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## ***THE REFUGE OF LIES***

BY: C. D. COLE

*"Judgements 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.

The word "refuge" implies danger or distress. A refuge is a place one flees to for protection or safety in time of danger or distress. Back in 1937, the flood waters in Kentucky and other states forced many thousands to flee from their inundated homes to other parts of the country for safety. These people were called refugees. Whole cities like Paducah had to be evacuated and smaller towns like Benton and Mayfield had to house these refugees in schoolhouses, church buildings and private homes. There have been many displaced persons in the history of the world--people who had to flee from home and country to escape the wrath of wild men like Hitler.

Now the Bible is our authority for saying that a great peril is confronting this world of mankind. God the Creator and Judge of all the earth has been insulted and rebelled against by men, and His righteous wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Because of sin and judgment to come, every man in his natural state is in danger--he faces an awful peril--and he needs a place of refuge; a place of safety in the coming day of judgment.

Numerous are the strategies of Satan to ruin men, but I believe his most successful trick is to get men to trust a false refuge. Satan does not object to a man getting religion if he can get him to take the wrong kind. He does not care for the soul becoming sin-

sick if he can prescribe the remedy. He does not object to the sinner becoming frightened if he can designate the refuge. And Satan's refuges are all refuges of lies--they are false plans of salvation.

### **Sinners Often Feel**

#### **The Necessity Of A Refuge.**

This feeling is sometimes:

1. From a sense of guilt. I suppose every man has at one time or another had a feeling that he was a guilty sinner before God. Even the heathen have these workings of conscience--these pangs of guilty fears. And they have their refuge from the danger of approaching judgment.

2. From the tragic events of life. Sudden adversity, like the loss of property, or health, or a loved one sometimes awaken the conscience of men and arouse them to think about a refuge.

3. From the supposed nearness of death. Men who mock at religion in health have been known to quail and tremble at the approach of death. Voltaire trembled in a storm. Nearly all criminals become religious before they go to the chair or scaffold. People turn to preachers when their time comes to die.

4. Under the alarming influences of the preached word. Felix trembled at the preaching of Paul. Many tremble who never trust. Like Felix they put off the matter of a refuge for a more convenient time.

### **Sinners Often Betake**

#### **Themselves To Refuge of Lies.**

There is only one safe refuge. Only one refuge that will be a shelter in the coming storm of judgment. Let us think of some of these refuges of lies:

1. Reformation. Reformation is self-improvement. It is giving up the grosser sins of life, such as drinking, gambling, swearing, etc. These things ought to be given up, but this is not the way of salvation. This would make self the Saviour and give no place for Christ, the real Saviour.

2. The general mercy of God. Under a sense of guilt, men often find relief in the thought that God is merciful--too merciful to punish them in hell. I shudder as I think that for years this was my only refuge. In those days if you had asked me how I expected to escape punishment for my sins, I would have said that God is a merciful God, and that His mercy would take care of me. I did not then see that the channel of mercy is the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is God's mercy-seat. Come to Him.

3. Joining the church. There are others who think the church is a safe refuge. And under a sense of guilt, they will join some church and vainly hope they are safe.

4. The virgin Mary is the refuge of many. From the R.C. Mass Book we read: "We fly to thy patronage, O Holy Mother of God! Despise not our prayers in our necessities, but deliver us from all danger, O every glorious and blessed virgin."

### **The Only Safe Refuge** **Is Jesus Christ.**

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# JOHN ON THE ISLE OF PATMOS

BY: C. D. COLE

*"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," Revelation 1:9.*

Our text is autobiographical--the author is introducing himself. Strange introduction! He says little to satisfy our curiosity. He says nothing about his position or talents or accomplishments as a servant of God. He tells us nothing about his salary or the size of his last church--nothing about the esteem of his brethren--nothing about how many souls he had won to Christ. There is a vast difference between what a man thinks and says about himself when under the power of the spirit and what he says about himself out of the pride of the natural heart. John had no virtues to extol; no victories to recount; and no prominence to proclaim.

1. He tells us he is a Christian, a brother in Christ. How beautifully humble he is in making this assertion. He lays no claim to Lordship or leadership. There is no air of superiority. He is only a brother in Christ. He is now writing what was to be the completion of the Word of God and yet he does not claim to be a poet, prophet, or author, or a bit of genius. He belongs to the brotherhood. He is a part of the kingdom Christ came to establish. He has caught the spirit of truth taught by Christ: *"One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."*

2. He is a companion--a sharer with other saints in their common experiences as followers of Christ. He was sharing in the sufferings of fellow believers. His loyalty to Christ and fidelity to His word had gotten him into trouble. Vital Christianity has had a way of doing that through the centuries. He says, *"I found myself on the island of Patmos, for uttering God's message and testifying to Jesus."*

Brethren, if we are always sailing on smooth seas; if we are never buffeted by the waves of opposition, we might well

examine our chart and compass; we might be headed towards the wrong port. *"Woe be unto you when all men speak well of you."* *"Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom."* Vital Christianity is so much unlike much that goes by the name of Christianity--Christianity in name only--that it is obnoxious to the world. The Christian life is a flower planted in an unfriendly soil, a soil acid with human hatred for God and His truth. I know the Bible pictures the saint as planted by the rivers of waters, but God has caused these streams to run through this barren world where no water is.

Here is an obvious truth or fact: Faithfulness to God and His word does not make one popular in this world--it does not make one popular with church members even. The world, if it has any milk of human kindness, feels sorry for the Christian who takes his giving seriously--the man who tithes and makes offerings is wasting his money in the eyes of the world. And many church members do not even appreciate the liberal givers--they warn against the wrong motive in giving and are quick to charge with Phariseeism.

If anybody who is a member of a church thinks or ever thought that being faithful and liberal will bring him or her any prominence and prestige, he might as well be disillusioned now because he will find it out sometime that faithfulness to God in time and talent and money brings no earthly reward.

## The Nature of John's Trouble.

For preaching the word, he had been arrested, tried and deported to the lonely island of Patmos. This was a penal colony, a kind of concentration camp.

The sea was the barrier that kept prisoners from escaping. When John looked forward to the new heavens and the new earth, he said there would be no more sea. No more wall of separation from those he loved. No more imprisonment with criminal companions. John was shut away from fellowship of the saints--away from the privilege of

preaching to his devoted congregation.

Here was a godly man herded with the ungodly. About him was broken pieces of humanity. The atmosphere in which he moved was tainted with oaths and vileness of the wicked.

Patmos was John's testing ground. Every believer has his Patmos. Life is constantly bringing us to some kind of a Patmos--into circumstances, good or bad, that try our souls. For John, Patmos was a place of physical and mental suffering. For some of us, Patmos may be a sick-bed. For others, it may be a prodigal son or daughter. For some, it may be a question of employment. Some of you right now may be passing through deep waters of affliction--sorrows that you cannot bare to the public gaze. But on the other hand, Patmos may be in the nature of material prosperity. You can be tested by having too much as well as too little. There is a pestilence that walketh in darkness, and there is also destruction that wasteth at noonday. There is the Patmos of affliction and there is also the Patmos of prosperity--the destruction that wasteth at noonday, and this is the more severe trial. The Patmos of prosperity is more deadly than the Patmos of adversity and affliction.

## John's Reaction To His Patmos Experience.

What would have been yours? John's reaction to his troubles is more important than the trial itself. It may be more important to be kept in Patmos than to be kept away from Patmos. It may be more important for Christ to quiet us in the storm than to quiet the storm. We think too much about our trying circumstances and not enough about how to behave under the circumstances. We are apt to think more about a clean community than we are about a clean church. We are prone to think about the sins of our brethren than we are about our own sins. We are apt to fight evil with the law than we are to starve it without giving it our support. We are in danger of bemoaning the wickedness that is so rampant in the world instead of realizing that it

gives us all the better opportunity of witnessing to it of the power of Christ to save.

1. John refused to let Patmos master him. He refused to surrender to Patmos. He would not let Patmos defeat him. There are several ways we may be defeated by our circumstances:

a. We may give way to self-pity. John might have said something like this to himself: "I have tried to live right; I have tried to be true to Christ and His word and this is my reward--this is what it has cost me. I have stood for my Lord--I have not let him down, but it seems He has let me down. Patmos is what He has given me for my faithfulness." For many, the Patmos of pain and affliction becomes a place of self-pity. It is dreadful to be allergic to oneself.

b. The Patmos of prosperity and prominence may lead to self-conceit and self-importance and self-praise. Here is the danger to successful people--people who approximate success in what they undertake. They are apt to take credit to themselves instead of giving God the glory. Here, for instance, is a young fellow named Jack Horner. He is enjoying a delicious piece of pie. It is a plum pie. But little Jack did not grow the plums--he neither planted nor pruned nor cultivated the tree. He did not gather the plums. He did not bake the pie. But when he puts in his thumb and pulls out a plum, he does not say, "What a great cook is mother," or "what a great man is my father," or "how good is God." He says rather, "What a great boy am I." All this in face of the fact that all the contribution he made was to eat the pie.

c. We might give way to discouragement. John might have said, "The church is weak; Rome is strong; my effort is fruitless; my devotion has brought me to this dreadful place; what's the use? Why keep on? Why continue to fling myself against impossibilities." There is danger of the believer who serves in hard places. The pastor might say, "What is the use in my trying to make the church what it ought to be when I have such little help? Why cry over the lost when they are not even disturbed about themselves?" But if difficult days cause some to be discouraged, prosperous days can be no less tragic. If some are discouraged, others grow foolishly optimistic in prosperous

days. They don't feel any need of God's help. They strut and brag as if God had nothing to do with their success. When did David fall? Not during hard days but when he had ease and success. In the day of strength he was made weak.

d. Then there is the danger of becoming sour and embittered while living on Patmos. Our dreams have failed to come true; we have not had the appreciation we felt we deserved. We have not heard the plaudits of men. Many a preacher started out in the ministry with a smile on his face and a spring in his step and joy in his heart, and hope in his soul, but he has had to spend many days on Patmos and this gloomy place has taken the smile from his face, the joy from his heart; it has taken the spring out of his step and hope from his soul.

e. But if some have become soured and embittered, others have become hard and arrogant by what they have thought was great success. Men of this type have no patience with those who have not had the measure of success they feel they have had. They take credit for themselves and blame the lowly brother who never hears the praises of men. These brethren of great success are like a rock, but they are not like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. They look down on their brothers--they are not like John--companions of the defeated. These successful brethren have arrived; they sit on a self-built pedestal to be looked at and admired and praised. But their hearts are dry and little--they have lost compassion for the poor and lowly and defeated.

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*"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,"* Acts 4:12. *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,"* I Timothy 2:5. *"For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by*

*the sacrifice of himself,"* Hebrews 9:26. *"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,"* Hebrews 1:3.

### The Hail of Judgment Shall Sweep Away The Refuge of Lies.

The day of judgment will test all the refuges. One religion is as good as another until the day of judgment comes. Psychiatrists are recommending religion--just any religion--to their patients as a cure for mental and physical disorders. And most any religion will help so far as the ills of this life are concerned. But when the day of judgment comes--when the wrath of God is poured out there is only on Ark that will come through--the Ark of Christ. Those in Him will be safe; others will be lost.

Let us look a moment at this idea that one religion is as good as another if one is sincere. Now I cannot judge as to the sincerity of any man in his religion. I cannot judge motives. So far as I know every communist is sincere in his religion that there is no God. So far as I can judge the heathen are as sincere in their worship of idols as I am in worship of the true and living God. Sincerity is no substitute for the truth. Isaiah describes the worship of the idolater. He holds his idol in his right hand and does not know that he is holding a lie--trusting something that cannot save him. He is sincere but ignorant.

Was Paul's religion before he trusted Christ as good as after his faith in Christ? He was just as sincere before as he was after. He was just as sincere when he rejected Christ and persecuted His people as when he trusted Him and gave his life in service for Him. Paul's old religion as a Pharisee was better for him so far as the comforts of this life were concerned. Before his faith in Christ, Paul was popular with his own people, but after trusting Christ to be his Saviour, he suffered many things, and his life of suffering ended in death as a criminal under the law of Moses and Caesar.

The only safe refuge is saving faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. All the ele-

ments in saving faith may be brought out by the use of an old illustration. The thoughts, feelings, and actions of a person who stands by a boat upon a small island which is threatened by rising waters, will represent the whole of saving faith. The person first regards the boat from a purely intellectual point of view. He believes the boat actually exists, just as the sinner believes there is a God and that there is a Saviour. As the stream rises and swells, the man will look at the boat with some sense of emotion and feeling of interest. And so the sinner under conviction of sin has a feeling of concern for his safety. When the man sees the rushing tide is about to sweep him in to the raging waters, he gets into the boat as the only way of escape. Getting into the boat is what actually saves him, and he cannot be said to have trusted the boat until he gets into it. And so the sinner may believe that Christ is the Saviour, but he is not saved until he gets into Him by faith--not saved until he relies upon Him for salvation. The very essence of faith is reliance or trust. Every believer gladly confesses: "I broke God's law, Christ came between, I'm depending on Him to save."

My dear reader, if you are lost, let me urge you to acknowledge before God and men that you have no righteousness of your own, and then trust Jesus Christ for the righteousness He has provided by His obedience unto death--even the death of the cross. Then you can say with Isaiah, *"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation: He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,"* Isaiah 61:10.