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CHRIST OUR REFUGE

BY: C. D. COLE

Hebrews 6:18-19, *"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."*

Introduction: The name Christian was invented by outsiders, and occurs but three times in all the Bible. It was a designation by which Christ's followers were known to others, and not a name as employed by themselves. They spoke of each other as brethren, disciples, saints, or the like. Sometimes they used more expanded names of which our text is an example. It sets forth a part of the characteristics of those whom the world knew as Christians. Our text gives an essential feature in the description of a saved man. He is one who has fled for refuge to Jesus Christ--the hope set before him. This text strikes a good many off the list, who claim to be saved. A saved man is one who has fled to Christ for refuge. It is not birth, nor baptism, nor church membership, nor a good life that makes a man a Christian, but the personal act of fleeing for his life to Christ.

This text is a rebuke to those people whom when you talk to them about their need of Christ and urge to trust Him, say that if they are one of the elect they will be saved, and that they are to wait until God gets ready to save them. I believe in election and would not dare to say a word against this Bible truth. I believe every one of the elect will be saved. But election is God's secret council, and is not to be the thing that determines a man's duty. Man's duty is

determined by God's revealed will and commands. And He commands men to flee to His Son for refuge.

Let us illustrate this doctrine: The death of Christ was God's decree, but it was not man's duty to crucify Him. God nowhere commanded men to murder His Son. *"It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh,"* Matthew 18:7.

Our text is highly figurative. It is either an allusion to mariners, who make all haste to get into port and then cast anchor; or to runners in a race who make haste to reach the goal that they may lay hold of the prize; or rather to such as fled to the cities of refuge, which were types of Christ.

The names and meanings of these cities show them to be types:

1. *Kedesh* means holy. Christ was the Holy One.

2. *Shechem* means shoulder. Christ has borne the sins of his people, and has the government of their affairs upon His shoulder.

3. *Hebron* means fellowship. We have fellowship with the Father through Him.

4. *Bezer* means a fortified place. Christ is a stronghold and tower--a place of defense to His people.

5. *Ramoth* means exaltation. Christ is exalted to God's right hand, and through Him our exaltation will come.

6. *Golan* means manifested. Christ is God manifest in the flesh.

Men Need A Refuge.

Men are strangely blind to their danger. They are spiritually insane. Ephesians 4:18, *"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through*

the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." II Timothy 1:7, *"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."*

Christ Is The Refuge Men Need.

He possesses every qualification as a place of refuge for men who are in danger of hell.

A. Because of who He is. He is God's only begotten Son, in whom He is always well pleased. It is an insult to God to suppose that a man who has fled to His Son for refuge would be cast into hell.

B. Because of what He has done. He has done everything necessary for man's salvation. Tell me a need if you can that Christ did not provide for when He died upon the cross. He is an anchor that is sure and steadfast. He assumed our responsibility.

A pupil asked his teacher, "When shall I repent?" "The day before you die," was the answer. "But, I may die today," said the pupil. "Then repent today," answered the teacher. A dam up the mountain gave way at midnight. Messengers were sent down the valley to arouse the sleeping villagers. Those who arose and fled in an instant were saved. Those who slumbered and slept were swept away by it. **Arise, escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plains. Escape to the mountains lest thou be consumed.**

THE TWO CROSSES

BY: A. W. TOZER

Unannounced and mostly undetected there has come in modern times a new cross into popular evangelical circles. It is like the old cross, but different: the likenesses are superficial, the differences fundamental.

From this new cross has sprung a new philosophy of the Christian life; and from that new philosophy has come a new evangelistic technique--a new type of meeting and a new kind of preaching. This new evangelism employs the same language as the old, but its content is not the same and its emphasis not as before.

The old cross would have no tryst with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. It carried into effect the sentence imposed by the law of Sinai.

The new cross is not opposed to the human race; rather, it is a friendly pal, and if understood aright, it is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure, only now he takes delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies instead of singing bawdy songs and drinking hard liquor. The accent is still on enjoyment, though the fun is now on a higher plane morally, if not intellectually.

The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist does not demand abnegation of the old life before a new life can be received. He preaches not contrasts but similarities. He seeks to key up public interest by showing that Christianity makes not unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same things the world does, only on a higher level.

Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamoring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the gospel offers, only the religious product is better.

The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive it says, "Come and assert

yourself for Christ." To the egotist it says, "Come and do your boasting in the Lord." To the thrill-seeker it says, "Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship." The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public.

The philosophy back of this kind of thing may be sincere, but its sincerity does not save it from being false. It is false because it is blind. It misses completely the whole meaning of the cross.

The old cross is a symbol of death. It stand for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said goodbye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was not going out to have his life redirected; he was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck swift and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.

The race of Adam is under death sentence. There is no commutation and no escape. God cannot approve any of the fruits of sin, however innocent they may appear, or beautiful to the eyes of men. God salvages the individual by liquidating him, and then raising him again to newness of life.

That evangelism which draws friendly parallels between the way of God and the ways of men is false to the Bible and cruel to the souls of its hearers. The faith of Christ does not parallel the world, it intersects it. In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up onto a higher plan; we leave it at the Cross. The corn or wheat must fall into the ground and die.

We who preach the Gospel must not think of ourselves as public-relations agents sent to establish good will between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to Big Business, or Press, or the World of Sports, or Modern Education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is

not a compromise but an ultimatum.

Not Mere Improvement.

God offers life, but not an improved old life. The life He offers is life out of death. It stands always on the far side of the Cross. Whoever would possess it would pass under the rod. He must repudiate himself and concur in God's just sentence against him.

What does this mean to the individual, the condemned man who would find life in Christ Jesus? How can this theology be translated into life? Simply, he must repent and believe. He must forsake his sins and then go on to forsake himself. Let him cover nothing, defend nothing, excuse nothing. Let him not seek to make terms with God, but let him bow his head before the stoke of God's stern displeasure.

Having done this, let him gaze with simple trust upon the risen Saviour, and from Him will come life and rebirth and cleansing and power. The cross that ended the earthly life of Jesus now puts an end to the sinner; and the power that raised Christ from the dead now raises him to a new life along with Christ.

To any who may object to this or count it merely a narrow and private view of truth let me say: God has set His hallmark of approval upon the message from Paul's day to the present. Whether stated in these exact words or not, this has been the content of all preaching that has brought life and power to the world through the centuries. The mystics,

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THE FATHER'S DISCIPLINE

BY: C. D. COLE

Hebrews 12:10, "For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

Introduction: On the surface, the experiences of the saved and the lost seem to be much the same. There are certain painful experiences common to all men--to the saved and lost alike. Trouble is a word in every man's language. Sorrow knocks at every man's door.

But the same experiences do not have the same meaning. To the child of God, pain and sorrow have a message that cannot be heard by the man of the world. The Father's hand is seen only in dealing with a son. And none but a son can see the hand of the Father. But the son ought always to see his Father's hand in all his experiences. Paul is writing to saints in sorrow, and he writes to comfort and strengthen. And in doing this he shows them the Father's hand--and the Father's heart.

He shows them that by trials and difficulties of life God trains or disciplines His children. We must not view our sufferings apart from God and His design in them. We must not think of them as senseless accidents. Trials are tokens of His love and the discipline to which every son must be subjected. Those whom God takes to his heart and cherishes, He also disciplines. And to be without this discipline marks one as an illegitimate, and not a real son.

Here is a truth that may go unnoticed on the page of Scripture, like a lighthouse when the sun is shining, but when the stormy night falls, then this truth flashes out and is welcome. Our scripture goes deep into the meaning of life--life is discipline. Our scripture tells us that God's discipline of His children is more loving and wise than that of earthly parents.

The earthly and heavenly disciplines are described in four contrasted clauses. And they are arranged in what students call inverted parallelism. The first clause, "*for a few days*," corresponds to the fourth. "*For a few*

days" is paired with "*that we might be partakers of His holiness.*" The clause, "*for a few days*," does not refer to the duration of discipline, but to the direction or purpose of it. Paul is not speaking of how long earthly parents discipline, but the purpose is to prepare the child for a short career. The earthly parent trains for circumstances, positions, occupations, professions, all of which terminate with the brief span of life. The earthly parent is interested in preparing his child for this life, and that is the purpose of discipline; he wants to make of him a good citizen of this world. But in contrast God's discipline is to make His child a partaker of His holiness; His training is for an eternal day.

The other contrast is "*after their own pleasure*," or as it seemed good to them--"*but He for our profit.*" Earthly parents often make mistakes and do harm when they think they are doing good. Their training is not perfect, for they may have false conceptions of what is best for their children. Then personal whims and passion often enter into their discipline. But God's discipline is from a simple and unerring regard for the benefit of His child.

Now in amplification of these general truths, we shall try to lay some things on your hearts.

Life is intelligible only as we regard it as education or discipline. God is a Father who looks after His children. He does not leave them to roam at will to their eternal ruin. He rebukes, corrects, trains, and educates. Everything that befalls us is for training in holiness.

Life is not a heap of unconnected incidents, like a number of links flung down on the ground, but the links are a chain, and the chain has a staple and a stake. A heavenly Father presides over our lives. We are not at the mercy of blind fate or impersonal chance. All things work together for our good because a loving and wise Father is in control.

Brethren, this is something more than a creed to recite; it is a truth to grip us and bless us.

The word here for "chastisement" or "discipline" literally means "child-training," and implies the child is small. The oldest of us in years and in experience of childhood are still God's little children. All of our days here we are in a state of pupilage. This world is God's nursery. There are many mansions in His big house--the universe--and this earth is where He keeps His little ones. Life is given us that we may learn to talk and walk with the Father. We are here to acquire qualities for service in glory. We are here to be fashioned for eternity. God is more interested in our character than in our comfort.

Life here is training for glorious service yonder. We are to serve here; but in heaven the saints serve day and night without fatigue.

We hear a great deal about the mystery of suffering the saints endure here. And that is because we think life here is meant mainly for enjoyment and for material good. If we thought more of life as discipline, as acquiring or character, we would have less difficulty in interpreting our experiences and understanding what people call the mysteries of providence.

We sing "sometime we'll understand..." as though we were without any present light on God's providential dealings with us. Our scripture tells us that the Father is training us and all that befalls us is a part of His discipline.

What is the guiding principle of this discipline? The guiding principle for earthly parents is what they think will be good for the child. But mistakes enter into their training. With them there may be fits of passion, impatience, and ignorance. But He our heavenly Father disciplines "*for our profit*" and He makes no mistakes.

The child of God may see good in his most painful trials. There is no such thing as evil except the evil of sin. Affliction is not an evil. The Psalmist said, "*Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.*" And again, "*It was good for me that I have been afflicted.*"

The flood comes, the water covers the fields, and men are in despair. The

waters recede; and then like the slime left from the Nile in flood, there is a better, richer soil in which to grow crops. Storms are dreaded, but they keep sea and air from stagnating.

That should be a gracious word for some of us today in our perplexities and pains and disappointments-- "*He for our profit.*"

This word profit has been terribly abused. Bankers and merchants, businessmen in general, have about monopolized the use of this word profit. Everywhere it takes the shape of the dollar mark. We can hardly think of profit without thinking of money or material substance. The greatest profit might be the loss of money.

This does not deny that pain and sorrow are real. We are not to act as if there is not trouble when there is. Trouble would not help us if it did not trouble us. The good we get from sorrow would not be realized unless we did sorrow. It is right for us to writhe in pain; for without pain there is no profit. It is proper for us to be impressed with calamities when they befall us. But it is not right for us to fail to discern in them the gracious truth that they are for our profit. The Father knows what will be for our good and this is what He sends.

The great aim of all discipline is "*that we should be partakers of His holiness.*" God trains us for an eternal end; Earthly parents train for earthly occupations--for the work of a few days. Man was made in the image of God--he lost that image through sin, and the only adequate end in life is to be restored to the likeness of God. If I fail to ever become like God, I have failed, whatever else I have accomplished. Just to live for earthly riches and pleasure and fame is to miserably fail.

And to become like God is the purpose of our sorrows. They will wean us; they will refine us; and they will blow us to His breast, just as a strong wind might sweep a man into some refuge from itself.

What child of God cannot testify that he has been brought nearer to God by some short, sharp sorrow than by many long days of prosperity.

What Absalom, in his wayward way, did with Joab is like what God does with His sons. Joab would not come to Absalom's palace, so Absalom set his corn field on fire; and then Joab

came. So God sometimes burns our harvests--stops our income--that we may go to Him.

But sorrow may have the opposite effect. It may make a man hard, sullen, and bitter. The effect trouble and sorrow has on a person is a pretty good barometer of whether the person is a child of God.

THE TWO CROSSES

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the reformers, the revivalists have put their emphasis here, and signs and wonders of the Holy Ghost gave witness to God's approval.

Dare we, the heirs of such a legacy of power, tamper with the truth? Dare we with our stubby pencils erase the lines of the blueprint of alter the pattern shown us on the Mount? May God forbid. Let us preach the old cross and we shall know the old power.

--Alliance Weekly (1954)