

The Parable of the Ark

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon illustrates that salvation is found only in Christ, symbolized by the ark, which offers a secure refuge for all believers regardless of their spiritual condition or denominational differences.

Scripture: Genesis 7:15, Genesis 6:14, John 10:9, Romans 8:33-34, Psalm 125:1, Psalm 1:3, Ephesians 2:8, Galatians 1:9
Topics: "Salvation"

Description

In 'The Parable of the Ark,' C.H. Spurgeon powerfully expounds the biblical truth that salvation is found only through Jesus Christ, symbolized by the ark that saved Noah and the creatures from the flood. He emphasizes the security believers have in Christ, the unity of all true Christians despite denominational differences, and the exclusive nature of Christ as the door to salvation. This sermon encourages listeners to trust fully in Christ's protection and grace amid life's storms. Spurgeon's rich exposition draws from Scripture to offer both comfort and conviction.

Transcript

"And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life." Genesis 7:15.

CHRIST always taught by parables. Hence the popularity and the power of His teaching. The masses never were and perhaps, never will be, able to receive instruction in any other way than by parabolic illustrations. He who would be a successful minister must open his mouth in parables. He who would win the hearts of the multitude must closely imitate his Master and preach in parables which all men can understand. I believe there are few living men who are able to devise a parable. Those who do possess this rare ability are very scarce, indeed. Nor do I profess to belong to the honorable confraternity. I have sometimes endeavored to fashion a parable and though I found it easy, at times, to manufacture a figure, yet a parable I can by no means make. I am happy to say it is not required of me to do so, for God's Word, if it is rightly used, is suggestive of a thousand parables! And I have no reason to fear that I shall be short of subjects for preaching when I am able to find such parables as I do in God's Word.

I shall preach to you this evening a parable. It shall be the parable of the ark. While I do so, you must understand that the ark was a real thing—that it was really made to float upon the waters and carry in it Noah and his family and "two and two of all flesh." This is a fact, not a myth. But I shall take this real fact and use it as a parable. Making the ark represent salvation, I shall preach to all who are within sound of my voice the parable of the ark. The ark, which saved from the floods of water, is a beautiful picture of

Jesus Christ as the means of salvation, by whom multitudes of all flesh are preserved and saved from perishing in the floods of eternal Perdition!

I. First, then, in working out this parable I shall remark that THERE IS BUT ONE MEANS OF SALVATION.

No, Sir, but it does not say any such thing! It says they are a multitude that no man can number who have been elected! And who knows but what you are one of them? Calvinism gives you ten thousand times more reason for hope than the Arminian preacher who stands up and says, "There is room for everybody, but I do not think there is any special Grace to make them come. If they won't come, they won't come, and that is the end of it. It is their own fault and God will not make them come." The Word of God says they cannot come, yet the Arminian says they can. The poor sinner feels that he cannot, yet the Arminian declares positively that he could if he wanted to. And though the poor sinner feels sometimes that he would if he could, and groans over his inability, this blind guide tells him it is all nonsense! Whereas, it is, in truth, God's own work. You must feel it and you may plead against yourself on account of it, but you shall come for all that. He will not plead against you, but He will put strength in you. There is more hope for you in the pure Gospel of the blessed God than there is in those fancies and fictions of men which are nowadays preached everywhere, except in a few places where God has reserved unto Himself a people who have not bowed their knee to the Baal of the age!

III. In the third place, note that THE ARK WAS A SAFE REFUGE.

Noah was commanded to make an ark of gopher wood and, lest there should be any leakage in it, he was commanded to "pitch it within and without with pitch." The ark had no harbor to go to and we never read that Noah called up Shem, Ham and Japheth to work at the pumps, nor yet that they had any, for there was not a leak in her. No doubt there were storms during that year, but we do not hear that the ship was ever in danger of being wrecked. The rocks, it is true, were too low down to touch her bottom, for, "fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered." Rising 27 feet above the loftiest mountains, she had no quicksands to fear—they were too deep below her keel. But of course she was exposed to the winds. Sometimes the hurricane might have rattled against her and driven her along. Doubtless, at another time, the hail beat on her top, and the lightning scarred the brow of night, but the ark sailed on, not one was cast out from her, nor were her sailors wearied with constant pumping to keep out the water, or frequent repairs to keep her secure. Though the world was inundated and ruined, that one ark sailed triumphantly above the waters! The ark was safe and all who were in her were safe, too.

Now, Sinner, the Christ I preach to you is such a refuge as that. His Gospel has no flaw in it. As the ark never sank, and the elements never prevailed against it, so Christ never failed. He cannot fail. All the principalities and powers are subject to Him. Those who are in Christ are sheltered from every storm. They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands. Remember that God gave the pattern and Noah perfected the work of the ark before a single fountain of the great deep was broken up, or one drop of the desolating storm fell from the vengeful clouds. And it is not less true that our glorious Lord was set up in the counsels of eternity, a perfect Christ before the clouds of vindictive wrath began to brew on account of man's iniquity! And His mighty work of mediation was finished before your poor soul was invited to take shelter in Him. Oh, I think as the angels looked out of the windows of Heaven upon the swelling tide and saw how securely the ark rode upon its surface, they never doubted that all who were inside were as safe as the ark itself—and is there any reason to doubt that those who are in Christ are as safe as Christ? "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abides forever." They that trust in the Lord are blessed! They are like trees planted by rivers of water—their leaf shall not

wither and whatever they do shall prosper. If you once come to Jesus and trust in Him, there is no fear of your sinking! There will be storms, tempests will beat around you—these you will be sure to have—but you will be too high up ever to strike on the rocks. If you are once on board the Good Ship of Salvation, you will be lifted up too high above the floods to be swallowed in the quicksands. With cheerful heart I can "commend you to God, and to the word of His Grace." Christ will preserve you!

Believers, could you give up to anybody the Doctrine of your Security in Christ? No, I know you could not. Touch one of my Brothers or Sisters in the Lord who attends this Chapel on that point and you will soon get your answer. I have sometimes heard disputes outside the chapel door, when some who do not believe that Truth of God, have been disputing it, and I have felt confident that I might leave its defense in your hands. There are mighty men of valor among you who are not ashamed to uphold the whole counsel of God, even as I am constantly anxious to declare it!

IV. Now I go to another part of the parable. The creatures in the ark, of course, needed light—but it is a singular thing that THERE WAS ONLY ONE WINDOW IN THE ARK.

V. Now, if you will read the chapter (Gen 6) attentively, you will find it said, "ROOMS shall you make in the ark" (Gen 6:14).

When I read that, I thought it would serve for a point in the parable, seeing that it may teach my dear friends that they are not all to be put together—in the ark, rooms were made. Those who lived in one room did not stand or sit with those who lived in another—but they were all in the same ark. So I have sometimes thought—"There are our Wesleyan friends, some of them love the Lord. I have no doubt they are in the ark, though they do not occupy the same apartment as we do. There are our Baptist friends who love the Lord—we welcome them in our room. Then there are our Independent friends, those also love the Lord. They are in another room and our Presbyterian and Episcopalian Brothers and Sisters—in all these various sections are some who are called of God and brought into the ark—though they are in different rooms." But, Beloved, they are all in one ark. There are not two Gospels. As long as I can find a man who holds the same Gospel, it does not matter what order of church government he adopts if he is in Christ Jesus—it is of little consequence what room he is in so long as he is in the ark. If he belongs to those of whom it is written, "By Grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," I will call him Brother.

We cannot all expect to be in one room. The elephants did not live with the tigers and the lions did not lie down with the sheep. There were different rooms for different classes of creatures—and it is a good thing there are different denominations, for I am sure some of us would not get on very comfortably with certain denominations. We would need more liberty than we could get in the Church of England. We would want more freedom than we could get with the Presbyterians. We would need more soundness of Doctrine than we could get with the Wesleyans, and we would want a little more brotherly love, perhaps, than we could get with some of the Strict Baptists. We could not entirely agree with them all. And happy is he who can sometimes put his head into one room, and sometimes into another, and can say to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, "Grace be with you all, so long as you are but in the Ark."

VI. But though there were many rooms in the ark, I want you to notice that THERE WAS ONLY ONE DOOR.

It is said, "And the door of the ark shall you set in the side thereof." And there is only one door into the ark of our salvation, and that is Christ. There are not two Christs preached—one in one chapel and another in

another. "If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that which you have received, let him be accursed." There is but one Gospel. We take in the righteous out of all sections, but we do not take in all sections! We pick out the godly from among them all, for we believe "there is a remnant according to the election of Grace" in the vilest of them. But still, there is only one door—and "he that enters not by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

There was only one door to the ark. Some animals, like the giraffe, whose heads are higher than those of other animals, might have to bow their necks to go in by the same entrance as the waddling ducks which naturally stoop, even as they enter a barn. And so the lofty ones of this world must bend their stiff necks and bow their proud heads if they would enter into the Church by Christ. The swift horse and the slow-paced snail must enter by one door. So too the scribes and Pharisees must come in the same way as the publicans and harlots or be forever excluded. All the beasts God had chosen went in by the one door—and if any had stood outside and said, "We shall not enter in that way," they would have been standing outside till the flood overtook and destroyed them, for there was only one door. There is only one way of salvation and there is only one means of getting into it—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be

saved." But "he that believes not," whoever he may be, must "be damned." There is no hope of any other way of salvation! He that comes in by the door shall be saved—and Jesus says, "I am the door."

VII. Proceeding in the parable, you will notice that THIS ARK HAD SUNDRY STORIES IN IT. They were not all of one height—there were lower, second and third stories.

This is, to me, a figure of the different kinds of Christians who are carried to Heaven. There is my poor mourning Brother who lives in the bottom story. He is always singing—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this!" He lives just near the keel, on the bare ribs of the ark. He is never very happy. At times a little light reaches him from the window, but generally he is so far from the light that he walks in darkness and sees very little, indeed. His state is that of constant groaning—he loves to go and hear "the corruption preachers? He revels with delight in the deep experience of the tried family of God. He likes to hear it said, "We must, through much tribulation, enter into the Kingdom of God." If you paint the Christian life as a very gloomy one, he will like your picture, for his is gloomy, indeed. He is always poring over texts such as this, "O, wretched man that I am!" He is down in the lower story of the ark. But never mind—he is in the ark, so we will not scold him, though he has little faith and very much doubt. "With lower, second, and third stories shall you make it." There is one of our Brothers who is up a little higher and he is saying, "I cannot exactly say that I am safe, yet I have a hope that my head will be kept above the billows, though it goes hard with me at times. Now and then, too, the Lord bestows 'some drops of Heaven' upon me. Sometimes, I am like the mountains of Zion, where 'the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.'" He is in the second story, but he is no safer, though he is happier, than the man on the ground floor! All are safe so long as they are in the ark! Yet, for my part, I like the uppermost story best. I had rather live up there where I can sing, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." I love the place where the saints are "teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

I confess that I am obliged to go down to the lower story sometimes, but I like running up the ladder to the third deck, yet I am no more safe when I am in the top story than I am when I am in the bottom one. The same wave that would split the ship and drown me, were I in the lowest story, would drown me if I were in

the highest. However high some of us and, however low others of us may be, the same vessel bears us all, for we are one crew in one boat—and there is no dividing us. Come, then, my poor desponding Hearer, is that your place, somewhere down at the bottom of the hold, along with the ballast? Are you always in trials and troubles? Ah, well, fear not, so long as you are in the ark! Do not be afraid. Christ is your strength and righteousness. The ark was, in each and every department, a secure shelter to all who were shut in!

"Ah," says one, "but I am down there, Sir, always at the bottom, and I am afraid the vessel will sink." Do not be so silly! Why should your heart beget such fears? I knew a man who went up the Monument and when he had got half way, he declared that it vibrated and was about to fall, and he would come down. But the Monument has not fallen. It is as safe as ever and if 50 like he, or fifty thousand, went up, the Monument would be just as firm! But some poor nervous Christians are afraid Christ will let them sink. A wave comes against the side of the ship, but it does not hurt the ship, it only drives the wedges in more tightly. The Master is at the helm—will not that assure your heart? It has floated over so many billows—will not that increase your confidence? It must, indeed, be a strong billow that will sink it! No, there never shall be such an one! And where, do you think, is the power that could destroy the souls who are sheltered in the Ark of our salvation? Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since Christ has died and God the Father has justified us? Happy assurance! We are all safe, so surely as we are in the Ark of the Covenant. The ark floated triumphantly on amidst all the dangers and when it finally rested on Mount Ararat and God spoke to Noah, saying, "Go forth of the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you. Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you," the inventory was complete and all were safely landed. So, too, will Christ present the perfect number of all His people to the Father in The Last Day—not one shall perish!

VIII. This brings me to notice, in the last place, THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF ANIMALS THAT ENTERED INTO THE ARK. Listen to the statement—"Of every clean beast you shall take to you by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female."

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This great ark was meant to save both clean and unclean beasts! In like manner, the great salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ is intended for sinners of all kinds, the clean and the unclean. There are some people in the world whom we may well reckon in the former class. They are in every way respectable. Their conduct in society is beyond reproach—exact in their commerce, they were never known to erase a figure in their account books—they would not defraud their neighbors, nor would they be so negligent of their fair fame as to do a disorderly action. Their character is so amiable that their mothers might regard them from childhood as almost without a fault. They have grown up to mature years without the hideous taint of immorality—their practice has been always akin to piety. Their zeal for the Law of God has been truly commendable so that Christ, Himself, might have looked on them and loved them, although He would have tenderly and pitifully admonished them as He said to the young man who came to Him, "One thing you lack." Yes, but the desolations of the flood are so universal that there is no escape except in the ark. The clean beasts must go into the ark to be saved—and there is not a soul among you so good, nor a character so clean—but you have need of Christ, whether you know your need or not! You may be ever so good and excellent but you will need a Savior. There is something about your character that is not clean.

Your lives require purification which you can never find except in Christ.

But then the unclean beasts went in likewise. Here is the opposite class. Are there not some of you, (we know there are), whose education from early childhood has been vicious—certainly not virtuous? From your earliest recollections you have gone into the paths of open profanity. You have dived into the kennel and have steeped yourselves up to the very lips in the gall of bitterness. You have been drunks, swearers, Sabbath-breakers and injurious. You have indulged in all kinds of iniquities. You are just the sort of persons we should liken to unclean beasts. Yes—then the ark was built on purpose for you, too! The most moral man will stand no better when he comes before God than you will. He must be saved just as you are. You must both be saved by the one common salvation, or not at all. There is but one Savior for all who are saved—there is but one Redemption for everyone of you who really is redeemed. There is but one ark for the clean and the unclean!

"Ah," says someone, "I suppose, then, the unclean beasts come from the courts, the alleys and the filthy slums of the metropolis." Oh, no, not particularly so! We can find the unclean as plentifully in St. James's as in St. Giles's. There are some in what you call "the higher circles" who, from infancy, have reveled in vice. Soon did you learn to break the rule of your parents' authority. You laughed at your mother's tears, you sneered at your father's counsels—you drank up iniquity in your schooldays, as the greedy ox drinks up water. You made a boast of your wild riots. You tell of your wickedness, now, with an air of impertinent triumph. You brag of having sowed your wild oats. So infamous has been your career, in spite of good example and education, that I suppose, "Newgate" could hardly produce a class of unclean beasts more to be loathed than you are!

Well, now, to each class of sinners I preach. If you feel and deplore your uncleanness, there is mercy for you, unclean as you are. I beseech you, come into the Ark and you will never be turned out! If God shall compel you to come as He did those creatures, He will never, never drive you away. The ark was for the unclean as well as for the clean—for the swine as well as for the sheep—for the poisonous asp as well as for the harmless dove—for the carnivorous raven as well as for the turtle-dove. All creatures came in—some of every sort. You swinish sinner, one of Satan's hogs, come in and you shall be safe! And you lamb-like sinner, gentle and mild, come in, for there is no other Ark for you, and you will be drowned unless you come in by the same door into the great Ark of salvation!

Let us divide these creatures once more. There were creeping things and there were flying things. On the morning when the ark door was opened, you might have seen, in the sky, a pair of eagles, a pair of sparrows, a pair of vultures, a pair of ravens, a pair of hummingbirds, pairs of all kinds of birds that ever cut the azure, that ever floated on wing, or whispered their song to the evening gales. In they came. But if you had watched down on the earth, you would have seen come creeping along a pair of snails, a pair of snakes and a pair of worms. There ran along a pair of mice. There came a pair of lizards and in there flew a pair of locusts. There were pairs of creeping creatures as well as pairs of flying creatures. Do you see what I mean by that? There are some of you who can fly so high in knowledge that I should never be able to scan your great and extensive wisdom—and others of you so ignorant that you can hardly read your Bibles. Never mind! The eagle must come down to the door and the ant must go up to it. There is only one entrance for you all—and as God saved the birds that flew, so He saved the reptiles that crawled!

Are you a poor, ignorant, crawling creature that never was noticed—without intellect, without repute, without fame, without honor? Come along, crawling one! God will not exclude you! I have often wondered how the poor snail crawled in, but I daresay he started many a year before! And some of you have started

for years and still you keep crawling on. Ah, then, come along with you, poor snail! If I could just pick you up and help you on a yard or two, I would be glad to do it. It is strange how long you have been near to the Ark, but not yet in—how long you have been near the portals of the Church, but never joined it.

Remark again, they all got in. Do not fear if you are, in your own esteem, a crawling reptile—you may have the lowest possible opinion of yourself—still come! Nobody forbids you to come, however mean you are! Yes, and the meaner you are, the more willing do I feel to invite you, for Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance! What a strange assemblage was there that morning! But Noah was positively commanded to bring all sorts of creatures into the ark. He might have thought some too vile and worthless to preserve, yet his orders were to bring them in. When Peter was commanded to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, God showed him in a vision, "all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air," and said to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." "Not so, Lord," said Peter, "for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." And, lo, "the Voice spoke unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, that call you not common." In Christ there are some out of every nation, kindred, tongue and people who shall be saved to the praise of God and the Lamb forever and ever!

Moreover, it was a mysterious impulse by which God moved the creatures to come. The sight must have been imposing—the elephants, the camels, the giraffes, the rhinoceroses and all the huge creatures walking in side by side (as it were) with the timorous hares, the tiny mice, the lizards, ferrets, squirrels, beetles, grasshoppers and all such insignificant-looking little creatures. So it has been in the Church of Christ and so it shall be to the end of her history—"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," though their characters, by nurture, were as various as this globe has ever witnessed—rude as barbarism's foulest sink, or polished as Grecian culture ever knew!

Now, dear Hearer, I do not care about asking you who you are, or what you are—that has nothing to do with me. What I ask you is—Are you in the Ark, or are you not? You are saying, perhaps, "Sir, I do not care for you—why should you enquire about my condition?" But there will be a day when you will be like those who spoke to Noah and said, "Go along, old graybeard—build your ark on the dry land, like a fool, as you are—build your ark there on the hillside where the waters cannot come. As for us, we shall eat and drink and if, tomorrow we die, what will it matter, for we have eaten and drunk the merrier while we have had the opportunity." In vain did Noah warn them that the waters would surely come. He seemed to them as one to mock, and they laughed at him. Even so, when I preached to you, this

morning, of the Resurrection, [Sermon #s66, 67, Volume 2—THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.] some of you may have mocked and thought that I was but pursuing a wild reverie of imagination. Ah, but how different was their tune when the rain fell and "the same day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up"! They doubtless changed their notes when the clouds began to empty themselves in fury, when the very earth did crack, and its heart was dissolved and the mighty fluid gushed up to devour them all! Did they think Noah was a fool when the last man stood on the last mountaintop and cried in vain for help?

I saw, some time ago, a picture which I think time will never erase from my memory. It was a picture of a man who had been climbing up to the top of the last mountain and the floods were coming around him. He had his old father on his back. His wife was clasping him round his waist and he had one arm round her. She held one child at her breast and with her other hand she grasped another. In the picture one child was represented as just letting go, the wife dropping and the father clinging to a tree on the top of the hill. The

branches were breaking and it was being torn up by the roots. Such a scene of agony I never saw depicted before—yet such a scene was likely enough to have been real when the waters entirely covered the earth. They had climbed up to the top of the last hill—and now they sank. False hopes gave place to fell despair—and so it will be with you, you careless ones, unless you take shelter in the Ark!

Do you ask me, "How can we do that?" You look anxious, some of you. Listen, then, while I finish, as I have often done before, with the simple statement which contains our authority to preach and your admonition to believe! Jesus said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

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