

Walking with God

Sermon preached by Mr J Walder at Galeed Chapel Brighton on 6th September 1989

“Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”
Genesis 6:9

What an unspeakably solemn state prevailed in the world in the days of Noah! God speaks in regard to the awful and dreadful wickedness of man: “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (v. 5)—and if this had been written today, concerning the things which prevail in the world at this present time, it would very much apply. The wickedness that is in the world is no worse now than it was then, and no worse then than it is now. Such is the character of man in the fall, and the utter corruption and the extremity of the Adam fall, that human nature from Adam’s day to this has not differed one iota. There have been many changes in practice; many vicissitudes have threatened the world; many different seasons have passed over this earthly scene—but the world has always been as ungodly in every age as it was in Noah’s day and as it is in ours. And we are assured by God himself, in the words of his own lips, that when the Son of Man shall come it will be no better: “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” (Matthew 24:37-39) Things will be no better than they were in Noah’s day. But in the midst of all this evil and wickedness and sin, we find in this chapter and in our text there was a favoured character, and a few with him, who differed from the rest.

In an attempt to look at these words, I want to see whether we bear any resemblance at all to God-fearing Noah. What was the difference between Noah and the rest? Our text says he was ‘A just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.’ Shall we conclude then for one moment that this good man was in any measure or degree exempt from the Adam fall and its effects? O no! he was no better than the rest—just as ruined, just as great a sinner, and in himself just as wicked as the rest of the world—he was no different from any other. But one thing made the difference and caused him to stand out from the midst of the rest as a marked man—he had the manifested favour of God toward him; for what do we read in the previous verse? “But”—O, what a word that is, how full, how blessed, how wonderful, how full of grace, what an amazing little word it is! “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” This sovereign, distinguishing, saving grace set him apart from all the rest that were about him, as a subject of God’s saving love and goodness. And as it was then, so it is now—grace alone will make us differ.

God’s free, sovereign, unmerited, ill-deserved, boundless, glorious grace is that alone which will make us to differ and cause us to be separate from the sons of Adam. It will make such a blessed and wonderful difference between us and the rest, if so be this is our privilege and favour. And if it is—if it is—we shall never be able to be thankful enough for it. We shall never be able to render unto God a sufficiency of praise and honour and gratitude for such favour manifested.

It is sometimes our prayer, and I do believe and trust it is a sincere and earnest one, ‘O, that I might find grace in thy sight, O Lord!’

Noah did find grace in the eyes of the Lord. He was the object, the favoured and blessed object, of the eternal love and unmerited favour and boundless grace and gracious kindness of the covenant God of salvation. This is that which separated him from among the rest and caused him to be different. He had nothing whatsoever in and of himself to merit it, it was free. He did nothing to earn it, he was just the same as the rest through the Adam fall—not exempt from it, he was just as great a sinner as the rest—but he was the object of God’s favour.

Now this favour is manifested to God's people, Noah among them. It is God's people alone—none other, without any exception—who are manifest by a call by grace, convincing grace, quickening grace. These are they who are given a precious knowledge of God and his thoughts and ways and a communication to their hearts of that precious, living, sacred principle of grace. May our lives testify of God's grace and testify that we are the subjects of God's favour and the recipients of his grace in our poor hearts. Surely in grace there is every precious thing promised in the covenant—'every grace and every favour,' we may call it—and among those blessed things, that great principal thing, God-given faith.

Noah was a believer. We read of his faith, and what it did for him, and what he had by that precious God-given faith. This is the description of his character: 'Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations.' He found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

I want to try and look first at this word concerning him: 'Noah was a just man.' I must ask this question—how can sinners be just in the sight of God? How can they be just in their actions as they are caused to walk in the fear of the Lord? How is it that a man is just? Simply in this way; justification is by faith. "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17) And the just shall walk by faith. Now we read in Hebrews 11 of what this faith did in the heart and soul of godly Noah: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (v. 7)

I want to notice that here we have the demonstration and manifestation of the ways of this just man, Noah, among all the rest of humankind in that evil day when the flood came upon the earth. He was warned of God and he believed the warning. There is a spiritual aspect and signification of this. My friends, the day must most certainly and surely come, when God will destroy the wicked—not annihilate them, there is no such thing—but destroy the wicked. There is, and must be, a day coming when God, who must be just and righteous, shall manifest his wrath upon the wicked. This was threatened in Noah's day. God was grieved with man's wickedness upon the earth, and he said: "The end of all flesh is come before me... and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." (v. 13) Now Noah believed God. Let me just stay here a moment. My friends, do we humbly hope we have faith? Do we by that faith believe God? Do we by that faith believe the warnings of his Word? And, like Noah, build a house to the saving of our souls? If so, we have fled into the ark, Christ; we have known what it is to be like the dove which Noah took and pulled into him in the ark. Have we felt the 'in-pull' of the gospel? For Noah "put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark." (Genesis 8:9)

Now to build an ark to the saving of our souls is to know our need of Christ, for he is the ark of our salvation. It is in him alone that we have any vestige of hope of escaping the wrath to come. But what of Noah's day? Man was deaf to every warning given—

*When, deaf to every warning given,
Man braved the patient power of heaven,*

(Gadsby's 791)

But there was among them this godly man Noah. He was a just man, he believed God, and he found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Moreover, his faith was proved to be of God—God was the giver and the blessed source of that faith, for Noah acted as though he believed what God had said. It was not just a confession of his lips, it was not just merely an acknowledgement of natural credence of the fact of things, but a faith which worked by love. He acted and behaved as though he believed what God had said, and so he built the ark to the saving of his house. He was moved with fear, and thus became the heir of that righteousness which is by faith.

Let us look at this just for a moment, for it concerns us greatly as to whether we have any resemblance at all to this good man: 'Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.' He was a just and perfect man in his generations, and what a generation it was! Can it honestly be said of you and me, that we are just and righteous persons in our generation, in this present generation, in the midst of all the wickedness and filth which is now just as great as in the days of Noah? Not perhaps so universally, but just as bad now. Noah was building the ark for many, many years and all that time, he was a preacher of righteousness, and he did not just preach, he walked it out. But for all his speaking and preaching and doing, he was reproached by the wicked about him. 'O,' he said, 'the deluge is coming and God is the God of all flesh, and I believe

it, and I am building this ark for safety.’ And no doubt the world scoffed and mocked him and derided him. They no doubt thought the dear man was out of his mind, out of his reason, to build such a large ark upon a mountain side, where there was no possibility that water could come. But he laboured on. He laboured year in and year out, determined to do as God had commanded him, thereby proving that he believed what God had said. I have wondered if there were any who listened, who regarded Noah’s words and ways, and if any were concerned about the deluge that was coming—we do not read that there were. Only eight souls entered the ark and were saved from the deluge, which was the demonstration of the wrath of God against the wicked, even though Noah was a preacher of righteousness all that long, long time.

Well then, he was a just man. He believed and feared God, and he built an ark to the saving of his house. Now just one word before we go on to the next point in regard to this. My friends, what of our hearts, our feelings, our thoughts, our cases? Has God by his wonderful grace caused us to differ? Do we indeed desire to flee from the wrath to come? Do we believe with all our heart that we have to do with a just God, a righteous and holy God, and that he will punish sin and that he will deal with the wicked? Has this caused us to earnestly, sincerely and diligently seek that we, like godly Noah, may find an entrance into the ark? That God will shut us in, and that he will be merciful to us and deliver us from the wrath to come? Well, if we are warned, if we do tremble, if we see our danger and know our need to find grace in the eyes of the Lord, we have found grace. We have indeed, if that day has come, causing us to flee from the wrath to come.

*The appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose but call by grace;
To change the heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion’s hill.*

(Gadsby’s 76)

Well, this is to be a just man. It is by faith, and only God given faith, that a man can be just with God.

But Noah was not only just, he was a righteous man. The Word of God tells us that, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10) There is not a single exception—that is God’s Word. We have all gone astray from the womb, speaking lies, born in sin and shapen in iniquity. We are born sinners into this world; we do not become sinners, we are sinners. God has plainly and concisely described the character and condition of fallen man, and his word is this, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” So where are we going to find one? For God’s Word also tells us that there are the righteous. How are they so? What is it that constitutes a righteous man in the sight of God? This is a blessing received by faith alone—not by works, but by faith alone in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through his sin-atoning and precious blood, sin is fully put away. The substitutionary and vicarious obedience of the Son of God has made man righteous with the imputed righteousness of Christ. The Old Testament saints were not justified in any other way to what we are now, if we are so. They were not righteous then, in any other way or upon any other ground, than what we are in our day. It was through Christ, the eternal Son of God, and his precious finished work, that man was just in God’s sight. Yes, righteous in the sight of the Almighty.

But not only was Noah a just man, but he was ‘perfect in his generation.’ What a perfect man? Yes! Perfect in the flesh? O no! No such thing; the flesh, the old man, fallen nature, is all imperfection. There is nothing other than that which is evil, sinful, and wicked in the sight of God; all imperfection, deformity, corruption—no perfection there. But there are perfect men: “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.” (Psalm 37:37)

*Good men there are; but, be it known,
Their goodness dwells in Christ their Head!*

(Gadsby’s 538)

No perfection in nature, no perfection in the flesh—and it is in vain that we should ever seek it or find it, for such is the ruin of the fall that there is nothing but deformity and corruption and imperfection and every thought of sin and evil. Well, where then is this perfection? Why, it is so simply stated in the Word of God: “And ye are complete in him.” (Colossians 2:10) Ah, there is the perfection. Perfect in Christ and

that by virtue of union to him and the communication of his grace, righteousness, holiness and that blessed divine nature of his. The people of God are made partakers of the Spirit of Christ, they are made partakers of the divine nature; the Word of God tells us so, and tells us that they are perfect in Christ's perfection, they are holy in Christ's holiness, they are righteous in his righteousness; they are complete in him.

Now, Noah was a perfect man in his generation. Do we in any felt and experienced measure, answer to this description? Is there any resemblance in us to this good man, as standing out from among all the rest of mankind in his day? For God has ever put a difference between the sons of Adam and the sons of God, and here is the difference. The first thing that will be necessary for us to know something of is this—it is to be well taught, thoroughly taught, our wretchedness and ruin and imperfection, that in and of ourselves we have nothing good. Our thoughts, affections, character and nature, through the fall, are altogether corrupt, crooked and undone—no better. This is a fact and it is well if we are given to know a little of it. In regard to the worst characters, apparently the worst characters, who have ever set foot upon the earth, so are we—exactly—except for the grace of God; that is the only thing that makes us to differ. It made Noah differ, blessed, favoured, honoured, happy man. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord and because of that, 'Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations.'

This perfection is all in Christ, the blessed and glorious covenant Head of the Church. In Christ, the people of God have a perfect, flawless, glorious righteousness and this is both imputed and imparted to the election of grace. It is theirs essentially and substantially (in the new nature given at conversion) by that blessed act of God—imputation. This is their perfection. God looks upon every one of his own people and says: "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee," (Song of Solomon 4:7) as he views them perfect in Christ.

This is the only perfection I know - Christ's perfection, which is imputable, impartable and communicable. In him they have perfect holiness and in some gracious measure it is communicated by impartation now. If we are the possessors of this imparted holiness, it causes us to eschew evil, to loathe ourselves and to hunger and thirst after righteousness; to seek after those things which make the people of God earnestly desire holiness and to hate evil. For when a person is born again of the Spirit, they are given a new nature which is after the image of him that created him. It is a holy nature, and this perfection is on account of the communicated grace and Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ - imparted to every vessel of mercy. This will make the subject of it to stand out from the rest of mankind, as much as it is possible for them to do; for there is a difference. My friends, if grace does not make us to differ, what does it do for us? What does grace do, if it does not make a change and cause us to answer in some measure to this good man Noah, who 'was a just and perfect man in his generation'?

It is on account of grace imparted, divine life imparted, being made a new creature in Christ Jesus, being justified by faith and having an interest in the substitutionary work and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, that it is possible for God to utter such blessed words to Noah, which do essentially apply to all that answer to his description. "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark." (Genesis 7:1) O, blessed gospel invitation, for such as answer to Noah's character, to come to Christ, to enter in, to be brought in, and to be saved eternally—saved from that deluge of wrath which (we are assured by God himself) will one day be poured out. O, it will, whether we believe it or not. It is our mercy if we are caused to believe it, and if this experience be ours: "Come thou into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." O, what a thing for God to say of a poor sinner—"thee have I seen righteous before me"! And we know very well that the omniscient God looks upon us, through and through—and how can he look upon a poor sinner and say, "Thee have I seen righteous?" Well, simply as God is pleased to view his people in his Son, perfect in Christ:

*Good men there are; but, be it known,
Their goodness dwells in Christ their Head!*

(Gadsby's 538)

Now, we have something else to try and look at in regard to this favoured character: 'and Noah walked with God.' First, I want to notice that it is an unspeakably blessed, glorious privilege, a most wonderful favour, for poor sinners like me and you to walk with God. Then afterwards I want to try and

look at the wonder of this, that we should be so favoured with the grace of God and the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit upon us, as to cause us and influence us in all our acts, feelings, affections and desires, to walk with God. Is this possible, unless we are given a new nature? No, it is impossible. The nature that we have, as born into this world the fallen sons of Adam, is at enmity to God; it is contrary to God. All our thoughts, affections, desires, steps and actions are contrary to him. We do not walk with God, we walk against God. The natural man can never be reconciled, it is impossible: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14) O, we must be given a new nature before we can walk with God. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) How can darkness agree with light? How can ignorance agree with knowledge? How can holiness agree with sin? How can a heart that is full of enmity, agree with a God of love? How can a poor, fallen sinner, who is hell bent and bent on sinning to his own destruction, walk with a holy and righteous God? It is impossible. Two cannot walk together, except they be agreed, and our fallen nature can never agree with God. It can never, never agree with anything he has said or done. It is at enmity to *him*. There are some of us who, to our deepest grief and sorrow, know what it is at times to solemnly feel that awful enmity that is in our hearts by nature. It is only as grace is given us and is in exercise, that there is any possibility whatsoever that we should walk with God, and not walk in rebellion, disobedience, obstinacy, and sin. So then, if we walk with God there is one thing evident—God has given us a new nature. Noah had a new nature, he would not have differed if he had not. No, he was a born again sinner. He was a believer; he was given the fear and grace of God in his soul: 'Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.' The rest of the earth was walking contrary to God, and day by day the wrath of an offended, yet just and holy God, increased. What a wonderful mercy then, if we are favoured to walk with God.

The first thing I want to notice is that this is a blessed and sacred privilege. Is there anything more blessed than to proceed in the sensible and felt presence of God? If he be with us, and we are favoured in our walk and conversation and in all our ways to feel the presence of God, this is a blessing indeed. I am sure that in some sacred measure at least, Noah felt this. You know, he had divine approval for what he did in building the ark; he was obedient to God who instructed him so to do, although this was indeed absolutely opposite to carnal reason, fleshly wisdom and all that is to do with the natural mind. For Noah to go on for many years building an ark, on a mountain where there was no likelihood of water, proved that he really believed what God had said to him. He believed it and so he laboured. Now if we believe what God has said, and we shall believe it if he speaks to our hearts with divine power, we shall do the same. I have no doubt but that the world looks upon some of us as the most ridiculous creatures on the face of the earth. We, by praying, reading our Bibles, attending services and all other such things and actions, are looked on us as being well-nigh out of our minds. But O, my friends, what a great thing it is to be warned, and what a great thing it is to flee to Christ, and what a great thing it is to be blessed to walk with God!

Secondly, I want to look at this a little in the spiritual experience of it, in that sweet acquiescence to the will of God in our spirit and feelings, to be so swallowed up in the will of God that we walk with him in blessed agreement and sweet harmony. The first and the most important thing regarding us is this, to be made unreservedly willing to be saved by grace alone. You say, well, that is easy surely, that is something we are always speaking and hearing and singing about. But it is one of the hardest lessons I have had to learn. My friends, we have got a legal heart, we have got a self-righteous spirit and there is always that secret motive in our hearts that tells us to do a little something toward it. But salvation is of grace: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8) It is absolutely exclusive of all the work of man, he has no place, room or ground to help in this matter; he has ever to be ashamed. O, it is to be saved by grace, and only as we are caused to walk in this pathway and are taught our absolute dependence upon the merits of Christ and the grace of God for our salvation, that we walk with God. I have said it, I know, a number of times before, but it is a word which came with such power upon my spirit once, and has left an impression and remains with me. A legal spirit, no matter how small the measure of it, a legal spirit is in opposition to Jesus Christ. I know

that for a truth, and I am sure of it, so that if we are under the influence of a legal spirit in any measure, we are not walking with God, we are walking contrary to him. But if we can truly say this with real feeling:

*My soul into thy arms I cast;
I trust I shall be saved at last.*

(Gadsby's 339)

—we are walking with God. That is God's way of saving us, by his dear Son alone, through his merit and worthiness. It is not an easy thing for us to proceed in this pathway. It is utterly impossible for a guilty, ruined, undone sinner, of himself, to lean hard upon Christ, simply and alone upon him; but those and those alone walk with God in that way which he himself has appointed for his people.

But now briefly to notice, walking with God in regard to our concerns, both small and great. We have a rebellious, very rebellious, exceedingly obstinate spirit, and only as God gives us that new nature and blesses us with his grace shall we be enabled in any measure to acquiesce to his will. There are two sides to this. One is obedience. What is obedience? Doing unreservedly, wholeheartedly, absolutely and unconditionally what God has told us to do—no less and no more. To do anything less than the Lord has instructed us is disobedience. In any measure to do more than he has told us to do is disobedience. Perfect acquiescence is a sweet thing, sweet obedience to his sovereign and holy will. What a wonderful mercy if we are given to know and to understand what the will of the Lord is for us. I do not speak of that in any general way. The Word of God is absolutely full of the declaration of God's will and there it is revealed. We may understand in some measure what his will is, but we need him to speak, to cause us to proceed according to his purpose, and to stay according to his purpose. There is that active obedience to the will of God which is comprehensive, as it affects every part and particular of our profession—our walk, conversation and conduct, place, responsibility, relationships and all other things concerning God's will.

To walk with God is not to walk contrary to him in disobedience or rebellion. It is not a question of quarrelling, murmuring or disputing in regard to his way and purpose, but it is a sweet acquiescence to his will. It is a wonderful blessing. 'Noah walked with God.' It is in the pathway of obedience alone that we can ever expect to have God's smile and presence. If we walk in disobedience he will hide his face. He has said he will. If we are in the pathway of obedience we have his smile. Afflictions, distresses, troubles, trials and cares—well, are we willing to pass through them, to fall under them? Can we be patient in tribulation, suffer the will of God which he has appointed? "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10) That is to accept at his hand all that he has appointed for us and not cast it away, reject it and rebel against it, but receive it. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Now to be given an unreserved, patient, submissive and quiet spirit, in those times of tribulation which God has appointed for us, is to walk with God—not walking obstinately and rebelliously and disobediently. So obedience has these two sides to it, active obedience in walking according to God's will, and obedience in suffering which is to his glory.

May God cause us to resemble Noah. We live in a wicked world, as he lived in a wicked world. But he was caused to differ by grace, and may we differ by grace. 'But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,' and may we find it also.

The Lord add his blessing.

Amen.

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