

Setting" the Mind On" Eternity - Part 3

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

A time of refreshing is a period of spiritual revival and renewal, where God pours out His Spirit and brings people to a deeper understanding and experience of His presence.

Scripture: Isaiah 44:3

Topics: "Revival", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the necessity of seeking a time of refreshing from God, highlighting that true revival and spiritual awakening come only through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He urges believers to recognize their thirst for God and to pray earnestly for revival, as it is God who initiates and sustains the work of grace in their lives. M'Cheyne also warns against relying on human ministers for spiritual renewal, reminding the congregation that it is God alone who can pour out His Spirit and bring about transformation. He encourages both ministers and believers to cry out for revival, as it is essential for spiritual growth and the salvation of souls. Ultimately, M'Cheyne calls for a deep longing for God's presence and a commitment to prayer as the means to experience His refreshing grace.

Transcript

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A Time of Refreshing

"The wounds of Christ were the greatest outlets of His glory that ever were. The divine glory shone more out of His wounds than out of all His life before." - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lords (Isaiah 44:3-5).

These words describe a time of refreshing. There are no other words in the whole Bible that have been more often in my heart and on my tongue since I began my ministry. Although God has never left me without some tokens of His presence, He has not yet fulfilled this promise. I have taken it up today in order that we may consider it more fully and plead it more earnestly with God.

God Is the Author of a Work of Grace It is God who begins to convict dead souls of their spiritual condition. So it is in Zechariah 12:10: I will pour . . . the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn. Likewise, this is the promise in John 16:8-9a: And when he is come, he will convict the world of sin . . . because they believe not on me. If any of you have been awakened to concern about your soul, God alone has done it.

In the same way, if we are ever to see a time of widespread revival that will cause people young and old to cry out, What must I do to be saved? God must pour out the Spirit. It is God who carries on the work. He leads awakened persons to Christ. Again, John describes the Spirits function: He shall convict the world . . . of righteousness (16:8). If ever we are to see multitudes of souls flying like clouds to Jesus Christ--if ever we are to see parents rejoicing over their children, husbands rejoicing over their wives, and wives rejoicing over their husbands--God must pour out the Spirit.

He is the author and finisher of a work of grace (Phil. 1:6). It is God who enlarges His people. Remember how the olive trees supplied the golden candlesticks with oil in Zechariah 4--they emptied the oil out of themselves (v. 12). If there is little oil, the lamps burn dim, but if much oil, the lamps begin to blaze. If ever we are to see the children of God filled with joy and growing like willows beside the watercourses, God must pour down His Spirit. He must fulfill His Word, and He has promised that He is the Alpha and Omega, the author and finisher of a work of grace.

Because God is the author of grace, we must learn to look beyond ministers for a work of grace. God has given much honor to His ministers, but not the power to pour out the Spirit. He keeps that in His own hand. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts (Zech. 4:6). We would have little hope if a work of grace depended upon ministers, for where are our men of might now? God is as able to send His Spirit today as He was at the day of Pentecost, but men are focused on ministers and not on God.

As long as people look to ministers, God cannot pour, because then they would say the work came from man. Stop looking to man! One would think we would be humbled in the dust by this time. In how many churches has God raised up faithful men who ceaselessly warn everyone with tears? And yet the heavens are still like brass and the earth like iron. Look away from man to God. Then He will pour out the Spirit, and His shall be all the glory. Because times of refreshing come from God, we have good reason to pray for them.

We are often preaching to awaken others, but we should concentrate even more on praying. Prayer is more powerful than preaching. It is prayer that gives preaching all its power. I observe that some Christians are very ready to censure ministers and to complain of their preaching, of their coldness, and of

their unfaithfulness. God forbid that I should ever defend deadness in the ambassador of Christ! But the blame for unfaithfulness lies in the lack of faithful praying. Note that even the hands of Moses would have fallen down had they not been held up by his faithful people. Come, then, you wrestlers with God--strive with God that He may fulfill His Word.

God Begins with Thirsty Souls Distressed wanderers. There are often souls that have been under the heavy hand of God for a long time. God has led them into trouble but not into peace. He has taken them down into the wilderness, and there they wander about in search of refreshing waters, but they find none. They go from well to well seeking a drop of water to cool their tongue, and from minister to minister opening their mouths and panting earnestly, yet they find no peace. These are thirsty souls.

Now, it is a sweet thought that God begins with such as these: I will pour water upon him that is thirsty (Isa. 44:3). The whole Bible shows that God has a peculiar tenderness for those who are thirsty. Christ, who is the express image of God, had compassion on those who were weak: Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28). If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink (John 7:37). Many of Jesus cures were intended to win the hearts of burdened souls.

The woman who had spent everything she had upon other physicians, and who was worse rather than better, no sooner touched the hem of His garment than she was made whole (Luke 8:43-44). Another was bowed down 18 years but Jesus laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight (Luke 13:13). Weary sinner, this is what Jesus wants to do for you! Only learn that it must come from His hand. You try other physicians in vain. You will get worse rather than better. Instead, wait on Him.

Kneel and worship Him, saying, Lord, help me. Long for a time of refreshing that weary souls may be brought into peace. Arise and plead with God that He may fulfill His Word. Thirsty believers. All believers should be thirsty, but few are. Those who are genuinely so are thirsty for the Word. When two travelers are going through the wilderness, you can tell which of them is thirsty by noticing who is always looking out for wells. Thirsty believers love the Word read and preached.

They thirst for it more and more. Is it so with you, dear believing brethren? It is a fearful sign to see little thirst in the children of God. I do not wonder when the world stays away from our meetings for the Word and prayer but when professing believers do, my soul weeps for the pride of the church. God grant that we may not have famine of the Word for very long. Thirst will lead believers to united prayer, which is the well where living water may be drawn. If your town were in desperate need of water, would you not meet one with another to consult and dig new wells?

Yet now our towns are in much need of grace. Souls are perishing for lack of it, and you yourselves are languishing. Oh, meet to pray! Thirst will also evidence itself in a desire to grow in grace. Some persons are contented when they come to Christ. They sink back, as it were, into an easy chair. They do not ask or wish for more. This must not be. If you are thirsty believers, you will seek salvation as much after conversion as before it: Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13b-14).

God Pours Floods on the Dry Ground

The dry ground represents those who are dead in trespasses and sins just as you have seen the ground in a dry summer all parched and dry. Dry ground does not ask the clouds to rain. So it is with most in our

churches. They are all dead and dry, parched and withered, without a prayer for grace or even a desire for it. Yet God says, I will pour floods upon them.

The signs of dryness abound in the church:

They do not pray. I believe there are many in our churches who never pour out their heart to God. Many are dropping into hell who never so much as said: God, be merciful to me, a sinner. These are the dry ground. It is sad to think that the souls that are nearest to hell are the souls that pray least to be delivered from it.

They do not wish a work of grace in their souls. I believe that many of you regularly go to the house of God who would rather lose house, home, and friends than have a work of grace done in your heart. You love death. Nothing would terrify you so much as the idea that God might make you a praying Christian. You are the dry ground.

Those who do not attend to the preached Word. I have heard people under deep conviction of sin declare that they never really heard a sermon in all their life until their consciences were awakened. During every sermon, they were preoccupied with other thoughts. I believe this is the way with many of you. You are the dry ground.

What will God pour out on you? Instead of floods of wrath, He will pour out floods of grace, floods of the Spirit, floods of blessing. The mercy of God passes all understanding! You deserve the Flood that came on the world of the ungodly, but He offers floods of blessing. You deserve the rain of Sodom, but behold, He offers floods of His Spirit.

Christians, we should be the first to cry out for refreshing! Gods own Word encourages us to pray for floods. He puts the words into our mouths. Therefore, do not ask for drops when God offers a deluge. Rather, Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it (Ps. 81:10).

God Causes New Life and Spiritual Prosperity

Saved souls will be like grass. At present, Christs people are like a single lily among many thorns, but in a time of grace they shall be like grass. Count the blades of grass that spring up in the clear sunshine after rain; so many shall Christs people be. Count the drops of dew that come in the morning and the stars that sparkle in the night sky; so shall Christs people be in the day of His power. Oh, pray for an outpoured Spirit, you men of prayer, that there may be many raised up in our day to call Him blessed!

Believers shall grow like willows. There is nothing more distressing in our day than the lack of growth among the children of God. They do not seem to be pressing forward or to be running a race. When I compare this year with last year, where is the difference? The same weakness and coldness persists. I fear that there is great laziness in divine things.

How different is the description of saints in the New Testament when the Spirit was poured out! They were like a willow that grows day and night and never ceases shooting out new branches. Cut it down and it springs up again. So would you, dear Christians, spring up if there were a flood time of the Spirit in our day. Then you would care less about material success than prayer and praise. You would experience more change in your heart--victory over the world, the devil, and the flesh. Even in affliction, you would grow in sweet submission, humility, and meekness.

Self-dedication. One shall say, I am the Lords (Isa. 44:5a). There is no greater joy than for a believing soul to give himself all to God. This has always been the way in times of refreshing. It was so at Pentecost. First they gave their own selves unto the Lord. It was so with Jonathan Edwards and all the holy men of old.

I have this day been before God, says Edwards, and have given myself--all that I am and have--to God so that I am in no respect my own. I can claim no right to myself--in this understanding, this will, these affections. Neither have I right to this body, or any of its members--no right to this tongue, these hands, these feet, these eyes, these ears. I have given myself clean away.

Oh, that you would know the joy of giving yourself away! You cannot keep yourself. This day try and give all to Him. Lie in His hand. Little children, write on your hand: I am the Lords.

Chapter six

The Cry for Revival

"The nearer you take anything to the light, the darker its spots will appear; and the nearer you live to God, the more you will see your own utter vileness." - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

It is interesting to notice the time when this prayer was offered. It was a time of mercy. "Lord thou hast been favorable unto thy land". It was a time when God had led many to the knowledge of Christ, and covered many sins. "thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people." It was now they began to feel their need of another visit of mercy -- "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

"Revive us again," or literally, return and make us live anew. It is the prayer of those who have received some life, but feel their need of more. They had been made alive by the Holy Spirit. They felt the sweetness and excellence of this new, hidden, divine life. They pant for more -- "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

"That thy people may rejoice in thee." They plead with God to do this for the sake of His people, that their joy may be full; and that it may be in the Lord -- in the Lord of their Righteousness -- in the Lord their Strength.

When is the Prayer needed:

In A Time of Backsliding

There are many times when, like Ephesus, many of God's children lose their first love. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. Believers lose their close and near communion with God. They go out of the holiest, and pray at a distance with a curtain between. They lose their fervency, sweetness, and fulness in secret prayer. They do not pour out their hearts to God

They have lost their clear discovery of Christ. They see Him but dimly. They have lost the sight of His beauty -- the savor of His good ointment -- the hold of His garment. They seek him, but find Him not. They cannot stir up the heart to lay hold on Christ.

The Spirit dwells scantily in their soul. The living water seems almost dried up within them. The soul is dry and barren. Corruptions are strong: grace is very weak.

Love to the brethren fades. United prayer is forsaken. The little assembly no more appears beautiful. Compassion for the unconverted is low and cold. Sin is unrebuked, though committed under their eye. Christ is not confessed before men. Perhaps the soul falls into sin, and is afraid to return; it stays far off from God, and lodges in the wilderness.

Ah! This is the case, I fear with many. It is a fearfully dangerous time. Nothing but a visit of the Holy Spirit to your soul can persuade you to return. Is it not a time this prayer -- "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

The soul of a believer needs grace every moment. "By the grace of God I am what I am." But there are times when he needs more grace than at other times. Just as the body continually needs food; but there are times when it needs food more than at others -- times of great bodily exertion, when all powers are to be put forth.

Sometimes the soul of a believer is exposed to hot persecution. Reproach breaks the heart; or it beats like a scorching sun upon the head. "For my love they are my adversaries." Sometimes they are God's children who reproach us, and this is still harder to bear. The soul is ready to rest or sink under it.

Sometimes it is flattery that tempts the soul. The world speaks well of us, and we are tempted to pride and vanity. This is still worse to bear.

Sometimes Satan strives within us, by stirring up fearful corruptions, till there is a tempest within. Oh, is there a tempted soul that reads these words? Jesus prays for thee. You need more peace. Nothing but the oil of the Spirit will feed the fire of grace when Satan is casting water on it. Send up this cry, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

Who needs this revival?

Ministers Need It

Ministers are naturally hard-hearted and unbelieving as other men (Mark 6:14), so that Christ has often to unbraids them. Their faith is all from above. They must receive from God all that they give. In order to speak the truth with power, they need a personal grasp of it. It is impossible to speak with power from mere head knowledge, or even from past experience. If we would speak with energy, it must be from present feeling of the truth as it is in Jesus. We cannot speak of the hidden manna unless we have the taste of it on our mouth. We cannot speak of the living water unless it be springing up within us. Like John the Baptist, we must see Jesus coming, and say; "Behold the Lamb of God." We must speak with Christ in our eye, as Stephen did. "I see Jesus standing on the right hand of God." We must speak from a present sense of pardon and access to God, or our words will be cold and lifeless. But how can we do this if we are not quickened from above. Ministers are far more exposed to be cast down than other men; they are standard bearers, and Satan loves when a standard-bearer fainteth. Oh, what need of full supplies out of Christ's fulness! Pray, beloved, that it may be so. "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

God's Children Need It

The divine life is all from above. They have no life till they come to Christ. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Now this life is maintained by union to Christ, and by getting fresh supplies every moment out of His fullness. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in Him." In some believers this life is maintained by a constant inflowing of the Holy Spirit -- "I will water it ever moment" -- like the constant supply which the branch receives from the vine.

These are the happiest and most even Christians. Others have flood-tides of the Spirit carrying them higher and higher. Sometimes they get more in a day than for months before. In the one of these, grace is like a river; in the other, it is like a shower coming down in its season. Still, in both there is need of revival. The natural heart is all prone to wither. Like a garden in summer, it dries up unless watered. The soul grows faint and weary in well-doing. Grace is not natural to the heart. The old heart is always for drying and fading. So the child of God needs to be continually looking out, like Elijah's servant, for the little cloud over the sea. You need to be constantly pressing near the Fountain of living waters; yea, lying down at the well-head of salvation, and drinking the living water. "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

Those Formerly Awakened Need It

A drop fell from heaven upon their hearts. They trembled, wept, prayed. But the showers passed by, and the rocky heart ceased to tremble. The eye again closed in slumber; the lips forgot to pray. Ah, how common and sad is this case! The King of Zion lifted up His voice in this place and cried. Some that were in their graves heard His voice, and began to live. But this passed by, and now they sink back again into the grace of a dead soul. Ah! This is a fearful state! To go back to death, to love death, and wrong your soul. What can save such a one, but another call from Jesus? "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." For your sake most of all I pray, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

Barren Fig Trees Need It

Some of you have been planted in this vineyard. You have enjoyed sun and shower. You have passed through all this time of awakening without being moved. You are still dead, barren, unconverted, fruitless. Ah! There is for you no hope but in this prayer. Ordinary times will not move you. Your heart is harder than that of other men. What need have you to pray for a deep, pure, effectual work of God, and that you may not be passed by. Many of you would stand the shock much better now. Many of you have grown experienced in resisting God, and quenching the Spirit. Oh, pray for a time that will remove mountains. None but the Almighty Spirit can touch your hard heart. "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

For Whom Revival Comes It is God who must revive us again. It is not human work. It is all divine. If you look to men to do it, you will only get that curse in Jeremiah 17. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." The Lord has all the men in His hands. The Son of Man holds the seven stars in His right hand. The stars are His ministers. He lifts them up, or lets them down, at His sovereign will. He gives them all their light, or He takes it away. He holds them up and lets them shine clearly, or He holds them in the hollow of His hand, as it seemeth good in His sight.

Sometimes He lets them shine on one district of a country, sometimes another. They only shine to lead to Him. The star that leads away from Him is a wandering star, and Christ will cast it into the blackness for ever. We should pray to Christ to make His ministers shine on us. The Lord had the fullness of the Spirit to Him. The Father has entrusted the whole work of redemption into the hands of Jesus, and so the spirit is given to Him. "As the Father hath life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will, so hath he given the son to have life in himself, and to quicken whom he will."

It is He that pours down the Spirit in His sovereignty on those that never knew Him. "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Truly, the whole work from the beginning to end is His. Every means will be in vain until He pours the spirit down (Isaiah 32:15): Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers, "Until the spirit be poured upon

us from on high." We may preach publicly, and from house to house, we may teach the young, and warn the old, but all will be in vain; until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, briars and thorns shall grow.

Our vineyard shall ne like the garden of the sluggard. We need that Christ should awake; that He should make bare His arm as in the days of old; that He should shed down the Spirit abundantly. The children of God should plead with Him. Put your finger on the promise, and plead, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, I the Lord will hear them" (Isaiah 41:17). Tell Him you are poor and needy. Spread out your wants before Him. Take your emptiness to His Fullness.

There is an infinite supply with Him for everything you need, at the very moment you need it Ungodly men, you are saying, there is no promise to us. But there is, if you will receive it. Psalms 68:28; "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." Are you a rebel? Go and tell Him so. Oh, if you are willing to be justified by Him, and get your rebel heart changed, go and ask Him, and He will give you living water.

Proverbs 1:23; "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." Go and tell Him you are a "Simple one, a scorner". Ask Him to do what He has promised in Ezekiel 34:26; "And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." Now you cannot say you belong to Zion's hill, but you can say you are in the places around this hill. Oh, cry, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

The Effects of A Revival The Lord's children rejoice in Him. They rejoice in Jesus Christ. The purest joy in the world is joy in Christ Jesus. When the Spirit is poured down, His people get very near and clear views of the Lord Jesus. They eat His flesh and drink His blood. They come to a personal cleaving to the Lord. They taste that the Lord is gracious. His blood and righteousness appear infinitely perfect, full, and free to their souls. They sit under His shadow with great delight.

They rest in the cleft of the rock. Their defense is the munitions of rocks. They lean on the Beloved. They find infinite strength in Him for the use of their soul -- grace for grace -- all they can need in any hour of trial and suffering to the very end. Then go by Him to the Father. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We find a portion there -- a shield, and exceeding great reward. This gives joy unspeakable and full of glory. Now, God loves to see His children happy in Himself.

He loves to see all our springs in Him. Take and plead that. Oh, you would pray after a different manner if God were to pour water on the thirsty. You would tell Him all, open to Him all sorrows, joys, cares, comforts. All would be told to Him. Many flock to Christ. "Who are these that fly like a cloud, and like doves to their windows?" "To him shall the gathering of the people be." Just as all the creatures came into the ark, so poor sinners run in such a time. Laying aside their garments (Mark 10:50), their jealousies, they flee together into the ark Jesus.

Oh, there is not a lovelier sight in all this world. Souls are saved. "Is this not a brand plucked out of the fire?" There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. They are passed from death unto life." It is glorifying to God. "He that receives Christ, sets to his seal that God is true." He confesses the holiness of God, His love and grace. His mouth is filled with praise. "Bless the Lord, O my soul! " He begins to long for the image of God, to confess Him before men, to walk in His ways.

It gives joy in heaven, and joy in earth. Oh, pray for such a time. There is an awakening again of those who have gone back. IF we have not a time of the outpouring of the Spirit, many who once sought Christ, but have gone back, will perish in a dreadful manner; for they generally turn worse than before. Sometimes they scoff and make a jest of it all. Satan is all the worse, that he once was an angel. So they become all the more wicked who have gone back. They generally go deeper into the mire of sin.

But if God graciously pours down His Spirit, the hardened heart will melt. Pray for this. There is an awakening of fresh sinners. It is a sad state of things when sinners are bold in sin, when multitudes can openly break the Sabbath, and openly frequent the tavern. It is an awful sin when sinners can live in sin, and yet sit unmoved under the preaching of the Word, cast off fear, and restrain prayer before God. But if the Lord were pleased to revive us again, this state of things would change.

I am sure it would be a lovelier sight to see you going in company to the house of prayer, than thronging to the tavern, or the haunts of sin and shame, that will bring down eternal ruin on your poor soul. It would be sweeter to hear the cry of prayer in your closets, than to hear the sounds of oaths and profane jesting, and your hard speeches and reproaches of God's children. Sweeter far to see your hearts panting after Christ, His pardon, His holiness, His glory, than to see them turning after the world and its vain idols.

Oh, lift up your hearts to the Lord for such a time. Plead earnestly the promise, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." Then this wilderness will become a fruitful field, and its name be, Jehovah-Shammah -- the Lord is there.

Chapter seven

The Lord's Dealings With His People

"When God gives a promise, He always tries our faith." - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

There are times in the, life of a believer when he is like a traveller who has arrived at some high eminence; he can look back on the way he has gone and the way he has yet to go. So this is a passage where God tells us what he has done and what he will yet do. The history of a believer is wonderful, whether we look backward or forward. If we look back, there is election in a past eternity; and if we look forward, there is deliverance and final victory. As Christ's name is "wonderful", so all the members of his body are wonderful, for they are "men wondered at."

The history of a believer divides itself into two parts - before and after conversion.

Let us consider the past history of a believer "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb" (verse 3). God follows his chosen vessels before their conversion. Now, let us notice some of his providences; and the first before they are awakened is, in preserving them. There are some, I believe that are like John, "filled with the Holy Ghost even from their mother's womb" (Luke 1:15); or like Jeremiah, "before thou camest out of the womb I sanctified thee" (Jeremiah 1:5).

But this is not the way commonly, for "we are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin" (Psalm 51:5). We are degenerate plants of a strange vine. Now those that are vessels of mercy are kept safe. God keeps them from falling into hell. They are often brought to the brink of it, it may be by a fever, or such like; but "he sends his word and heals them" (Psalm 107:20). Others are cut down; but God spares his chosen vessels. A second providence before conversion is, God does not take away his Holy Spirit from them.

It is a wonder God does not take it away. Often they resist and grieve the Spirit, and sin against convictions. Ah, brethren! we will never know till eternity, what a mercy it was that God never took away his Spirit from us. A third mercy before conversion is, he brings them to the place where they are awakened. Who brought Zacchaeus to the sycamore tree? It was the same hand that beckoned him to come down. Who brought the woman of Samaria to the well? The same that told her all things that ever she did.

Who brought you and me to the place where we were awakened? It was he that hath "borne us from the belly, and carried us from the womb"- he who is the Alpha and the Omega. A second part of the believer's history is the time after awakening and before conversion. Unconverted souls are Satan's property; and when Christ comes in, no wonder that Satan roars and is enraged; and so does the world - they do not like to see their companions leaving them. The tenderest parent is often enraged at his child leaving him.

But let us notice what God does for them after they are awakened. First of all, he does not let them go back. He makes them say, "I have opened my mouth to the LORD and I cannot go back" (Judges 11:35) - I will never, never go back. Ah! many are driven back like a ship before a stormy sea. Once they bade fair for Christ and for heaven; but they could not bear the tempest of hell and the rage of an ungodly world. But God's children are carried forward: they are carried by God from the belly - they are borne by him from the womb.

Ah! you are not driven back by persecutions, nor by a tempting world. You can tell the world you have opened your mouth to the Lord, and you cannot - you will not go back. God help us to go forward! Secondly, God keeps them from refuges of lies. Some set out with great anxiety, but fall asleep, and never awake till they hear the voice, "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!" Others take rest in outward forms, prayer, and ordinances. Some go farther still -they take rest in their feelings.

These are refuges of lies; but chosen vessels are carried past these refuges of lies; and they are carried past the temptations of the world. It is a sweet thing to be carried by Jesus. Another mercy is, they are carried to Jesus - to the Rock, the smitten Rock, to the wounded, bleeding bosom of Jesus. God never rests till he carries them to his Son -"I drew them with cords of love" (Hosea 11:4). It is God that does it. Oh! if any of you have been brought to the Rock that is higher than you, it is God that has done it.

He does all, from election to coronation. Oh it is quite natural to be awakened, but not so to be brought to Jesus - to leave all your own righteousness, and to take the righteousness of another. Oh it is divine! None but God can make you do it. Ah! can you say, then, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength" (Isaiah 45:24)?

Let us consider the future part of a believer's history

"And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you" (verse 4). Here you may observe three particulars.

Who is it that offers to carry them even to old age?

It is "I am he" "He". It is the very same being that has brought us hitherto that will carry us on till he sets us down in glory. Ah! it is a sweet truth -"And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." The future history of those of you who are come to Christ is unknown to yourselves. God in mercy hath hid it from us; but he hath carried us through the worst already; and do you think that he that hath

carried us thus far will let us slip now? Ah no! "And even to old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you! I have made, and I will bear..." Let us notice some of the believer's trials, while journeying through the wilderness.

Temptation. It is when you are brought to Christ that you feel temptation. But, ah! you can then say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! When I fall, I shall arise; and when I sit in darkness the LORD shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7:8). Never, till a man is brought to Christ, does Satan rage and put forth such wily temptations: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). As long as you are away from Christ the devil will let you pray, read the Bible, and come to the house of God, and let you think you believe; but, when Jesus comes and draws you to himself, then temptations begin. Many a believer is like to fail in the day of adversity; but, beloved, fear not. There is one who hath made and will bear - who will carry, and deliver you.

There are afflictions. Ah! there are many, many afflictions, beloved, between you and the better land. There are the afflictions of a poor, frail, dying body. There are also soul afflictions - darkness, desertions, doubting, fears. And there are family afflictions. But ah! there is a hand engaged to carry us through. It matters not the rugged mountains, if the sheep be on the Shepherd's shoulder.

The time may be long. Some may have a short fight and a sure victory - but a step to the crown. Others of you may have long, long to tarry here. This sweet promise is to you - "And even to old age I am he", etc.

Let us consider how he will carry us

"Through faith." They are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (I Peter 1:5). It is by faith you first found peace to your soul; so by faith you will be carried to the end. You came empty at first, and you found Christ; so you must come to the last. You came hell-deserving, undone, and closed with him as the Lord your righteousness; so you must come to the last. You came weak, and you found strength; you came poor, and you were made rich; so you must come to the last.

Consider why he will carry us

Because he hath said it. And hath he said it, and will he not do it? It is impossible for God to lie. God will carry you. He hath pledged his word he will do it.

He will carry us because his honour is engaged. If we were suffered to drop from the Shepherd's shoulder, then all in heaven - all in hell - would hear of it; but, ah! no. Though we sin every day, yet he pardons us every day - he blots out all our iniquities.

Another reason why he will carry us is, because he loves us. Ah, beloved, he loves us better every day. It was said of Jesus, "He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). So it is with all that are united to him. If, when we were enemies, God loved and Jesus died for us, how much more now, being reconciled by the death of his Son! Ah, yes! he will love us - "I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

The time may be long. Some may have a short fight

I would now apply this subject

To you that are bold, and have no fears - no doubts. Ah! rejoice with trembling. Believer, you are carried by the same hand. The nailed hand of Jesus is underneath you. Walk softly.

To you that are fearful, fear not: your Redeemer is strong. He that brought you to Christ will bring you safe to glory. He, from his throne, will put the crown upon your head - the crown of victory. He will do it - "I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Greater is he that is for you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). "Fear not, little flock: it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

May God bless his Word. Amen.

Chapter eight

Flee Into The Ark

"O Christless man! You too will hear that voice." - Robert Murray M'Cheyne

It is a wonderful fact of human nature that we learn far more easily from example than we do in any other way. Now, you have in this passage an example of a sinner saved by faith. It shows you how a sinner is saved. And as Noah fled into the ark which he had prepared, so should you. You too, have an ark provided; and just as Noah thereby condemned the world that is, shewed that the world was righteously condemned so will you; if you enter in, you will show by your faith that its condemnation is just.

Let us go over these things and see:

First, Noah's warning: "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." We have an account given us of the warning of Noah in the 6th chapter of Genesis:

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth ... that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years; verses 1-3.

That was the First Warning And the LORD said, I will destroy man, whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them; verse 7. This is the second warning. That was the warning which God gave Noah; he told him that the Holy Spirit would not always strive with man, and then he told him that he would destroy man whom he had created. Now, if Noah had been like some of you, he might have said, God is a merciful God he will not destroy the souls that he has made.

Or, like some of you, he might have said, O! it is a long time yet; it will be time enough to turn to God a year before the flood comes. But, no; "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Now, brethren, if you would be like Noah, you should be moved with fear. God has warned you, not once, nor twice, but a hundred times. God warns you in the Bible that "his wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" - Romans 1:18.

It says, "Except ye be converted ... ye shall not enter the kingdom of God" - Matthew 18:3; it says, that if you commit such things you shall die; it says that if you do not believe you shall be damned - Mark 16:16; it says that if you are not converted and become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of God - Matthew 18:3. Ah, then, man, have you ever trembled at the warning of God? No; then you are not like Noah; you are not like him, for he believed God. I tell you, you could not live on as you do, if you believe God's Word; it is because you are infidel at heart - that is the reason why you do not tremble at his Word: "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."

Again, you are warned by ministers. We are to receive the word at God's mouth, and warn the people; and if we do not warn you, God says he will require it at the watchman's hands. This is one of the chief parts of a minister's duty to warn the unconverted. This is what I have done, both in public and in private. I have warned you, and how have you received it? O, you say, do you think I would be afraid of the word of a man? Well, if so, I tell you that it is not our word, it is the Word of God; and, oh! if you do not take the Word of God, spoken through the minister, you are not like Noah.

Again, you are warned by providence. Some of you have seen souls cut down, and yet you are left. Some of you have seen those whom you led into sin taken away, and yet you are left. Ah, brethren, can you say that you have not been warned? and how have you taken it? Some of you have gone deeper into sin. Ah! you are not like Noah. But some of you will make this objection. I do not like to be moved with fear; I like it to be all love. It is quite true that none were ever brought to Christ by fear.

We must be brought to Christ by a sight of his love. But then, it is quite as true that you will never be brought out of your security but by fear: you must be drawn out by fear, and drawn in by love. Ah, brethren, do not you despise fear. How was the jailer brought to Christ? "He called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" - Acts 16:29. What was it that made him ask the question?

It was fear. What was it that made the three thousand on the streets of Jerusalem cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" - Acts 2:37. It was fear. What was it that made Saul cry, when he lay on the ground, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" - Acts 9:6. It was fear. And so must it be with you, if ever you are brought to Christ. Awake, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God" - Jonah 1:6. Ah! do not despise fear. I tell you, as long as you remain in that carnal lifeless state, like wine settled on its lees, you will never come to Christ.

The Holy Spirit is like a dove, but the first thing he does is to convince of sin. I come now, in the second place, to consider the ark. "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." are told about the preparation of the ark in the 6th chapter of Genesis, 14th verse: "Make thee an ark of gopher-wood: rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shall pitch it within and without with pitch"; then, verse 16: "A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above: and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof, with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it"; verse 21: "And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food to thee, and for them.

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." Observe, brethren, how completely the ark represents Christ. It was of God's planning; and so it is with Christ and the gospel salvation. All the men that lived could not have devised an ark to hold so many: so, in like manner, neither man nor angel

could find a way whereby the sinner could be saved. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son..." - John 3:16. It is said, the angels desire to look into the plan of redemption.

It is said, "it is unsearchable". It is a plan that saves the sinner, and that gives glory to God. It is a plan laid so as to bring the sinner to God a plan that gives glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to man. Observe still further, the strength of the ark. God knew what the billows were it would have to contend with. So it is with Christ; God made him strong enough to bear all that came against him, so that he is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him.

It was a Roomy Ark And it was a roomy ark. So it is with Christ; the commission given to ministers is, "Yet there is room" - Luke 14:22. And you will notice there was a door made in the side of it. So it was with Christ; there was a spear thrust into his side; so it is said, "I am the door" - John 10:9. "We both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" - Ephesians 2:18. "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" - John 6:37. There are no steps up to it, so we have nothing to do but to believe.

Again, there was a window on the top of it, that looked up to heaven. So, in Christ, we can look up to a reconciled God. Again, there was provision in the ark. So is there in Christ; "My God shall supply all your need" - Philippians 4:19. You need gold? Christ has it to bestow. You are polluted, and need a fountain? There is a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. You are hungry, and need bread? Christ says, "I am the bread of life" - John 6:35. There is everything you need in the ark.

Brethren, how will you escape, if you neglect so great salvation? If you despise an ark so strong, so filled with provision, how will you escape? This leads me to the third point, and that is to inquire how Noah saved his house. "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." Noah saved his house by fleeing from all other refuges. "And the LORD said unto Noah, Come, thou and all thy house into the ark" - Genesis 7:1.

"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. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth, there went in two and two unto Noah in the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah" - Genesis 7:7-9. Observe, dear brethren, that the way in which Noah saved his house was by entering in. First of all, he entered in. Carnal men would have said, Better go to the top of the mountains; but Noah believed God, and fled from all other refuges; and not only did he go to the threshold, but he entered in, and his Wife and his sons, and their wives with him, into the ark, and the Lord shut him in.

So must it be with you if you would enter in. First of all, you must forsake all other arks. Carnal men will say, There are arks as good as it. Some rest in the ark of God's general mercy, but that is a false ark. Some rest in the ark of their decent moral character. Some rest in their knowledge of the ark, but these are all false arks; all that proceeds from man is false. Brethren, we must flee from all refuges of lies, and remember you must not stop on the threshold; there are many that look in, but do not enter in.

There are many that know what is in the ark, but they do not enter in. But come thou into the ark, thou and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee, and the Lord will shut you in. You must not only hear about the ark, but you must enter in. You are not safe because you have wept and prayed. You are only safe when you enter in. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" - 2 Corinthians 5:17.

All the Beasts Entered In All the beasts entered in. There came a lion and a lioness they, too, entered in. And then there came in the tall cattle; there came a camel-leopard, with its long majestic neck bent down - it, too, entered in. And then came the birds; the eagle that loves to soar aloft in the sky, and feed upon its prey - it, too, entered in. And then the creeping things; there came a serpent, and perhaps, Noah might say when he saw them creeping along the ground, "These will bite us" - but they, too, entered in.

So, brethren, it is true that all kinds of sinners may enter in. And it is sweet to see what a change came over them when they entered in. The lion lay down beside the lamb, and the leopard beside the kid. So it is with those that came to Christ. The lion-like nature is changed into the gentle nature of the lamb the proud man is made humble. "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Some of you think you are Christ's and yet your old nature is not taken away.

Fourthly, what came of the world. It is said he condemned the world. When Noah entered into the ark he condemned the world; not that he judged them, for it is said he was a preacher of righteousness but he entered in, and thereby condemned the world. So is it yet; when a child in an ungodly family is saved, he enters into the ark, and thereby condemns those that do not. Brethren, the most of the world did not know when Noah entered the ark. "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away" - Matthew 24:37-39. Brethren, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. The bride was standing up putting her hand into the bridegroom's hand, and promising herself many happy days that day the flood came. Some said, Come, let us see a man making a ship on the dry land.

They mocked Noah until the day that the flood came. So it is still. Though we tell you of a better ark, yet you go on with your ways. "Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." Brethren, I believe that the most of you, who ever will be, are gathered already, you are becoming gospel proof, and so you will live on, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the flood of wrath come and sweep you away. Ah, brethren, you mock at the man building the ark; you do this by not entering in.

Ah, my brethren, many of you say, when you see persons striving to enter in, they are mad, and this is what they said to Noah. O brethren! it is a happy madness to enter into the ark. But, brethren, I believe that there are many that did not mock Noah, and, perhaps, they helped to build the ark; they, perhaps, went and cut down wood to build it, but they did not enter in. Ah! so it is with you; there are many who say that we are good people, but we carry things too far. Ah, there are many ministers who help to build the ark, that do not enter in themselves; there are many Sabbath school teachers help to build the ark, but do not enter in themselves.

It is very probable that some came down to the ark that morning when Noah entered in; but it was too late; God had shut him in. I believe that most of you will come when it is too late. I know that many of you have your convictions, but do not enter in; you will come to the door when it is shut, like the foolish virgins, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us", but he shall say, "I know you not" - Matthew 25:11-12. You will seek to enter in when you hear the rumbling of the chariot of Emmanuel, but it will then be too late.

Brethren, it is the devil that is shutting your eyes from seeing these things. Last of all, it was an awful deluge that came. It came on them before they were aware when they were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage". The taverns were all full, the bride was happy, all were full of mirth. And so it will

be when the Son of Man comes. It will be a sudden flood. And it was a deep flood. It lifted the ark to the top of Ararat. It is calculated that the water rose four hundred feet the first day.

Ah, brethren, it was a deep and awful flood, none were able to stand against it it covered the proudest. Ah, brethren, it is the same word that reserves the world for a flood of fire. And it is said, "In that day who shall be able to stand?" O be warned, by a sinful worm like yourselves, to flee! "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?" Ezekiel 22:14. The flood came upon Christ, and oh, how fearful was his agony! But if you are his, it will not come upon you - if you are in this ark, you will be saved; but, if not, you will be lost. God pity you, dear friends, I cannot. God grant that he may do it, before the flood come and sweep you all away. Amen.

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