

The Ark

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

We should be like Noah, who was warned by God and prepared an ark to save his house, and that we should enter into the ark of salvation through faith in Christ.

Scripture: Genesis 6:13, Hebrews 11:7

Topics: "Faith", "Salvation"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the importance of faith and obedience through the example of Noah, who, warned by God, prepared an ark for the salvation of his family. M'Cheyne draws parallels between Noah's ark and Christ, illustrating that just as Noah entered the ark to escape judgment, so must individuals enter into faith in Christ to be saved. He warns that many, like those in Noah's time, may ignore the call to enter the ark, leading to their condemnation. The preacher urges listeners to recognize the urgency of their situation and to flee from false securities, entering into the true refuge that is found in Christ. Ultimately, M'Cheyne calls for a heartfelt response to God's warnings, emphasizing that true safety lies in faith and action.

Transcript

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.

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. 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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