

Every Man's Need of a Refuge

R.A. Torrey:

“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.” Isaiah xxxii. 2.

I have a very precious old testament text to-night. I love the Old Testament, it is full of Christ - Isaiah xxxii. 2: “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.”

A good many years ago I was traveling on the continent visiting some of the art galleries of Germany, and I saw a picture in the new art gallery in Munich that made a very deep impression on my mind. It represented the approach of a storm; the thunder clouds were rolling up thick and ominous; the trees were bending before the first approach of the oncoming tempest. Horses and cattle were scurrying across the fields in fright, and a little company of men, women and children, with bowed forms, blanched faces, and terror depicted in every look and action, were running before the storm in search of a hiding-place. I do not suppose it was the artist’s intention, but it has always seemed to me that this piece was an accurate representation of every human life. Every man and woman needs a hiding-place. You may say a hiding-place from what? A hiding-place from four things.

I. A Hiding-Place, needed from an accusing Conscience. “First of all, every one of us needs a hiding place from the accusations of our own conscience. Every man and woman here to-night has a conscience, and every man and woman here to-night has sinned against their own conscience. There is no torment like the torment of an accusing conscience. We do not have to go to the Word of God to find that out. We find it in heathen literature as well. It was not a Christian poet, but a heathen of about the time of Christ, the Latin poet Juvenal, who said:

“Trust me, no torture that the poets feign
Can match the fierce, unutterable pain
He feels, who, night and day, devoid of rest,
Carries his own account in his breast.”

It was another heathen poet, though he lived in a Christian land, the poet Lord Byron, who wrote:

“Thus the dark in soul expire
Or live like scorpion, girt with fire,
Thus writhes the soul remorse hath riven,
Unfit for earth, undoomed for heaven;
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around him gloom, within him death.”

But we do not need to go to the poets to find out the torments of an accusing conscience. We find them round about us every day in actual life and experience. One night at the close of a service, at the church of which I am now pastor in Chicago, there came to me a woman with a haunted face and said, “I would like to see you in private.” I replied, “If you will come to my office tomorrow at 2 p.m., I will have the pastor there; and if you have anything to say we shall be glad to listen.”

The next day at 2 o’clock the woman came to my office, and Mr. Hyde, the pastor, was present, and I said to the woman, “Now what is the trouble?” She made an effort to speak, and failed. Again I said, “What is the trouble?” Now she made an effort, and again failed. For the third time I said, “What is the trouble? We cannot help you unless you tell us your trouble.” Then she gasped out, “I have killed a man. It was fourteen years ago, across the Atlantic Ocean, in the Old Country, in the darkness of a forest, I drove a dagger into a man’s throat, and dropped the dagger and ran away. He was found in the forest with the dagger by his side. Nobody suspected me, but everybody thought he had committed suicide. I stayed there two years, and nobody ever suspected me; but I knew I had done it, and was wretched and at last I came to America to see if I could find peace here. First I went to New York and then came to Chicago, and I have been here twelve years, but have not found peace. I often go to the lake, and stand on the pier and look into the dark waters beneath, and I would jump in if I were not afraid of what may lie beyond death.” Haunted and hunted by her own conscience for fourteen years! Hell on earth! Well, some one says, I can very readily see how a person who has committed so awful a deed as that, staining her hands with human blood, should be haunted by her conscience.

But I have never done a thing like that. That may be, but you have sinned; and when conscience points at us the finger of accusation, we do not so much balance up the greatness or the smallness of our sin. But you say, "My conscience doesn't trouble me." That may be, for it is a well-known psychological fact that conscience sometimes sleeps; but conscience never dies. The day is coming when that sleeping conscience of yours will awaken, and your conscience will point at you the finger of accusation, and woe be to the man whose conscience wakes up, who has no hiding place from his own conscience. In the city of Toronto years ago there was a young girl who had drifted there from the country.

She had heard of the gaities of the place, and had left her home and come there for a life of pleasure, going to theatres and dances and amusements of that sort and like many another that goes to the great city with the same object, she was caught in the maelstrom of the cities sins and had gone down, down, down into a life of shame. Her conscience did not trouble her; but one night the Fiske Jubilee Singers were singing in Toronto, and some friends asked the girl to go and hear them, and she did. At last they came to that hymn with the weird refrain:

"My mother once, my mother twice,
My mother she'll rejoice;
in heaven once in heaven twice,
my mother she'll rejoice."

The poor girl was sitting up in the gallery, and as she heard the strains of that chorus floating up to her, all the memory of her childhood came back; she was a child, and at home again, in the old home. It was evening; the lamp stood upon the table, another sweet-faced mother glad there with open Bible on her lap, and she a little girl of four, with golden hair, was kneeling at her mother's knee, learning to pray. It all came back again to her. Again the Jubilee Singers came to that refrain:

"My mother once, my mother twice,
My mother she'll rejoice;
in heaven once in heaven twice,
my mother she'll rejoice."

And as those words came floating up again, the hot blood came to the girl's cheeks, she sprang to her feet, and rushed down the stairs out into the streets of the great city. On, on, on, as fast as her feet, now growing weary, could take her, out beyond the gaslights into the country; and next morning, when a certain farmer came to his farm-house door, there was the poor girl, clutching the threshold, dead! Hunted to death by her own conscience.

Oh, there are men and women here to-night whose consciences are asleep, but whose consciences will some day awaken, and woe be to the man or woman whose conscience wakes up and who has no hiding place from it.

II. A Hiding - Place needed from the Power of Sin within Ourselves. "In the second place, we need a hiding-place from the power of sin within ourselves. Now every man and woman here to-night who know themselves at all well know that there are powers of evil resident within themselves which are more than they can master in their own strength. If there is any man or woman who thinks they have a complete mastery over themselves, if there is any man who thinks he has power to break away in his own strength from the sin that is within, he is a sadly deceived man. There are some people here to-night with the overmastering appetite for strong drink. There are others who do not care for it at all, but are enslaved by other sins. Others have a passion for gambling. Others care for neither of these, but have a love for other things. With another it is an ungovernable temper; with others it is a sharp, unkind, censorious tongue. With some it is one thing and with some another. But with every man and woman of us within these four walls there is the power of sin within ourselves, which is more than we can master in our own strength. We need a hiding-place from the power of sin within.

I remember one night a young man came to me at the close of a meeting like this, in Minneapolis, in America, and he said, "I heard you speaking in the street to-night, and I said to myself, 'that man can help me,' and I have come here and stayed through the service. Will you now help me?" I said I would be very glad to do so if I could. He said: "listen; I was employed down in Pennsylvania, and I got to leading a fast life. Now," he said, "you know that a fast life costs money. It cost more than I earned, and I put my hand into my employer's money-till and took his money. Of course I was caught, but my employer was a good man. He might have sent me to prison; instead of that, he said, 'You must go to the Northwest. It is a new country;

begin life anew up there.™ They sent me here, and I have now got a good position, as you see by my uniform, and he pointed to it. But, he said, I am going just the same way in Minneapolis that I went in Pennsylvania. I am afraid to leave this hall to-night. Before I get a block from this hall, I shall meet some one who knows me, and just as sure as do I am lost.

You may have no weakness in the direction that this young man had, and again you may have; but every man and woman here has the power of sin within that is more than they can master in their own strength. We need a hiding place from the power of sin within.

III. A Hiding-Place needed from the Power of the Devil. In the third place, we need a hiding-place from the power of the devil. Over in our country there are a great many people who are too wise to believe in the existence of a personal devil. I believe in the existence of a personal devil. I will tell you why. In the first place, because the Old Book says so, and I have found that the man who believes in the Bible always comes out ahead in the long run, and that the man who is too wise and too advanced to believe the Word of God comes out behind in the long run, every time. Now, there was a time when I was so wise that I believed so much of the Bible as was wise enough to agree with me. Thank God, that time has passed. Thank God, he has opened my eyes and ears until I have come to the place where I know-I wish I had time to tell you how I know- that that Book, from the first chapter to the last, is the very Word of God. Now this Book teaches us that there is a personal devil. Turn to 1 Peter v. 8: "Because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Ephesians vi. 11,12: "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." But, friends, there is another reason why I believe in a personal devil, and that is, because of the teaching of my own experience and my common sense. Years ago a great French man of science was crossing the Arabian desert under the leadership of an Arab guide. When the sun was setting in the west, the guide spread his praying-rag down upon the ground and began to pray. When he had finished the man of science stood looking at him with scorn, and asked him what he was doing. He said, "I am praying." "Praying! praying to whom?" "To Allah, to God." The man of science said, "Did you ever see God?" "No." "Did you ever hear God?" "No." "Did you ever put out your hands and touch God and feel Him?" "No." "Then you are a great fool to believe in a God you never saw, a God you never heard, a God you never put out your hand and touched." The Arab guide said nothing. They retired for the night, rose early the next morning, and a little before sunrise they went out from the tent. The man of science said to the Arab guide, "There was a camel round this tent last night." With a peculiar look in his eye, the Arab said, "Did you see the camel?" "No." "Did you hear the camel?" "No." "Did you put out your hand and touch the camel?" "No." "Well, you are a strange man of science to believe in a camel you never saw, a camel you never heard, a camel you never put out your hands and touched."

"Oh, but," said the other, "here are his footprints all around the-tent." Just then the sun was rising in all its oriental splendour, and with a graceful wave of his barbaric hand, the guide said, "Behold the footprints of the Creator, and know that there is a God." I think the untutored savage had the best of the argument. Friends, we see everywhere in the magnificent universe the footprints of the Creator. But, alas! we see everywhere in human society the footprints of the enemy. Why, you have only to walk the streets of Jordan and you see the footprints of Satan; you see them in your dens of infamy, in the faces of the men and women on the streets, and, alas! alas! you see the footprints of Satan in the homes of culture and refinement. What means it that men and women of education, men and women of refinement, fall under the power of all these strange delusions, of Christian Science, Theosophy and all that sort of nonsense? It means that there is a devil-cunning, subtle, masterly, marvelous-more than a match for you and me in cunning and power. We need a hiding-place from the subtlety, the cunning, the power, of the devil

IV. A Hiding-Place needed from the Wrath to Come. In the fourth place, we need a hiding-place from the wrath to come. There are a great many people who do not believe that there is a wrath to come. I do. Why? Again, because the Old Book says so. The Old Book says, as I showed you last night, that "God has appointed a day in the which He will judge the World in righteousness," and God has given assurance of this by raising Jesus Christ from the dead. The Old Book says: "There is to be a day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of a holy and outraged God!" I believe this because the Bible says so.

Another reason why I believe that there is a wrath to come is that my common-sense says so. Look here, here is a man who grows rich by overreaching his neighbours, grows rich by robbing the widow and the orphan. He does it by legal means. Oh, yes, he is too cunning to come within reach of the law. But he grows rich by making other people poor. He increases in wealth and is honoured and respected. When he goes down the streets in his magnificent equipage, the gentleman on the street turns and says to his son: "There goes

Mr. So-and-so, a man of rare business ability, a man who is now one of our leading men of capital. I hope, my boy, when you grow up, you will be as successful as he. He lives in honour, dies in honour, dies respected by everybody-almost. And the victims of his rapacity, the victims of his oppression, the victims of his dishonesty lie yonder, bleaching in the potter's field, where they have gone prematurely because of his robbery. Do you mean to tell me that there will not be a day when these men who have lived on wealth wrung from the poor widow and orphan will not have to go before a righteous God and answer for it, and receive what they never received in this world, the meet reward of their dishonesty? Of course there is a judgment day; of course there is a hell. If there is not, then there ought to be. Look here, here is a man who goes through life, never giving God one thought from one year to another. He leaves God out of his business, leaves God out of his social life, leaves God out of his study leaves God out of his pleasures, and makes God's day a day of pleasure, God's book never opened, God's son trampled under foot. And thus the man lived, and thus he dies, going through the world ignoring the God that made him and gave His Son to die upon the cross to save him. Do you mean to tell me that there will not be a day when that man will have to go up before a righteous God and answer these questions: "What did you do with My day?" "What did you do with My laws?" "What did you do with My Word?" "What did you do, above all, with My Son?" Of course there is a judgment day. And you and I need a hiding place from it, every one of us, for every one of Us has sinned and come short of the glory of God. There are then these four things from which we need a hiding place our own conscience, the power of sin within, the power and subtlety of the devil and the wrath to come.

Is there a hiding place? I read my text again: "A man shall be 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." A man shall be-who is that man? There is just one man that is a hiding-place -the God-man, Jesus Christ. He is a hiding-place from conscience. I have told you part of a story, and I will now tell you the rest. When that woman came and told me how she had been haunted by her conscience for fourteen years, I took the Bible and said to her, "Do you believe what is written in this book?" She said, "Yes, sir, I believe it all. I was brought up in the Lutheran Church!" "All right," I said, "listen!" (Isaiah Liii. 6) "All we like sheep have gone astray?" I told, "Yes that true of you?" "Oh, sir," she said, "it is." "We have turned every one to his own way." "Yes that true of you?" "Oh, yes, that is the trouble. It is true." I said, "What are you?" She said, "I am lost." "Very well, listen to the rest of it: "And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Now, "I said, "who is the Him?" She said, "It is Jesus Christ." "Well, listen: "And the Lord hath laid on Jesus Christ the iniquity of us all." Now, "I said, "let my Bible represent your sin, let my right hand represent you, and my left hand Jesus Christ." I closed the Bible and repeated the text: "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one his own way." And I laid my Bible over on my other hand and said, "Where is your sin now?" She said, "It is on me." "Well, listen: "The Lord hath laid on Him, the iniquity of us all." And I laid the Bible over on the other hand. "Where is your sin now?" She hesitated and then said, "It is on Jesus Christ." "Right!" I said. "Yes it is on you any longer, then?" It was a few moments before she spoke, and then she burst out with a cry of joy: "No, it is on Jesus Christ!"

That woman, who had been haunted by her conscience for fourteen years went from my office that day with the peace of God in her heart. If there a man or woman here haunted with the memory of the past? Christ is a hiding-place and there is peace to-night for you in Him.

Christ is a hiding-place from sin within. I knew a young man belonging to a good family, highly educated, with noble aspirations, but completely overmastered by sin in one of its most loathesome forms. He tried to break away, tried to be a man, but failed, and he went down, deeper and deeper and deeper, unto at last he was in despair and on the verge of a suicide's grave, and one awful night when despair had settled on his soul, he cried to God for Christ's sake, and Christ set him free. And never once did he fall into that sin again.

Thirdly, is a hiding-place from the power of sin. I know a man in our home country- I think I never knew a man in my life more completely in the power of Satan than he was-a man of brilliant intellectual gifts, the most remarkable orator I ever heard and yet he had gone down, and had fallen into the power of Satan, gone down until his friends had all left him, unto his wife and children were wanderers, and he was a tramp on the streets. The man had gone down so low that on one occasion I was told he threw his poor wife down on the floor (one of the noblest women who ever stood by a fallen husband), and stamped on her with his heel. I said to him., "John, you ought to be repentant." He said, "Well, I do not believe as you do. I do not believe in God or in your Bible." "But," I said, "John, that does not make any difference; if you will take Jesus Christ as your Saviour, He will save you, and if you do not take Him, you are lost." A few months afterwards, in another city, he went to his wretched garret, and threw himself upon Christ, and Jesus Christ met him and saved him and transformed him, and to-day he is one of the most honoured men in our land. There is no mere speculation about the religion of Jesus Christ. It is a present-day demonstrable reality. It is not merely that Christ saved

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people nineteen hundred years ago; he is saving them to-day in London.

Once more, Christ is a hiding-place from the wrath to come. Now, of course, I cannot prove that from experience, for it lies in the future; but I can prove it by an argument that is unanswerable. That argument is this: the Christ that has power to save men from the power of sin now -certainly has power to save them from the consequences of sin hereafter. Is not that a good argument? Let me add, that any religion that is not saving you from the power of sin to-day will not save you from the consequences of sin in eternity. There is a lot of religion in this world that is absolutely, worthless. People tell you that they are Christians and that they are religious. They are saying their prayers, and doing all sorts of things. I will ask you a question: "Have you got that kind of faith in Jesus Christ that is saving you from the power of sin today?" If you have, you have that kind of faith in Jesus Christ that will save you from the consequences of sin hereafter. But if you have that kind of faith in Jesus Christ which after all is not faith, which it not saving you now, you have that kind of faith in Jesus Christ that wont save you from the penalty of sin hereafter.

Friends, Jesus Christ is a refuge, a hiding-place from experience and its accusations, from the power of sin within, from the power of Satan, from the wrath to come, from all that man needs a hiding-place from. Who will come to this hiding-place tonight?