

The Rainbow in the Clouds

by Henry Law

The rainbow is a symbol of God's covenant with His people, promising salvation and protection to those who believe in Him.

Scripture: Genesis 9:13, Psalm 91:1, Isaiah 54:7, Romans 8:38, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Colossians 3:3, Hebrews 13:8, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 4:3

Topics: "Gods Covenant", "Eternal Security"

Description

Henry Law preaches on the significance of the rainbow as a symbol of God's covenant with the earth, reflecting His tenderness, compassion, and watchful care towards His people. The rainbow not only signifies God's promise to never again destroy the earth with a flood but also points to Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant of salvation. Believers are encouraged to see the rainbow in every trial and discouragement, finding assurance in the eternal security provided by God and Jesus, symbolized by the unchanging presence of the rainbow in the sky.

Transcript

"I have set My rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth."
Genesis 9:13

In the rainbow there is a charm, of which every eye is conscious. It looks forth through the dark windows of the storm, and earth rejoices in the reviving visit. Its lovely hues proclaim that the gloom is past. It spans the clouds, as the fair herald of returning clearness. Its noble form, its various shades of distinct and blended color, surpass all praise. Admiration can only say--it worthily magnifies its mighty Maker. Such delights become us. The book of nature is the penmanship of God. Every line should be a sanctifying lesson. Enlightened piety sings, "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all those who have pleasure therein."

But the shining light of the rainbow teaches far more than that our God is excellent to plan, and almighty to perform. To receive its especial instruction we must ponder its birth. Let us go back, then, and take our station by the side of Noah, when it first awakened his grateful thanks. His feet again trod on the solid pavement of earth. But the sound of rushing torrents had left their echo in his ear. The expanse of desolation had not faded from his view. What had been, might be again. Each gathering cloud might mantle the world in final ruin. Each falling raindrop might open the sluices of another deluge. Thus fears would lodge in his breast; and "fear has torment."

From the foreboding patriarch, let us turn to our God. He is glorious in tenderness, and pity, and compassion, and watchful care towards His people. It is His merciful will that they should repose in perfect peace. He invites them to feed by the still waters of confiding love. He would have the wings of each breeze to flutter over them--laden with joy. He would have every shadow to spread the covert of protection. But how will He calm the trembling anxieties of Noah? A word of heaven-sent promise might suffice. But He, who multiplies to pardon, multiplies also to give comfort. His word indeed shall go forth, but it shall go forth sealed with an enduring, ever-speaking seal. He will call a new wonder into being. A smiling offspring of the weeping cloud shall tranquilly assure the earth, that waters have no more a mandate to lay waste. And what is this wonder? An arch, cheering and bright, embraces the skies. On a scroll of variegated light there is inscribed, These storms drop fertility--they break to bless and not to injure.

How is this wonder framed? Jehovah's works are sublime in their simplicity. The sun looks forth from the opposite skies. Its rays enter the descending drops, and returning to the eye in broken pencils, paint the rainbow on the illuminated background. Heaven dries up the tears of earth, and the high roof above seems to take up the Gospel-hymn, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." Thus the rainbow is more than an evidence of skill and power. It is the brilliant signet on God's preserving arm. It is the golden impress, by which He ratifies the covenant, that "the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."

But faith looks further. It is ever intent to catch the image of its beloved Lord. It has learned the sound principle, that the whole field of nature reflects the beauties and glories of Jesus. It has read the testimony, that He is the "true Light," and the "true Bread," and the "true Vine." Hence it is not slow to inquire, Is He not too the truth of the "faithful witness in Heaven?" While it thus listens to drink in some Gospel-music from the rainbow, the word sounds plainly: "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will take you back. In a moment of anger I turned my face away for a little while. But with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the Lord, your Redeemer. "Just as I swore in the time of Noah that I would never again let a flood cover the earth and destroy its life, so now I swear that I will never again pour out My anger on you. For the mountains may depart and the hills disappear, but even then I will remain loyal to you. My covenant of blessing will never be broken," says the Lord, who has mercy on you. Isaiah 54:7-10.

Here the great depths of God's love are broken up. As the deluge overtopped the highest hills, so this assurance drowns the pinnacles of doubt and hesitation. It places the covenant of Noah in contrast with the covenant of Jesus. God promising to hold back a flood, pictures God, making oath, that He will save to the uttermost. The earth safe from watery waste is the Church safe from all wrath.

But if the former had a pledge impressed on the firmament, much more has the latter a seal of unfading perpetuity--even Jesus high in the glories of heaven. Thus faith sees the rainbow in the cloud, and adores the Savior on the right hand of God.

But this is not all. The rainbow, which cheers us in the first pages of our Bible, shines brightly to the last. We read in the Revelation, that John was in the Spirit--a door was opened before him in heaven--and behold, a throne was set. But what encircled it? The Rainbow! As the vision advanced, he saw a mighty angel come down from heaven clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head. Thus in the fullest blaze of the Gospel, the rainbow continued the chosen emblem of the grace and truth, which came by Jesus Christ. How can we render thanks enough for this super-added pearl in our diadem of

encouragements?

We are thus led to look for our rainbow on the brow of every threatening storm. In the world of nature it is not always visible but in the world of grace it ever shines. When the darkest clouds thicken around us, the Sun of Righteousness has neither set nor has eclipsed: and its ready smile converts the drops into an arch of peace.

Let a few cases from the diary of experience illustrate this. In our journey through the wilderness, the horizon is often obscured by storms like these; terrors of conscience, absence of peace, harassing perplexities, crushing burdens of difficulties. But from behind these dusky curtains, the rainbow strides forth in its strength. It is indeed a cheerless day, when terrors of conscience pour down pitiless peltings. Specters of past sins start up. A grim array of bygone iniquities burst their tombs; and each terrifies by hideous form, and each points to eternal death as its due. The light of life seems excluded by the dread, "Can there be hope, when sins have been so many, and so grievous--and against the clearest knowledge--and after such tender pardons, and such healings of mercy?"

Wild is this tempest's roar--but in its midst faith can still look upwards, and see Jesus with outstretched arms before the throne of God. There is a rainbow upon His Head, and the bright colors write, "Father, forgive them." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." The darkness vanishes, and clear joy returns.

Absence of peace, too, is a heavy cloud. Many a cross of spiritual distress lies in the believer's path. Today he may recline joyously on the sunny slopes of the Gospel--tomorrow the thunders of Sinai affright. Today David sits high at the banquet of the king--tomorrow he is an outcast in the cave of Adullam. Now the Church rejoices in the voice of her Beloved, that knocks, saying, "Open to Me:" soon she laments, "I sought Him, but I could not find Him."

I must not pause to explore the marshes, from which these chilly mists arise. But it is sure, that the fault is with our hearts. Sin may be indulged--then comforts die. Means of grace may be neglected--then heavenly communions are shut out. But in these dreary hours the gladdening rainbow, which crowns the Redeemer's head, will suddenly appear. In letters of light the truth is emblazoned, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." "I change not, therefore are you not consumed." "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Again the darkness vanishes, and clear joy returns.

Perplexities are often as a mass of clouds. The pilgrim would climb the hill of Zion, but impassable rocks are on either side--the sea is in the front--the Egyptians in the rear. He sighs, as the lepers of Samaria, "If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit still here, we die also." He is in the straits of David. The enemy has left him desolate; his friends are ready to stone him. But he looks aloft to Jesus, and the rainbow is bright. The "faithful and true Witness" cheers him onward: "This is the way, walk in it." "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go, I will guide you with My eye."

So, also, burdens of difficulties often oppress. The believer is ready to sink beneath the weight. Moses felt this when he said, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel?" But a Bow was in the cloud, and it sparkled with the promise, "Certainly I will be with you." He went and prospered. The women on the way to the sepulcher were in gloom, "Who," said they, "will roll us away the stone?" But a rainbow was in the cloud. Hoping against hope, they advanced, and the stone was gone. Paul trembled, when he was to stand alone before the tyrant and his court. But a rainbow was in the

cloud, and he took courage: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

Believer, have you, like Noah, been called by God into the ark of Salvation? Then, like Noah, you may trace the rainbow in every trial and discouragement. Go forward undismayed, for you are encompassed with heaven's hosts of covenant-grace. Nothing can separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. You believe that no waters can again destroy this earth. So believe, that neither sin, nor Satan can sweep you to perdition. Your "life is hidden with Christ in God." The eternal God is your tower of security. The arms of Christ are the guards around you. While God is God, mightier than Satan, you are safe. While Christ is Christ, all-sufficient to redeem, you are safe. Behold the rainbow. Satan cannot pluck it from the skies. Behold your Jesus. Satan cannot reach His throne.

But do not extol the beauties of the rainbow, you who are strangers to the sheltering ark. Alas! it is no harbinger of peace to such. It tells indeed, that God is love, and God is true. But love rejected is no friend: and truth unheeded is a relentless foe. When the clouds blacken, let such tremble--for truth says, "upon the wicked He will rain fire and brimstone, storm and tempest." When the rainbow gleams sweetly forth, let them tremble--for it warns, God has set me here as a pledge, that His word cannot be broken.

Believer, these lines guide you to look upward; may they also help you to look onward! Here you have no rainbow without a cloud and without a storm. Here you see Jesus only by the eye of faith, in emblems, in records, and in means of grace. But soon, throughout eternity's calm brightness, you will gaze upon the rainbow of His glory. And as you gaze, you will shine, even as He shines. For we shall be like Him, when we shall see Him as He is!

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