

I Set My Rainbow In The Cloud.

Text: Gen 9:13-15

1) Cloudy days will come

Suggested Hymns:

2) God is in control of the clouds

598, 793, 414, 397, 463

3) Spiritual comfort

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Genesis 9:13-15, ¹³ ***“I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ “It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; ¹⁵ “and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. (NKJV)***

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The old world had been destroyed by the waters of the Flood. Its teeming population had been swept away by the wrath of Jehovah because of men’s abounding corruption and sins. Of its countless numbers Noah and his family were the sole survivors. The human race was starting on a new era in the world’s history.

The Almighty God, to show the importance this grand event, entered into a covenant with Noah on Mount Ararat where the ark rested. God formally installed Noah as the rightful possessor of the earth, and told him to repeople and to rule it. And in evidence and confirmation of that covenant, and so that Noah and his descendants need have no fears of a second world-wide flood, the text declares that God gave to Noah an outward sign, or token. The rainbow.

Clouds may gather, storms rage, torrents roar, lightnings flash, and thunders peal, but their fury shall be limited. That rainbow, with all the tints and hues of its gorgeous beauty, gave to the dwellers on the earth the assurance that there would never be another universal overthrow by water.

But we need not stop with just understanding this symbol as a pledge against a mere physical calamity. It has also a deep spiritual significance. As the Lord

Jesus often drew illustrations for His teachings from the birds and the flowers, the sea and the fields, so the Holy Spirit throughout the Scriptures uses the things and the occurrences in the visible world to set forth religious truths.

Nature, we may say, every object in it, is an expounder of spiritual things and is intended to lead us to look up to nature's God as Romans 1:20 tells us. So also this emblem, the rainbow.

Taking our text in this light, let us consider the clouds of which it speaks as representing the trials of life and the rainbow as denoting God's covenant of mercy toward us. There are three practical lessons that we should draw from our text. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Cloudy Days Will Come To All Of Us

In the first place, we note that in the world of nature it is to be expected that clouds will arise. There are oceans, and seas, and lakes, and rivers with wide surfaces of water, and from these, under the action of the sun's rays, evaporation is continually going on, and clouds are constantly in process of formation. That is a matter inseparable from the way God orders things on earth.

And just so, it is in the world of God's providence, with trials and afflictions, of which the clouds of heaven are an illustration. We are dwelling in a vale of tears, and afflictions will come says the Scriptures.¹

There are causes at work which must necessarily lead to such afflictions, as in the world of nature, the operation of the sun's heat on the water's surface must give rise to clouds. What the Bible states is true, that *"man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward."*²

Sickness, poverty, suffering, disappointments, and death, what are these but the natural and inevitable consequence of that abominable thing called sin. It dwells in every heart, spreading its blighting influence over everything. It always causes affliction of one kind or another to gather round the pathway of earth's pilgrims just as clouds form in, and float across the sky.

In a world like this it is to be expected as a matter of course that clouds will arise. So let us not, as we read in the First Epistle of St. Peter, *"think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you."*³ It is not uncommon to hear even Christians, when some trial

comes upon them, one sorrow is added to another, asking what evil they have done to merit such chastisement and how God can be just and merciful in giving such an affliction to those who love Him and are anxious to serve Him.

It confounds and perplexes them. It makes them suspect that, after all, there is some mistake. The truth is that there is nothing strange about it. In a world like this, so disordered by sin, so greatly under the sway of the Evil One, it is natural for the clouds to arise, but to think that we are not Christians or less Christian because of that is an error.

The truth is that the very best of people were often the greatest sufferers. Afflictions in some form or other are sure to come, with more or less severity, to every one of us. It belongs to God's prudence. *God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.*⁴

2. God Is In Control Of The Clouds

The second lesson to which I wish to call your attention to in connection with our text is that, whenever these clouds arise and whatever course they take, they are always under God's guidance. Our text says, ***It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth.*** This is strictly and literally true in the world of nature. Note that God does not say, "*It shall come to pass when a cloud comes upon the earth,*" as though its coming were a thing of chance. No, he says, ***when I bring a cloud.*** Yes, that is the Bible doctrine. The Bible teaches us to regard God's hand, His almighty power, as connected with all events and controlling all results. Clouds arise and winds blow by order from His throne.

How much like a thing of chance it seems, when the moisture rises, almost invisibly to human vision, and floats away into the air of the sky! But there is nothing casual or chanceful about it. God is as truly present in that silent operation as when the world was made. The language of Scripture is true of every cloud that forms in the air, whether it rises in the heavens like that which the prophet Elisha saw on Mount Carmel as an indication of approaching rain, which was no larger than a man's hand,⁵ or whether it spreads itself out in blackness over all the sky.

And as the Lord brings it, so He guides it. Clouds go where God directs. They do what God intends; and when God wills, they dissolve and disappear. And likewise it is with the clouds of trial and affliction which rise and float in the

providential firmament. From whatever source they come, whatever character they assume, or whatever instrumentality is used to produce them, we are to look beyond all these and to consider that it is God alone who sends them.

The cloud may come immediately from God's hand, as when He smote two sons of Aaron with instant death,⁶ or Satan may be used to bring it, as when he was permitted to afflict Job. The malice of wicked men may be the cause of it, as when Shimei came forth to curse David.⁷ The treachery of relatives or family members may give rise to it, as when Jacob's sons tore his beloved Joseph from his embrace and sold him into cruel bondage and lied to their father to hide their sin.

Yet it is still God's purpose which runs through all these agencies. It is His hand which controls the results they work out. It remains a truth in every case that, when the cloud comes, God brings it. The Bible tells us in Matthew 10:29,²⁹ *“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.”*

God guards His people's interest with an unslumbering eye. He is always mindful of them. He never leaves nor forsakes them. He makes all things work together for their good. No cloud can cast its shadow on them, no burden press, no pain disturb, no anxiety annoy, no sickness seize, no disappointment meet them, no trouble come to them in any shape, except God brings that cloud over them.

3. Spiritual Comfort

The third point to notice in connection with our text is that there exists a connection between the clouds that rise and the rainbow of God's promise.

We can easily understand the feeling of dread with which, after the Flood had subsided, Noah and his family would have looked on every cloud that rose in the sky. They had once seen the clouds form which were bringing God's wrath to a doomed race. They had seen the flood of vengeance roll in and destroy the whole earth.

The recollection of those awful scenes, when it rained mercilessly in torrents for forty days and nights, must have haunted their thoughts. What does it matter if the sun the shines with all its beauty? So what if their children would multiply

and repeople the earth? Could not the same judgment overtake them? But there was the rainbow to allay such fears.

To the rainbow was attached an unbreakable promise. That gave assurance to their hearts. And so spiritually God has made a covenant with His people. The Bible teaches us to connect every trial we experience with the purposes of God's grace and love.

If it was not for the teaching of Scripture, we would be left to regard these trials and afflictions in the same light as that in which Noah and his family, after the Flood, would have regarded the rising clouds in the sky had God not made known His covenant. Sickness, sorrow, pain, and death would all seem to us but messengers of wrath, and indications of divine displeasure.

The hymnist writes,⁸

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessing on your head.*

Sorrow, sickness, disappointment, the sundering of our most sacred ties, are dark storm-clouds indeed; but over them is the rainbow of God's promise, which brightens all woes, all trials, all pains, all sufferings and every bereavement.

The rainbow is made up of various colours, produced by the rays of the sun refracted and reflected from the falling drops of rain. This is called the prism. And so, turning to the pages of God's Book, let us select seven texts, which amid the dark and showery clouds of sorrow, are to bring inspiring hope, consolation, and assurance to the faint and fearing heart as that rainbow did to the heart of Noah and his family.

For the first colour we turn to the Psalms which lifts up the drooping spirit of God's people. We read in Psalm 42:5, ⁵ *Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.* Yes, why are you cast down? What reason have you to be so dejected? Did you in this vale of tears expect to escape its trials and strains, its sorrows and bereavements? "*Hope in God.*" Keep your thoughts upon Him.

We are not to be unduly cast down. Rather think more of, and thank God more for, the many and undeserved blessings which you have received.

For the second colour, we quote another ray from the Old Testament, Isaiah 41:10, ¹⁰ ***Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*** Originally spoken to the Israelites, these words are reaffirmed to each individual believer. The clouds may be black, angry-looking but ***Fear not, for I am with you; I am your God*** the Almighty One, “***Yes, I will help you.***” What divine assurance! What props to lean upon! Should any heart cower? “***Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away***” Jesus tells us.⁹

For the third colour we turn to the New Testament, and select from the Saviour’s lips this colour of the rainbow of His covenant promise. “***Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.***” Here, there is no restriction for any one or in respect to anything.

Whether you labour under the cares, trials, and perplexities of life; whether you are burdened by the crushing weight of poverty, sorrow, and sickness; whether you labour under the sharp convictions of sin, from which you struggle to free yourself, there is no mind labouring under any of the pressing cares of this mortal state that will not be at once relieved by bringing its burden to, and finding rest in, Christ.

Just as there are no instances in the Bible of the sick and blind going to Jesus for healing and being sent away uncured, likewise are no instances of a burdened soul’s accepting the invitation which calls him to the Saviour and not finding the rest which the Saviour promises to give. Coming to Jesus, we find peace and rest in Him. This covers the whole human race; it includes you and me. The Hymnist writes,¹⁰

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
‘Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast’:
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;*

*I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.*

This is something you find nowhere else. Nor has any one ever come to Jesus and been disappointed.

For the fourth colour we go to Jesus' last interview with His disciples when Jesus spoke these cheering words. ***“Let not your heart be troubled I will not leave you orphans.”***¹¹ The lot of an orphan is indeed sad and comfortless. With the loss of his earthly goods and parents, a painful emptiness is made in his life.

Jesus says that you may seem to be forsaken and disinherited; you may think from the severity of God's dealings that your heavenly Father has forgotten you or cast you out from His presence, and you may feel as do the homeless, parentless, and orphans.

Yet Christ's promise stands out in full prismatic beauty as with lips of peace and truth He proclaims, ***“I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. ”***¹⁹ ***“A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.”***¹²

I come to you in the cheering influences of My presence. I come to you in the imparted strength and comfort of the Holy Spirit. I come to you in sickness, in suffering, and in sorrow. I come to you with the oil and wine of My Word, poured into your aching hearts, and will make your wounded spirit radiant with joy.

The fifth colour of this rainbow in the cloud we choose from the writings of St. Paul, that great sufferer. The first of these are the words ***“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”***¹³ This applies to us amid the many duties and problems that confront us in our homes, in our place of occupation, in our life's calling, in our times of temptation, in periods of sorrow, and in the hour of death. But, oh, for the comfort and tranquillity of mind which these words impart. ***My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*** God, is with you.

For the sixth colour, we read in Hebrews 13:5, ***“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*** God's promises never fail. Looking to God, relying on Him, in your tribulations, did they ever not have a silver lining? Your fears, did He not

dispel them? Your sorrows, has He not sustained you in them? In your bereavements, did He not comfort you? Why not trust Him for the future?

The seventh colour in this rainbow of promises, is taken from the last book of the Bible, chapter 7. The Apostle John in his vision saw *“a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands.”*¹⁴

And while he listened to their song of praise, he heard a voice asking, *“Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”* ... *“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ... “They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;”¹⁷ “for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”* Can human tongue add anything to this picture, the white robe, the branch of a palm, the mighty chorus, the absence of hunger and thirst, the feeding in green pastures, the drinking from living fountains, and the wiping away from our eyes of all tears?

And all these things for those who *“came out of great tribulation.”* Since tribulations are necessary, then let us welcome sorrow and suffering, which endures only a moment here below, but is followed by eternal joy hereafter.

Beautiful is the rainbow as it appears in the skies, sweeping heavenward, bending downward, with its seven exquisite and varied hues. As you gaze upon it, let the lessons of this morning occur to you.

Let the seven precious promises from the Book of God curve over your burdened and sorrow-drenched hearts. They will give you cheer, comfort, peace, and a future of bliss and happiness. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Thessalonians 3:3, Psalm 34:19

² Job 5:7

³ 1 Peter 4:12

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- ⁴ Hymn 414
 - ⁵ 1 Kings 18:44
 - ⁶ Leviticus 10:1-2
 - ⁷ 2 Samuel 16:13
 - ⁸ Hymn 414
 - ⁹ Luke 21:33
 - ¹⁰ Hymn 306
 - ¹¹ John 14:1, 18
 - ¹² John 14:18-19
 - ¹³ 2 Corinthians 12:9
 - ¹⁴ Revelation 7:9