

A RAINBOW FOR EVERY LIFE

"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." Genesis 9:13.

Sin was rampant in the earth during those days before the flood. Civilization had become so corrupt that God finally decided to destroy it. Of all who were living in those days, Noah, his wife, their three sons and their three wives were the only ones who received grace in God's sight. To Noah God gave specific instructions concerning the building of the ark. It took Noah one hundred and twenty years to build that ark, and during that interval he preached to those who gathered about him while he worked. Finally, the ark was completed, his cargo was gathered, Noah and the seven members of his family entered the ark, and the door was shut. For forty days and nights it rained. The stoutest swimmers, the strongest beasts, and the swiftest birds perished in that flood. The only ones who did not drown were those inside the ark. Such devastation and desolation were never seen before nor since.

In God's appointed time the rain stopped, and the sea of water below became calm. The ark floated until the flood water subsided and evaporated sufficiently for it to be cradled on the craggy head of Mount Ararat. Then Noah and his family found themselves on dry ground. They came forth from the ark to begin a new civilization with God. When Noah offered a sacrifice, and called upon the name of the Lord, and his worship was accepted, the Lord declared that as long as the earth remaineth the seasons shall never cease to revolve annually. As a pledge and proof that the promise thus made should be remembered and kept, God said: "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." Through all of the intervening years, God's rainbow in the sky has been seen by the successive generations of the children of men, ever reminding them of the great historical fact of the flood, and of the great theological fact of the covenant between God and man. Some look at that phenomenon and see nothing in it; while others look upon it as being not only the most beautiful scarf that is thrown over the shoulders of the blackest clouds, but as declaring the glory of God.

A rainbow contains the seven prismatic colors—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. It is produced by the rays of light falling upon drops of water. The cloud is needed as the canvas on which the rainbow is to be painted. The sun is needed to give the light or colors of which the painting is to be composed. The drops of falling rain are needed as the pencil by which these colors are to be applied, or the medium required to decompose the rays of light and spread out their varying hues in blended loveliness.

Of course, this was not the first time that God had set the rainbow in the cloud. It was a case of investing a familiar sight with a new meaning. Noah had seen the rainbow many times before. No doubt he had admired the beauty of its colors. Thereafter, he would see more in it than just the radiant beauty of its colors. Henceforth, the rainbow would have for him a spiritual meaning; it would carry his thoughts up to God; and it would be a symbol of a new covenant between God and the human race. After that day the sight of the rainbow was charged with new significance for Noah and his household. It was a reminder to Noah that he owed everything to the grace of God.

It is important for us to remember that the flood did not come of itself, and that the rainbow did not appear of itself, but that God sent both of them. In the giving of the rainbow, God ratified His promise that no more would the earth be destroyed by a flood, and He established a new relationship between Himself and His creatures. He assured Noah that the

the rainbow was a visible sign which would serve at once to confirm men in their faith and to dispel their fears.

A father was showing his little daughter a beautiful rainbow, the first one she had ever seen. He asked her, "What do you think of it?" She answered, "It's very nice, what does it advertize?"

That very modern little maiden was not altogether in the wrong. The rainbow really does advertize something. After the worldwide judgment of the flood, the sun breaking through the gloom gilded with its glory the dark messenger of judgment, it was then that God chose the glorious rainbow to be the symbol and token of His covenant with mankind and with all the earth.

It takes two things to make the rainbow, namely, the dark cloud and the sunlight falling upon the rain. Thus the rainbow becomes God's fitting symbol of promise and hope. When the clouds hang heavy and black over the world, and the outlook is dismal and threatening; when the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, and the sentence of judgment drapes the future with deepest gloom, there will also be a rainbow.

1. The rainbow is a symbol of beauty.

God, the master artist, has done a noble work in this world in which we live. What a beautiful world we may live in, if we so desire! In it is the beauty of everlasting friendships, love that outshines the stars, flowers to garnish our pathways, the birds without a wrong note.

2. The rainbow is a symbol of harmony.

All seven colors of the rainbow exist in such juxtaposition as to make a perfect chromatic whole. The rainbow is God's lesson of harmony to us. Is there discord in our lives? Is there the knowledge of personal failure? Are we thorough masters of ourselves? Any lack of harmony in our lives is a result of our unwillingness to tune our lives to the master key, even Christ.

3. The rainbow is a symbol of faith.

God said, "By the sign of the rainbow, never again shall a flood destroy the earth." Thus God was vouchsafing His faith in the future of the human race. Because He believed in men, there would be no necessity of another destruction. God believes in us. God greatly trusts us. He endows us with the possibility of divine sonship, gives us the privilege of choice, either to walk in the mud of sin or among the stars with Him. He has faith in us, and He depends upon us to live worthily in His sight. Therefore, we should live accordingly.

"I would be true, for there are those who trust me,
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer,
I would be brave, for there is much to dare."

What is the significance of the rainbow?

I. It Is The Token Of A Perpetual Covenant.

A covenant is a contract wherein one or both of the parties pledges to perform certain things. In the covenant with Noah, God made an unconditional promise that He would never again destroy the whole earth with a flood. God did not ask Noah or his family to promise anything, but simply to believe what He said. The cross of Calvary is God's pledge to those of us who trust Christ as our Saviour that the Father will never condemn us for our sins, because Christ bore the penalty for them. The believer shall not come into condemnation because he has placed his trust in Christ, Who loved him and gave Himself for him. Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

II. It Exhibits The Glory Of The Sun.

In the rainbow we see the brilliant and glorious colors that blend with the light of the sun. Likewise, in the cross of Christ we see all the marvelous attributes of God exhibited in their magnificence.

1. God's magnificent justice.

So just is He that He could not let sin go unpunished. Ages before the cross He had written: "I will by no means clear the guilty," and on the cross He laid the guilt of our sin upon His beloved Son, and visited His wrath upon Him, as our Substitute. Thus, by the punishment of Christ in our stead, God can be both, "Just and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus." If God had merely remitted the penalty He would not have been a just God. Instead of remitting it, He bore it in full in the person of His Son.

2. God's infinite love.

The Old Testament spoke of God's love, but the cross exhibited it in all of its matchless perfection. The cross shows that God's love was a love to the illdeserving. We did not deserve anything at God's hands except punishment, but God loved us and sacrificed His Son for us. The death of Christ exhibits this matchless love.

3. God's marvelous wisdom.

The plan of salvation is so wonderful it could not have been devised by human brains. All man-made religions say that "salvation must be earned," and of course that is impossible. But the cross exhibits the fact that God saves sinners by the work which Christ did, and not by anything which we have done.

4. God's matchless power.

"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:4).

III. It Forms A Bridge Between Earth and Heaven.

The ends of the rainbow are on the earth, and its arch is in the sky. All of man's efforts to please God by human works could not bridge that gulf. So, Christ on the cross, God's Rainbow, has united God and man. By His death for sin, Christ bridged the gulf between earth and heaven and made it possible for those who believe to come unto God by Him. He said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

IV. It Embraces The World.

Between the arms of the rainbow gathers all the earth that we can see. In this respect it is but a type of the all-embracing love of Christ and mercy of God. "There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea." Jesus Christ "is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2). God's grace and mercy are offered freely to every one. The rainbow is a perpetual reminder of the goodness and faithfulness of God. When men see it in the clouds, it whispers something to them about God's love and mercy.

V. It Was Designed To Be An Incentive To Holy Living.

Noah could not behold that rainbow in the sky without realizing that God loved him, and had been gracious to him, and that he ought to continue to trust and obey God. Likewise, the cross should be an incentive to holy living for all believers. It should remind us that we ought not to live to please ourselves, but to live to please God.

VI. It Is A Constant Source Of Comfort.

After escaping judgment by means of the ark, every time that Noah saw a rainbow in the sky, he was reminded of God's love, and reassured of God's announced purpose to bless him and his family. Likewise, after we have obtained deliverance from judgment through faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Christ, the rainbow reminds us that God will not withhold His blessings from us.

When the clouds come to you, who are Christians, in the form of troubles, anxieties, cares, and sorrows, God will be sure to put a rainbow in the cloud to tell you that He is not going to destroy you, but that through all He will take care of you, and fulfill every promise that He has ever made to you. You will then begin to learn that, apart from the clouds of life, you could not see as many of the beauties of God's love, just as you would never see the rainbow if there were no clouds.

It is the prerogative of faith to draw comfort from the severest trial and the darkest disaster. Frequently it takes a long time for God to get some of us to see that there is a rainbow for every life. Even in the darkest hours, when the clouds are the most numerous and foreboding, God stands ready to illuminate what seems to us so dark and awful, and to bless us richly. He comes to touch with beauty and hope what had seemed ugly and forbidding. The rainbow tells us of the tender compassion of our God. It assures us that in all our afflictions He longs to share. Regardless of how heavy the load, or how dreary the prospect, He wants us to know that He is standing by, sympathizing with, and waiting to strengthen and to cheer us.

Perhaps the clouds which infest our skies the most frequently are the following:

1. The cloud of guilt.

Every individual stands guilty of sin before God. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin" (Galatians 3:22). But, thank God, there is a rainbow of cleansing for every cloud of sin. God's Word says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 44:22). Rejoice and be grateful that the cloud of guilt is arched with the rainbow of pardon.

2. The cloud of affliction.

What is the bow that is ever manifest on the cloud of affliction for the child of God? It is the rainbow of all-wise and beneficent purpose. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worked patience (James 1:2-3). The word "divers" means many colored. Through variegated trials, faith stands the test. If we are to know the fine art of comfort, we must learn it through the afflictions that befall us. Over the cloud of affliction is the arch of God's purpose.

"I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be."

3. The cloud of mystery.

Clouds are symbolic of the dark and tragic experiences which come into each of our lives. They came into the lives of Joseph, Jeremiah, David, Peter, Paul, and multitudes of others. They will come into our lives, too. In our lives there is so much that is mysterious. But this cloud of mystery is arched with the glorious bow of God's eternal providence. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). There has never been a cloud of mystery that has come over your experience that hasn't been arched with the rainbow of providence.

4. The cloud of sorrow.

This world is a place of sorrow, which comes to all of us in turn. God does not promise to prevent the clouds of sorrow from casting their shadows over the lives of His children. But He does promise to span the clouds with the rainbow of His presence. He said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18). For God's child there is a rainbow of comfort for every cloud of sorrow.

"From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat:
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat."

5. The cloud of judgment.

Over this sinful world hangs God's cloud of righteous judgment. Yet, over that cloud is the rainbow of God's pardoning grace and mercy for all who will receive Christ as Saviour. We are saved from wrath through Him Who said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).