

Genesis 7:1-24

by John Calvin

John Calvin's sermon on Genesis 7:1-24 emphasizes Noah's righteousness and obedience amidst divine judgment through the flood, highlighting God's provision and promise of restoration.

Scripture: Genesis 7:2

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Gods Judgment"

Description

John Calvin preaches about the obedience and faith of Noah amidst the impending destruction of the world by a great flood. Noah, a righteous man in a corrupt generation, diligently followed God's instructions to build the ark and gather the animals. Despite the incredibility of the situation, Noah's unwavering faith and obedience led to his family's salvation. The floodwaters, breaking forth from the earth and the heavens, covered the entire earth for forty days, sparing only Noah and those with him in the ark, showcasing God's judgment and mercy.

Transcript

1. And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.
1. Et dixit Jehova ad Noah, Ingredere tu, et omnis domus tua arcam: quia to vidi justum coram me in aetate ista.
2. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.
2. Ex omni animali mundo capies tibi septena septena, virum et foemellam ejus: et ex animali quod non mundum est, bina, virum et foemellam ejus.
3. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.
3. Etiam ex volatili coeli septena, masculum et foemellam: ut vivum conservetur semen in superficie omnis terrae.
4. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

4. Quia post dies adhuc septem ego pluam super terram quadraginta dies, et quadraginta noctes, et delebo omnem substantiam quam feci, a superficie terrae.

5. And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

5. Et fecit Noah secundum omnia quae praeceperat ei Jehova.

6. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

6. Noah autem erat sexcentorum annorum quando diluvium fuit aquarum super terram.

7. 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.

7. Et ingressus Noah, et filii ejus, et uxor ejus, et uxores filiorum ejus cum eo in arcam, propter aquas diluvii.

8. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth,

8. Ex animali mundo, et ex animali quod non erat mundum, et ex volatili, et ex omni quod reptat super terram,

9. There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah.

9. Bina bina ingressa sunt ad Noah in arcam, masculus et foemella, quemadmodum praeceperat Deus ipsi Noah.

10. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

10. Et fuit, post septem dies aquae diluvii fuerunt super terram.

11. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

11. In anno sexcentesimo annorum vitae Noah, in mense secundo, in septimadecima die mensis, die ipsa, rupti sunt omnes fontes voraginis magnaeee, et fenestrae coeli apertae sunt.

12. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

12. Et fuit pluvia super terram quadraginta dies et quadraginta noctes.

13. In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

13. Ipso eodem die ingressus est Noah, et Sem, et Cham, et Jepheth, filii Noah, et uxor Noah, tresque uxores filiorum ejus cum illis, in arcam:

14. They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

14. Ipsi, et omnis bestia juxta speciem suam, et omne animal juxta speciem suam, et omne reptile quod reptat super terram, secundum speciem suam, et omne volatile juxta speciem suam, omnis abis, et omne alatum.

15. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

15. Ingressa sunt igitur ad Noah in arcam, bina bina ex omni carne in qua erat spiritus vitae.

16. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

16. Et quae ingressa sunt, masculus et foemina ex omni carne ingressa sunt, quemadmodum praeceperat ei Deus: et clausit Jehova super eum.

17. And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth.

17. Et factum est diluvium quadraginta dies super terram, et multicae sunt aquae, elevaveruntque arcam: itaque elevata est a terra.

18. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.

18. Et praevaluerunt aquae, et multiplicatae sunt valde super terram, et fluitabat arca super faciem aquarum.

19. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.

19. Roboraverunt itaque se aquae valde super terram, et operti sunt omnes montes excelsi qui erant sub universo coelo.

20. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

20. Quindecim cubitis superne roboraverunt se aquae, ita ut operti sint montes.

21. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

21. Et mortua est omnis caro quae reptabat super terram, tam de volatili quam de animali et bestia, et omni reptili quod reptat super terram, et omni homine.

22. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

22. Omnia in quorum nare erat anhelitus spiritus vitae, ex omnibus quae erant in sicco, mortua sunt.

23. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

23. Et delevit omnem substantiam vivam, quae erat super faciem terrae, ab homine usque ad jumentum, usque ad reptile, et usque ad volatile coeli: et deleta sunt e terra, et remansit tantum Noah, et qui cum eo erant in arca.

24. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

24. Et roboraverunt se aquae super terram quinquaginta et centum dies.

1. And the Lord said unto Noah . I have no doubt that Noah was confirmed, as he certainly needed to be, by oracles frequently repeated. He had already sustained, during one hundred years, the greatest and most furious assaults; and the invincible combatant had achieved memorable victories; but the most severe contest of all was, to bid farewell to the world, to renounce society and to bury himself in the ark. The face of the earth was, at that time, lovely; and Moses intimates that it was the season in which the herbs shoot forth and the trees begin to flourish.

Winter, which binds the joy of sky and earth in sharp and rugged frost, has now passed away; and the Lord has chosen the moment for destroying the world, in the very season of spring. For Moses states that the commencement of the deluge was in the second month. I know, however, that different opinions prevail on this subject; for there are three who begin the year from the autumnal equinox; but that mode of reckoning the year is more approved, which makes it commence in the month of March.

However this might be, it was no light trial for Noah to leave of his own accord, the life to which he had been accustomed during six hundred years, and to seek a new mode of life in the abyss of death. He is commanded to forsake the world, that he may live in a sepulcher which he had been labouriously digging for himself through more than a hundred years. Why was this? Because, in a little while, the earth was to be submerged in a deluge of waters. Yet nothing of the kind is apparent: all indulge in feasts, celebrate nuptials, build sumptuous houses; in short, everywhere, daintiness and luxury prevail; as Christ himself testifies, that that age was intoxicated with its own pleasures, (Lu 17:26.)

Wherefore, it was not without reason, that the Lord encouraged and fortified the mind of his servant afresh, by the renewal of the promise, lest he should faint; as if he would say 'Hitherto thou hast labored with fortitude amid so many causes of offense; but now the case especially demands that thou shouldst take courage, in order to reap the fruit of thy labor: do not, however, wait till the waters burst forth on every side from the opened veins of the earth, and till the higher waters of heaven, with opposing violence, rush from their opened cataracts; but while everything is yet tranquil, enter into the ark, and there remain till the seventh day, then suddenly shall the deluge arise.'

And although oracles are not now brought down from heaven, let us know that continual meditation on the word is not ineffectual; for as new difficulties perpetually arise before us, so God, by one and another promise, establishes our faith, so that our strength being renewed, we may at length arrive at the goal. Our duty, indeed, is, attentively to hear God speaking to us; and neither through depraved fastidiousness, to reject those exercises, by which He cherishes, or excites, or confirms our faith, according as he knows it to be still tender, or languishing, or weak; nor yet to reject them as superfluous.

For thee have I seen righteous. When the Lord assigns as his reason for preserving Noah, that he knew him to be righteous, he seems to attribute the praise of salvation to the merit of works; for if Noah was saved because he was righteous, it follows, that we shall deserve life by good works. But here it behaves us cautiously to weigh the design of God; which was to place one man in contrast with the whole world, in

order that, in his person, he might condemn the unrighteousness of all men.

For he again testifies, that the punishment which he was about to inflict on the world was just, seeing that only one man was left who then cultivated righteousness, for whose sake he was propitious to his whole family. Should any one object, that from this passage, God is proved to have respect to works in saving men, the solution is ready; that this is not repugnant to gratuitous acceptance, since God accepts those gifts which he himself has conferred upon his servants. We must observe, in the first place, that he loves men freely, inasmuch as he finds nothing in them but what is worthy of hatred, since all men are born the children of wrath, and heirs of eternal malediction.

In this respect he adopts them to himself in Christ, and justifies them by his mere mercy. After he has, in this manner, reconciled them unto himself, he also regenerates them, by his Spirit, to new life and righteousness. Hence flow good works, which must of necessity be pleasing to God himself. Thus he not only loves the faithful but also their works. We must again observe, that since some fault always adheres to our works, it is not possible that they can be approved, except as a matter of indulgence.

The grace, therefore, of Christ, and not their own dignity or merit, is that which gives worth to our works. Nevertheless, we do not deny that they come into the account before God: as he here acknowledges and accepts the righteousness of Noah which had proceeded from his own grace; and in this manner (as Augustine speaks) he will crown his own gifts. We may further notice the expression, "I have seen thee righteous before me;" by which words, he not only annihilates all that hypocritical righteousness which is destitute of interior sanctity of heart, but vindicates his own authority; as if he would declare, that he alone is a competent judge to estimate righteousness.

The clause, in this generation, is added, as I have said, for the sake of amplification; for so desperate was the depravity of that age, that it was regarded as a prodigy, that Noah should be free from the common infection.

2. Of every clean beast. He again repeats what he had before said concerning animals, and not without occasion. For there was no little difficulty in collecting from woods, mountains, and caves, so great a multitude of wild beasts, many species of which were perhaps altogether unknown; and there was, in most of them, the same ferocity which we now perceive. Wherefore, God encourages the holy man, lest being alarmed with that difficulty, and having cast aside all hope of success, he should fail. Here, however, at first sight, appears some kind of contradiction, because whereas he before had spoken of pairs of animals, he now speaks of sevens. But the solution is at hand; because, previously, Moses does not state the number, but only says that females were added as companions to the males; as if he had said, Noah himself was commanded not to gather the animals promiscuously together, but to select pairs out of them for the propagation of offspring. Now, however, the discourse is concerning the actual number. Moreover, the expression, by sevens, is to be understood not of seven pairs of each kind, but of three pairs, to which one animal is added for the sake of sacrifice. 276 Besides, the Lord would have a threefold greater number of clean animals than of others preserved, because there would be a greater necessity of them for the use of man. In which appointment, we must consider the paternal goodness of God towards us, by which he is inclined to have regard to us in all things.

3. To keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. That is, that hence offspring might be born. But this is referred to Noah; for although, properly speaking, God alone gives life, yet God here refers to those duties which he had enjoined upon his servant: and it is with respect to his appointed office, that God commands

him to collect animals that he may keep seed alive. Nor is this extraordinary, seeing that the ministers of the gospel are said, in a sense, to confer spiritual life. In the clause which next follows, upon the face of all the earth, there is a twofold consolation: that the waters, after they had covered the earth for a time, would again cease, so that the dry surface of the earth should appear; and then, that not only should Noah himself survive, but, by the blessing of God, the number of animals should be so increased, as to spread far and wide through the whole world. Thus, in the midst of ruin, future restoration is promised to him. Moses is very earnest in showing that God took care, by every means, to retain Noah in obedience to his word, and that the holy man entirely acquiesced. This doctrine is very useful, especially when God either promises or threatens anything incredible, since men do not willingly receive what seems to them improbable. For nothing was less accordant with the judgment of the flesh, than that the world should be destroyed by its Creator; because this was to subvert the whole order of nature which he had established. Wherefore, unless Noah had been well admonished of this terrible judgment of God, he never would have ventured to believe it; lest he should conceive of God as acting in contradiction to himself. The word **הַיְקוֹם** (hayekom ,) which Moses here uses has its origin from a word signifying to stand; but it properly means whatever lives and flourishes.

5. And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded . This is not a bare repetition of the former sentence; but Moses commends Noah's uniform tenor of obedience in keeping all God's commandments; as if he would say, that in whatever particular it pleased God to try his obedience, he always remained constant. And, certainly, it is not becoming to obey one or another commandment of God only, so that when we have performed a defective obedience, we should feel at liberty to withdraw; for we must keep in memory the declaration of James,

'He who forbade thee to kill, forbade thee also to steal, and to commit adultery,' (Jas 2:11.)

6. And Noah was six hundred years old . It is not without reason that he again mentions the age of Noah. For old age has this among other evils, that it renders men more indolent and morose; whence the faith of Noah was the more conspicuous, because it did not fail him in that advanced period of life. And as it was a great excellence, not to languish through successive centuries, so big promptitude deserves no little commendation; because, being commanded to enter the ark, he immediately obeyed. When Moses shortly afterwards subjoins, that he had entered on account of the waters of the deluge, the words ought not to be expounded, as if he were compelled, by the rushing of the waters, to flee into the ark; but that he, being moved with fear by the word, perceived by faith the approach of that deluge which all others ridiculed. Wherefore, his faith is again commended in this place, because, indeed, he raised his eyes above heaven and earth.

8. Of clean beasts . Moses now explains, -- what had before been doubtful, -- in which manner the animals were gathered together into the ark, and says that they came of their own accord. If this should seem to any one absurd, let him recall to mind what was said before, that in the beginning every kind of animals presented themselves to Adam, that he might give them names. And, truly, we dread the sight of wild beasts from no other cause than this, that seeing we have shaken off the yoke of God, we have lost that authority over them with which Adam was endued. Now, it was a kind of restoration of the former state of things when God brought to Noah those animals which he intended should be preserved through Noah's labor and service. For Noah retained the untamed animals in his ark, in the very same way in which hens and geese are preserved in a coop. And it is not superfluously added, that the animals themselves came, as God had instructed Noah; for it shows that the blessing of God rested on the obedience of Noah, so that his labor should not be in vain. It was impossible, humanly speaking, that in a moment such an

assemblage of all animals should take place; but because Noah, simply trusting the event with God, executed what was enjoined upon him; God, in return, gave power to his own precept, that it might not be without effect. Properly speaking, this was a promise of God annexed to his commands. And, therefore, we must conclude, that the faith of Noah availed more, than all snares and nets, for the capture of animals; and that, by the very same gate, lions, and wolves, and tigers, meekly entered, with oxen, and with lambs, into the ark. And this is the only method by which we may overcome all difficulties; while, -- being persuaded, that what is impossible to us is easy to God, -- we derive alacrity from hope. It has before been stated that the animals entered in by pairs. We have also related the different opinions of interpreters respecting the month in which the deluge took place. For since the Hebrews begin their year in sacred things from March, but in earthly affairs from September; or, -- which is the same thing, -- since the two equinoxes form with them a double commencement of the year, some think that the sacred year, and some the political, is here intended. But because the former method of reckoning the years was Divinely appointed, and is also more agreeable to nature, it seems probable that the deluge began about the time of spring.

11. The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up. Moses recalls the period of the first creation to our memory; for the earth was originally covered with water; and by the singular kindness of God, they were made to recede, that some space should be left clear for living creatures. And this, philosophers are compelled to acknowledge, that it is contrary to the course of nature for the waters to subside, so that some portion of the earth might rise above them. And Scripture records this among the miracles of God, that he restrains the force of the sea, as with barriers, lest it should overwhelm that part of the earth which is granted for a habitation to men. Moses also says, in the first chapter, that some waters were suspended above in the heaven; and David, in like manner, declares, that they are held enclosed as in a bottle. Lastly, God raised for men a theater in the habitable region of the earth; and caused, by his secret power, that the subterraneous waters should not break forth to overwhelm us, and the celestial waters should not conspire with them for that purpose. Now, however, Moses states, that when God resolved to destroy the earth by a deluge, those barriers were torn up. And here we must consider the wonderful counsel of God; for he might have deposited, in certain channels or veins of the earth, as much water as would have sufficed for all the purposes of human life; but he has designedly placed us between two graves, lest, in fancied security, we should despise that kindness on which our life depends. For the element of water, which philosophers deem one of the principles of life, threatens us with death from above and from beneath, except so far as it is restrained by the hand of God. In saying that the fountains were broken up, and the cataracts opened, his language is metaphorical, and means, that neither did the waters flow in their accustomed manner, nor did the rain distil from heaven; but that the distinctions which we see had been established by God, being now removed, there were no longer any bars to restrain the violent irruption.

12. And the rain was upon the earth. Although the Lord burst open the floodgates of the waters, yet he does not allow them to break forth in a moment, so as immediately to overwhelm the earth, but causes the rain to continue forty days; partly, that Noah, by long meditation, might more deeply fix in his memory what he had previously learned, by instruction, through the word; partly, that the wicked, even before their death, might feel that those warnings which they had held in derision, were not empty threats. For they who had so long scorned the patience of God, deserved to feel that they were gradually perishing under that righteous judgment of his, which, during a hundred years, they had treated as a fable. And the Lord frequently so tempers his judgments, that men may have leisure to consider with more advantage those judgments which, by their sudden eruption, might overcome them with astonishment. But the wonderful

depravity of our nature shows itself in this, that if the anger of God is suddenly poured forth, we become stupefied and senseless; but if it advances with measured pace, we become so accustomed to it as to despise it; because we do not willingly acknowledge the hand of God without miracles; and because we are easily hardened, by a kind of superinduced insensibility, at the sight of God's works.

13. In the self-same day entered Noah , and Shem , etc . A repetition follows, sufficiently particular, considering the brevity with which Moses runs through the history of the deluge, yet by no means superfluous. For it was the design of the Spirit to retain our minds in the consideration of a vengeance too terrible to be adequately described by the utmost severity of language. Besides, nothing is here related but what is difficult to be believed; wherefore Moses the more frequently inculcates these things, that however remote they may be from our apprehension, they may still obtain credit with us. Thus the narration respecting the animals refers to this point; that by the faith of holy Noah they were drawn from their woods and caverns and were collected in one place from their wandering courses, as if they had been led by the hand of God. We see, therefore, that Moses does not insist upon this point without an object; but he does it to teach us that each species of animals was preserved, not by chance, nor by human industry, but because the Lord reached out and offered to Noah himself, from hand to hand, (as they say,) whatever animal he intended to keep alive.

16. And the Lord shut him in . This is not added in vain, nor ought it to be lightly passed over. That door must have been large, which could admit an elephant. And truly, no pitch would be sufficiently firm and tenacious, and no joining sufficiently solid, to prevent the immense force of the water from penetrating through its many seams, especially in an irruption so violent, and in a shock so severe. Therefore, Moses, to cut off occasion for the vain speculations which our own curiosity would suggest, declares in one word, that the ark was made secure from the deluge, not by human artifice, but by divine miracle. It is, indeed, not to be doubted that Noah had been endued with new ability and sagacity, that nothing might be defective in the structure of the ark. But lest even this favor should be without success, it was necessary for something greater to be added. Wherefore, that we might not measure the mode of preserving the ark by the capacity of our own judgment, Moses teaches us that the waters were not restrained from breaking in upon the ark, by pitch or bitumen only, but rather by the secret power of God, and by the interposition of his hand.

17. And the flood was forty days , etc . Moses copiously insists upon this fact, in order to show that the whole world was immersed in the waters. Moreover, it is to be regarded as the special design of this narrations that we should not ascribe to fortune, the flood by which the world perished; how ever customary it may be for men to cast some veil over the works of God, which may obscure either his goodness or his judgments manifested in them. But seeing it is plainly declared, that whatever was flourishing on the earth was destroyed, we hence infer, that it was an indisputable and signal judgment of God; especially since Noah alone remained secure, because he had embraced, by faith, the word in which salvation was contained. He then recalls to memory what we before have said; namely how desperate had been the impiety, and how enormous the crimes of men, by which God was induced to destroy the whole world; whereas, on account of his great clemency, he would have spared his own workmanship, had he seen that any milder remedy could have been effectually applied. These two things, directly opposed to each other, he connects together; that the whole human race was destroyed, but that Noah and his family safely escaped. Hence we learn how profitable it was for Noah, disregarding the world, to obey God alone: which Moses states not so much for the sake of praising the man, as for that of inviting us to imitate his example. Moreover, lest the multitude of sinners should draw us away from God; we must patiently bear

that the ungodly should hold us up to ridicule, and should triumph over us, until the Lord shall show by the final issue, that our obedience has been approved by him. In this sense, Peter teaches that Noah's deliverance from the universal deluge was a figure of baptism, (1Pe 3:21;) as if he had said, the method of the salvation, which we receive through baptism, agrees with this deliverance of Noah. Since at this time also the world is full of unbelievers as it was then; therefore it is necessary for us to separate ourselves from the greater multitude, that the Lord may snatch us from destruction. In the same manner, the Church is fitly, and justly, compared to the ark. But we must keep in mind the similitude by which they mutually correspond with each other; for that is derived from the word of God alone; because as Noah believing the promise of God, gathered himself his wife and his children together, in order that under a certain appearance of death, he might emerge out of death; so it is fitting that we should renounce the world and die, in order that the Lord may quicken us by his word. For nowhere else is there any security of salvation. The Papists, however, act ridiculously who fabricate for us an ark without the word.

Footnotes

276

Le Clerc objects to this interpretation, and supposes that seven of each sex, of unclean animals, were admitted into the ark. Perhaps a skeptical objection to the use of the seventh animal, as a sacrifice, inclined him to adopt this interpretation. Commentators, however, have generally preferred the solution here given. -- Ed.

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