

THE WEARY DOVE'S RETURN

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A SERMON
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“But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.”

Genesis 8:9

NOAH knew that God would in due time let him out of the ark. He was quite sure that the Lord had not put him into the ark to make a great coffin of it, that he and all those living creatures that went in with him should perish there, and because he believed in God, therefore he removed the covering of the ark and looked abroad, expecting by and by to see not only the tops of the mountains, but also a dry and green earth once more.

True faith often goes to the window. If your faith turns her face to the wall and expects nothing, I do not think it is genuine faith. Faith has eyes and therefore she looks afar off, and she often watches as the watchman of the night looks for the gray dawn of the morning.

You remember the story of the child who went to a prayer meeting which was called together to pray for rain? She expected that God would send the rain, so she took her umbrella with her because she wanted to get home dry. I wish that you and I had learned the same simple art of faith. Having prayed, and having believed, let us expect, let us open the window and look out. God never failed an expectant people yet, but a great many of His people fail to expect, and if you do not expect, you are not likely to receive.

David said, “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him,” and when your expectation is from Him, it will not be disappointed. It is a great pity when we keep the shutters up so that we cannot look out of the window to see the dry land.

Next, because Noah expected the earth to be dry, he sent out the raven, and when the raven did not answer his purpose, he sent out the dove. After the dove came back with no tidings, he waited seven days, and then sent her out again. And when she returned with only an olive leaf in her mouth, he waited seven days more, and then sent her out again.

Oh, dear friends, often send out your doves! Be looking for blessings, you have asked for them, God has promised to give them, send out your doves to see whether the blessings are not there, and if you do so constantly, and perseveringly, verily, I say unto you, you shall have your reward.

Still, notice that Noah, when he had the best evidence that he could get that the earth was dry, did not dare to go out of the ark till God opened the door. So, gather all the information you possibly can about your position, and act according to the rules of commonsense, but after you have done that, still wait upon God. When you know from your ravens and your doves that the earth is getting dry, do not come out till He that shut the door opens it for you.

Dear people of God, I wish that we had more of that old habit of looking to providence. We have become so wise nowadays, that we do not require the fiery cloudy pillar. We run without divine guidance, but mark you, we often have to run back again. We are guests at the table of providence, and if we will let God carve for us, our plate will always have a sufficiency on it, but if we get carving for ourselves, we shall cut our fingers, and not cut much else, and we shall have great cause to be ashamed that instead of trusting God, we took to trusting ourselves.

Do not trust your raven, do not trust your dove, trust your God, and if you go where He guides you, you will go the right way, even if it should be a rough way, and you will have to say, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

Now to come a little closer to the text, and to what we are about to say upon it. I do not know where the raven rested, whether he did, as some suppose, alight on the corpses floating on the flood, which I hardly think is likely, for God was preparing the earth for Noah to come back to it, and He would not leave it strewn with carcasses, as some have imagined.

Whether the raven returned to the ark, but refused to come in, or whether it found a resting place on the slimy boughs of trees, or on the tops of the mountains, which we are told began to be visible, I cannot tell.

This I do know, that wherever the raven rested, the dove could not do so, there was no clean place fit for the dove's clean nature. So it had to return to the ark, and when, weak and weary, it could hardly reach the ark, being heavy with the damp, perhaps mired with the filthy water into which it may have fallen in its weariness, while just able to get as far as the ark, it might have perished in the waters had not Noah perceived his little bird coming to the window. I suppose he was already there looking out for her, and he stretched forth his hand, and caught her, and pulled her in, and she was safe in the ark again.

There are three lessons which I am going to try to teach you from this simple little incident.

I. The first is, that **THUS GOD RECEIVES HIS SERVANTS.**

He receives them unto Himself, just as Noah received this dove into the ark.

Upon this I remark first, that *sometimes God's servants wander*. How I wish that they never did! Oh, that we so loved our Noah that we never left Him, and never went away from Him who is our rest! We are tempted and the flesh is frail. Oh, how sadly have some good men wandered! We speak this to our shame, we make no excuse for ourselves, we have wandered like silly doves, we have left the place of peace and safety and joy, and we have gone abroad, flying we know not where. Perhaps I speak to some such at this time.

Now, *if you are one of Christ's doves, you will never rest till you go back to Him*. Time was when you could have found pleasure in the ways of sin, but you cannot do so now. You may try to find it, but you cannot. When you were a raven, you might have done so, but now that the Holy Spirit has made a dove of you, you are spoilt for the raven's ways.

When a true child of God wanders into sin at any time, and goes back to the old haunts, he thinks to himself, "I used to enjoy myself in this place of amusement, I used to make merry with such and such company, the pipe and the bowl were once like heaven on earth to me, but now," he says, "I do not know how it is, but these things seem so vapid, so empty, there is not the life, there is not the vivacity about them that I knew in my younger days. It seems to be all a more hollow sham now."

Ah, my friend, it is not those things that have altered, it is you that the grace of God has changed! If God means you to live in heaven, you shall never find your heaven in this world. If He has chosen you to be His, and means you to be His, and has put His Spirit within you, you must be always restless till you come back and find rest in Him.

"May I come back?" says one. May you come back? Your Noah is at the window waiting for you. Speed towards Him with both your wings, rest not till He puts forth His hand to you and grasps you, and draws you into Himself. "But will He have me? Will He have me again?" O bird of the weary wing, He is not weary of you! O bird of the wet wing, that has been soiled in the filthy flood, He will not reject you! He washed you once, He will wash you yet again. He waits to be gracious.

Jesus loves to receive backsliders. It is the joy of His heart not only to make a sheep out of a goat, but to find one of His sheep that has gone astray, not only to adopt a stranger into His family, but to restore the prodigal son. That is the meaning of that parable, it is the backslider's parable. Oh, that you would understand it, and know that the infinite mercy of God is as ready to receive a returning backslider as Noah was to receive his wandering dove!

Now I will turn to another point. The dove in this narrative was not to blame, for it had not gone astray, but Noah sent it out, and every now and then the Lord Jesus sends a dove of His to go and spy out the world. It is a business upon which we must go if He sends us.

Now, what is our report of the world? Our report is that *there is nothing in the world upon which we can rest the sole of our foot*. The world is said to be progressing, advancing, improving, but we cannot discover it. The same sin, the same filthiness, the same universally abounding unbelief that our fathers complained of, we are obliged to complain of still, and we are weary with the world, weary with the nineteenth century, and all its boasted civilization. There is nothing upon which the sole of our foot can rest.

“What of the church?” asks one. Well, look at the church too, there is nothing to rest on there. There is much for which to be thankful, but there is nothing that can content a spirit that seeks after truth and holiness. I speak what I do know, for with weary wings have I fled across the waters, and with anxious eyes have I scanned the horizon, but there is no place of rest for the sole of my foot. What then? What then? Is the servant of God weary with his flight? See what Noah did to the dove, for this is what the Lord will do to His servant, “he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.”

O dear child of God, if you cannot rest in the church, you can rest in Christ, if you cannot rest in the world, you can rest in the Lord! “He pulled her in unto him.” It is a delicious sensation to get away from all men and all things to Christ Himself. He never seems so sweet as when all else is bitter, He never appears so substantial as when all else melts before you. “He pulled her in unto him.” She had done her work, she had taken her flight, she had made her investigation, now she has come back and she is in his bosom. “He pulled her in unto him.”

May that be the portion of all my dear friends in Christ who at this time feel heavy about the signs of the times! May the Lord draw you into nearer, dearer, sweeter fellowship with Himself than you have ever enjoyed before, and this will be your best reward!

Again to give another case, *the Lord's servants are sometimes sent forth that they may bring something back with them*. You Sunday school teachers go out on the Sabbath hoping to bring some child back with you. You street preachers (and may your number be multiplied!) are trying to bring something or somebody to Jesus.

Workers of different sorts who are here tonight, you go flying abroad to try to find something for Jesus. It may be that you have not picked up even an olive leaf yet, not one “son of peace” has at present received your benediction. Well, this dove was welcome though she brought nothing back. She came back with nothing in her mouth the first time, but then we read, “Noah put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.”

What though no child is saved as yet? What though no hearer in the street has responded to the invitation of love? What though you have labored in vain, and spent your strength for nothing? Thou art accepted of your God if you have done your best, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit, and tonight He pulls you in unto Himself.

If you are weary, O Martha, come and sit with Mary! If you are encumbered with the serving, come and be refreshed with the communing. After all, you can perhaps glorify your Lord more by receiving than by giving. You shall find it more blessed to yourself to receive Christ than if you could bring a soul to Him, He can make it to be so if He pleases. At any rate, your hope of going out again, and bringing in an olive leaf by and by, will lie in your coming in now, and getting in unto your Noah, and resting on Him until He sends you out again.

Only one more observation will I make on this first point and it shall be a very brief one. As far as I can see, *this dove was sent out in the morning, and she came back in the evening*, and Noah pulled her in unto him. Brethren, let that be a picture of every day in your lives. When you wake in the morning, perhaps the factory bell is ringing, at any rate, it is time for you to be off to business. You must think

about your business, perhaps yours is a work that is mental. You must give your mind to it, so all day long you feel like the dove flying abroad.

Well, take good heed that when the sun goes down, you make your way back home to your Lord. Lock up your heart every morning before you go out, and give Christ the key to keep till you come home, and then when He opens it at night, the sweet perfume that you had in the morning will be there in the evening. It is best if we can keep up our thoughts of Christ all day long, but perhaps we cannot, then let the dove, that flew away in the morning, be sure to fly back at night. It is where you go when the day's toil is done that tells what sort of a man you are.

I think I have before now used the simile of the crows. You cannot tell where the crows live early in the morning, they are out on the land following the plow. Farther on in the day they are inspecting a field of turnips, perhaps just watching to see if they can find a fly or a worm. Where do they live? Wait until the evening when they get together, and then you will see that they make a straight line for those tall trees where their nests are.

Where do your thoughts go at night? Where do they go when your day's toil is done? When you have done with the business of the day, which is like the crows picking up the worms, which way do you go then? That shows where your soul lives, so take care that in the evening you make your way back to your Noah. Oh, how sweetly does Christ come to us in our evening prayer, and put out His hand, and pull us in unto Himself, and we rest once more—

*“As in the embraces of our God,
Or on our Savior's breast.”*

Thus have I spoken to you upon my first division, showing that God receives His servants as Noah received the dove.

II. I will now go on to the second part of my subject which is equally practical, and will be useful to another class of people. THIS IS WHAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST DOES TO SINNERS.

I have spoken first of His servants, now I want to speak of sinners who are seeking His face.

Note then, that *the Lord Jesus Christ does not despise the condition of the sinner who comes to Him*. I have imagined that this dove might have fouled its wings, certainly it was not the beauty that it was when Noah sent it out in the morning, but he did not therefore refuse to take it into the ark. It was very weary, and ready to drop into the waters, yet Noah did not refuse it, but there he stood, at the open window, to meet it when it came.

And you feel very foul, very unworthy, very unfit, and very unsafe, nevertheless Jesus Christ will not refuse you. Whatever your condition may be, He casts out none who come to Him. Come as you are, come even though you feel that you cannot come, come any way, for He will not reject you.

The first thing that Noah did with this dove was to display his power, “He put forth his hand.” I have known *the Lord display His power very remarkably* when poor souls have been coming to Him, putting forth His hand, sometimes in providence doing some extraordinary thing to bring them to decision.

Sometimes He has used a sermon, or a stray word from some gracious soul, or He has put forth the power of His hand in the preaching of His Word. Sometimes He has used a religious book, or a little tract as His agent, it has not mattered what the instrumentality has been, it is the power which God has put forth which has been the means of laying hold upon the coming sinner.

Sometimes there has been no book and no sermon, but the Holy Spirit without any apparent means, has made an impression upon the conscience and upon the heart. There has come over the sinner, when he has begun to seek the Lord, a singular melting power, a feeling of solemnity such as he never had before. He cannot understand it, he seems to be on the borders of a new world, he hears the chimes of bells which he never heard before, ringing out of invisible places, and summoning him to his God.

I know what this experience means and I pray that some of you may know it, that just now at this very moment, our blessed Noah may put forth His hand to you poor fluttering doves. You cannot do

anything, but Jesus can, you cannot save yourselves, but He can save you, even as Noah put forth his hand, and saved the dove from perishing.

Then we read next, that Noah took the dove, seized her, captured her, held her. That is what my Lord does. *Jesus takes hold of sinners*. Oh, that He might get a blessed hold of some of you tonight! I have sometimes thought that Noah stood something like this (leaning forward, with hands outstretched), looking out of the window, and when the dove came back and was ready to drop, he caught her between his hands, as one would tenderly hold a dove, encompassing her, and then he pulled her in unto him.

What a blessing it is when the Gospel of Christ seems to surround you, and you get a hand beneath you, and a hand above you, and you feel as if Christ had laid hold of you, and was leading you joyfully captive! Some of you recollect when that happened to you, when the hand of Jesus was first held out, and then was put round about you, and you were taken prisoner and held in gracious bondage to the love and power of Christ.

Then we read that, "He pulled her in," and thus *Jesus draws in sinners*. There is something of a pull needed. Oh, what blessed pulls the Lord sometimes gives to bring sinners to decision, and put an end to their hesitancy! They want to wait a little longer, but the Lord Jesus will not have it. Providence and grace end their delays. They are very fearful, fluttering like this dove, afraid of her best friend, but the Lord Jesus Christ gives a pull that ends their fears and kills their despair. They are His, and His powerful love wins the day.

Sometimes, it is ignorance that keeps sinners back from Christ, for God's doves are often very silly creatures. They do not know the way into the ark, they miss the window, but Jesus does with them as Noah did with the dove, "He pulled her in." I hope I am not talking beyond the experience of many of you, or if I am, I pray my Master to make this to be your experience even now.

May these poor simple words of mine induce some of you to come to Christ at once! Why will you perish? Why will you delay? Why not be pulled in tonight, even as the dove was pulled in by Noah? I cannot pull you in, I would if I could, but Jesus can, and He cannot be less willing to bless you than I am.

Notice where Christ draws sinners. Noah pulled the dove in unto himself, and that is what Christ does with His poor fluttering doves, *He draws them to Himself*. You say that you want a lot of things. No you do not, you only want Jesus. If you have Him, you have everything. You want to be pulled into peace, to joy, to holiness, to rest. Ay, but what you really want is to be pulled into Jesus, and you will get all the other blessings. Drawn to His wounds, poor doves, you shall find your hiding place, drawn to His wounds, poor doves, you shall find the truest cleansing. This is what your Master must do for you, even as Noah pulled the dove in unto himself.

And when he had pulled her into himself, then she was in the ark, and she soon found other doves. Thus *Jesus draws sinners in unto salvation*. When He draws a man to Himself, then He draws Him to the church and he comes where he shall meet with fit society that shall console him and help him during the rest of his days. I cannot preach as I would, but I know that I am telling you that which, if my Lord will but bless it, will save and comfort your souls. I pray Him to put me on one side altogether, and to come, and with His own pierced hand pull you in unto Himself.

III. So I finish with this third point. **THAT WHICH JESUS DOES TO HIS SERVANTS AND TO SINNERS, HE WOULD HAVE US DO.**

Now, ye people of God, listen to me, and do what I now entreat of you in my Master's name.

In the first place, *look out for souls*. Now, Noah, go to the window, there is that dove you know, fluttering somewhere, go and look out for it, go to the window, Noah. He does not need to be told to go, for there he is, Noah loves his dove, so he is watching for her at the window.

Dear people of God, often go to the window! In your families look for the salvation of your children. In your workshops look for the salvation of your servants, and those with whom you employ. Perhaps that is a new thought to some of you. If you can get them to work for a little less money, you look out for that, but oh, that you would look out for their salvation! To see your employees saved is the best

profit that you can any of you have. Watch for their souls, and do so, not only at home, but when you come to your place of worship.

We have friends in this Tabernacle who are looking all over the place while I am speaking, I do not say that they are not attending to my message, but I do not think they are attending so much to my words as to those to whom I am speaking.

I have frequently seen a brother making his way very quietly down to a certain spot where he has noticed some of you sitting very attentively, some newcomers perhaps, who have never been here before, and it is more than likely that he will speak to some of you before this service is over. I hope somebody will ask you whether you are saved, and if so, you will begin to find that there are some who desire to bring you into close quarters. I think that it ought to be so, I cannot bear the thought of your coming here without getting a blessing.

I have to fire the Gospel cannon from this platform, it is loaded with grape shot, and it often does great execution, yet many of you may not be hit that way, but happily, my friends can come to you with their little pocket pistols, and so reach many whom I miss. Get to close quarters with them, brethren, find out whether they are saved or not. We need a great deal of this kind of work. Now then, Noah, go to the window and look out, be you an old Christian or a young Christian, be on the look out for sinners.

Noah goes to the window, and sure enough there is his dove. Then Noah stretches out his hand, as I want you to do. *Stretch out a hand to sinners*. Do it very gently, for doves are not bears you know, the souls of men are not like the skins of tigers. Stretch out your hands to sinners, but do it in a very loving and gentle way. Try if you can to let them see that there is a friend near, who will be happy to help them to Christ. Stretch out your hand, and if you can, do lay hold of them.

I do not know how Noah caught his dove, whether by the wings, or the legs, or the neck, but he did catch her, and pulled her into the ark. Now try if you can to lay hold of a soul for Christ, get a firm grip on it. This is not child's play, he that can catch doves with his hand is a wise man, and he that would win souls must be wise. Try to catch souls if you can, but do it gently. Remember that they are doves, and therefore be very tender and very gentle with them, but being doves, they are apt to fly away, therefore hold them fast, and *do not let them go*.

Perhaps they will not like you to touch them, never mind that, go on as mildly and lovingly as you can, yet do seek to give them a pull, and *do not rest until they are with you in the ark*, that is to say, till they are in Christ, till they are trusting Him, till they are resting in Him, till His precious blood has washed them, and they are saved, as you trust you are.

I do not think that we are half earnest enough in dealing with our fellow men. I remember a young man who when dying, said to his brother, "I am afraid I am lost, my brother, and I cannot help saying to you, 'Why were you not more earnest about my salvation?'" His elder brother answered, "John, I have spoken to you once or twice about your soul." "Once or twice!" replied the other, "You ought to have been always at me." "Well, but I did frequently speak to you about divine things." "But," said he, "if you knew that I was perishing, why did you not shake me, why did you not do something unusual with me, why did you not weep over me, why did you not force me to think? My soul is lost, and you have shown but very little care about it."

Perhaps that was a very hard thing to say, and an unkind thing, and a self-excusing thing, but do you not think that some people might say that of you and of me? We have never been earnest enough in seeking the salvation of their souls.

Mr. Rowland Hill's story about this matter is a good one. He said, "I hear them say that poor old Mr. Hill makes a great noise, and often shouts when he is preaching, the poor old gentleman gets quite excited." "Yes," added Mr. Hill, "and I was one day walking out at Wotton-under-Edge, and I was going by a gravel pit, or a chalk pit, and it fell in and buried a man, and I went running down into the village as fast as ever my old legs would carry me, crying out that there was a man likely to be buried alive, and the people rushed out to try to save him, and they did not say then as they do now, 'Poor old Mr. Hill is making a deal of noise.'"

Oh, that we were as earnest about the souls of men as we can sometimes be about their bodies! Do try then, you who love the Lord, to pull them in, even as Noah pulled the dove in unto himself into the ark.

I leave the text with you. When I cannot preach, I always wish that all of you may be preaching. If the preacher seems to speak feebly, take up what he has said, and work at it, and go and do better with it, and if you will do so, it will be better than if I alone had done better. The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

GENESIS 8

1. *And God remembered Noah,—*

Noah had been shut up in the ark for many a day, and at the right time, God thought of him, practically thought of him, and came to visit him. Dear heart, you have been shut out from the world now for many days, but God has not forgotten you. God remembered Noah and He remembers you.

1. *And every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark:*

Does God remember *cattle*? Then He will certainly remember men made in His own image. He will remember you, though you think yourself the most worthless one on the face of the earth, "God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark."

1. *And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters asswaged;*

Winds and waves are wholly under God's control. I suppose that this was a very drying wind, so the waters began to turn to vapor, and gradually to disappear. It is God who sends the winds, they seem most volatile and irregular, but God sends them to do His bidding. Blow it east, or blow it west, the wind comes from God, and whether the waters increase or are asswaged, it is God's doing.

Are the waters very deep with you, dear friend? God can dry them up, and singularly enough, he can stop one trouble with another, he can dry up the water with the wind. I have known Him act very strangely with His people, and when they thought they were quite forgotten, He has proved that He remembered them, and both the winds of heaven and the waters of the sea have had to work their good.

There is not an angel in heaven but God will make him to be a servant to you if you need him, there is not a wind in any quarter of the globe but God will guide it to you if it is necessary, and there are no waves of the sea but shall obey the Lord's will concerning you.

2. *The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained;*

God works upwards, and stops the windows of heaven. He works downwards, and stays the breaking up of the fountains of the deep.

*"He everywhere hath sway,
And all things serve His might."*

Be not afraid, He can open the windows of heaven, and pour down abundant blessings for you, and He can let down the cellar-flaps of the great deep, and stop its flowing fountains.

*"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?"*

3-5. And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days, the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

God told Noah when to go into the ark, but He did not tell him when he should come out again. The Lord told Noah when to go in, for it was necessary for him to know that, but He did not tell him when he should come out, for it was un-necessary that he should know that. God always lets His people know what is practically for their good.

There are many curious points on which we should like to have information, but God has not revealed it, and when He has not revealed anything, we had better not try to unravel the mystery. No good comes of prying into unrevealed truth. Noah knew that he would come out of the ark one day, for was he not preserved there to be a seed to keep the race alive?

Noah was not told when he should be released, and the Lord does not tell you when your trouble will come to an end. It *will* come to an end, therefore wait and be patient, but do not want to know the time of your deliverance. We should know too much if we knew all that will happen in the future. It is quite enough for us if we do our duty in the present, and trust God for the rest.

Still, I think that Noah must have been very pleased when he felt the ark grating at last on the mountains of Ararat. He could not build a dock for his big ship, but God had prepared a berth for it on the mountain side. Now, as he looked out, he could see, here and there, a mountaintop rising like an island out of the great expanse of water.

6-7. *And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: and he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro,—*

Sometimes alighting on the ark, then flying away again.

7-10. *Until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet another seven days;*

I wonder whether Noah sent out these creatures on the Sabbath mornings. The mention of seven days, and the resting in between seems to look like it. Oh, dear friends, sometimes people send out a raven on the Lord's-day morning, and it never brings them anything. Send out a dove rather than a raven, come to the house of God with quiet, gentle, holy expectation, and your dove will come back to you. It may be that it will bring you something worth bringing one of these days, as Noah's dove brought to him.

10-11. *And again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.*

The waters were abated as far as the fruit trees, not only the tallest forest trees, but some of the fruit trees were uncovered from the water. The dove had plucked off "an olive leaf." Perhaps you have seen a picture of the dove carrying an olive branch in its mouth, which, in the first place, a dove could not pluck out of the tree, and in the second place, a dove could not carry an olive branch even if she could pluck it off. It was an olive leaf, that is all. Why cannot people keep to the words of Scripture? If the Bible mentions a leaf, they make it a bough, and if the Bible says it is a bough, they make it a leaf.

12. *And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.*

Noah could read something from that leaf that the dove brought to him, but he learned more when she did not return to him. He knew that she had found a proper resting place, and that the earth was clear of the flood.

13. *And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth:*

That was a happy New Year's day for Noah. He was glad to find himself at rest once more, though not yet at liberty.

13. *And Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.*

Why did not Noah come out? Well, you see, he had gone in by the door, and he meant to come out by the door, and He that opened the door for him and shut him in, must now open the door for him and let him out. He waits God's time, and we are always wise in doing that. You lose a great deal of time by being in a hurry. Many people think they have done a great deal when they have really done nothing. Better take time in order to save time. Slow is sometimes faster than fast. So Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked out, but he did not go out till God commanded him to do so.

14. *And in the second month,—*

Nearly two months Noah waited for the complete drying of the earth.

14. *On the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.*

"The face of the ground was dry" in the first month, "the earth was dried," the second month. Noah might have thought it was dry enough before, but God did not think so, there was enough mud to breed a pestilence, so Noah must wait until God had made the earth ready for him.

15-16. *And God spake unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark,—*

Noah must wait till God speaks to him. Oh, that some people would wait for God's command, but they will not! He shall bless thy going out and thy coming in if thou will go forth and come in when He bids thee. "Go forth," says the Lord, "Go forth of the ark."

16-19. *Thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.*

That was a very wonderful procession, it was the new beginning of everything upon the earth. Whatever evolution or any other folly or evil of man may have done, everything had to begin again now. Everybody was drowned save these great fathers of the new age, and all must begin from this stock.

20. *And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*

Commonsense would have said, "Spare them, for you will need every one of them." But grace said, "Slay them, for they belong to God. Give JEHOVAH His due." I have often admired that widow of Sarepta. When she had but a handful of meal, she made a little cake for God's prophet first, but then God multiplied her meal and her oil. Oh, if we would but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things should be added unto us! Out of the small stock he had, Noah took of the clean beasts, and of the clean fowls, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21. *And the LORD smelled a sweet savor;*

Noah's faith was pleasing to God. It was Noah's confidence in a bleeding sacrifice that gave him acceptance with the Lord. God thought upon His Son, and that great Sacrifice to be offered long afterwards on the cross, and He "smelled a sweet savor."

21. *And the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.*

God always speaks comfortable words to those who bring an acceptable sacrifice. If you would hear the voice of a divine promise, go to the atoning blood of Jesus. If you would know what perfect reconciliation means, hie to the altar where the great Sacrifice was presented.

22. *While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*

They never have ceased. We have this year had a long and dreary winter, it looked as if spring would never come. Only a few days ago the chestnuts were just beginning to turn green, and then there came

the little spikes, and now you can see them in full flower. How faithfully God fulfils His covenant with the earth! How truly will He keep His covenant with every believing sinner! Oh, trust ye in Him, for His promise will stand fast forever!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—649, 499, 501

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