the ideas of friendship and fellowship. It is noteworthy that such a life was possible amidst the environment in which he lived. It meant independence and courage, for no one else was walking in that way.

V. Noah was moved by a godly fear.

"These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Genesis 6:9. The fear of God is one motive which leads many to serve Him. Noah's heart was not chilled with fear of coming harm, but was warmed with faith in coming protection. By faith he was moved in heart.

VI. Noah obeyed God.

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." Genesis 6:22. His spiritual position, attitude, character, and fellowship were expressed and proved by his practical obedience. Nothing can take the place of obedience to God. All our privileges and opportunities of grace are intended to be manifested in daily obedience. His obedience was thorough—"according to all that God commanded him." This was the standard by which Noah lived, the Word of God, and everything that that Word had declared. Noah did not pick and choose between God's commandments. "And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him." Genesis 7:5.

Against the wickedness of his age Noah registered the protest of a godly life and a godly home.

God's fiat went forth for the destruction of the world. There was nothing abrupt or sudden in that pronouncement of doom. God's judgments always come after His mercies and follow the pleadings of the Holy Spirit. God had been patient with the sin and degradation of man. But repentance had not come, and at last the hour had struck for God to intervene. The hour comes when the pleading and the warning of God gives way to His righteous judgments.

God revealed to Noah His divine purposes and commanded him to build a place of refuge into which he could flee from the impending storm of judgment. Noah was commanded to make an ark of gopher-wood. "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." Genesis 6:14. In the prompt obedience of Noah we have one of the greatest examples of faith recorded in the Bible.

In what he did, Noah followed faithfully the directions given him by Almighty God. He did not make any suggestions to God as to improvements on the ark or how the world might be saved in a better way. He simply did as God commanded him.

Noah must have been the object of no small amount of ridicule and laughter when he commenced to build the ark. We can imagine the people scoffing at him as he toiled away at his gigantic barge. They scanned the heavens, which were cloudless, and then asked Noah where he could see the slightest sign of rain, for there was not even a cloud the size of a man's hand. Where was there any sign of a flood? Noah had the courage to endure being laughed at. Those who would be saved and live as God would have them live must be ready to endure ridicule. Today some sneer at those who hold to the simple, but grand, doctrines of the Bible. They laughed at Noah when he was building the ark, but no one laughed at him when the floods came and the earth rolled back to its original chaos. 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.

VII. Noah preached.

He was called, "A preacher of righteousness." "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly". II Peter 2:5. It was as if he hung up two pictures as an object lesson for all to see--the one showing in beautiful colors the pure

and holy righteousness of God; the other revealing the black sinfulness of men. Then he would point to the contrast between the two, and tell his hearers that if they would repent of their sin and turn to God, He would forgive them; but if they would not do so, a terrible destruction would overwhelm them. Noah did not have any difficulty in gathering a congregation, for there were plenty of people who came every day to see how the ark was progressing. Some were thoughtful, some were flippant, others hostile; but they all heard the truth as it was faithfully proclaimed to them. None could ever plead ignorance, or urge that they were never warned.

VIII. Noah prayed.

We learn this from Ezekiel (14:14,20), who classes him with Job and Daniel as a man of prayer. Evidently Noah prayed constantly for the sinners all around him. He spared nothing of labor, prayer, and preaching to turn them from their evil ways.

IX. Noah lived consistently.

How could he have lived other than rightly when he "Walked with God"? None of those who lived before the flood could ever say that he did not practice what he preached.

In spite of all the ridicule and opposition to which Noah had been exposed while he built the ark, and the doubts that were freely expressed as to whether there would ever be a flood at all -- of which the passing years gave no sign -- yet come it did, for God had said it would, and Noah was proved to be right after all. Then "God remembered Noah" Genesis 8:1. He remembered his obedience. He did not forget it on a single day in all of those years spent in building. And yet all the time that Noah was obeying he was having a very hard time, for obedience brought with it many trials. To obey gladly is not always an easy thing, is it? But if we remember God, He will remember us. In the long run obedience always pays.

God remembered Noah's safety. Just before the flood began, God said, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." Genesis 7:1. This is the first time the word "come" is found in the Scriptures, and it recurs over five hundred times in the remainder of the Bible. God did not say, "Go into the ark," but "Come". "Go" would have been a command, but "Come" was a gracious invitation; "Go" would have implied that God was bidding Noah depart from Him, but "Come" intimated that in the ark God would be present with him. The ark was a place of absolute safety.

"And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood." Genesis 7:7. "And the Lord shut him in." Genesis 7:16. 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 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. But Noah was safe because he had entered the ark.

In due time God, who had shut the door, opened it and let them out. What genuine thanksgiving for their wonderful escape and deliverance! So the first thing that Noah did was to build "an altar unto the Lord." Genesis 8:20, to dedicate himself and his family afresh to Him. Thus Noah remembered God. It was then that the first rainbow appeared,

with its pledge that God would never send another flood upon the earth. "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations; I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." Genesis 9:12-16.

I wish we could stop here with Noah. I wish we could leave him bowing with his family at that first altar of the new earth and gazing in rapture upon the tender glory of the rainbow across the heavens. But the Bible does not stop there; neither can I. The Bible does not spare its greatest heroes. In the day of his prosperity and great success Noah fell into sin; how often that happens! Here was Noah who had testified against a whole world, and had endured the ridicule and the persecution of the world; yet now, after his great witness and great deliverance by the hand of God with whom he had found grace, drinking himself drunk and lying senseless and exposed on the earth in the presence of his sons.

It is impossible to say how long after the flood this sad and tragic event took place, but, inasmuch as Noah lived 350 years after the flood, we may rightly assume that he lived long after this fall, and did not repeat his terrible sin. His fall is never mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, and we can fairly say that he was completely restored. Still, the memory must have remained to cloud the glory of his former days. This sad incident suggests:--

1. A believer is never immune from sin.
2. A believer often finds small temptations the most dangerous.
3. A believer is always liable to experience entirely new temptations.
4. A believer may be the occasion of sin in others. How sad to think of the influence of Noah on his sons. No one sins alone. Others are affected by the evil that we do.
5. A believer will suffer most bitterly for his backsliding.
6. A believer always needs to be watchful and prayerful. The best of men can and do sin.

Thank God, there is a Saviour from sin. Christ Jesus is His name.