

A HIDING PLACE FOR THE SOUL

"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." Isiah 28:17.

"And a man shall be as an 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." Isiah 32:2.

The times in which Isiah lived, like our own, were full of trouble. The Israelites had drifted far from the glory of their earlier days, and the nation of Israel was in a very sorry plight. Both the social and political life were depraved. Materialism had settled over the nation. False teachings had been hurled against Israel like a tempest. The Ten Commandments had been scrapped and a man-made covenant had been instituted as the rule of faith and practice. The people were spiritually bankrupt.

This decay in the spiritual life of the people had unloosed forms of criminality and general disregard for ethical practice to such an extent that the entire nation was in dire straits and facing grave consequences. They were on the verge of temporal bondage. Captivity was in prospect for them.

To meet this need, the time-serving politicians advocated the formation of an alliance either with Assyria or with Egypt, two great adjacent empires. But Isiah, who was much in prayer over the approaching collapse, did not consent to turn to the wisdom of heathen rulers for deliverance. Instead, he assured the people that God would raise up a Man Who would be a remedy for all the ills under which his people suffered. This Man, Whom God would send, was the only hope of Israel. He alone could save from complete disaster, and afford protection and refreshment to the covenant people. He would bring relief from wicked rulers, be as a shelter from the blight of corrupting political winds, and be like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Isiah saw the coming One as a hiding place for the soul.

In many of the art galleries of the world hangs the copy of a painting which represents the approach of a frightful storm. The storm clouds were rolling up black and ominous; the trees were bending before the first blast of the oncoming hurricane; horses and cattle were chasing across the fields in a frantic endeavor to escape the furies of the rapidly approaching cyclone; and a little group of men, women and children, with terror depicted in every look and movement, were fleeing as rapidly as possible in search of a hiding place from the fury of the wild tempest that was so soon to break. That is an accurate picture of real human life.

I. Every Person Needs A Hiding Place For His Soul.

Every person needs a refuge or hiding place. A refuge means a protection against danger or a source of safety. The fundamental need of every person is a refuge, a hiding place, a safe retreat, a haven of rest, or a port of safety for his soul.

After the death of Goliath, when the people sang, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten of thousands," Saul became insanely jealous. Henceforth, it was his desire to slay David. When fleeing from Saul, David took refuge within a cave. Then Saul and his pursuing army encompassed him. Naturally every minute seemed to David that it might be the last. On either hand there was no help for him. In the midst of his gloom and despair, David looked away from himself and found a refuge in the Lord. In like manner each of us needs a hiding place for his soul. From what does one need a hiding place?

1. The pangs of an accusing conscience.

Everyone has a conscience. Everyone has sinned against his conscience. A conscience may be dulled, seared or mistreated, but it will make a serious and terrible cry at times. Oh, what pain there is, at times, in the human conscience! It is the most terrible pain of all. There is no torment like that of an accusing conscience.

In Herod's court room in Palestine a discussion was under way relative to Jesus Christ. Some said that because of His mighty works He was Jeremiah come back to life. Others said that He was Elijah. Still others said He was Isiah. Herod, trembling like a leaf, remarked "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him." Why did he think that Jesus was John the Baptist returned to life? Some six months before, John the Baptist knew about his adultery and among other things said, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." Seeking revenge for this uncomplimentary sermon, Herod had John the Baptist beheaded. During these intervening months Herod's conscience had said, "You have done wrong." Now he thinks that John the Baptist has returned to plague him. His conscience was not dead.

You recall the tragedy of Judas Iscariot who sold Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver--about \$15.95. A few hours later he returned to the members of the Sanhedrin, who had given him the coins, and offered to return the money to them, and finally, when they refused to take it, he threw it down at their feet, and said: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." The men with whom he had traded mocked him, and then, prodded by his conscience, Judas went out to the outskirts of the city and hanged himself. His conscience tortured him and he concluded that suicide was the solution of his problem, but of course, it was not.

2. The power of Satan.

All are sinners by nature and by choice. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Everyone knows that there is a power of sin residing within him that is more than he can master in his own strength. No man knows how weak he is, and he needs a refuge from the slumbering power of sin in their lives.

Satan has tremendous power, and he is exceptionally subtle and cunning. Some do not believe in the existence of a personal devil, but he is man's greatest adversary

3. The storms of life.

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." Psalm 9:9. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Isiah 43:2.

Even our Saviour passed through the storms of life. He knew what it was to be hungry, thirsty, tired, weary, griefstricken, despised, rejected, slandered, spit upon, scourged and tortured.

Are you in trouble? Do you have burdens which are hidden to the eyes of people? Are you perplexed, cast down, discouraged or despondent? Our Lord said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall

find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

"Never a trial that He is not there,
Never a burden that He doth not bear,
Never a sorrow that He doth not share,
Moment by moment, I'm under His care.

Never a heartache, and never a groan,
Never a teardrop and never a moan;
Never a danger but there on the throne,
Moment by moment He thinks of His own.

Never a weakness that He doth not feel,
Never a sickness that He cannot heal,
Moment by moment, in woe or in weal,
Jesus, my Saviour, abides with me still."

4. The wrath of God.

Every person needs a hiding place from the wrath of God. God loves the sinner, but so long as he continues in unbelief and rejection of the divine remedy for sin he stands exposed to the wrath of God. The Bible tells us that "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds." Romans 2:5-6.

II. Many Hiding Places For The Soul Are Inadequate.

Certain tests can detect and reveal these false and inadequate hiding places for the soul.

1. Does it meet the highest demands of the conscience?
2. Does it make you a better person?
3. Will it stand the test of the dying hour?
4. Will it stand the test of the judgment day?

Unless your hiding place stands these tests it is worthless. Here are some false and inadequate hiding places:

1. Trust in your own goodness.

Many trust in their own goodness, and consider themselves good enough without any help whatsoever from God. Will this refuge meet the tests?

- (1) Does it satisfy the highest demands of your conscience?
- (2) Does it make you a better person?

Are you any gentler, sweeter, kinder, more considerate, more humble and more helpful because you trust in your own goodness?

- (3) Will it stand the test of the dying hour?

Many have boasted of their goodness, but when they came to die they wished that they had a living faith in Christ. How many have said, "I wish that I was a Christian," or "What a pity that I have waited until now!" What will be your hope in the dying hour?

- (4) Will it stand the test of the judgment day?

When you come to stand face to face with the Great Judge, you will not say, "I am confident that my righteousness will pass with Thee." Remember God's Word says, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

2. Trust in the badness of others.

Frequently one will say, "I don't pretend to be so good; I have my weaknesses and I know it, but I am as good as a lot of those in the churches, so I am going to let things go as they are and take my chances." Will this refuge meet the tests?

(1) Does it satisfy the highest demands of your conscience? "I am not very good, but as good as somebody else?"

(2) Does it make you a better person?

Nobody will ever be made better by talking about the badness of others.

(3) Will it stand the test of the dying hour?

It will never give you the comfort you will need then.

(4) Will it stand the test of the judgment day?

"So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." In the judgment you will forget everybody except yourself.

3. Trust in religion.

Religion never saved anybody. Trust in religion is one thing, and trust in Christ is another. All are religious, but many are still unsaved. The Saviour said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out demons, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me ye that work iniquity."

III. There is A Safe Hiding Place For Every Soul.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the only safe hiding place. He meets every test that I have discussed and every one that you can mention. Is He your hiding place? If not, accept Him now. He said, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."