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Select Sermon.

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The Parable of the Ark.

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

CHRIST always taught by parables. Hence the popularity and the power of his teaching. The masses never were, and perhaps, never will be, able to receive instruction in any other way than by parabolic illustrations. He who would be a successful minister must open his mouth in parables; he who would win the hearts of the multitude must closely imitate his Master, and preach in parables which all men can understand. I believe there are few living men who are able to devise a parable. Those who do possess this rare ability are very scarce indeed; nor do I myself profess to belong to the honorable confraternity. I have sometimes endeavored if it were possible to fashion a parable; and though I found it easy at times to manufacture a figure, yet a parable I can by no means make. I am happy to say it is not required of me to do so, for the book of God's word, if it be rightly used, is suggestive of a thousand parables; and I have no reason to fear that I shall be short of subjects for preaching, when I am able to find such mighty parables as I do in God's word. I shall preach to you this evening a parable. It shall be the parable of the ark. While I do so you must understand that the ark was a real thing—that it was really made to float upon the waters, and carry in it Noah and his family and two of all flesh. This is a fact, not a myth. But I shall take this real fact and use it as a parable. Making the ark represent salvation, I shall preach to all who are within sound of my voice the parable of the ark. The ark which saved from the floods of water is a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ as the means of salvation, by whom multitudes of all flesh are preserved, and saved from perishing in the floods of eternal perdition.

I. First, then, in working out this parable I shall remark, that there is BUT ONE MEANS OF SALVATION. The ark of gopher wood in the one case, and the person of Christ in the other case, sets forth the one only means that was ever planned or provided by God. The whole world was drowned except those happy ones who were found in the ark. The mightiest beast and the tiniest insect, the stately elephant and the loathsome reptile, the fleet horse and the creeping snail, the graceful antelope and the ugly toad—every living substance that was upon the face of the ground was involved in one common doom, save those only who were preserved alive in the ark. The noblest animals, endowed with the finest instincts, were all drowned, despite their powers of swimming (if they were not fish), save those only who were sheltered in the ark. The strongest winged fowls that ever cut the air were all wearied in their flight and fell into the water, save those only who were housed in the ark. The proudest tenants of the forest, those who ranged fearlessly in the broad light of day or those who prowled stealthily under the cover of night, the strongest, the mightiest, all were swallowed up in the vast abyss, save those only who were commanded by God to hide themselves within the shelter of the ark. Even so, in the application of my parable, there is only one way of salvation for all men living under heaven. There is only one name whereby they can be saved. Wouldst thou be saved, rich man? There is no way but that whereby the poverty-stricken pauper is also to be saved. Wouldst thou be delivered, thou man of intelligence? Thou shalt be saved in the same way as the most ignorant. There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. There were not two arks, but one ark; so there are not two Saviours, but one Saviour. There was no other means of salvation except the ark: so there is no

plan of deliverance except by Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. In vain you climb the lofty top of Sinai: fifteen cubits upwards shall the waters prevail. In vain you climb to the highest pinnacles of your self-conceit and your worldly merit: ye shall be drowned—drowned beyond the hope of salvation; for "other foundations can no man lay than that which is laid—Jesus Christ and him crucified." Would those of my congregation be saved? They must all be saved by one way. Do they object to Christ as the plan of salvation? Then they must be damned, for there is no other hope for them. Do they think this too hard? do they think the revealed plan of salvation too humbling? Then they must sink, even as the sons of Adam sank beneath the mighty flood, and all flesh was utterly consumed by the overwhelming billows. There is but one way. Enter into the ark: take refuge in Christ. Thus only can you be saved. But, "how shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation?" By what means shall ye secure your souls, or your bodies either? What plans can ye devise for your security? Your refuges shall prove to be refuges of lies; the winds, the rain, the hail, and the tempest shall destroy them. There is one Saviour, but there is only one. There is one Jesus who saves his people from their sins, but there is no other name and no other means of salvation. The ark stood alone, and even so doth Christ Jesus.

II. Proceeding with my parable, I must direct your attention to THE SIZE OF THIS ARK; this may be comforting to you. If you read the 15th verse of the 6th chapter, you will find that the ark was of immense size. "The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits." It is an old objection of infidels that there was not room enough in it for all kinds of creatures that lived on the face of the earth; but we know, on Divine authority, that if there were not room enough in it for all the different kinds of creatures which were then alive, they would have been drowned; yet of every kind some were safely housed, so that room enough was found for them all. This is not very logical, perhaps, you will say, but it is conclusive enough for us, if we believe in revelation. Yet there really is no reason for any one to make the objection, and we have no room to entertain it, since the most eminent calculators have proved to demonstration, that the vessel called the ark was of immense size, and was able not merely to hold all the creatures, but all the provender they require for the year during which it floated on the water. I use this idea, without stopping to expound it further. Let me but trace its analogy as a beautiful picture of the plan of salvation—Oh! what a capacious plan! The ark was a great ark, which held all kinds of creatures; and our Christ is a great Refuge, who saves all kinds of sinners. The ark was an immense vessel—in it floated a multitude of animals who were saved; Christ's salvation is an immense salvation, and in it there shall be delivered a multitude which no man can number. The narrow-minded bigot limits salvation to his own contracted notions, and he still says, "There shall none be saved, except they walk arm-in-arm with me." Poor, little, miserable soul! he cuts his coat according to his own fashion, and declares, that if men do not all cut their coats in the same way they can not be saved. But not so the Bible. The Bible preaches a great salvation. It says there is a multitude that no man can number, who shall stand before the throne of God. Here is assembled a multitude of sinners; but if you all feel your need of a Saviour, there is room enough for you in heaven. Here is a multitude of hearers; but if every one of you this night should come to Christ with real penitence in your hearts, and belief in Him, you would not find that there was not room enough for you. That saying is still true, "And yet there is room." There is not room enough for a pharisee, for a man who does not feel himself a sinner, for a hypocrite, no, nor yet for a formalist; but there is room enough for every convinced

sinner under God's heaven. There has been room enough hitherto, and we have never yet heard of saints complaining that they were cramped for room; but, rather, I have heard them say in the words of David, "I called upon the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place." They have ever found abundance of room in Christ, and so shall you. Our Redeemer is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto him. He is able to save all of you. If the Father that hath sent him draw you, and you come unto him, doubt not there is room. Do not think, beloved, because we preach election, that we preach the election of a few. I find that this is a common mistake. Some one will say to me, "I don't like your Calvinism, sir, because it says that there are a few elected, and that nobody else will be saved."

Nay, sir, but it does not say that there are a few elected; it says no such thing; it says they are a multitude, that no man can number, that have been elected, and who knows but what you are one of them? It does not turn you out. It gives you ten thousand times more reason for hope than the Arminian preacher, who stands up and says, "There is room for everybody, but I do not think there is any special grace to make them come; if they won't come, they won't come, and there is an end of it! it is their own fault, and God will not make them come." The word of God says they cannot come, yet the Arminian says they can; the poor sinner feels that he cannot, yet the Arminian declares positively that he could if he liked; and though the poor sinner feels sometimes that he would if he could, and groans over his inability, this blind guide tells him that it is all nonsense; whereas, it is, in truth, God's own work to make a man feel that he is unable. You must feel it; and you may plead against yourself on account of it, but you shall come for all that. "He will not plead against you," "no, but he will put strength in you." Nay, beloved, we do not preach that a few shall be saved; we preach that a mighty host, whom mortals cannot count, shall be the seed of Jesus. So shall he see of the travail of his soul, and be abundantly satisfied. Hear me, then, while out of this parable of the ark I draw encouragement concerning the capacity of the salvation of Christ.

III. In the third place, note that THE ARK WAS A SAFE REFUGE. Noah was commanded to make an ark of the best wood, gopher wood; and, lest there should be any leakage in it, he was commanded to "pitch it within and without with pitch," and we do not find that it ever sprung a leak while it was out at sea; she certainly never went into harbor to mend her bottom, for she had no harbor to go to. We never read that Noah called up Shem, Ham, and Japheth to work at the pumps, nor yet that they had any, for there was not a bit of leakage about her. No doubt there were storms during that year; but we do not hear that the ship was ever in danger of being wrecked. The rocks, it is true, were too low down to touch her bottom; for fifteen cubits upwards did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered. Rising twenty-seven feet above the loftiest mountains, she had no quicksands to fear; they were too deep below her keel. But of course she was exposed to the winds; sometimes the hurricane might have rattled against her, and driven her along. Doubtless, at another time, the hail beat on her top, and the lightnings scarred the brow of night; but the ark sailed on, not one was cast out from her, nor were her sailors wearied with constant pumping to keep out the water, or frequent repairs to keep her secure. Though the world was inundated and ruined, that one ark sailed triumphantly above the waters. The ark was safe, and all who were in her were safe too.

Now, sinners, the Christ I preach to you is such a refuge as that. His Gospel has no flaw in it. As the ark never sank and the elements never prevailed against it, so Christ never failed, he can not fail; all the principalities and powers are subject unto him. Those who are in Christ are

sheltered safely from every storm, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands. Remember that God gave the pattern, and Noah perfected the work of the ark, ere a single fountain of the great deep was broken up, or one drop of the desolating storm fell from the vengeful clouds. And it is not less true that our glorious Lord was set up in the counsels of eternity a perfect Christ before the clouds of vindictive wrath began to brew on account of man's iniquity; and his mighty work of mediation was finished before thy poor soul was invited to take shelter in him. Oh, methinks as the angels looked out of the windows of heaven upon the swelling tide, and saw how securely the ark rode upon its surface, they never doubted that all who were inside were as safe as the ark itself. And is there any reason to doubt that those who are in Christ are as safe as Christ? Did he not say himself, "because I live, ye shall live also?" Were the sons of Noah commanded to take their tools into the ark to keep it in repair? And dost thou vainly think that thou canst make the matter of eternal salvation more perfect than it was when Jesus said "It is finished?" Oh, no! the work is done, the vessel is sea-worthy. "God can not mend it, the devil can not mar it." It is not an Arminian Gospel I preach to you, that tells of dangers, and sounds alarms in the ears of those who are within the ark of Christ. In him—in him—oh, hear it, poor trembling sinner! in him you are—

"Beyond the reach of death's alarms,
The source of mortal woe."

"They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which shall never be removed, which abideth forever." They that trust in the Lord are blessed. "They are like trees, planted by rivers of water; their leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever they do shall prosper." If you once come unto Jesus, and trust in him, there is no fear of sinking. How sweet was the precious hymn we sang just now—

"Firm as a rock Thy Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust;
If I am found in Jesus' hands
My soul can ne'er be lost."

Not but that there will be storms, and tempests will beat around you—these you will be sure to have; but you will be too high up ever to strike on the rocks. If you are once on board the good ship of salvation, you will be lifted up too high above the floods to be swallowed in the quicksands. With cheerful heart I can commend you to God, and the word of his testimony. Christ will preserve you.

"Grace will preserve what grace begins,
To save from sorrows and from sins;
The work that wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

Believers! could you give up the doctrine of your security in Christ to any body? No, that I know you could not. Touch one of my brethren or sisters in the Lord who attends this chapel on that point, and you will soon get your answer. I have sometimes heard disputes outside the chapel door, when some who do not believe the truth have been disputing it, and I have felt confident that I might leave its defence in your hands. There be mighty men of valor among you, who are not ashamed to uphold the whole counsel of God, even as I am constantly anxious to declare it. Beloved, the ark is pitched within and without with pitch; it is made of good gopher wood; it can never sink so long as we are on board; if it were threescore years and ten, she will still preserve us. Salvation in Christ is a sure salvation.

IV. Now I go to another part of the parable. The creatures in the ark of course wanted light; but it is a singular thing that THERE WAS ONLY ONE WINDOW IN THE ARK. In the 16th verse of the 6th chapter we read—"A window shalt thou make to the ark." I have often wondered how all the creatures could see through one window; but I have not wondered what was meant by it, for I think it easy to point the moral. There is only one window whereby Christians ever get their light. All who come to Christ and receive salvation by him are illuminated in one way. That one window of the ark may fitly represent to us the ministry of the Holy Ghost. There is only