

REFUGES OF LIES, AND WHAT WILL BECOME OF THEM NO. 1501

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“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.”
Isaiah 28:17.*

OVER against amazing mercy, the Holy Spirit sets awakening judgment. The acceptable year of the Lord is also the day of vengeance of our God and the sentence which shall confirm the righteous in his righteousness is attended by another which says, “He that is unjust let him be unjust still.” When the Lord shall come to be glorified in His saints, He will at the same time take vengeance in flaming fire upon those that know Him not. In the present instance, in the sixteenth verse of this chapter, the Lord declares, “Behold *I lay* in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone” and then immediately in our text He speaks of another laying, “Judgment also *will I lay* to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.” Upon the roses of grace grow the thorns of justice. Whenever the Lord bares His arm for mercy towards believers, He gives a backstroke to His enemies. Hence even the activity of love wears a threatening aspect to those who live impenitent, wedded to their sins, since it is accompanied by an energetic display of justice. Take care that you remember this, you who are unbelievers and yet dream of some millennial benediction or latter day glory which may bring salvation to you. Is it not written, “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light”? Whatever good may be in store for believers, there is none for you. The pillar of fire which will give light to the Lord’s Israel will be darkness to you, O you Egyptians. To those who are out of Christ, even the greatest triumphs of divine love will be terrible—they shall behold and wonder and perish—they shall see the plentiful goodness of the Lord but they shall not eat thereof, but die in the gate.

These are heavy tidings for you who love not the Lord, but they are as true as they are heavy—as certainly as mercy lays her foundation, as surely will judgment sweep away those who reject it and build upon another. Nor shall there be long space between the rejection of the blessing and the execution of the curse. Longsuffering will have an end and then the swift-footed executioner shall overtake the sinner and woe shall be unto the hairy scalp of him that goes on in his iniquities. Now therefore, be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. Another great truth should never be forgotten—it is this—a great privilege involves a great responsibility. It is a great privilege to hear the gospel, but woe unto those who shut their ears to its warnings and invitations, for it shall ring out their death-knell. It is a very high favor to see the foundation which God has laid in Zion and to be exhorted to build upon it. But of those who reject that foundation, vengeance will be exacted. Upon whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind them to powder. In proportion to the love which gave the Only Begotten to be the foundation of a sinner’s hope will be the divine indignation against those who reject Him. You who see Jesus set forth before you as the cornerstone of the Lord’s own choosing and yet perversely turn aside to prepare false refuges of your own will have to answer to God for this insult to His Son, this despite to His Spirit. Every hour in which you make lies your refuge and hide yourselves under falsehood, you increase your guilt. O that you would consider this.

But I hear one say, “We have no refuge or hiding place and do not feel that we need any.” I answer that this very self-conceit of yours is your refuge. Every man knows in his own conscience that he needs a shelter of some sort to screen himself from stern justice. He supplies his conscience with something in the form of a shield because he inwardly knows that he is not able to appear before God without some sort of apology or attempt at justification. Let him quiet his conscience as much as he pleases, there is a something within him which tells him that everything is not right. He may brag as he likes, but he has at least a suspicion of danger, a fear of coming judgment. Even as a man needs the shelter of a cave, a hut,

or a house for his body, so he needs a refuge for his soul and when he rejects the solid refuge which the mercy of God has provided in Christ Jesus, he sets to work to build another shelter and to lay for himself another foundation where he may repose. Our desire this morning is anxiously and solemnly to warn men of what will come of their willfulness and to lead them to look a little before them and spy out, through the telescope of Scripture, the sure future of their ungrounded hopes. Thus I trust they may be led to abandon all false refuges and may be guided by the Spirit of God to accept the sure foundation which God has laid for His believing people. O how I long that you may all of you be right for eternity. I would not have one of you perish, any more than I would wish to perish myself. O Holy Spirit, bless my feeble words to the good of these my beloved people. May my weakness of thought and speech never hinder You from working, but rather, in this hour of my infirmity, speak with greater power.

First, *let us see the Lord judging false refuges*. Secondly, *let us picture their destruction*. And thirdly, *let us take the warning* which such a subject should convey to every thoughtful mind.

I. LET US SEE THE LORD JUDGING MAN'S REFUGES. He says, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Observe that, however carelessly we may judge ourselves, God will not so judge us. We may take things at second hand and view them very lightly, but God makes personal observation and takes a careful survey. We may foolishly say, "Do not let us trouble ourselves too much or become too anxious, things will no doubt come right one of these days," but God is in earnest and there is no trifling with Him. Observe that His survey is performed with the utmost accuracy. He will not judge according to the sight of the eyes or the hearing of the ears, but He will go into matters and make a thorough search. An ordinary builder who should be sent to examine a house would probably content himself with hastily looking to see whether the walls were perpendicular and whether the work was of the quantity and quality specified in the contract. He could tell this pretty nearly with his eye or by measuring with his foot. But if a very careful and scientific survey were wanted, he would then produce his plummet and his line and try everything by the regular accepted tests of builder's work. Hence our text describes the Lord as laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet—that is to say, He makes a deliberate trial of our confidences, compares our hopes with our conduct, our beliefs with the truth—and our expectations with the facts of the case. He measures and gauges and gives in an accurate estimate of what we are and where we are. O that we might have grace to invite such a test at once by praying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts." If the Lord will help us to know ourselves now, it will save us from a sad discovery at the last. Let us examine ourselves, because God will examine us at the judgment day. Let us come to the plummet and to the measuring line and give up random hopes and hasty confidences. Better the distress of honest anxiety than the presumption of foolhardy rashness. It is much better to be afraid where there is no cause for fear than to be at ease where there is no ground for confidence. Well did Cowper say—

*"He that never doubted of his state,
He may, perhaps, he may, too late."*

He who takes things for granted may find himself out to be a fool in that day when folly will never again have opportunities for wisdom. All things will in the end be put into the scales and weighed, and infallible justice shall give its final decision. It is wise to anticipate that final and irreversible verdict by a present and honest searching of the grounds of our hope.

According to the connection of our text, there are three ways by which we may all of us judge whether our confidences are refuges of lies or not. For, first, if they are safe hiding places, such as will bear the brunt of the coming storm, they are founded upon Christ. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." Now examine, my dear friend, your hope for eternity. Is it the hope which God has set forth in Scripture? Is it based and bottomed upon the work of the Lord Jesus? For if not, as the Lord my God lives and as your soul lives, it will fail you in the day of trial. If God laid the foundation and you accept it, you may feel quite sure about it, for God never yet laid down a fiction as the groundwork of faith. He never mocked human reliance yet and never will. If the Lord laid the foundation you need not hesitate to build on it, for the responsibility of its security is with the Lord and not with us. We may fairly put it thus with our hearts in hours when all things are questioned—if our faith is vain, at least we have grounded it where divine revelation commanded us to ground it. If there is a failure, it is not ours only, but a failure on the part of Him who laid the foundation for us. But such a thing shall never be—the Christ of God never fails. We shall find Jesus to be

what the Father declares Him to be, a sure foundation which shall support us in life, bear us up in death, and sustain us throughout eternity. Come, search yourselves, and try your hopes by this test. Hang this plummet against your wall—do you stand even with it? Is Jesus Christ all in all to you? Do you rest on Him and on Him alone? If so, you are surely saved, but if not, you have made lies your refuge.

He then gives us a second test and that is, if our confidence is a right one, it comes to us through faith, for it is written in the sixteenth verse, “He that believes shall not make haste.” He shall not be confused. He shall not run away in trepidation and alarm. He shall not be in a hurry to anticipate the day of blessing, nor be in distress about the hour of trial. “He that believes” is the man whose soul is fixed on the sure foundation and therefore abides in peace. Now, my hearers, do you believe for your salvation or do you look to your own feelings and doings? If your hope is grounded upon sight, or feeling, or working—it will one day fail you. Do you rest on ceremonies, upon something performed by a priest or a minister, or are you resting upon outward religiousness, upon attending the means of grace and bowing, kneeling, and standing like Christians? Then I warn you that these sandy foundations will be washed away when the floods come. Have you faith in Jesus Christ? Do you believe the infallible Word of God and do you confide in His infallible Son? If you do this, heaven and earth shall pass away, but never shall your foundation be moved. Your hope shall stand firm as the throne of God. Judge yourselves then by this—bring this plummet and this line to bear upon the building that you have been erecting for years and remember that if it is not of faith it is all in vain. Salvation is of grace through faith. By faith the sinner is justified and the just lives by faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God, therefore see to it that you have the faith of God’s elect or your hope is vanity.

A third test seems to me to be proposed in my text, “Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.” Here, then, is the test of righteousness. If our hope is sound, it is a holy, sanctifying hope which purges us from sin and breeds in us all that is true and good. This is a test which some do not like to apply. They are wonderfully pleased when we are preaching the gospel of believing, but when it comes to fruit—to the declaration that true faith works by love—they fight shy of it. But I beseech you, my brethren, be not like these foolish persons. Court those tests which are the most searching and thorough, that you may make sure work for eternity. Exercise a loving severity toward your own soul. Be lenient to every other person, but be sternly severe to your own case. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Have you this holiness? The faith that is without works is dead, being alone. Have you the works which prove the sincerity of faith? If the grace of God does not change your character, if it does not make you hate sin and strive after that which is right, just, and good, then it is not the grace of God at all. You have but the form and are without the power of it. Is this the case with you? Come, do not flinch, but go through with it and deal fairly with your own soul.

We shall now apply these tests to certain refuges which I am sure will turn out to be refuges of lies. A few of these we will mention at length. The first is *the hope which some men ground upon their own moral goodness*. “It will be all right with me,” says one, “for I have not done anything much amiss. If I have been faulty, we are poor, imperfect creatures and we cannot help it. On the whole my aims and objectives have been greatly superior to those of the bulk of mankind. I do not think I can have incurred much wrath from God, or that I need be under any apprehension as to being judged of Him at the last great day.” Alas, my friend, yours must be a refuge of lies, for it will not stand trial by the first plummet. It is not based upon the foundation which God has laid. Your hope has nothing to do with Christ, that precious cornerstone. It is evident that you do not want Him, or His blood, or His righteousness, for you are altogether independent of such help. Why should God have taken the trouble to lay a foundation in the blood of His own Son when it is evidently quite a superfluity, since you can save yourself? Do you not see that, inasmuch as you rely upon your own moral goodness, you as good as tell the Lord that the gift of His dear Son and His death on Calvary were all a mistake, a Savior was not required and an atonement was not needed? If you can save yourself, so can others and the whole plan of grace becomes an absurdity. I feel sure that since you cannot stand this first test your refuge is a false one.

Now, try the second touchstone as to faith. You have no faith in God. Your hope is not based on faith in Jesus—you have no faith except faith in yourself. You are trusting to the works of the law, but do you not know what the Scripture says, “By the works of the law there shall be no flesh justified in His sight”? You are opposing the revelation of God. He declares that men are not saved by works, but

by grace, and you, on the other hand, claim salvation by your own works. You are under a gross delusion and your trust is a refuge of lies!

Moreover, my gentle boaster, is not this plea of moral goodness a lie from top to bottom? In the calmness of your mind can you prove this excellency of yours? Your outward life may have been comparatively pure, but I am not sure of that if all were known. Look back and see whether there are not more stains than you thought, more grave faults than you would like to confess. You have a very flattering memory, which obliges you by forgetting things which it would be inconvenient to remember. Your righteousness is little better than a house of cards and if you ever blow upon it with anxious breath it will come tumbling down. I call upon you to put away such folly and to open your eyes to facts. Please to recollect that even if your outward life may have been correct, God regards the heart and takes account of the inner life. Your thoughts, have they not gone after evil? Your imagination, has it never delighted in sin? Have there been no corrupt desires, no selfish ambitions? Hare you come up to the standard of God's perfection? I will ask you no more questions. I know you have not, for the testimony of the Searcher of all hearts is this, "There is none that does good, no, not one." Therefore, I know that you have not done good. You, like your fellow men, are a sinner and condemned and I beseech you put away this vain glorying and seek a better refuge. A spider's web is not slighter than this confidence of yours. A bubble is not more frail or a breath more unsubstantial. If this is your shelter, it is worse than none. The fig leaves of our first parents, when they were all dry and shriveled, were a better covering than our poor merits. If we were not maddened by our sins, we should never be so insane as to dream of pleading our own excellence before God. If we had any just idea of what holiness is, we should confess our iniquity and then close our mouth in the silence of self-condemnation. Lay but justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet and our personal moral excellence is seen to be as a bowing wall and as a tottering fence.

I have noticed, however, in the second place, that a number of persons make a refuge for themselves out of *the notion of fate*. They say, "Everything is settled and determined and ordained and therefore if I am to be saved, I shall be saved and if I am to be lost I shall be lost. After all, we are creatures of circumstances and are like the fish of the sea taken in a net or sea birds caught in the wind, driven, we scarce know where. Let us hope that all may come right at last, but we cannot help it whatever may occur." I have no hesitation in saying that this refuge is a refuge of lies. It would not endure one of the tests and assuredly not the last, for its tendency is to deny all moral obligation and hence it is no friend to holiness. It deliberately charges God with the creature's sin and makes out the sinner to be the injured person and clear of the guilt of his own acts. Many persuade themselves that they believe it, but it is such a poor, paltry shelter that I wonder they are not ashamed to mention it. In the bottom of their hearts, those who urge it know better. Look you here, good sir, and see your own inconsistency. Why did you punish your boy this morning for willful disobedience? Why did you not say to him, "I will not chide with you, my son, nor chasten you, though you provoke me, for you cannot help it, you are ordained to it"? The thief that broke into your house the other day, did you lie still and let him take your silver? If he was ordained to have it, he would have it—why did you open the window and cry for help? When the thief was taken, did you say to the magistrate, "Do not punish him, he could not help it. No doubt some divine decree led him here"? The scoundrel that called you, "Liar," the other day and knocked you down in the street, did you rise up and with a quiet smile thank him for it, for he could not help it, he was only the agent of a divine purpose and the instrument of an omnipotent predestination which he could not resist? You never thought of such folly. You feel that those who injure you are responsible and you treat them accordingly. Now mark you are responsible, too. It is a truth that all things are fixed, but it is not a truth that therefore men may live in sin and lay the blame upon God. Whatever foreordination and predestination may be or may not be, they leave men free agents and responsible beings or else both law and gospel are absurdities and the Bible is ill written. In other matters men act not on the supposed inferences of fate, but on the evident necessities of everyday life—why not in religion? It may be true that everything is fixed, and doubtless so it is, but because it is fixed, whether I shall live or not, do I therefore refuse to eat? Because it is fixed whether I shall sleep or not, do I refuse to undress and get into my bed? Because it is predestinated whether I shall be rich or not, do I leave my shop and get away and leave my goods to sell themselves? Nay, verily, predestination or no predestination, you are all eager to get gain. Men are not such idiots in other things as they pretend to be in the things of God. The plea of fate is a fool's ref-

uge worthy only of a brainless sot. Since it will not stand even my feeble brush, you may be sure that it will all dissolve beneath the iron rod of the Prince of truth. It is in vain for you to say, "We were delivered to work this iniquity," for you know that you sin willingly and you refuse Christ deliberately. You choose the evil and turn your backs on the good and therefore your ruin must be laid at your own doors. Cease, then, from the vain endeavor to justify yourselves and seek unto the Lord and His Christ.

The third shelter of lies which many fly to is *a hope based upon novel doctrines*. Each age would gladly have its own gospel and the present is not behind hand in the desire to be its own prophet. Many are ready to help in this presumptuous design. Certain divines attain to eminence by undermining the gospel they pretend to defend and forging new theories upon the anvils of their own fancy. Men who would never have been known if they had acted honestly, have gained a cheap notoriety by vending heresy and yet wearing the garb and eating the bread of orthodoxy. The most fashionable form of this evil just now is the production of novelties with regard to the future punishment of the wicked. False prophets prophesy smooth things and talk of a larger hope, which being interpreted is this—that men may live very much as they like, but some time or other, and somehow or other, character will cease to operate upon destiny and the righteous and the wicked will stand on a par. This is the old doctrine of falsehood with which the sinner blesses himself in his heart, saying, "I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart." The punishment of sin has been doubted from the very beginning. The chief of all subtle thinkers said in the garden of Eden, "You shall not surely die." By this larger hope, insinuated rather than boldly stated, the serpentine philosopher tempted the woman and ruined our race. Pleased with his success, he continues to use the same artifice, asserting either that sin is trivial, or that penance can remove it, or that hell is temporary, or that the soul will be annihilated, or some other form of the same radical lie. His perpetual cry is, "You shall not surely suffer what God threatens. You may sin and yet there is a hope larger than the revelation of Jesus Christ, wider than the Savior has proclaimed." In this refuge there is no Christ and no faith in Him and assuredly there is nothing in it that conduces to holiness. Mark its influence wherever it is received. When any of our friends embrace the novel theology, do they become more devout, more earnest, more gracious, more holy as the result of it? I think not. Are these the persons who make our prayer meetings a power? Are these the winners of souls? Are these the men who speak much of Jesus and live in daily fellowship with Him? Do we see them more careful to avoid conformity to the world? Our witness is that the consequences are the reverse. Did you ever hear of a man who was converted from vice by hearing that sin would be lightly punished and who, in proportion as he grew purer in life, grew more heterodox in his views? Such an instance would be a rarity, if indeed it ever existed. But when a man who holds orthodox doctrine, backslides and declines, as a general rule he finds it convenient to adopt some novel hypothesis in order that he may feel comfortable in his sin. Is it not so? So far as my observation goes, these modern notions go with looseness of life, with worldliness of heart, with decay of prayerfulness, and with backsliding from the living God, and as you lay this line and plummet to them, it will soon be seen that they are refuges of lies. At any rate, sirs, suppose your larger hope should turn out to be correct? In what respect will the orthodox be the losers? But suppose your larger hope should turn out to be a mere delusion? What will become of you who venture your all upon it? We are in any case upon the safe side of the hedge and this is no small advantage when the weightiest interests are at stake. Suppose there shall be no hell? If I am a believer in Christ, it matters not to me. But suppose there is—and there is—then you who are unbelievers are in an evil plight. If you do not catch this will-o'-the-wisp of a larger hope, as I believe you never will, then where are you? It behooves every man not only to make sure, but to make doubly sure. About the soul we want the utmost certainty. I would counsel you to dig deep and see what you are resting on. I would have you make sure that you do not permit a falsehood to lie like a worm at the root of your hope. Seek to know the reason for your building on Christ and when you have ascertained that, then look for God's warrant for placing stone upon stone in the upbuilding and without this do not rest. Nothing but divine authority ought to content you in the business of eternity. The views and hypotheses of the learned Dr. Somebody are of no value to me, for I can theorize for myself if I have a mind to. I want facts and certainties, for I dread every refuge of lies.

Alas, we have another brood of men whose refuge is that they make *a profession of religion*. "I am always at a place of worship," says one. "I am never absent from a single service and what is more, I joined the church some years ago and I have kept up my membership. I have been baptized and I come

to the Lord's table with great regularity. I feel a good deal of pleasure in religious exercises. I am not sure that I was ever born again. I am not sure that I ever repented of sin. I am not sure that I try to live a holy life, but still I am a member of a church and that is a great comfort to me." Ah, my brethren, this will not do. Unless this membership of yours with a visible church is backed up by holy living and unless there is an inward resting upon Jesus Christ and a vital faith whereby you hold fast to Him, your name may be on the church roll, but it will not be found written in the Lamb's book of life, and this profession of yours, instead of blessing you, will curse you. If you are not savingly converted, you are guilty of a daily hypocrisy and chargeable with sacrilege for appropriating sacred things to which you have no right. Unconverted one, you are an intruder into the family of Christ; an interloper at the feast of the King of kings. Search yourselves lest, being found at the bridal feast without a wedding garment, you should be cast out into outer darkness. You need not be hurt by the exhortation, for those of us who speak to you are often forced to carry out a severe search within our own hearts. How often I put myself through my paces with many an anxious question! I have taught others, but do I know the truth for myself? I have brought others to Christ, but have I come to Christ myself? What if, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway! What the Lord's ministers feel bound to do to themselves, surely you need not be too proud to endure. If you are doing very little for your Lord and Master compared with others, you may well be very anxious and careful, for the doom of unprofitable servants is not a light one and barren trees are not always allowed to stand. "Oh," says one, "but I do not like heart-searching." Then I am afraid for you. You who do not examine yourselves, you who are not willing to be tested and tried by the word of God, you cause us serious suspicion lest you may have built very rapidly with wood, hay, stubble, and yet your whole structure will be consumed in the last great fire.

Let me speak a word concerning certain ones who have a *hope of being saved which does not sanctify them*, for there are professors who feel sure they are Christians and will go to heaven and yet they show no sign of being prepared for it. They live as others live and yet imagine that they shall not die as others die. They have an outward film of morality upon their lives, but underneath it there is worldliness and love of sinful pleasure. How dare they hope? If they sow iniquity shall they reap perfection? Can a man go to heaven who is not heavenly? Can lovers of worldly pleasure enter into the dwellings of the perfect? O sirs, if your hope does not lead you to follow after holiness, away with it. God help you to away with it at once and to begin aright. Above all things dread an empty, baseless hope of heaven, for it will make hell all the more terrible.

Some, too, make a refuge of their *old experience*. Now, an old experience which is all old is a manifest deception. A true experience continues and grows day by day. Not with one even pace each day, but still, as a whole, the divine life goes forward to perfection, and where it does not do so, but comes to an end, it is not the divine life at all. Have you never heard of the man who wrote out his experience of religion when a young man that he might fall back upon it in later years? He lived in neglect of all godliness but having already experienced religion, as he said, and having made a record of it and put it away with the title deeds of his farm, he dreamed that when he came to die he might fetch it out and comfort himself with his evidences of salvation. His daughter went to the drawer and found that the mice had eaten it. Ah, dear me, it was not much loss, for that hope which is grounded on a musty experience, which is not supported by a present love of God and present prayer and present fellowship and present striving against sin, is a lie. It is all in vain to say, "I know I did experience such-and-such a thing a dozen years ago when I joined the church." What of that? If a man is alive now, he does not need to prove it by going back to the records of his youth. Present life is its own evidence. If you are not living to God today, I care not a button what you profess to have done twenty years ago. If you had a true faith then, you have it now, and if you have no faith *now*, you are in the gall of bitterness. It is true that he that believes in Christ is saved, but we must have proof of it in the consequent life. If the man is not saved from living in sin, we infer that he has not believed, and if he does not persevere to the end, we are sure that he is not one of the Lord's own, "For if any man draw back," says the Lord, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." This is the test of true faith. Those who have really believed do not draw back unto perdition, for they have believed unto the salvation of their souls. Oh, then, I pray you, if your imaginary experience in former times has dissolved into present carelessness and sin, do not attempt to hide behind it. It will not endure the line and the plummet, therefore put it away and seek God this day that He may begin a sound work of grace upon your souls.

I hope I have said enough by way of laying the line and the plummet to false refuges. May the Lord arouse the carnally secure and lead them to forsake their useless hiding places and shelter themselves in Christ.

II. Very briefly let us, in the second place, PICTURE THE DESTRUCTION OF THESE REFUGES OF LIES. A man has been very comfortable in one or other of these refuges for a good number of years, but at last he is getting old and is laid aside to think. Infirmities are increasing, death is drawing nigh, and he takes a look into the dark future. He finds himself facing an eternal state and he has need of all his confidences and hopes to sustain him. Now, what happens? His spirit undergoes a great storm and what is the result? Does he dwell in a fortress which defies the hurricane? No, his shelter is so frail that, according to the text, “the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies.” A cold, hard truth falls from heaven like a hailstone and crashes right through the glass roof of his false confidence. He looks up astonished and lo, another and another forgotten truth descends with like violence and crushes through all opposition till it smites his soul. He had always hoped, good, easy man, that sunshine and quiet would last forever and then his glass house would have been all he needed. He never reckoned on these hailstones. Great truths which he forgot, neglected, and despised, come rattling down upon him from heaven pitilessly, in awful earnest and with deadly aim. He must think and he has much to think of, and no means of forgetting any of it. His conscience, which he tried to smother, awakes, and as it awakes, the big hailstones of truth come through his roof faster and faster. Down falls all his comfort and peace of mind as hailstone after hailstone pounds all his hope to pieces. “After all, I never was born again and the Scripture has well said, ‘You must be born again.’ I never yielded up my selfishness and I cannot be saved unless Christ is my King. I did not really close in with Christ and cast my naked soul on Him—I trusted in something else and I am lost forever.” Great hailstones thus follow each other and against them the deceived heart has no defense. Presently the storm comes up with tremendous wind and the hailstones are hurled forward like terrible artillery and the naked soul finds its refuge utterly swept away—not a vestige of it remains. Refuge fails the man and his soul, unhoused, unsheltered, starts back in horror. It starts back in vain. God has now to be met and the soul has no hiding place. The fire eyes of the Most High are burning the heart through and through and rocks and hills refuse a shelter. God grant that this may not be your case and that it may not be mine. May it never be said of us, “When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” Let us fly to Jesus at once. Let us most solemnly exercise faith in Him now. I pause while this is done. Is it so? Have you rested upon the Son of God for everything? Then you may go forward and neither fear hailstones nor coals of fire, for he that believes in Him shall never be confounded.

Another impressive picture is set before us in the text. “The waters shall overflow the hiding place.” Imagine one who, in the time of Noah’s flood, does not choose to enter into the ark for he does not care to be tied down to God’s way of deliverance. Salvation by an ark is too simple, too childish—he wants a more philosophic way. Besides, he does not care to be cooped up with Noah and a handful of narrow-minded people who shut them in and shut everybody else out. He has broader views and therefore he has found a shelter on the side of the hill, in a great cave where thousands can assemble and enjoy a liberty denied them within the pale of the ark. It is utterly preposterous to suppose the flood will ever reach so high as this elevated cave. It is hundreds of feet above the plain and in the judgment of the wisest men, it is more than safe. After a day or two of extraordinary rain, the man would look down from his hiding place and see the waters covering all the lower area and creeping up the valleys foot by foot. And he would remark upon the abundance of rain, but scoff at the idea of a general deluge. He would be easy, hoping that the rain would cease, but as it continued he would begin to think, “I may not be quite so safe after all.” Imagine his horror when the flood at last fills up the ravine and creeps up the rocky steep. With cruel lip, seeking his destruction, the water threatens the cave in which he thought to dwell so safely. At last, it penetrates his hiding place. It climbs to the very roof. It sweeps over his head and his false confidence has proved his ruin. Such will be the end of all that hide themselves, but hide not in Christ.

I will tell you in what fashion this overthrow will come. First, the mirth of the mind is damped with doubt. The man does not feel so easy as he used to be. He is afraid that God’s Word may be true and that things will go amiss with him. Soon the doubt has oozed into his refuge and become a pool of fear—the man is sadly afraid and the dread saturates and dissolves all his joy. The truth of God’s Word still further

comes home to his conscience and he begins to be more and more alarmed. Nor does he continue long in one place, for he is growingly distressed—the waters are evidently advancing upon him and he cannot escape. He has come to be altogether dismayed. He hardly knows what will become of him and within a little while, unless God's mercy shall prevent and enable him to find the true shelter, he will be drenched in despair and washed away in terror. At last he cannot believe that there is any salvation possible for him. He hears death and hell approaching and his flesh creeps with horror. Let him alone and you will find him filled with terror. If his conscience is really awake, he will dread to go to sleep at night lest he should never wake again. I have seen such in their dying moments afraid of everything, fearing alike to live or to die. At last the man is taken away and where is he? Lost, lost, lost! The hail has swept away his refuge and the flood has overwhelmed his hiding place. He has perished forever from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. None can find a ransom for him. He rejected the foundation which God laid and sought to find a refuge for himself—and he has been taken away in his presumption.

III. Time fails us, but I want you TO LEARN THE LESSON OF WARNING which I have just strength enough to indicate in a few words. May the Holy Spirit bless it, though I am scarcely able to express my thoughts.

The first lesson of warning is *let us build on God's foundation*. He knows better than we do what is right and safe. Come, you wise people, be as children and believe your God. Come, you who like something of your own imagining and yield your own fancies for once. Indulge your whims upon some common business, but in this matter it will be safer to believe God's Word than to continue dreaming and devising for yourself. You may be a very intelligent person, but will you compete in intelligence with God? Very likely you may know a hundred times more than I do. You may know a thousand times more if you choose to think so, but you cannot have a better hope than mine, for I rest on Jesus Christ alone. You may have what hope you like, but I would not change with you for all your learning. My hope lies in simply coming to Jesus and depending upon Him and learning how to love Him. I recommend the same to you. Come, and from the love of Jesus, learn how to be a Christian. Learn to be holy. Learn to be unselfish. Learn to live according to God's Word. There is a power about faith in Christ to give a man the mastery over himself—a power to be found nowhere else. I have seen the drunkard, the thief, the harlot believe in Jesus Christ and become converted—and from that very day they have become gracious, godly, pure-minded people. I have never seen anything else make such a change in men as faith does. We may surely speak as we find and use a remedy of which we see the cure. We have, moreover, tried it ourselves and therefore we speak what we know. Therefore, come and rest in Jesus and when you come to die you will at least be able to feel, "I have God's sanction for the foundation I have built upon and therefore it cannot fail." O may the Holy Spirit bring you to this.

Again, let your refuge be wholly built up of divine truth. Do not try to comfort yourself with a lie. Dear friend, let the truth be all in all to you. Counterfeit coin enriches no man. Have nothing to do with false and flattering teachings. If your hope is not built on solid, substantial matters of fact, give it up and get one that is. If your hope of being saved depends on a dream, or a voice you thought you heard in the air, or some other such nonsense, put it away. Build upon your Lord's life, death, and resurrection—build upon God's promises—build by the work of the Holy Spirit with faith and you shall have the reward of eternal life. In a word, rest on Jesus, the eternal Son of God made flesh and bleeding to death for man. Build on His complete work and there only, and then if winds blow and waters rage, you shall be safe, safe forever. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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