

SHUT IN OR SHUT OUT

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“The Lord shut him in.”
Genesis 7:16.

NOAH was a very different man from the rest of those who lived in his time, for the grace of God had set a division between him and them. They forgot God and Noah feared Him. They lived for things seen and temporal and he lived in sight of the invisible. When he was building the ark, he was in a miserable minority, as men count heads. And, even after 120 years of ministry, when his ark was built and his family entered it, they were eight against many millions—an insignificant few, as men would say—a pitiful sect among mankind. Who could imagine that the eight would be right and all the millions wrong? Where God is, *there* is the majority! But very clearly there was a very marked distinction between Noah and his household and all the rest of mankind. Yet, great as that distinction was, throughout 120 years there was no impassable gulf between the two parties. Although Noah could not, *would* not go to them, yet they that would, might pass to him. If they would hear, believe and obey, they, too, might be among the company whom God had blessed and whom He would surely preserve from destruction. When the 120 years were over and God's Spirit would no longer strive with men, there stood the great ark with its vast door wide open and Noah still continued to preach and to declare that all who would pass within that open portal into the ark of safety should be preserved from the coming destruction.

Outside that door death would reign universally, but all would be peace within. When the last seven days of grace had come to a close, the Lord began His work of justice by separating Noah. “The Lord shut him in.” Then there was a more marked difference between Noah and the rest of mankind. He that opens and no man shuts; He that shuts and no man opens—even He had interposed an impassable barrier between Noah and those that believed not. Mercy's gate was shut! The time of long-suffering had come to a close. Brothers and sisters, the Church of God stands, at the present moment, in the world very much in the same condition as Noah and his family! The door of the ark is still wide open and it is our business to persuade, constrain and compel men, with all our might, to come in! Not without success have our entreaties been, for many have entered the ark of salvation which is found in the person of our divine Lord Jesus. These make up with us the chosen family of God who shall be safe when the world is deluged with the last devouring fire. But the time comes—it comes to each man in death and it will come to the whole company of the ungodly in the day when the Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven with a shout—that the door shall be shut and it shall be said, “Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from there.” Character will become unchangeable! He that is unjust will be unjust, still, and he that is filthy will be filthy, still.

My heart trembles as I think of this matter! There is a joy in being shut in with the saints, but a great grief in knowing that many will be shut out. I shall labor so to set forth this truth of God that, perhaps before the door closes, a goodly company may cry, “We will come with you, for we perceive that the Lord is with you.” Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto the Lord—but until those water floods break forth they *may come*—and they shall find a glad welcome! For it is written, “Him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out.”

Our meditation will be arranged under two heads which may readily be remembered—shut in and shut out. They stand in very distinct contrast and admit of no third condition.

I. First, let us think of truths of God which range themselves under the head of SHUT IN. This is a blessed text. Oh that the Spirit of God may help me to preach from it and you to enjoy it! Observe, then, that Noah was shut in—shut in the ark. Noah's condition as to an evil world was now one of permanent

separation. He was severed from the world and his separation was beyond recall. There is a time in the human character when it has some good thing in it towards the Lord God of Israel and yet that good thing may be lost. But there is another and happier time when the truly converted have stepped over the boundary and shall never go back to corruption. They are dead and their life is hid with Christ in God—hidden beyond further damage or death. They are, from then on, kept by the power of God unto salvation—crucified unto the world and the world unto them. There was a time when, speaking after the manner of men, Noah might have given up his testimony and sided with the ungodly mass. But that possibility is all over, for the door is shut—the Lord has shut him in. There was no wish in Noah’s heart to come out and he could not come out. The deed was done and could not be undone—the bolt was turned and could not be withdrawn. Noah was shut in by a hand which is not given to undo its own work! I believe that this blend of character and condition has happened to all believers who can truly say that they are dead unto the world. Dying unto the world is the way of our salvation! By this process we pass into newness of life. I dare say when that door was shut, the men of the world said, “Look at old Noah! He has gone into his coffin. He is as good as dead and buried.”

Yes, that was exactly what they were meant to *see* and to *say*! Peter says, “The like figure whereunto also baptism does now save us.” He does not say that baptism saves us, but that it is a “like *figure*” of the way of salvation. The ark and immersion set forth the same truth of God. The man is “buried in baptism,” to signify that he is dead to the world, wherein, also, he rises, again, to show his fellowship with Christ in resurrection and the fact that he has risen to newness of life. Baptism is a picture of the way of salvation, just as Noah’s ark was. Entrance into the ark and submergence beneath a 40 days’ deluge of rain was a fit type of death and burial—and the rising of the ark above the waters fitly sets forth resurrection to a new life. Noah underwent burial to all the old things that he might come out into a new world and, even so, we die in Christ that we may live with Him. This is the doctrine, but the experience is grand! Beloved, it is a great mercy when a man can feel in his own soul that God has fixed, forever, his condition towards the ungodly. We have come out, my brethren, from among men just as Abraham did when he left his fatherland and went into the land of which he knew nothing but that God had said that He would give it to him and to his seed. It is written concerning Abraham and the other patriarchs that, “doubtless if they had been mindful of the place from where they came out, they had opportunity to return,” but they did not return—it entered not into their minds and hearts to do so. They had as fully left Padanaram behind them as if they had been dead and buried to it and their life showed, each one of them, to be a pilgrim and a sojourner with God.

Even so with believers! The Lord has called us out and set us apart unto Himself. Therefore a door is shut behind us and we cannot go back. We are like Bunyan’s Pilgrim—we must go forward, for we have no armor for our backs. There is no inducement to go back if we fairly consider the matter. The City of Destruction which we have left is to be burnt with fire—shall we go back to *that*? The enemies we have fought and encountered are left behind—shall we seek them to fight again, or to become their friends? Sin is bitter to us, it has already broken our teeth as with gravel—shall we go back to it? What inducement do we have to return to the house of bondage? No, by God’s grace, “Forward,” is our motto till we come to “the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Brethren, I am always glad when I can feel, concerning any of you, that you have finally done with the world and may be numbered with the irreconcilables, for, alas, I fear there are too many who have so questionably come out of Sodom that their hearts are still there and they are apt to cast lingering looks towards the accursed city. Ah me! What if any of you should become pillars of salt! “Remember Lot’s wife?” But when, like Noah, you are divided from the world’s pursuits by God’s own act, then is it well with you! Noah was shut in and could not follow after the festivities and worldliness of men. They were eating and drinking—marrying and given in marriage—but to Noah the dance and the viol, the feast and the revel called in vain! He could not now hoard up wealth, nor seek for fame among the sons of men. He was utterly exiled and excluded from all those things which charmed the minds of his contemporaries. He was out of the fashion, yes, out of the world!

He was shut out, too, from all their possessions. Even from his own farm he was now expatriated. Blessed is that man who, whatever he has, has it as though he had it not—he sets no store by earthly things and does not lock up his soul in his iron safe. He is shut out from the things which rust and corrupt, so that they are not his god, nor his treasure. Noah was divided from the evil generation among

which he dwelt by an act of God—here was his safety! Adam was put in paradise by God, but he was never shut in by God and, therefore, very soon he left his first estate and wandered among thorns and thistles. But Noah was both put in the ark and shut in the ark—and, therefore, he never left his shelter until the Lord bade him come forth to possess the new world. Blessed are the men of whom the Lord Jesus can say, “They are not of the world.” Such have passed by death into life and are members of a new race who shall go forth with joy and be led forth with peace, for they shall inherit the earth! Blessed is that man who has crossed the Rubicon, deciding to be on the Lord’s side whatever others may do; blessed is the man who has burnt his boats behind him, having landed in a country from which he will never retreat. I would gladly be one who can cease to be, but cannot cease to be a Christian! I would gladly be one who can die, but cannot deny his Lord! I would gladly be one who will, if necessary, go with Him to prison and to death—and cannot do otherwise—for the love of Christ constrains me. Then is the will most truly free when it is under the sweet dominion of infinite love! This is true liberty—to be led about in triumph in every place, bound with the silken cords of gratitude—a captive to the power of grace! O happy man who can truly say that from now on he is “shut in” because he is born-again and, thus, entirely changed!

In the olden times a newly converted man who became an eminent saint was met in the street by a woman who had, at other times, tempted him to sin. He took no notice of her and at last she cried out, “Do you not know me? It is I.” “Ah,” said the new man, “but it is not I.” No, he was not the man who could take pleasure in uncleanness. He could no longer sin, for he was born of God! Our inner life shuts us in to holiness and the wounds of Jesus seal the door. The goodness of God interposes a barrier between us and evil, for we say with Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” “How can we, that are dead to sin, live any longer in sin? Therefore our prayer is that of Toplady—

*“Oh nail me to the sacred wood,
There tie me with Your Spirit’s chain!
There seal me with Your fastening blood,
Nor ever let me loose again!
There let me bow my suppliant knee,
And acknowledge no other Lord but Thee!”*

We must now remark, secondly, that Noah was not only shut in, but he was shut in *by God*. There was the excellence of it—“The Lord shut him in.” No man can shut in as the Lord can! I cannot shut professors into the ways of godliness as I would wish. Alas, with all my preaching, many wander and try to be members of the church and citizens of the world, too! We have among us avowed lovers of Christ who act too much like “lovers of pleasure.” I have preached no liberty to sin, as some do, but I have declared that, “strait is the gate and narrow is the way,” but yet these men make excursions into the broad road. I would still hammer at the door of the ark, in hope of shutting it closed and keeping it so, but it is little that I can do. If Noah had shut *himself* in, he might have come out again. And if any of the outside world had shut him in, he would probably have burst open the door! But “the Lord shut him in” and, therefore, sure work was made of it. Oh to be enclosed by almighty grace! The Lord has shut His people in unto Himself by His choice of them in Christ Jesus, by His redemption of them from among men and by His sanctifying them to be a peculiar people unto Himself. Yes, the Lord has done it—“The Lord shut him in.” Take notice that this was very close shutting, so as to keep out the water. I fancy that if you saw a huge vessel lying upon the dry land where the floods would come to float it, you would be very anxious about that great opening in its side. It was evidently a huge doorway, for a pair of elephants had passed through it, so that it was a gaping leak which would take in enough water in an hour to sink the ark to the bottom!

How could the great door be closed? All the timbers are waterproofed and the ship is well caulked and pitched within and without, but all will go for nothing unless we can secure the big door. Merely to shut the door will be of no use. When the rain begins to fall in torrents from above and the waters leap up from below, and the ship commences to rise, she will take in any quantity of water at the points where the door fits into the wood. Shipwrights will be needed and the caulkers and the men with the pitch must come. No shipwright could manage to shut so huge a door close enough for safety unless you give him time and call in the help of other workers. Therefore “the Lord shut him in” because nobody else could safely be trusted to shut such a door, against which a forty days’ tempest was to beat most

furiously! What a mercy it is that when we get into Christ by faith and are shut in from the world with Him, that we are perfectly safe because the Lord Himself has shut us in! We are not only brought to Christ Jesus by divine power, but we are *preserved* in Christ Jesus unto eternal life by the same divine might. Beloved, there is no doubt about the salvation of those who are in Christ, for none can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Never has a soul perished trusting in Jesus and never shall a soul so perish, for though salvation is so difficult that the righteous scarcely are saved, yet when the Lord Jehovah puts His hand to the work, it is done well and done forever! In Noah's case the huge chasm that would have let in the water-floods was perfectly closed up. Even so, all the yawning leaks and openings of our fall and sin are closed by the grace of God and, in Christ Jesus, we are secure—the Lord has shut us in!

That door was also shut very fast to prevent the entrance of enemies from the outside. For who can tell? I should fancy that when the waters began to rise, when they were up to the ankles, or knee deep, those who had, before, ridiculed the patriarch's barge would assemble around that door and clamorously demand to be admitted, resolved, if refused, to force their way in. But it would have been in vain. God had shut the door and no violence could force it open—by push of crowd or leverage of strength. Even so it is with us—we are protected against every onslaught of the enemies of our soul. Come life, come death, things present or things to come—God has appointed salvation! Come temptations of every sort, come craft or assault of devils—none can force the doorway and come at us for our destruction. “At evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning: for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto You, O my strength, will I sing.” This divine shutting in of Noah was very necessary, for I suppose that no one else could have moved the gigantic door upon its enormous hinges. It was probably too massive to have been stirred by Noah or his united family. It must have been a moment of wonder and awe when that stupendous door began silently to move of its own accord, as though an invisible hand was carefully closing it so that not a crevice should be made through which water could penetrate!

The ark was soon as complete as if it had never exhibited an opening from stem to stern. You and I need shutting into Christ by a divine hand or it never will be done securely. When a soul is brought to Christ it is by divine grace, but the whole is not done then—the grand difficulty is to keep us in Christ, for without continued grace we shall still perish in spite of all the arrangements of redeeming love. How many have ventured to sea in the galleys of their own resolve and have perished there! How many have hoped to shut themselves in with Christ by the mere force of personal determination, but the leakage of their own depraved heart has drowned them! But, oh, when God has brought us into union with Jesus, He shuts us in and we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation! The great door of covenant faithfulness is shut behind the believer, and he is surrounded by the power and grace of God, even as Noah was housed within the strong timbers of the ark; there is no crack nor cranny through which the floods of wrath can penetrate—omnipotent love has shut us in, and the Lord did this not only necessarily, but graciously. I call your attention to the change of the names in the text, a very significant change indeed—“They that went in, went in male and female of all flesh: as God had commanded him: and the Lord”—that is, Jehovah—“shut him in.” Elohim, as the creator and preserver, takes care of living things to preserve them, but the Lord, even Jehovah, the covenanting God, interposes in great mercy to protect His chosen servant!

It was Jehovah who entered into solemn league and covenant with His servant, Noah, so that He would preserve him in the ark, and float him into the new world in it. And as Jehovah, the covenanting one, He shut Noah in. There is no security like that which is given us by the covenant of grace. The hand which was lifted to swear our safety has also been outstretched to effect it! The everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, guarantees salvation to all who are represented by the great head and surety of that covenant, even our Lord Jesus. Love and power cooperate with faithfulness and truth to keep the chosen from all danger. Dwell much upon the covenant and note the immutable pledges by which it is secured, and the immortal principles upon which it is founded! Try to suck out the delicious sweetness which is to be found in the hive of the covenant, for if you are an advanced child of God, no form of the truth of God can be more nourishing or refreshing to your mind! The doctrines which spring out of the covenant are peculiarly comforting to believing minds. The promises of God are yes and amen in Christ

Jesus, and can never fail nor change, since the covenant stands fast forever and ever. Its tenure is free and sovereign grace and it cannot be disannulled. Here is a line of it, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." With such a promise does Jehovah shut us in with Christ Jesus in matchless kindness and unspeakable love! Notice, once again, that this deed was very instructive to Noah. It must have been so. Noah had ceased to live according to the mere senses of the body and had come to perceive his absolute dependence upon God, but he was made, by the opened door, to see that dependence most clearly. By divine orders he had built an ark on dry land and when it was built, Noah might have said, "Now I feel safe." But he could not say so, for there was a gaping hole in the side of the ark—a vast aperture which he could not close up.

It was an occasion of mercy to mankind, and Noah was probably glad to see it open that he might still preach righteousness and warn men to escape, saying, "The door is open! Come, you great sinners! Enter, you sons of Anak. Come and be saved!"—

*"Come to the ark, before yet the flood
Your lingering steps oppose!
Come, for the door which open stood
Is now about to close!"*

Yet when he had done his sermon and went home, perhaps he said to his wife, "Beloved, how can this ark save us? That door, if ever the floods come, will be a dreadful danger to us. We cannot shut it! What is to be done? We must leave it with God. We are still dependent upon a divine interposition and Jehovah will stretch out His hand and shut the door effectually so that we shall float above the deluge."

In this condition of daily dependence, the Lord would have His people abide, conscious to the very last that in Him, only, do they live! "Without Me you can do nothing." We are entirely dependent upon our faithful, loving God for everything! If I were to get up to heaven's wall and gaze in through the pearly gates, I know that if God did not give me grace to take the last step, I would die upon the threshold of the Celestial City! We rest upon God at the first for hope and pardon and the same is the case to the end. "My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." You will never be able to throw your cap up and say, "I have done with further prayer and watchfulness, for I need no longer depend on God." *Never* will you cease to look unto the Lord for your salvation till you shall be safely housed in heaven—

*"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."*

Then joyfully will you confess that salvation is of the Lord and glorify your great God and Savior. Thus the text tells us that Noah was shut in, and that he was shut in by God.

But now let us remember that he was shut in *with* God, for in the first verse of the chapter we read, "The Lord said unto Noah, Come, you and all your house into the ark." This clearly shows that the Lord was *already in the ark*. O what a joy it is to know that when a soul is buried to the world it lives with Christ, "for if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." God is in Christ Jesus and *we* are in Christ Jesus—and thus we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus! The tabernacle of God among men is the person of Christ! And when we are joined unto the Lord and become members of His body, we are alive unto God and have fellowship with Him! It is a blissful privilege to be hidden away in the person of Christ, for, "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him." You are in Him; that is true, joined unto the Lord in one spirit. Oh the fellowship the saved have with God! How cheering! How near! How elevating! How strengthening! God has left the entire world to its own destruction, but in the ark, Christ Jesus, there is joy, peace and fellowship—for God is there and all His redeemed family shut in with Him! Happy man, to be enclosed in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High! He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Next, notice that Noah's happiness was all the greater because he was shut in the ark with all his family. This is a great joy, to have your entire household brought unto the faith of Christ. Some among us have one or two of their family still without Christ and strangers to His salvation. This is a great grief. I will not enlarge upon a subject so painful, but I know instances in which godly women have all their children with them in Christ, but the husband is still a stranger to the covenant of promise. There is a brother among us who joys to dwell in Christ, but his father and mother are still without God and with-

out Christ! How often have we heard that dear brother's prayer for his relatives! Perhaps his parents are here, and if so I would tell them how much their son's prayers affect me. He cries as for his very life that God would save his father! Some among us never pray in the prayer meeting without strong crying and tears for their kinsmen according to the flesh—they cannot get through a prayer without mentioning their children, or their brothers, or others of their house—I hope they never will! I hope God will lay their kindred on their heart as a heavy burden till they are all saved in answer to prayer!

Noah would have been an unhappy man that day if his wife had been outside the ark, or if Shem or Ham had been outside, or if Japhet's wife or any other had been left to perish. How joyful are they who can say that all theirs are God's. You are very pleased, some of you, to see your sons and daughters respectably settled in life. Thank God for His gracious providence, but, mark you, if they were all poor and you saw them all *saved—that* would be the highest cause for gratitude! Better to see them regenerate than rich! Better married to Christ than to a fortune! Give your God no rest till it is so and if there is one who seems quite outside of spiritual things, pray for him as Abraham prayed for Ishmael, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" It is better you should pray hard for them while they live, than that you should mourn bitterly over them when dead, as David did when he lamented aloud, "O Absalom, my son! Would God I had died for you! O Absalom, my son, my son!" May the Lord, when He blesses us as He did Jacob, extend that blessing to all our tribes, and cause all that are born unto us to be born-again unto Himself. Noah and his household were shut in, dear friends, to be perfectly preserved, and then to come forth into a new world.

The rains descended, the springs poured forth their fountains, the waters rose and the huge vessel began to leave the ground and to walk the waters like a thing of life. I think the little company might well have sung a hymn, but if they did, it is probable that the hymn was brought to a pause as they heard the cries of drowning men and women outside. I cannot attempt to picture the scene—they must have come clustering in great multitudes round the ark when they saw that in very deed the flood was descending and rising! As the fast-closed ark began to move, the inmates must have heard a chorus of cries, groans, and shrieks of men and women as they perished in the insatiable waters! Down poured the incessant showers, beating on the roof with perpetual thunder. The bidden eight were in solitude, shut in from the all-enveloping sheet of rain. The waters continued to gather and still the ark rose. Though they could scarcely tell where they were amid the watery solitude, they knew that they were safe. When they looked out and saw no living thing, not even the top of a mountain, and they were floating on a sea that knew no shore, how strange must have been their sensations! But the Lord had shut Noah in, so he was perfectly safe. Noah knew that the Lord High Admiral of the seas was at the helm to steer the lonely ship aright.

Then came a strong wind to evaporate the waters, and how the ark must have sped before the gale, none knew where! It was doubtless tossed about, for it is the nature of winds to raise waves—and where there was no shore to give the slightest shelter, the vessel must have felt all their force. Yet the favored family was safe—

*“Without deep calls unto deep,
But all is peace within.”*

The waters subsided and, by-and-by, the ark came to a strange sensation, for its keel was touching the earth—it was coming to its rest. God remembered Noah and brought the ark to rest on the mountains of Ararat. But will the ark ground safely? Perhaps she will break her back on a rock, or slide down the side of a hill, or over the brink of a precipice! No, no. He who was her architect will be her preserver! God has found an anchorage for the stars, and He can surely berth a ship! He found the ark a safe resting place, and brought out all her passengers safe and sound. He is berthing many a vessel, now, in the everlasting harbors, and He has such skill in navigation that no vessel which belongs to Him shall ever come to an ill end! So far, Noah fared well and felt solid ground beneath him once again. Now the waters quickly disappear, but what a mass of mud—shall the rescued family run the risk of fever and pollution?

They shall not be let out till the land is dry—when the earth has been fertilized by its own destruction and is ready to receive the seed from the sower's hand—and the grass has begun to grow for the cattle! Then shall they come out into a new world. How fair the face of nature so newly washed! How like a bride decked for her marriage day! God sets open wide the door and out they come—camels, elephants, sheep, lions—Noah and all his family rejoicing to range at liberty! A sacrifice is offered and

God smells a savor of rest. So shall it be with us—shut in with Christ away from this world to which we are not conformed—we shall ride in safety as exiled beings out of this old world into another! A day comes when the new heaven and the new earth shall be seen and then the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace! Then shall our sacrifice of praise be accepted of the Lord! Blessed are they who enter into the ark of Jesus Christ, and so die to the old life that they may live in newness of life, rejoicing in Him who sits upon the throne of God and says, “Behold, I make all things new!” This is your lot and mine forever and ever!

II. I have purposely reserved only a very few minutes for the second and much more painful point of my discourse, which comes out of the words, SHUT OUT. To have the door shut is well enough for Noah, and those who are with him, but as for all the rest, that big door, when it closed on its hinges, shut them all out! Shut them all out to perish with a swift and sure destruction! Who were they? I wonder if any of the sort are here! Well, they were a people that had been preached to—Noah was a “preacher of righteousness”—and fulfilled his office perseveringly. The men of his generation were not left to perish without the light of God—they had been warned, they had been instructed, and they had been entreated.

They were such as you are who have been habitual hearers of the Word of God, but hearers only. Of course, you have, none of you, heard the gospel for 120 years from one man, but many of you have heard it quite long enough to have incurred great guilt in having rejected it so often. They were a people who had been prayed for. You will ask me how I come to know that. I answer that Ezekiel speaks of three men notable as intercessors: Noah, Daniel and Job—and I feel sure he would not have mentioned Noah in that company if he had not been a man of great prayer. I believe that Noah prayed much for his generation, and yet they were not saved. I am sure, dear hearers, that some of you are daily the object of earnest supplication. On Monday nights I have had notes about some of you, and hundreds, and even thousands of us have joined together in praying for you! Beside that, you know the dear ones at home are earnestly interceding for you, and some who are now in heaven pleaded hard for you before they departed. Yet you will be shut out as sure as you are alive unless you flee to Christ and enter into His salvation very soon! They were a people who had, many of them, been associated with Noah in his work. It is hardly likely that Noah built the ark with his own hands all alone—he must have hired fellers of trees and carpenters, caulkers and shipwrights of various kinds. None of these were saved. It is a sad thing that those who helped to build the ark were shut out of it!

Remember, however, that they shut themselves out! They chose their own destruction. Do I speak to any who have subscribed to build the house in which they worship? Who contribute their share to the expenses of the church and to the help of the poor, and to the education of the young—and yet have no part in Christ? I do not understand those of you who are zealous in promoting religion and yet have no share in the great salvation! Why will you resolve to be shut out? As sure as ever you sit on that seat, you will be shut out of heaven and shut out of Christ forever unless you arise and go unto your Father confessing your sins and seeking His mercy! May God awaken you to flee from the wrath to come!

These people in Noah’s time had seen great wonders. Half the world must have gathered to see the camels and elephants, eagles and peacocks, snails and worms—all come running, or flying, or creeping to the ark! Such a sight never could have been seen before! There they come in pairs—four wild beasts, two and two—and clean beasts by sevens! Voluntarily entering the ark! What a sight it must have been! Many saw it and confessed that God’s hand was in it, and yet they did not enter the ark, themselves. Oh, my hearers, some of you have been here in times of revival! You have seen drunks saved! You have seen the most unlikely ones converted, and yet *you* have not turned unto the Lord! Be you sure of this—you will be shut out of hope forever! May God grant it may never be so! But unless you repent, it will be the case.

Let me read you a passage from the gospel of Luke. And as I read it, think of it and tremble—“When once the master of the house is risen up and has shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us! He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not from where you are—then shall you begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in Your presence, and You have taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not from where you are! Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.” Thrust out—pushed out, not permitted to enter the great door interposing between you and all hope of mercy!

Next, notice what they did. What they did was this—they were a people who took all their delight in worldly things. We are told in the New Testament that they “ate and they drank; they married and were given in marriage till the day that Noah entered into the ark.” They were altogether taken up with this world—like some of you who have no regard for the world to come—but live as if this life would be everything. Prayer, praise and looking into eternal things are all weariness to you—you look after the shop, and the farm, and the house—and forget God! I do not blame you for diligence in business any more than I blame these people for eating and drinking and marrying! But to make this the main thing in life is to despise God, and heaven, and eternity! O my hearer, remember your God! Remember your Savior! Remember your soul! Remember death! Heaven! Hell! How little do you think of these things! Be not like these ungodly ones who gave their hearts to worldly things!

And then they did not believe. That was the point. Whatever Noah might say they replied, “Poor old man, you have entered on a second childhood. Perhaps when we are 500 years old, we shall talk nonsense, too.” When the patriarch came to be 600 years old, they said, “That greybeard is always telling us these stories,” and they jested at the old man’s fable. Alas, some of you do not believe the gospel, and therefore do not seek its salvation! But it is true, and you will acknowledge it to be so when you get breast deep in the fire-flood, as you will be before long! Oh that you would believe and escape from the wrath to come! They despised the long-suffering of God! They said, “Here has Noah been telling us these 120 years that a flood is coming and where is it?” Among us it is a common proverb, “Christmas is coming,” but in Noah’s days there must have been more sting in the proverb, “The deluge is coming!”

They would not believe that such a thing could ever be. Some say, “I have gone on very well; I have had no religion, and yet I have always prospered; I have seen godly people getting poor, but I have always added field to field, and house to house; I do not need religion! I am comfortable enough without it.” If we say we pity them, they reply, “We do not want your pity.” Just so! But the tables will be turned before long, and then you will *demand* our pity, though it will avail you nothing, for the door will be shut! Once let God shut the door and there will be an eternal separation between the ungodly and all hope and happiness. What came of it, then? The door of hope was shut, and the multitude perished without hope!

When I was thinking this over, I fancied that I could preach about it, but I cannot. When I realize the fact that any one of my dear hearers could be shut out of heaven, I cannot bear it! I need to find a secret place to weep. If an angel should say to me, this morning, “All your hearers shall be saved but one, and *you* must pick out the one who shall be shut out of heaven,” I should run my eyes anxiously up and down these lines of pews—and I should take up many an hour, and at last cry—“No, I cannot take the responsibility of marking out the doomed man!” I would keep you here, I think, till I died, before I could make the horrible death-choice. I would say, “Lord, save *everyone!*” And as for the marked man, I would cry, “Spare him! Do spare him!”

Oh, my hearers, will you do for yourselves what I could not dare to do for you? Will any man choose for himself to be lost? Will he count himself unworthy of eternal life, and take it from himself? Then I must shake off the dust of my feet against him! I will have none of the responsibility! If you will be damned, you must do it yourselves! I will not be a partaker in the crime. Your blood be on your own heads! Go down to the pit if you will; deliberately choose to do so, but know this, that Christ was preached to you, and you would not have Him! You were invited to come to Him, but turned your backs upon Him! You chose for yourselves your own eternal destruction! God grant you may repent of such a choice, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

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