

outlook of those left behind here; but the spirit, ransomed, realizes his translation into the presence of God. What Mrs. Hemans sang about the slave that lay dead in the Georgia rice fields is true, namely, that the body is "A worn-out fetter which the soul has broken and flung away." So in the deepest fact of life, whenever a man walks with God, at the end God receives him.

As we have seen the harmony of Enoch's life, notice the ending. Enoch "was not, for God took him"; took him into partnership, into fellowship, walked with him through all the vicissitudes of the commonplace life, and then at the end gathered him home, that he should not see death. I love the story of the little girl's outlook, when she went home from Sunday School, after hearing the story of Enoch. She said: "Mother, we heard about a wonderful man today in Sunday School." The sensible mother let her child tell what she had heard. "His name was Enoch, and you know, Mother, he used to go for walks with God." The mother said to her: "That is wonderful, dear. How did it end?" "Oh, Mother, one day they walked on and on, and got so far, God said to Enoch, 'You are a long way from home. You had better come in and stay with Me!'"

God has been saying that to our loved ones again and again. They have gone in to stay with Him, with Whom they had walked their earthly pilgrimage.

VII

THE FAITH OF NOAH

SCRIPTURE LESSON: GENESIS VI, 5-14, 22, AND VII. 5.

"By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."—HEBREWS XI. 7.

TAKEN as an illustration of faith, the story of Noah is remarkable and, indeed, unique. In it faith is revealed, acting on the same principles as in other cases, but in unexampled circumstances. I propose that in considering this text we should consider first the man and the times in which he lived; and then attempt to understand something of the operation of his faith in those times.

How much do we really know about Noah? We know he built an ark; and that he got drunk; and that often exhausts the common knowledge of this man Noah. Nevertheless he stands out as one of the most remarkable personalities on the pages of the Old Testament. He must be judged partly by the times in which he lived, and finally by his action in those times.

Take first that story of his getting drunk. Some people seem possessed with that fact, and do not think of him respectfully. But read the story carefully. There is no proof that there was any sin in the action. We are told he "was a husbandman and planted a vine-

yard." Then we are told he drank of the wine, and was drunk. Has it ever occurred to some that the drunkenness was an accident? In the Hebrew Bible there are many words for wine. Here this is the first occurrence of the Hebrew word Yayin, which means, simply and literally, intoxicating drink, the root of the word having the thought of fermentation. The word here used for his drinking is one of the intensive words. It simply means to drink deeply. Now I very much doubt whether Noah knew the effect it would produce upon him; and I am inclined to think this is the first instance on record of a man taking intoxicating drink and not knowing what effect it would have: and he became drunk. Another word for this is equally correct, he became satiated. It made him very sick. It was foolish, wrong, perhaps he should have known better. But there is no hint of moral delinquency here, when he did it.

What sort of a man was he? I repeat the Biblical description: "Noah was a righteous man and perfect in his generation." I would change that word "generation" for some other—perfect among his contemporaries. Then comes the summing up of the whole fact: "Noah walked with God." Here is the great fact of his life, and what a radiant revelation it is of a remarkable character, perfect among his contemporaries.

We had the same expression in our last study, on Enoch. "Enoch walked with God." It is arresting that of only two men in all Bible history is it declared that they walked with God. Here were two men, so distinctive that the recorder of olden time, referring to them, had to say that they walked with God. As we

saw in our last study on Enoch, that meant that Noah moved in the same direction in which God was moving; and that he was in agreement with God, had no controversy on the way, moreover that they kept in step with one another. Enoch and Noah did not run before the Lord. They kept pace with Him. They did not lag behind the goings of God. They kept beside Him. God did not hurry ahead of Enoch and Noah. He adapted His goings to their possibilities. He never lagged behind, as they went forward. He was always with them.

Noah was the great-grandson of Enoch. Enoch begat Methuselah, and Methuselah begat Lamech, and Lamech begat Noah. We have a glimpse into conditions of the times as we read the names. When Noah was born, Lamech gave him the name which means comfort. That is a remarkable thing. We see the comfort that Lamech expected from this baby boy. Now we shall be set free from the curse that is on the soil. It was purely materialistic. He hoped that the child would grow up in his home, setting him free from the curse of the soil, and the toil necessary to the earning of bread with the sweat of his brow.

The recorder, telling the story of Noah, has said that he was a righteous man, perfect among his contemporaries; standing out, different from them, and afterwards summarized in that great statement that "Noah walked with God."

Let us look a little more closely at the text, in which this statement is made about him. "Being warned of God." That word *warned* has a profounder meaning than may appear on the surface. The Hebrew word is

variously translated. The word simply means literally that God told him, admonished him, spoke to him, warned him. God revealed to this man a purpose.

Looking at Noah again, we see the motive of his life. It is declared that he was "moved with godly fear." The Authorized reading omits the word "godly." It is the Revised which correctly says, "moved with godly fear." Fear was the motive of his life as he walked with God. That is not fear that is slavish and terrifying; but the fear which is the fear of the Lord, and the beginning of wisdom. It refers to his awe in the presence and majesty of God, and to his urgent attempt to obey. That was the inspiring motive of what he did: "moved with godly fear." So we see him, not only walking, but talking with God, and listening to Him, passionately desiring one thing only, that is, the honor and glory of God.

So the man stands before us, limned in short, brief, pregnant sentences, revealed as one of the most remarkable and outstanding figures in Old Testament history.

With equal brevity, consider the times in which this man lived as they are revealed in the story, reading the story carefully.

Let us notice the description of the times. "The wickedness of man was great." That is a description of the human race at that time. That is not true today. The brief sentences are almost redundant in their employment of terms to reveal the depth of the depravity. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Have we ever sat down in front of that, and thought it out? Thoughts always act in the realm of the imagination. Every imagination, every

vision, every thought, every conception, only evil; and that not on one day, but "continually"! That is a picture of the human race that is the most appalling possible. There is nothing in the literature of the Bible or outside it, which is so graphic, terrifying, and overwhelming as the revelation of what humanity was at that time. Mark the superlativeness of it all—"Every . . . only . . . continually . . . evil." Those were the times in which Noah lived, the characterizations of the contemporaries among whom he lived.

Our Lord referred to those times. He said, "In those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." Everything was going on as usual. Indeed, if they had known the modern phrase, they might have used it—"Business as usual." On the ordinary level, they were progressing, and yet, every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts was evil continually. It is an appalling picture of the times.

But faithful Noah, being told of God of the things unseen, was moved and inspired by godly fear to prepare an ark for the saving of his house. Mark that carefully. There was no evidence of the things God was telling him. They were things unseen. Mark the operation of this man's faith. We have referred to it in connection with his life and conduct. He walked with God, and God talked to him. He warned him, spoke to him, admonished him. He was a lonely soul. Look round and see the condition of human life all around him; yet in the midst of it all, he walked with God, feared God, and was spoken to by God. Faith in God is seen operating.

What was his consequent outlook? What did Noah see, because he was walking by faith? There are two things I suggest.

First, he was conscious of that very evil in the midst of which he was living. That consciousness of evil was born of his communion with a holy God. Evil is never seen, except from the standpoint of the divine holiness, and the divine insistence, and the divine requirements. Here was a man walking with God, communing with God, fearing God, serving God. He saw the evil, the corruption, and how terrible it was, because he lived in fellowship with God. That is always so with faith. Real faith never thinks lightly of sin. Real faith never looks out upon conditions of corruption as though they were evanescent, and did not very much matter. That is how faith operated in Noah.

But I go further, and declare that in his case he was not only conscious of evil, but he also had an understanding of the degradation of it. Faith gave him a conviction of the inevitability of the divine wrath. That was born of his knowledge, not of the holy God merely, but of the righteousness of God and the ruling and reigning of God. Noah knew what God told him was about to happen. He felt the righteousness of it, the rectitude of it.

That brings us to the simple statement that by faith he built his ark. Faith brought him into active co-operation with God in His purpose and plans. Noah did not build that ark as the result of what he could see. Men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, business was as usual; there was indifference

to the dereliction of the nation and the corruption of the race.

Noah and his three sons could never have built that ark with their own hands. What became of the workmen who helped them: those who prepared the gopher wood, fastened it together, and carried out the instructions? As Jesus said, they were swept away. They went on building the ark, and they were eating, drinking, marrying, and carrying on their occupations. I have no doubt they were laughed at for building the ark. What a stupid thing! What a ridiculous idea! For one hundred and twenty years Noah was preaching righteousness. They had not listened. They had not noticed. They had turned a deaf ear to the preaching, because they believed a madman was building the ark. When the flood came, the builders of the ark were swept away because of what they were in themselves, in spite of the fact that they had been workmen preparing that which was to be God's vantage ground for His movement in history.

That is a terrible thought. It reacts upon us. It may be possible today that we are helping to build the ark, and we are so busy here and there, doing all sorts of things that are contributory to the divine purpose, and yet ourselves are corrupt, evil, every imagination of the thoughts of the heart only evil continually.

But Noah worked with God, as well as walked with God, in obedience and faith. Certainly in obedience he wrought to build the ark, and so he served in the carrying out of the divine purpose.

Is there any application of this story to ourselves? That is a shattering question. Let it be admitted:

never since that time has humanity sunk so low as this. Though there are some very dark and terrible things revealed in other periods in history in the Bible, and out of it, there is no description of a race having sunk so low that the recorder has to say that "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Only evil, no gleam of light, no change of thought, rotten, evil continually. The human race has never sunk so low since. Why not? Because Noah built his ark; and the work of God has moved forward from that new beginning. Never again have men sunk as low as that. The elect remnant in that ark has prevented it sinking to such unutterable depths of depravity as existed before the flood.

But the same principle of evil is at work, and it has the same manifestations. Business is still as usual, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage; busy about our work, and material things. The principle is still at work, and we see it everywhere.

And the same God is supreme. He has never been other than supreme. Consequently the same testimony to righteousness is necessary. This supreme illustration should warn and admonish us. In a day when the principle of evil is working, God is reigning; and He is always looking for Noah, for men and women to walk with Him, to fear Him, and obey Him; to do things that appear so utterly without reason when He commands them; to build an ark of gopher wood for the coming flood, when there is no sign of the flood! Men will laugh and mock if we do this kind of thing. Noah walked with God by faith. He carried on by faith. He did the thing for which he could see no reason ex-

cept that God commanded him. He fell into line with the divine order. He carried out the divine instruction. He built his ark, and gave God His vantage ground for another movement in human history.

That is what He is wanting us to do: to witness by faith, when all things seem contradictory; when all the circumstances of the hour seem to show that the things we are doing are supremely futile. Believing in God, hearing His voice, believing His word, we march on; and by our obedience condemn the world; and carry on the great march of righteousness toward its consummation.

No; things have never been at such a low ebb as then. It was a low ebb when they put Jesus on His Cross. No, not racially. There was a small elect remnant then; and even there in the midst of the dense darkness, God was carrying on. He always marches through those who have heard Him, who are obedient to Him, and do His commands.