



# GOD IS MY REFUGE

CRAFTON LEWIS

All scriptures are taken from the NKJV.

A refuge is a place that provides shelter or protection.

As a child, I can remember there was a place that was called "House of Refuge." If my memory serves me right, that place was specifically for the poor who had no help and were unable to care for themselves. They found refuge when all else seemed to fail them.

I believe we are living in what I would call, uncertain, momentous and exciting times. For many, it's fearful and depressing. In times like these, we should, more than ever before, realize our own insufficiency and pray like the apostles prayed, "Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

It is very easy to focus on what we hear and what the eyes see. Of all people, as followers of Jesus Christ, we cannot lay hold on the natural, and base the end result in the realm of the natural. We have been made a new creation. We have been born again by the Spirit of God, thus, it behooves us to "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:2-3).

Deuteronomy 33:27, "The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the

enemy from before you, and will say, 'Destroy!'" Yes, the eternal God provides shelter and protection.

The many things David realized, after God delivered him from his enemies and from the hands of Saul, are stated in 2 Samuel 22:3, "The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my Savior, you save me from violence."

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed. A refuge in times of trouble" (Psalm 9:9). Oppression is very much part of the lives of many. What is sad is when they look to every other source for help and not finding the expected help, they slip into a state of depression. Some even end up with a nervous breakdown. Let us remember and believe what God's Word says to us. "He is a refuge for the oppressed. A refuge in times of trouble." Psalm 59:16 says, "But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble."

Psalm 46:1-7 says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah." Verse 4: "There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of

*God, the holy place of the Tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.” Verse 7: “The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”* We are looking at calamity after calamity. Our unfailing and faithful God has not turned His back nor has He gone to sleep. He is our refuge! Hallelujah! Psalm 57:1 says, *“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul trusts in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge, until these calamities have passed by.”*

### Cities Of Refuge

God overlooks nothing but puts in place whatever is needed, even for the future. I’d like to reference Numbers 35. I hope you will take the time to read what directives God gave to Moses for the children of Israel regarding the cities of refuge. It is noteworthy that none of the cities of refuge were placed among the tribes but instead, were among the lands that were given to the Levites. The cities of refuge were set up so that anyone who accidentally injured, or killed someone, could flee to a city of refuge where the matter would be judged by the congregation (Numbers 35:11-12).

God, once again, shows His impartiality by being mindful that not only the children of Israel would have a place of refuge, but also the stranger and the sojourner among them (Numbers 35:15). Much can be said, but suffice it to say that there is refuge for the whosoever and for whatsoever. God has made provision for all. He truly is the refuge we all need. In times of danger, especially when disaster strikes, our thoughts and hopes are that we would find shelter where we can take refuge; that’s normal. Let us not forget, that there is also the spiritual side to this. We need to be sheltered. We need to take refuge in God. He is our hiding place. The Psalmist says in Psalm 62:7-8, *“In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah.”*

The call for deliverance from wicked men was the cry from the Psalmist in Psalm 71:3, *“Be my strong refuge, to which I may resort continually.”* God, having answered his prayer

for deliverance, seemingly, it was surprising to many, as borne out in Verse 7, *“I have become as a wonder to many, but you are my strong refuge.”* Please look up the following passages of scripture: Psalm 91:2,4, 9-10; Proverbs 14:26; Isaiah 4:6; Isaiah 25:4.

In Psalm 142:3-5, David prays while in the cave wanting relief from his persecutors, *“When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then you knew my path. In the way in which I walk they have secretly set a snare for me. Look on my right hand and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me; Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul (The arm of flesh cannot be depended upon). I cried out to You, O Lord: I said, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.’”*

Making the wrong choice can be detrimental: Isaiah 28:15,17, *“Because you have said, ‘We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we are in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hidden ourselves.’ ‘Also I will make justice the measuring line, and righteousness the plummet; the hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow the hiding place” (Verse 17). Jeremiah 16:19 says, “O Lord, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of the earth and say, ‘Surely our fathers have inherited lies, worthlessness and unprofitable things.’”* There is a false refuge, but there is also refuge that is true, safe, profitable and secure; this we have in Jesus Christ.

Abraham received God’s promise in Hebrews 6:17-20, *“Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, V18, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”*

Our refuge is assured in Jesus Christ. We are hidden with Christ in God. ✚



# ACCOUNTABLE

## MARKUS HANSEN

During a recent Sunday worship service, all the songs and prophecies centered around allowing the Holy Spirit the freedom to minister through us to one another. As the Lord spoke to us through prophecy, the 14th to 16th chapters of the gospel of John came to mind. With this as the background, let's look at the tenor or implication of what is recorded in these scriptures as it relates to us and this present move of the Holy Spirit.

During the remaining hours before Christ's crucifixion, Jesus spent time with His inner circle of disciples in intimate fellowship. Much to their dismay, Jesus said that He was going to leave them to be reunited with His heavenly Father. In return, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to abide within them. Different Bible translations use various words to describe the Holy Spirit. You may be familiar with the King James version as 'Comforter,' however, for this article, we will use the word "Helper" as used in the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible.

In John 14:16, the word 'Holy Spirit' or 'Helper' is transcribed from the original Greek word *parakletos* which means 'one who stands beside whom you can call upon for help.' As Jesus spoke about the Helper, He assured His disciples that the Holy Spirit, the Helper, would abide with them forever.

As Jesus addressed the disciples throughout John 14, 15, and 16, He described the character or nature of the Helper and what He would do for them and through them using words and phrases such as, *"the Spirit of Truth"* (John 14:17); *"teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you"* (John 14:26); *"testify of Me"* (John 15:26); *"convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (John 16:8-11); *"guide you into all truth....will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come"* (John 16:13); *"will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you"* (John 16:14).

After reading about the character, nature, and abilities of the Helper, the question that comes to mind is; how are these traits manifested, revealed, or demonstrated in the church and in the world we live in? Remember that the person of the Helper is a Spirit. He is part of the Godhead; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. As such we cannot see Him with our physical eyes, or touch Him with our hands. However, He is a person, who, when we are saved, the Holy Spirit of God comes to reside in us. This must mean that God's intention is that when the Helper takes up residence in us, God wants to reveal, or make known, the character and nature of the Helper through you and me. How does this happen? Consider what is written in Ephesians 4:7-8, *"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men'"* (NKJV).

It is through the implementation of spiritual gifts that have

been imparted to us by prophecy and the laying on of the hands of a presbytery that we are to manifest the character and nature of the Holy Spirit, the Helper. In other words, God wants you and me to testify to the truth; to show by our actions, righteous living (moral and ethical living according to God's standards), testifying of Jesus, glorifying Jesus, teaching others what we have learned about God and His Son, Jesus, and living a virtuous, holy life such that when we are in the presence of unbelievers they are convicted of sin, etc.

In Matthew 25, Jesus taught two parables. Parables are parallel stories, one with an underlying meaning, a story within a story. The parables that Jesus told always contained deep spiritual implications. The second parable in this chapter is "The Parable of the Talents," also found in Luke 19:11-27. On the surface, this parable describes a wealthy estate owner who decides to go to a faraway land. Before leaving he selects three trusted, capable servants to carry on with the management of his estate. He also gives them a sum of money to invest. When the estate owner returns he asks the three servants to account for the money he gave them to invest. One received five talents, and it returned another five. The second, two talents, and it returned two more. The third servant took the one talent given to him and wrapped it in a napkin and hid it so there was no increase. The estate owner was furious and threw him out of the estate and delivered him to be punished for his unfaithfulness. Then his one talent was given to the one who had ten talents.

The underlying spiritual story in this parable is that God is the estate owner, and His estate is the kingdom of God. God gives every believer spiritual gifts and ministries to exercise for the edification of the body of Christ. He also gives natural abilities which, when sanctified by the Holy Spirit, are to be used to glorify God. Our faithfulness to exercise these gifts and abilities will prove our worthiness to participate in kingdom administration. The word talent has two meanings; an ancient Asian unit of currency or a natural aptitude or skill. By natural birth, you are gifted by God with certain natural talents or the ability to do certain things well. However, as we read in Ephesians 4:7-8, when Jesus ascended on high to be with His Father He gave gifts unto men and women.

Now here is the important point. God has given us both natural and spiritual gifts along with the ability to employ those gifts. Upon Jesus' return to this earth, we will be accountable to Him for what we have done with the gifts we have received. This is a very sobering thought and a warning that we need to consider. We should take the receiving of our spiritual gifts very seriously. For a moment put yourself in the shoes of one of the three servants that were left to care for the estate. Who will you be like, the one given five gifts, two gifts, or one gift? Now, be honest and ask yourself the question, "What have I done with the spiritual gifts that were prophesied over me when the brethren laid hands and prayed over me?"

Some may say, “Oh, I have so little to give, it is not worth giving” or “I’m not capable” or “Let others do it, I am too shy” or “Right now I am too busy trying to make a living and raising a family to be of any help” or, or, or...

Think about it for a moment. It is God, the Creator of the whole universe, the One who created us in the palm of His hand who gives us the ability to function in the gifts He has given us. Given that He is God Almighty, is He not able to help us to employ our gifts, both natural and spiritual, little or small as it seems to us? The reason why God puts the Holy Spirit in us is so He can help us employ our God-given gifts. Paul wrote, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13, NKJV). Peter wrote *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the **ability** which God supplies”* (1 Peter 4:11, NKJV). Jesus said, *“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more”* (Luke 12:48, NKJV). Considering how much God has revealed to us in this move of the Holy Spirit and the gifts He has given us, isn’t it much in comparison to what the world knows and understands? Therefore, let us be faithful and take heed for, *“it is required in stewards that one be found faithful”* (1 Corinthians 4:2, NKJV).

We must be reminded of the outcome of the servant who was given one talent (or one spiritual gift) who did not use it as the estate owner intended. Because of his unfaithfulness, the gift was taken away, and he was banished from the estate and punished. From a spiritual aspect, he was eliminated from receiving his inheritance in God’s kingdom. He forfeited his right to rule and reign with Christ when Jesus comes to establish His kingdom on this earth. It is unbearable to think that if we, after many years of believing in Christ, will be barred from entering the door into His kingdom because we failed to use the spiritual gifts God has given. It would be like the five foolish virgins Jesus spoke of in the first parable in Matthew 25. The foolish virgins didn’t have enough oil in their lamps (they were not prepared) and left the pre-wedding ceremony to buy more oil. When they returned they were refused entry to the ceremony and cried out “let us in” and the Lord said, *“I do not know you. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming”* (Matthew 25:12-13, NKJV). It is very difficult to comprehend how devastating it would be to hear the words, *“I do not know you.”*

When Jesus comes to claim His rightful place in the kingdom of God we want to hear our Saviour say, *“Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.” And the second came, saying, ‘Master, your mina has earned five minas. Likewise he said to him, ‘You also be over five cities’”* (Luke 19:17-18, NKJV).

In the days and hours that lie ahead, let us commit to setting time aside to read God’s Word, seek His face and speak in the heavenly language so that we can be ready, willing, and able to employ the gifts God has given us, both in our family, in our neighbourhood and in our local church. Saints of the Most High, we are in a battle; we are at war with the enemy of God. This is a crucial time of warfare. So let us be found faithful in employing our gifts so we don’t become disinherited when Jesus returns.

*“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful”* (Revelation 17:14, NKJV). ✚

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