

Seen and Approved by God

“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation.” – Genesis 7:1

Summary:

God’s words to Noah reveal his careful observation of every person. Earthly distinctions such as wealth, learning, status, and freedom soon disappear; what matters is whether we are righteous before God. His knowledge is perfect: he distinguishes his people even when they are surrounded by the ungodly, never loses sight of them, and notices their difficulties, tears, desires, prayers, and faithful service. He also graciously accepts sincere work that remains imperfect or incomplete. God’s seeing includes approval. Though Noah’s preaching and obedience brought ridicule from others, the Lord valued his faith. God’s approving smile is therefore sufficient to sustain believers through reproach, persecution, and every bitterness of life.

Outline:

- 1. God observes every person**
 - No one is unnoticed; the moral Governor of all examines every path and action.
- 2. God looks for spiritual character**
 - Earthly distinctions fade, but righteousness, saving wisdom, and true riches endure into eternity.
- 3. God distinguishes his people**
 - He recognises each believer even when one righteous person stands amid a world of ungodliness.
- 4. God remembers every need and service**
 - He sees difficulties, tears, desires, private devotion, imperfect work, and willing intentions.
- 5. God’s observation includes approval**
 - The world may ridicule faithful obedience, but the Lord delights in it and says, “Well done.”

Text

Consider how God observed Noah's piety: "Thee," says God, "have I seen righteous before me in this generation." He had discerned and marked him. People may think themselves unobserved, but they are God's creatures and subjects. As their moral Governor, he examines them. His eyes are everywhere, beholding evil and good; they watch men's ways and ponder all their actions.

What is his purpose in examining humanity? Is it to see whether people are rich or poor, bond or free, educated or illiterate? Such distinctions matter little; they will soon disappear, and we will enter eternity only as individuals. The essential question is whether we are wise unto salvation, truly free, rich toward God, worldly or heirs of grace, wicked or righteous. God can determine this perfectly.

He is near each of us and needs no testimony to know us. Everything is exposed before him; he understands our thoughts, and darkness is no different from light to him. Therefore, he knows his own. Though mingled with others, they are distinct to him now and will remain so hereafter.

Though Noah was the only holy man among the ungodly, the Lord recognized him as a grain of corn among chaff and gold among dross. Too precious to overlook, Noah remained in God's attention. Unlike earthly rulers or fathers, who cannot always watch everyone in their care, the Lord never withdraws his eyes from the righteous; their walls are continually before him.

He sees their outward difficulties and inward anxieties. When they wander, he counts their steps; when they weep, he keeps their tears. Their desires and groanings are known to him. He does not forget their work and labour of love. He hears their conversations and records them in his book of remembrance. Though their faith is private and imperfect, he sees it and accepts what they offer according to what they have. When they lack the means to act, he counts their generous intentions as deeds. Their wishes are open before him; he judges their service by those intentions and rewards them accordingly.

When God says, "Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation," he expresses not only discernment but approval. "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright." He delights in those who fear him and hope in his mercy. Though they blush and weep over their duties, he approves them. The world may call their lives madness and their end dishonour, but the Lord knows the way of the righteous.

Noah, a preacher of righteousness, seemed to labour in vain among the disobedient, but his work was with the Lord and his judgment with his God. While preparing the ark, he faced constant ridicule and contempt. People may have mocked him: "Well, old man, how are you progressing with your folly? So you are going to sail on dry land! Do you intend to make a sea when you have made the ship? Where are your sails and rudder?" Who can withstand cruel mockery?

But the work was obedience to faith. While people scorned, the Lord admired. How delightful is God's approval! His smile and voice saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant," can silence reproach and persecution, sweeten life's bitterness, and begin heaven on earth.

This sermon is taken from William Jay's devotional, *Morning and Evening Exercises* (January 18, Morning), first published in 1854.