

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

51. GOD THE REFUGE FOR HIS PEOPLE

"I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge, and my fortress; my God; in him will I trust." Psalm 91:2

What a marvelous truth, that God, against whom man has sinned, should himself become the sinner's Refuge from the guilt and punishment of sin. Here, you behold, O my soul, the length and breadth, the depth and height, of infinite, everlasting love! The way in which God can receive sinners into his favor, consistently with his holiness and justice, could never have been discovered by the highest archangel, much less by the reason of man. The Scriptures of truth alone reveal this amazing mystery. There we learn, that God in Christ reconciles the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; that through his incarnation and death, he can now be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly; having fulfilled the righteousness of the law for man, and paid the penalty due to eternal justice, by shedding his own most precious blood upon the Cross.

He is now revealed as a just God, and yet a Savior. His law is magnified and made honorable, and all his perfections encompass the believing sinner, as with a shield. Oh! what a refuge for the oppressed; what a refuge in time of trouble! Yes! every poor sinner, who flies to a covenant God in Christ, has now a strong-hold, a tower of strength, into which he runs, and is safe. To him, Christ is "as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Those, to whom Isaiah wrote, knew well the preciousness of this description of the "King that shall reign in righteousness;" of the "Man," thus prefigured by the Spirit of prophecy. They knew how to value a hiding-place from the death-spreading whirlwind; a covert from the wild tornado; springs of water in the sandy desert; and the shadow of a great rock, to screen them from the burning rays of a tropical sun.

Have you, O my soul, fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the gospel? Have you made God your Rock and Support at all times, and on all occasions? Are your comforts drawn from earthly sources, and your hopes built on earthly dependencies; or, are they derived from God in Christ, the Fountain of true felicity; and founded on Him, the Rock of Ages? Oh! happy is the man whose hope the Lord is, and whose fresh springs, blessed Jesus, are in You!

While vessels, on a tempestuous ocean, are every moment in danger of being swallowed up by the yawning waves; the man, whose house is built upon the rocky shore, can view the storm, fearless and undismayed. So the Christian, whose refuge is the mighty God, can calmly contemplate the tumultuous sea of life, and smile amid the wildest uproar of the maddening multitude. This is the portion of the true believer. "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you." David enjoyed this peace, when he sang; "God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not fear, even if earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!" And what caused the Psalmist thus to feel peaceful in the midst of conflicting elements, and a warring world? He tells us; "The Lord reigns; he is clothed with majesty." "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice." "The Lord reigns; let the people tremble."

The believer in Jesus, opening the book of God, is quieted from fear of evil. He reposes on the promises of Him, who is the Amen; whose word is eternal Truth; whose counsel shall stand; and of whose government and peace there shall be no end. He knows that God is the Ruler of the universe, the wise Disposer of all events; that nothing can happen without his order or permission; therefore, he is cheerful and happy under all the dark dispensations of providence, remembering that the Lord God Omnipotent reigns; that the Judge of all the earth will do right, though clouds and darkness are round about him, and veil his bright designs.

He knows that God, who is rich in mercy, desires not the death of a sinner; that he is waiting to be gracious that his arms are ever open to welcome the returning prodigal, and to become a city of refuge to all who flee unto him through his dear Son Jesus Christ.

He knows that God has power as well as will to save him; that his willingness was manifested at Bethlehem, at Gethsemane, at Golgotha; that his power is daily displayed in the conversion of sinners, and the preservation of his saints.

He knows, from daily experience, that God is indeed a refuge, a place of defense against his spiritual enemies; he finds Jesus to be a near refuge to flee unto; for thus says the Lord; "Am I not a God at hand?" "He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being." Yes! the believer finds the Lord Jesus

to be, not only "as a little sanctuary," while on earth, but also his Eternal Refuge.

Moses animated the journeying Israelites by this delightful view of the God of their fathers; "The eternal God is your refuge, and his everlasting arms are under you." In life, in death, in trouble, and in joy, the true believer finds a sure, a strong, a near refuge in Jesus Christ. "But to the poor, O Lord, you are a refuge from the storm. To the needy in distress, you are a shelter from the rain and the heat. For the oppressive acts of ruthless people are like a storm beating against a wall, or like the relentless heat of the desert."

Oh! blissful truth— Jesus is the believer's refuge, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. At that awful hour, when the wicked shall call in vain upon the rocks and hills to cover them, and to hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; the joyful saint shall lift up his head, knowing that his redemption, his complete glorification, draws near.

Washed from his sins, through faith in the blood of Christ; clothed with the garment of salvation, the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness; purified and made fit for glory, through the power of the Holy Spirit; the now perfected believer is admitted through the gates into the city, and amid the hallelujahs of saints and angels, receives the crown of glory. Then will "the voice of harpers harping with their harps," fill the heavenly temple with celestial harmony; then will the mighty chorus, from "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of ransomed spirits, swell the anthem of praise unto him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!

O! my soul, delay not a moment to seek an interest in Jesus Christ. Fly to this friend of sinners. Go unto God the Father by him. Plead before the throne of grace the merits of your Savior. Cease not day and night to pray and cry unto the Lord, that you may be lodged in the ark of the everlasting covenant; be safely concealed in the cleft of the Rock, in the covenanted mercies of God in Christ.

How good, how gracious is the Lord. Infinite love directs the vast machine of providence, and makes all things work together for his people's good. If present dispensations be dark, they soon shall be clothed with light; and if his people are now sad, they shall before long be filled with joy. The designs of God, with respect to his Church, are full of mercy and truth. None of his purposes can fail of their accomplishment. He can make even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. The mighty conqueror is but as a rod in his hand, the staff of his indignation, which he can wield or break at his pleasure. Satan may plot, and his agents execute their schemes; but in every age the Lord reigns. He can still the madness of the people, or open the flood-gates of national judgments. He will do all his pleasure. Infidelity may pour forth its poisonous waters; Popery may forge its despotic chains; and Anarchy light up the torch of discord; yet, in the midst of all these enemies to truth and righteousness, Jesus is the King of Zion; he shall reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet, and God be all in all.

O! my soul, cleave then unto the Lord your God. Make him your refuge, your hiding-place, until the indignation be overpast. Yet, alas! what cause have I to mourn over a cold, unfeeling heart. How strangely do I feel. I want to be all life, all love, all energy for Christ, and yet I seem more like a statue than a living creature. Why am I thus? Oh! what a depth of evil there is in the heart. Satan knows this well, and fails not to work upon it. But, of this I am persuaded, that the word of promise can never be reversed; "Say to the righteous, that it shall be well with him." Believers, if need be, are now in heaviness through manifold temptations; but this is their happiness, that God is with them; this is their security, that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. As the sheep of Christ, they are lodged in his fold, they are safe under his protection, and shall never perish.

In myself, I have no spiritual strength. Of myself, I can do nothing. I cannot stand upright a single moment, I am not able to move a single step towards heaven. By nature I am full of guilt and misery, far from God, from happiness, from heaven. But how precious is the Gospel of the grace of God. There I behold Jesus, in the character of the good Samaritan, hastening to my relief; pouring into my heart the wine and balm of the covenant of grace, and saying to my soul; "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. I am your salvation. I have paid your debt. I will give you greater riches than the world can bestow, or Satan offer, as a lure to bind you to their service."

O! Spirit of all grace, enable me to open the arms of faith to embrace this loving Savior. Give me a heart of love to cleave to this compassionate Redeemer. Make me decided in my attachment, firm to my choice, and unshaken in my allegiance to my Almighty Sovereign.

My soul, upon the Savior build,
Then will you bear the rudest shock;

God the Refuge for His People

The powers of hell no more can harm,
Than dashing waves, the solid rock.
How feeble, Lord, my best desires,
How weak my frail, inconstant heart;
If left by you, the strongest saint,
From you that moment would depart.
Oh! let me, with untiring zeal,
In my dear Savior's footsteps go;
Take up his cross, and firmly leave,
All fading glories here below.
Jesus can make my burden light;
To his dear bosom I would flee.
Oh! blessed retreat! removed from fear;
There, would I tranquil live to thee.
Perfect, O Lord, my peace in thee,
Oh Rock of Ages- God of might;
In every storm my haven be,
My Refuge in death's dreary night.