

A People of Refuge
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Introduction: We need to be a shelter for people in this life.

- A. The local church will never function as it should until we really get to know each other and love each other in spite of that knowledge!
 - 1. When we have the love of Christ we will manifest that patient love that sees both the weakness and the good in another.
 - 2. We need each other to help us overcome sin! (**Jas 5:16**)
 - 3. Without a close relationship it is rare to see this practiced.
- B. Each of us needs someone spiritual to confide in, lean upon, and to trust when you are simply being yourself.
 - 1. It is these people who we will turn to during times of stress and anxiety.
 - 2. Do you have those who will lift you up? (**Heb 12:12-13**)
 - 3. Are you such a person another can turn to?
 - 4. Ultimately we will point to God, the only certain refuge for our lives.

I. Will a child of God have need of refuge?

- A. What is a refuge? King David knew this need well! (**Psalms 31:1 NASB**)
"In Thee, O LORD, I have taken refuge; Let me never be ashamed; In Thy righteousness deliver me."
 - 1. Here David needed a high place of shelter, a place for a fugitive needing somewhere to hide and gain strength.
 - 2. Even though alone, David knew the Lord who would always provide for him.
- B. Why do we need a refuge? (**Psa 31:9-13**)
 - 1. Because trouble will in time come upon all of us.
 - 2. We may look good on the outside, but there are likely those here today dealing with terrible stresses and trouble.
 - 3. There are times we have adversaries, like David did. How many have trusted someone only to have them turn on you and do much harm?
 - 4. David experienced the shunning of those who saw him in need! It is sad fact but true, that when we are hurt and in need is the time people are most likely to turn away from us.
 - 5. Have you ever felt like a broken vessel that has no use? This one needs refuge!
- C. Consider how God provided for David. (**Psa 31:19-24**)
 - 1. God keeps secrets and also keeps us away from the slanderous tongues.
 - 2. In a time of trouble we do not necessarily want agreement as much as we need an arm around us in comfort and support. Our God will always tell us the truth but also provide a rest in repentance and righteousness!
 - 3. Even when David doubted God, He was faithful and delivered him.

II. God expected His people to provide a refuge in the Old Testament

- A. God made provision for cities of refuge for those who killed another unintentionally.
 - 1. This was the action of a merciful God. (**Josh 20:1-2**)
 - 2. There were three cities in the east and three cities in the west. (**Num 35:6-7,9-14**)
- B. These cities were for people in real trouble! (**Josh 20:3**)

1. Could you imagine having an "avenger of blood" coming after you?
2. These cities were not obscure, hard to get to. No they were well marked.
- C. There was a righteous procedure for entering these cities. **(Josh 20:4)**
 1. They declared their case to the elders of that city. Refuge was only to be provided for certain people!
 2. Could you imagine the relief of finally having mature men listen to your story?
 3. How many have been falsely accused only to face emotional people who will not listen? We must display this basic sense of fairness! **(Acts 25:16)**
- D. This one now has the protection from the avenger. **(Josh 20:5-6)**
 1. The protection only applies to those within this walled city.
 2. The entire "congregation" would be involved in this process.
 3. Now his cause is clearly known. God's mercy has provided justice and protection.

III. How we can provide refuge today

- A. We need spiritual men who can act wisely. **(Gal 6:1-2)**
 1. There are many who need gentleness yet firmness.
 2. There are others who need sharp rebuke! True love and wisdom can discern. **(Tit 1:12-14)**
- B. We must be willing. **(Jas 2:15-16)**
 1. Often this may involve standing up to another who is acting unrighteously.
 2. Too often it is easier to whisper in the background but in the end have done nothing.
- C. We must act with loving compassion. **(1 Jn 3:16-18)**
 1. This required time and energy. Most of all it involves an opening of our hearts.
 2. In our busy times with all the stress surrounding us, we may flee from opening our hearts to additional "burdens."

"I am sorry for the man who can't feel the whip when it is laid on the other man's back." -- Abraham Lincoln

3. It is important that we act in love and not in bitterness. We need to help the other one put away their bitterness and not irrigate it. **(Heb 12:15)**
4. Please do not make the mistake of just saying: "If you need me, call me." The truth is that most people will think: "I need you, but I am not going to call!" We need to be more open to the needs of others!
- D. We must be more involved with others before they reach their time of crisis. **(1 Cor 12:23-27)**
 1. What are you doing to know those in this church better?
 2. Some are satisfied with family and a few friends and thus hardly talk to others.
 3. It is difficult to see others do little things such as coming to social gatherings in open homes, make calls when sick and many such things.
 4. Do we put a "no-trespassing" sign around our necks or an "open house" sign?

Conclusion: There will come a time where you will be in need of refuge.

- A. Let us learn to provide refuge for others now! In time this will provide refuge for us.
- B. Are you in need of refuge from the world? Are you pursued by enemies and most of all you own sin? God has a place of rest for you. **(Mt 11:29-30)**