

THE RAINBOW NO. 517

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 28, 1863
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it,
that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God
and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.”
Genesis 9:16*

THE story of Noah’s preservation in the ark is a suggestive representation of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, we think, especially intended to depict that part of our salvation which lies in the washing of regeneration. In the same way as baptism is the outward symbol of regeneration, so also is the ark, “Wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”

The ark was immersed in those dreadful rains and awful cataracts which deluged the earth, and Noah’s family were buried in that ark to all the world. But by this burial they were floated out of the old condemned world into the new world of life and grace. Death to the world, and burial in the ark, were the means of their safety. “The like figure whereunto,” says the apostle Peter (1Pe 3:21), “even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Baptism is a most significant picture of regeneration, but it is in no sense the cause of the new birth. And the blunder of the Puseyites lies in considering the outward manifestation of an accomplished fact, as though it were the means of creating that fact. Baptism saves no one, except, as Peter says, in *figure*. But as a figure, it is eminently full of divine teaching, for it sets forth the great truth that the believer, standing today in the old world, is buried to that world, “buried with Jesus Christ by baptism into death.”

And his rising from the liquid tomb is the figure of his resurrection in Christ, into a new world, as a new man, “That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Would to God that we thought more of being dead with Christ, buried with Him, and risen with Him. Brethren, let Noah in his ark preach the work of righteousness within the heart to all of us this morning.

Do you not think, dear friends, that the history of Noah, when he left the ark, in all its items, may be viewed as typical and instructive? Noah came out of the ark—no longer cooped up and penned within its narrow limits, he walked abroad, and the whole world was before him where to choose. Was not that a picture of the freedom of the believer who has been “buried with Christ,” and enjoys the possession of God’s free Spirit?

For him there is no spirit of bondage, he is free as a child in his father’s house. All things are his, by gift of God, to use and to enjoy. He has learned the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free, and if the Son make us free, we are free indeed. When Noah slew the bullock, and the other clean beasts, and offered them upon the altar, did he not show forth the believer’s employment? For we also offer acceptable sacrifices of prayer and praise unto God, and we ourselves are living sacrifices unto God.

Did he not as much say to all generations of saints, “You being thus delivered from a death which you deserve are to spend your lives as priests unto your God”? When the Lord was pleased on that day to bless Noah and his family, bidding them be fruitful, did He not therein set forth the fruitfulness which belongs unto believers, so that, abiding in Christ, they “bring forth much fruit”?

May not that benediction teach us how earnestly we should seek to be spiritually the parents of immortal souls, travailing in birth till Christ be formed in them? When the Divine Father gave them

dominion over the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and over all cattle, did not this portray the power which believers have over lust, and sin, and evil, and did it not prophesy the subjugation of all things by the power of their faith, so that they who become “priests” in sacrifice, become also “kings,” by virtue of the charter of dominion which the heavenly Father bestows upon them?

What think you, brethren? When He enlarged the grant of food, and permitted them to eat flesh, did He not set forth that food on which true believers feed, who now eat *His* flesh and drink *His* blood, who has become the spiritual food of our souls? Is it straining the allegory, is it carrying it too far, if I close these spiritualizings by observing that the very same security which God then gave to Noah and his descendants is that security under which *we* stand?

He gave them a covenant—a covenant embellished with a divine symbol and ratified with His own signature written out in all the colors of beauty. We too stand under a covenant which has its own faithful witness in heaven, more transcendently illustrious and beautiful than the rainbow—the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Leaving, however, all those points, which I have only started to excite thought among you, we come to this. We have Scriptural reason for asserting that this venerable covenant—that the world shall no more be destroyed by a flood—is typical of a yet more ancient compact which God made with Christ, that He would be unto His people a God, and they would be His chosen ones, world without end.

In the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, we find such language as this—“In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.”

The covenant of Noah, then, is typical of the great covenant made with Christ on behalf of His people. And the rainbow, as the symbol of the covenant with Noah, is typical of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord’s witness to the people. You read in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, in the third verse, “There was a rainbow round about the throne,” showing that the rainbow is not a temporary symbol for earth only, but is a symbol of everlasting and heavenly things.

And in the tenth chapter of the book of Revelation, if I mistake not, in the first verse, you will find that the mighty angel with the book in his right hand, who shall put one foot upon the sea, and another upon the land, is described as having His head crowned with a rainbow. In this place, our Lord Jesus Christ, in His mediatorial capacity, wears the symbol of the covenant about His brow.

And in the other passage, our Lord, as King, is represented as sitting upon the throne, surrounded with the insignia of the covenant of grace which encompasses the throne, so that there are no goings forth of His majesty and His power and His grace, except in a covenant way and after a covenant sort, since the rainbow must be passed, before the bright rays of His power and love can reach the sons of men.

This brings us now into the center of our discourse. We have to talk of two things—first, the *tenor* of the covenant, and secondly, the *token* of it—running a parallel all the way through between the two covenants. The tenor of Noah’s covenant is the tenor of the covenant of grace—just as the rainbow represents, and in some sense is, the token of the covenant of grace also.

I. First, then, the covenant itself—WHAT IS ITS TENOR?

We reply, that it is a covenant of *pure grace*. There was nothing in Noah why God should make a covenant with *him*. He was a sinner—and proved himself to be so in a most shocking manner within a few days. He *needed* a sacrifice, for he afterwards became drunken. He was one of the best of men, but the best of men are but men at the best, and can have no claim upon the favor of God.

He was saved by faith as the rest of us must be—and faith, we all know, is inconsistent with any claim of merit. At least one of his sons we must set down as being an open and abandoned sinner, and in him there could have been no ground why God should make a covenant with him. We have no reason to

imagine that Noah ever *sought* this covenant. He did offer a sacrifice, but we do not know that he ventured to indulge the idea that God would enter into bonds with him not to destroy the earth.

We imagine that the very first cloud which swept across the sky would excite the patriarch's alarm. The first drop which fell would dampen his comfort. As a preacher of righteousness, he understood well enough that on grounds of justice he had no claim upon the Most Holy God, and he would not venture to plead any merit of his own.

But out of pure favor—just as out of the mountain's side the sparkling fountain gushes freely without the labor or art of man, so this covenant of sparing mercy sprang spontaneously from the overflowing, ever bounteous and loving heart of God.

Certainly it is so with that greater covenant, whereof we strive to speak. For this was made with Christ, "or ever the earth was." And as there were no men to supplicate, it could not have been possible that it was due to their intercession. As there were no men to merit anything it could not be bought by their worthiness, and as divine foreknowledge well knew that man would be evil—"only evil, and that continually from his youth up," no foresight of human goodness could have suggested it.

And yet, because He, "will have mercy on whom he *will* have mercy, and will have compassion on whom he *will* have compassion," He, the gracious God, whose heart was swelling like the deep sea with flood-tides of lovingkindness, was pleased to strike hands with Christ, our covenant and federal head, and from grace and grace alone to enter into engagements with Him on our account.

The covenant, we note, in the next place, was all of *promise*. You will be struck, if you read these verses, how it runs over and over again, "I *establish*"—"It *shall* come to pass"—"I *will*"—"It *shall*"—"I *will*." He who knows the difference between, "*thou shalt*" and "*I will*" is a good theologian.

The old covenant of works is, "*thou shalt*." "Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal." Death always comes to us by that covenant of command. But the new covenant is, "*I will*," and life comes to us by its promises.

The covenant of grace runs on this wise—"I *will* sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your iniquities *will I* save you." If there be a "*you shall*," it is not by way of *command*, but by way of *promise*. "*I will*," and "*you shall*"! O dear friends, one's heart rejoices to think of those potent *shalls* and *wills*—those immoveable pillars which death and hell cannot shake—the *shalls* and *wills* of a God who, "Speaks, and it is done," who, "Commands, and it stands fast."

I do not see an *if*, nor a *but*, nor the shadow of a ghost of a *peradventure* in it. It is all, "*I will, I will, I will*," from beginning to end. And so, when God covenanted with Christ, it was not, "*I will* save My people *if* they do this," but "*I will*," and "*they shall*," from first to last.

***"Tis like a living spring of waters, sweet and clear;
There's not an if to foul the stream nor peradventure here.
Grace is its fountain head, the source from whence it came;
In wills and shalls of Gospel grace, eternally the same."***

The apostle Paul is very clear upon this. In that most blessed epistle to the Galatians, he calls this, "the covenant of promise," and marks the difference between Ishmael, "the son of the bondwoman," according to nature, and according to works, and Isaac, who is the child of the promise, and the gift of God, *above* nature—not according to the efficacy and energy of the creature, but according to the will and power and truthfulness of the Most High." You and I do not stand today under a covenant which demands anything of us. Unconditional favors, unlimited mercies, made sure to all the seed by the oath and promise—the *shall* and *will* of God!

Further, I would have you observe that this covenant *has hitherto been faithfully kept*. It cheered my heart, when thinking this matter over, to remember that although I depend upon covenant faithfulness, I am not alone in that dependence, for every living thing upon the face of the earth lives by virtue of the immutable covenant of God.

Covenant engagements preserve the world from flood—were it not for that covenant, the tops of the mountains might be covered tomorrow. So that a covenant tenure is a very sure one, seeing that these thousands of years the world has never been destroyed by a flood. Ask you, read you, ask your sires, go back to ancient histories, and see whether from the deluge God has ever again swept away the race of man with water, and you shall not even dare to hint that such a thing has been.

No, the earth standing in the water and out of the water, since the fathers fell asleep, according to the testimony of scoffers themselves, abides still the same. And so does the covenant of grace. It has never been removed or altered, nor have its promises been broken. O saint, you dwell in tabernacles which shall never be taken down! God has never failed His people, nor cast away His chosen. Not one promise has lost its fulfillment, nor one word its faithfulness.

*“This cov’nant of grace all blessings secures;
Believer, rejoice, for all things are yours,
And God from His purpose shall never remove,
But love thee and bless thee and rest in His love.”*

Beloved, there is this about Noah’s covenant and about the covenant of grace—that *it does not depend in any degree at all upon man*. For, if you will notice, the rainbow is put in the cloud, but it does not say, “And when *ye* shall look upon the bow, and *ye* shall remember my covenant, *then* I will not destroy the earth.”

But it is gloriously put not upon *our* memory, which is fickle and frail, but upon *God’s* memory, which is infinite and immutable. “The bow shall be in the cloud; and *I* will look upon it, that *I* may remember the everlasting covenant.” Oh! it is not *my* remembering God—it is God’s remembering *me*. It is not *my* laying hold of His covenant, but His covenant laying hold on me.

Glory be to God! the whole of the bulwarks are secured, and even the minor-towers which we may fancy might have been left to man, are guarded by divine strength. Even the remembrance of the covenant is not left to our memories, for we might forget, but our Lord cannot, will not forget the saints, whom He has graven on the palms of His hands.

It is with us today as it was with Israel in Egypt. The blood was upon the lintel and upon the two side-posts. But God did not say, “When *you* see the blood I will pass over you.” No, no, but, “When *I* see the blood I will pass over you.” My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God’s looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all His elect.

For it is impossible for our God to look at Christ, our bleeding Surety, and then to be angry with us for sins already punished in Him. No, dear friends, it is not left with *us* even to be saved by remembering the covenant. There are no linsey-wolsey here—not a single thread of the creature mars the fabric. Here we have the pure gold and not an atom of alloy. It is not of man, neither by man, but of the Lord alone. We *should* remember the covenant, and we *shall* do it, through divine grace. But the hinge of the matter does not lie there. It is God’s remembering *us*, not our remembering *Him*.

And hence—for all these reasons, it is an *everlasting covenant*. We know that as long as there is day and night, and summer and winter, and these shall be so long as the earth stands, the proud waves can never cover the earth. *Forever* has God established this covenant in heaven. Even so the covenant of grace is not intended to be fleeting and temporary. “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” “He hath made with us an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” “He will ever be mindful of His covenant.”

If it concerns *you* today, it is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” If the covenant blesses you at this hour, it shall bless you in old age, in the article of death, at resurrection, and throughout eternity. No *time* can change one of its stipulations. You may walk the centuries and fly adown the ages far into eternity, but you can never discover such a thing as the change or failure of one single article of the covenant of grace, its jots and tittles are sure to all the seed.

*“He lov’d the world of His elect,
with love surpassing thought;
Nor will His mercy e’er neglect
The souls His Son has bought.*

*“The warm affections of His breast
Towards His chosen burn;
And in this love He’ll ever rest
Nor from His oath return.*

*“Still to confirm His oath of old,
See in the heavens His bow,
No fierce rebukes, but love untold,
Awaits His children now.”*

Would to God you and I studied more the doctrine of this covenant of grace. Our old Puritanic forefathers were wont to preach much about it. Those Scotch Theologians, who were a second band of Puritans, Erskine and the men of his day, were always dwelling upon the covenants. Good Witsius has left us a marvelously learned and potent treatise on the same, and Fisher’s *Marrow of Theology* is a valuable exposition of the matter. He who studies the doctrines of the covenants is not very likely to make a mingle-mangle of his ministry, or to preach a yea and nay Gospel.

My dear friends, when you think of the covenant of law and the covenant of grace, and remember that they are contrary the one to the other, and can never mingle, can never be united—so that the one can dilute the other—it must come out forcibly before you that we may address the Gospel to the sinner *as a sinner*, without a fitness on his part.

That we may still believe in God’s love to the saint, even *though* he has sinned, and that notwithstanding all the misbehavior of any of the chosen people, since they are under the covenant of grace and not of works, their salvation is *never* in jeopardy, *never* at hazard, so far as God’s will and God’s power are concerned.

But He that vowed to save them, and loved them in Christ, and has given them faith, which is the token of His grace, will most assuredly save them and bring them to glory. The earth shall be destroyed, with water, long before one of God’s elect shall be damned. It *shall* be destroyed, with fire we know, but when “the mountains depart” and “the hills are removed,” the covenant of His grace shall still stand, and He will be mindful of all who have an interest in it.

So much, then, concerning the tenor of the covenant itself. My soul! search, and look, and see whether *you* have an interest in that covenant. Can *you* say from your heart—

*“My hope is fixed on nothing less
Than Jesu’s blood and righteousness”?*

Then, my soul, that everlasting covenant is yours, and you are safe beyond risk of harm.

II. Secondly, THE TOKEN OF THE COVENANT.

The covenant needs no token, as far as *God* is concerned. Tokens are given for *us*, because of our littleness of heart, our unbelief, our constant forgetfulness of God’s promise. The rainbow is the symbol of Noah’s covenant, and Jesus Christ, who *is* the covenant, is also the symbol of that covenant to *us*. He *is* the Faithful Witness in heaven.

1. Briefly upon this part of the subject let us notice *when we may expect to see the token of the covenant*.

The rainbow is only to be seen painted upon a *cloud*. Expect no tokens, except when you need them. The Lord Jesus, when He *can*, will trust us to our faith. For it is, on the whole, more healthy, more

strengthening to us, to “walk by faith, and not by sight.” Tokens are helps for our childhood—they would be unnecessary to us were we men.

Tokens, to men whose faith is in vigorous order, would be as crutches to a man who is not lame, or as glasses to those whose eyes are perfect. The Lord is pleased to give tokens when tokens are wanted, I say, and hence He gives them, as He gives rainbows, when there is a cloud.

When the greatest cloud which ever gathered upon earth had covered Calvary with blackness, when the sun himself had suffered eclipse, when human sin and divine wrath had made a tempest so black and terrible that all the earth was affright, then on that black cloud was painted the rainbow—for Jesus was lifted up, and amidst that thick darkness *He*, the expiation and the atonement, offered up Himself and poured forth His blood.

When the sinner’s conscience is dark with clouds, when he remembers his past sin, when he mourns and laments before God, Jesus Christ is revealed to him as the covenant Rainbow, speaking peace. And to the believer, when his trials surround him, when temptations beset him, when he suffers depression of spirits—then how sweet it is to behold the person of our Lord Jesus Christ—to see Him bleeding for us, offered up for guilty men—God’s rainbow, hung over the cloud of all our sins, our sorrows and our woes.

Look, believer, when you have a cloud—look for a token, and be not satisfied without it. The ancient church said upon one occasion, “We see not our signs.” And you and I have sometimes to say the same. But let us hasten to the Rock of our Salvation and beseech Him to bestow upon us a comfortable sight of Jesus, who shall will the covenant to our souls again.

Nor does a *cloud* alone give a rainbow. There must be *rain*. There can be no rainbows, unless there are the crystal drops to reflect the light of the sun. So, beloved, our sorrows must not only threaten, but they must really fall upon us. There had been no Christ for us if the vengeance of God had been merely a threatening cloud. It must fall in terrible drops upon Him.

Christ, who sets forth to us the vengeance and the love of God at the same time, had not come to us unless there had been a *real* vengeance, and a *real* punishment of sin—until there is a *real* anguish in the sinner’s conscience, there is no Christ for him. And until the chastisement which you feel becomes grievous to you—till the big drops bespatter you, and you feel it is not a threatening, but a real infliction of sorrow upon you, you cannot expect to see Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, dear brethren, some of us have but slight views of Christ, and few have visits from Him, because we have so few troubles. And the reason why the most of saints in these days do not live so near to Jesus as they were wont to do in the centuries gone by, may be because we have not so many of those showers of persecution which fell at that season.

Why, when, in the reign of Dioclesian, and in the preceding centuries, believers were stoned and dragged into the amphitheatre, or hacked to death with knives, they saw the glory of Jesus as the rainbow painted on the black cloud of persecution, while the raindrops fell upon them. It makes us even long to suffer as they suffered, that we may behold Jesus as they beheld Him.

But the day is coming when the world shall “hear of wars and rumors of wars.” The earth shall rock and reel, and the pillars of heaven shall be shaken. The stars shall fall, the moon shall be turned into a clot of blood, and the sun shall be black as sackcloth of hair. Ah! then how glorious will that rainbow shine to all the people of God, when over the conflagrations of earth, and the destruction of men, and the melting of empires, and the blazing of earth, there shall be seen Christ the Mediator, securing all His people, and ratifying still the covenant of grace. There must be drops of rain, or else no rainbow—some fallings of vengeance, or else no sight of Christ.

But then, there must be *a sun*, for clouds and drops of rain make not rainbows unless the sun shines. Beloved, our God, who is as the sun to us, always shines, but we do not always see Him. Clouds hide His face, but no matter what drops may be falling, or what clouds may be threatening, if *He* does but shine, there will be a rainbow at once.

When the blessed Spirit “sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts”—when we can say, “Abba, Father,” and a Father’s love and a Father’s peace are breathed upon us—then we see Jesus Christ, beholding the Father in the person of His Son.

It is said that when we see the rainbow, that particular shower is over. So, good Bishop Hall tells us in his, “*Contemplations*.” Certain it is, that when Christ comes, our troubles are over. When we behold Jesus, our sins are gone—our doubts and fears subside at His command. When *He* walks the waters of the sea, there will be a calm.

But others say that the rainbow is the showery arch and heralds bad weather. And probably this is quite as true. Certainly, whenever you get a love-token from Christ, you may expect some trouble. For He brings His people into the banqueting house either before a battle or after it. Melchisedec came to meet Abraham when the kings had all been slaughtered, but sometimes our Melchisedec brings the bread and wine just before the battle is to commence.

We are not *always* to be living upon love-tokens. Our beloved Jesus would rather make us live by simple faith, and therefore we “walk in darkness and see no light.” Still, rainbows are delightful sights, and a vision of Jesus is rapturous and transporting, but you cannot expect to see Him, I say, unless it is when the storm is over, or when another storm is coming on, or when the cloud is there, or the drops are falling, or the light of God’s countenance is especially shining upon you.

We will say no more about *when* this token is seen, but we will now notice briefly, what this token *is*.

2. *What do we see in our Covenant Witness in heaven?* We see in Him what we see in the rainbow. In the rainbow, we see transcendent *glory and beauty*. As one of the works of God, it is worthy to be sought out by them who have pleasure therein. One might stand and gaze on the rainbow with wonder and admiration, and never be weary.

I do not know whether you have noticed paintings of rainbows—did you ever see a good one? *Will* you ever see a good one? There are one or two in the Royal Academy this year—I am no judge of paintings, but I can judge that they are as much *unlike* rainbows as they well could be. Rainbows cannot be painted. The thing is impossible. There is such a melting and blending of colors, that human art shall never be able to rival the art of God.

The Master Painter, with the black cloud for His palette, and the sun’s rays for His pencil, paints so that no artist shall rival Him. If you should gather together a heap of all the glittering gems and jewels which adorn an Oriental prince, and build therewith a glorious arch—you could not make such glitter and brightness of glory as in the rainbow—which is the simple work of a drop of rain and a ray of light.

But shall I compare my Lord Jesus to the rainbow? I do Him an injustice.

“All human beauties, all divine, in my Beloved meet and shine.”

You never saw a picture of *His* face which satisfied you and you never will. You shall go all over the Continent and see some of the marvelous productions of the masters put up as altar pieces. And you will say when you see them, “*That* is not like Jesus Christ.” They can paint Judas. There are some fine heads of Peter—sweet guesses at John—John the Baptist to life—all but that little bit of a cockle-shell in his hand. They can paint Mary Magdalene if you will, but never Jesus Christ.

They can never paint Him. No artist that ever lived can catch His expression of countenance, much less put it on canvas. And as to the beauty of His character, must we not burst out with the spouse in the Canticles, “He is altogether lovely”?

***“The spacious earth, the swelling flood,
Proclaim the wise and powerful God;
And Thy rich glories from afar,
Sparkle in every rolling star.*”**

***“But in His looks a glory stands,
The noblest labour of Thine hands:
God, in the person of His Son,
Hath all His mightiest works outdone.”***

The rainbow has been recognized by ancient poets and bards as an appointed messenger of God. Homer calls it the messenger of the gods, and the old mythologies speak of it as the Iris, the messenger of Juno. They knew not who had sent it, nor what was the errand on which it came. Still they recognized it as a divine ambassador.

And surely such is Christ, the Messenger of the covenant whom we delight in, God’s great Ambassador, who is “our peace,” “the desire of all nations,” who shall yet come, and shall be hailed as “King of kings and Lord of lords.” O blessed rainbow! Jesus! when shall Your beauties be beheld by mortal eyes? When shall *all* kings fall down before You, and yield their sceptres and their crowns to You?

Again—in the rainbow and in Christ, I see *vengeance satisfied*. Is not the bow the symbol of the warrior’s power? With far-reaching arrows he draws the string and woe unto his enemies. But when a hero hangs up his bow upon the wall, what means he but that warfare is over and peace is proclaimed? When he loosens the bow, and leaves it without the string, and without an arrow, it means that he will go no more out to hunt his adversaries. His arrows shall be no more “drunk with the blood of the slain.” He lays the bow aside, hangs it up on high, and leaves it unstrung, without an arrow.

Such is the rainbow. A bow, it is true, but a bow hung up—a bow without string or arrow. And such is Christ, God’s bow. “*Thine* arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.” When *He* takes the “rod of iron,” He breaks His enemies in pieces, “like a potter’s vessel.” “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of his strength?” Jesus, the arrow of God, the polished shaft in the quiver of the Most High.

But *there* I see Him—a bow still—still mighty to destroy—but yet a bow without a string. He threw *that* away, when He came from heaven to earth, and lay slumbering in the manger. A bow without an arrow!

***“No thunder clothes His brow,
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.”***

Beloved, Christ *is* vengeance satisfied. Those wounds, those bright and burnished jewels of His hands, betoken that God demands no more of man.

The rainbow, yet again, is a token that vengeance itself has become *on our side*. You see, it is an unbroken “bow.” He did not snap it across His knee. It is a bow still. Vengeance is there, justice is there. But which way is it pointed? It is turned upward—not to shoot arrows down on us, but for us, if we have faith enough to string it, and to make it our glorious bow—to draw it with all our might, to send our prayers, our praises, our desires, up to the bright throne of God. Mighty is that man, omnipotent is his faith, who has power to bend that bow and draw it, and shoot his prayers to heaven.

Nay, more, inasmuch as it is a bow not black, nor blood-red, but a bow painted with the colors of holiday and delight, it seems to me as if heaven hangs out its streamers of joy, while angels sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.” *They* pull the banners from the standards of glory, and they hang them out across the sky, as *we* do on our ships upon marriage days.

Heaven hangs out its glorious banners to show that God is so completely satisfied with Christ, and so at peace with man, that He joys in man’s joy, and rejoices in man’s rejoicing—“rests in his love, and rejoices in us with singing.”

Look up, believer, to the person of Christ, behold the *joy* of God, “the pleasure of the LORD,” prospering “in his hands,” and your soul will be full of ecstasy and delight.

Once again. In the rainbow we see the one color of light, which appears to us to be but white, broken up, refracted, distributed, blended, harmonized, brought out in all its distinct elements. There is no doubt that there are more colors in light than our eyes have ever seen. The eyes can only compass a certain quantity of the colors.

But beneath the lowest, and above the highest, there are others. There is infinitely more in God than you and I will ever be able to see. One of the best sights of light, as dissolved and analyzed, is to be had in the rainbow. There you see the colors arranged in their proper order, and you are able to mark the red melting into the orange, and the orange into the yellow, and the yellow yet again into the green, and the green into the blue, and the blue into the indigo and the violet. They are all there—not one put out of place, not one left out.

The character of God is one, like His essence. Yet to us, that we may read it, it must be, as it were, broken up, but not thrown out of harmony. He that has seen Christ “hath seen the Father.” He that sees the rainbow sees “Light.” He who sees Christ sees the Father—God’s justice meeting and blending into His truth, God’s truth melting into His mercy, that mercy melting into His love, that love in contact with His faithfulness. And so every attribute standing side by side with its next of kin—the whole of them absolutely necessary to complete the glory of that arch, and every one of them necessarily to be put in its proper place also, to make the arch a harmony and a very music of colors.

Beloved, such is Jesus Christ. If we could but understand Jesus Christ, we could not make mistakes about *God*. In Jesus how I see blood-red justice, justice as fierce as if there were no mercy. But what love I see also! What boundless love! As Watts puts it, we cannot tell—

*“Which of the letters best is writ,
The power, the wisdom, or the grace.”*

They are all so clearly there. The *whole* of God written out in Christ! And yet, I warn you, we can never *see* the whole of God—in this life never. I do not know whether it is quite correct, but two or three of the older commentators, in glossing upon that passage, “There was a rainbow round about the throne,” say that it means entirely round it, and that therefore there is a complete circle—that we only see one half of it, but that in fact the covenant rainbow is a circle.

Now, whatever you may think of that gloss, there certainly is one circular rainbow in the Bible, for that angel, in the tenth of Revelation, had “a rainbow round his head.” He wore it as a crown round His head. We may, without straining a point, say the most we can ever see even in Christ, as revealed to us, while we are here, is just a glorious semi-circle of truth—an arch, like a divine ladder, by which we may mount to the very loftiness of God Himself.

But there is another half which you and I have not seen, and we shall not see it till we get to the throne of God. Moreover, that rainbow that is in heaven differs from ours, for there it is, “like unto an emerald.” The green preponderates. The mild luster of the mercy of God, and His love, will seem to triumph over the fiery sardus and jacinth of His justice.

3. How ought we to act, dear friends, with regard to this rainbow, and Jesus Christ as the symbol of the covenant?

First, let us act *like little children*. Little children run in clapping their hands with glee, “Father, there’s a rainbow!” Out they run to look at it and they wonder whether they could find the end of it. They wish you would let them run till they could catch it. They look, and look, and look, and look, and when the shower begins to abate and it dies out, they are so sorrowful because they have lost the splendid vision.

Beloved, let us be children. Whenever we think of Christ, let us be little children, and look, and look, and look again. And let us long to get at Him, for, unlike the rainbow, we *can* get at *Him*. Pliny, who, by the way talks a deal of nonsense, declares that wherever the rainbow’s foot rests, the flowers are made much sweeter. And Aristotle says the rainbow is a great breeder of honey-dew.

I do not know how that is, but I know that wherever Jesus Christ is He makes the perfume of His people very sweet. “His name is as ointment poured forth,” and I know *He* is, “a great breeder of honey-dew.” There is sure to be much more lovingkindness in that man’s heart who has seen much of Jesus. I recommend you to follow that divine rainbow till you reach the foot of it, and till you embrace it, and say with Simeon, “Now let thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Play the child then.

While we *gaze*, ought we not *praise and admire*? One or two of the nations of antiquity had it as a part of their religion always to sing hymns when they saw the rainbow. Should not we whenever we see Christ? Should it not be a red-letter day marked in our diary? “This day let us praise His name.” And as we ought *always* to see Him, I may improve upon this and bid you say,

***“I will praise Thee every day; now Thine anger’s passed away,
Comfortable thoughts arise from the bleeding sacrifice.”***

And again, when we see Christ, we ought to *confess our sin with humiliation*. An old writer says that the Jews confess their sins when they see the rainbow. I am sure, whenever we see Christ, we ought to remember the deluge of wrath from which He has delivered us, the flames of hell from which He has saved us, and so, humbly bowing ourselves in the dust, let us love and praise and bless His name.

To some of you there is nothing in this sermon, because you have never laid hold on the covenant. You have never believed in Jesus. Remember, that a simple faith in Christ is the evidence of your being in the covenant. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, then your name is written in the roll of the blessed.

But if you will not believe in Him, however excellent your character, however good your works, you shall perish in your sins. For “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not,” be he who he may or what he may, “shall be damned.” Believe, and believing, you put yourself under the divine arch of the blessed covenant. You shall see its glorious colors with exultation and delight, and you shall be secure, whatever catastrophes shall shake the earth, whatever calamities shall trouble the race of man.

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