

Refuges of Lies

by R.A. Torrey

The sermon emphasizes the importance of identifying and rejecting false refuges, such as trusting in one's own morality, other people's badness, universalism, or infidelity, and instead finding a true refuge in Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 28:16-17, Matthew 7:22, Romans 3:20, Galatians 3:10

Topics: "Faith in Christ", "True Refuge"

Description

R.A. Torrey emphasizes the necessity of finding a true refuge in Christ rather than relying on false refuges, which he refers to as 'refuges of lies.' He outlines four tests to discern a true refuge: it must meet the demands of one's conscience, improve one's character, withstand the dying hour, and endure the judgment day. Torrey warns against common false refuges such as morality, the badness of others, universalism, infidelity, and mere religion, all of which ultimately fail to provide true security. He concludes by affirming that only faith in Jesus Christ can provide the peace and assurance needed in life and death.

Transcript

"The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies" -- Isaiah xxviii. 17.

We have seen in a former address that every man needs a refuge from four things—from the accusations of his own conscience, from the power of sin within, from the power of Satan, and from the wrath to come. Almost every man has a refuge, that is, he has something in which he has put his trust to comfort him. The difficulty with most men is not so much that they have not a refuge, as that they have a false refuge, a refuge that will fail them in the hour of crisis and need; what our text characterizes as a "refuge of lies." It was just so in Isaiah's time; the men of Israel knew there was a coming day of judgment, and that they needed a hiding place from that coming judgment of God, and they made lies their refuge, and Isaiah -God's messenger- proclaimed, "the hail shall sweep away your false refuge, the refuge of lies," and I come to you with the same message, you men and women that have a refuge, but a false one. "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies."

1. HOW TO DETECT A REFUGE OF LIES.

Is there any way in which we can tell a true refuge from a false one, a refuge that will stand the test of the coming day of God from a refuge that the hail shall sweep away? There are four tests that will commend themselves to the reason and common-sense of every intelligent and candid man here to-night, whereby he tell a true refuge from a false one, a refuge that will save from a refuge that will ruin; a refuge of truth

from a refuge of lies. The first test is this:-

1. A true Refuge is one that meets the highest Demands of your own Conscience. - If that in which you are trusting does not meet the highest demands of your own conscience, it certainly is not a hiding place from accusations of conscience. Furthermore, it is not a hiding-place from the wrath of God, for if our own hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.

2. The second test is this: Every true refuge is one, trust in which is making you a better man or woman today. - IF you are trusting in something which is not making you a better man or woman to-day, it is not a hiding-place from the power of sin within, it is not a hiding-place from the power of Satan, it is not a hiding-place from the wrath to come; for a refuge that does not save you from the power of sin here on earth, very certainly will never save you from the consequences of sin hereafter.

3. In the third place: A true Refuge is one that will stand the test of the Dying Hour. - If you are trusting in something that simply brings you comfort when you are well and strong, but will fail you in that great hour that we have all got to face, when we lie face to face with death and eternity, it is absolutely worthless.

4. In the fourth place: A true Refuge is one that will stand the Test of the Judgment Day. - If you are trusting in something that will not stand the test of that great Judgment Day, when we have to pass up before the judgment bar of God to give an account of the deeds done in the body, it is absolutely worth-less. There are men here in London indicted for murders and about to be tried. Now suppose you went down to see one of these men, and you found him in a very peaceful frame of mind, without a fear, and you said to him, "Well, you seem very cheerful for a man charged with murder." "Oh, yes," he said, "I am; I have no anxiety whatever about that trial." And you say, "What, no anxiety about it?" "No, nods whatever." he replies. "Why not?" you say. "Because," says he, "I have an answer to make." "Well, is your answer one that will satisfy the judge and jury?" you ask. "No," he replies, "I do not think it will satisfy the judge and jury, but it satisfies me." "Why," you would say, "what good is it if your answer satisfies you, if it will not satisfy the judge and jury before whom the case is to be tried." The question is not whether your hope satisfies you; will it satisfy God? I might add a fifth test: will it stand the test of the Word of God?

Here then are the four tests:

first, Is it meeting the highest demands of your own conscience?

second, Is it making you a better man or woman?

third, Will it stand the test of the dying hour?

fourth, Will it stand the test of the judgment day?

2. REFUGES OF LIES EXAMINED AND EXPOSED.

Now we are going to apply these four tests to the things in which men are trusting.

1. The first is their own morality. How many men in London there are, who, if you go up and speak with them and ask them to come to Christ, say, "No, I will not come; I do not need Him." You ask, "My not?" And they reply, "Because I am a good man; my life and character are such that I do not feel the need of a Saviour and I am trusting in my life and character to gain acceptance before God." Let us apply the tests. You are trusting in your own goodness. Does your own goodness meet the highest demands of your own

conscience? is there a man here to-night that will say, "My life and character are such that they meet the highest demands of my own conscience"? Is there a man out of Christ here to-night who will say that? I have never met but two men who have said it. You will say, "They must have been remarkably good men." No, they had remarkably poor consciences. The first one was a man I once met while crossing the Atlantic Ocean. I approached him on the subject of becoming a Christian. He said, "I do not need any Saviour." I said, "Do you mean to me your life has been such, and your character from childhood up to this moment, as to satisfy the highest demands of your own conscience?" He said, "Yes, they have." But so far from being an exceptionally good man, he was the most unpopular man on the boat before we reached New York City.

Second. Is trust in your goodness making you a better man? As you go on from month to month and from year to year, do you find that you are growing more kind, more gentle, more self-sacrificing, more thoughtful of others, more considerate, more tender, more humble, more prayerful? Now I have known a great many men who trusted in their own goodness but I have yet to meet the first one who, while trusting to his own goodness, grew better. As far as my experience goes, these men grow hard, grow censorious, grow harsh, grow selfish, grow more and more inconsiderate of others, grow more proud, and more bitter.

Third: Will it stand the test of the dying hour? Oh, how many a man has gone through life boasting of his morality, and trusting in his morality to save him in the life to come; but when that dread hour comes, when he lies upon his dying bed face to face with God and eternity, all his trust in his morality leaves him, in the illumination that comes to the soul as eternity draws nigh. I remember a man in one of my pastorates who was very, very self-confident. He had no use for the church, no use for the Bible, no use for Jesus Christ He was very well satisfied that he was about the most exemplary man there was in the community, and he needed no Saviour. But the time came when there was a cancer eating into that man's brain. It was eating through the skin, eating through the flesh, it was eating into the skull, and eating so far into the skull that there was only a thin film left, and you could see the throbbing of the brain underneath. And when that man saw that he had but a few days, and possibly but a few hours, to live, his trust in his morality fled, and he said, "I wish you would go and call Mr. Torrey to come here and see me." I came to the bedside, and as he lay there in agony he said to me, "Tell me what to do to be saved?" I sat down by that bed, and tried to show him from the Word of God what he must do to be saved. And as night came on I said to his family, "Do not sit up through the long hours of the night; I will up stay up with him, and perform all that is necessary." And all sat through the hours of the night I sat beside that dying man's bed. Sometimes I had to go out of the room to get something for him, and whenever I came back there was always one groan from the bed over in the corner. It was this: "Oh, I wish I was a Christian! I wish I was a Christian! I wish I was a Christian!" And so he died. His morality did not stand the test of the dying hour.

Will it stand the test of the Judgment Day, when you stand face to face with an infinitely holy God who knows you through and through? Will you look up into His face and say, "O God, I stand here on my merits, on my character and life! Thou knowest my life; Thou knowest me through and through; Thou knowest my every secret thought and act; Thou knowest my life is pure, and I stand here before an infinitely holy God, and am proud of my morality."

Will it stand the test of God! God's word? Turn to Romans iii. 20: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Turn to Galatians iii. 10: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things are written in the Book of the Law to do them.

2. There is a second refuge of lies, and that is, trust in other people's badness. Some men trust in their own goodness; other men trust in other folk's badness. You go to them and talk about Christ, and they say, "Well, I am just as good as other folks. I am just as good as a lot of your professing Christians." Oh, I know so many hypocrites in the church. Instead of making their boast of, and putting their trust in, their own goodness, they make a boast of, and put their trust in, other people's badness. Let us apply the tests. Does that mean the highest demands of your conscience? When your conscience comes to you with its lofty demands, does it satisfy your conscience to say, "Well, I am just as good as a great many professing Christians"? If it does, you have a conscience of a very low order. Is trust in other people's badness making you a better man? Now, I have known a good many people, just as you have known them, who were all the time talking about the badness of other people. I have yet to meet the first one that grew better by the process. Show me the man or woman that is all the time dwelling upon the badness of other people, and I will show you a man or woman that is bad them-selves, every time. Show me the man that is always talking about another man's adultery, and you show me a man that is an adulterer himself. Show me the woman that is always having a suspicion about other women, and I will show you a woman you cannot trust. Show me a man that says; every other man is dishonest, and I will show you a man who is a knave himself. I once had a Bible-class, and in that class there was a woman who was in business, one of those women who was always talking about the faults of others; and one day this woman propounded this question to me; she said: "Mr. Torrey, is it not true that every person in business is dishonest?"

I looked at her and said, "When any person in business comes to me and asks if every one in business is not dishonest, they convict at least one person." She was angry, but I was only telling her the truth. Show me the man or woman who is always dwelling upon the faults of Christians, or the faults of anybody else, and I will show you a man or woman that is rotten to the core"- I made that remark in my church when I was pastor in an American city, and at the close of the meeting a lady came and said to me, "I do not like what you said; you said, "If you show me any man or woman that is always talking about the faults of others, you would show me some one that was bad." "Yes," I said, "and I mean it." "Well, there is Miss So-and-so. Now, you must admit that she is always talking about the faults of others." I had to admit that this was a well known fact. "You do not mean to say that she is bad herself?" I did not answer, for I did not care to be personal; but if I had told her all the truth, I would have told her that that very week I had forbidden that very woman to sing in the choir any more because of certain revelations of her character which had been made to me, and to which she had confessed.

Will it stand the test of the dying hour? When you come to lie on your dying bed, will it give all the comfort you need to be thinking about the faults of others?

This very woman who accused every person in of being dishonest, who was always dwelling the faults of others-the time came for her to die; and as she lay dying, the doctor came in and said: "Mrs. So-and-so, it is my duty to tell you that you must die.:" The woman shrieked, "I cannot die; I won't die; I am not ready to die"; but she did die.

Will it stand the test of the Judgment Day? When you go into the presence of God to answer to Him, will you look up into His face with the same confidence as you look up into mine, and say, "O God, I do not pretend to have been very good, but I was just as good as a great many in the churches"? Will you do it, man? Will you do it, woman? Ah, the blessed Book tells you, in Romans xiv. 12: "So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." Not an account of somebody else. In the judgment day you will forget everybody but yourself. In that judgment day all other sin will vanish but your sin.

3. The third refuge of lies is Universalism. There are a great many men in every city, who, if you approach them on the subject of becoming Christians and giving up sin, say, "Oh, no, I will not do that; I believe in a God of Love; I believe God is too good to damn any-body. A man does not need to forsake sin in order to take Christ. God is good, and there is not any hell. Do you mean to tell me God would permit a hell; that a good God would damn any one? No, I do not need to forsake sin. I am trusting in the goodness of God, and I believe all men will at some time or other be saved" Now, let us just try this. Does that meet the highest demands of conscience? When your conscience comes to you and points out your sin and demands your renunciation, does it satisfy your conscience to say, "Yes, I am doing wrong, but God is so good I can just as well go on sinning, I can just as well go on trampling God's laws underfoot. He is so good He will not punish me. He gave His Son to die for me; I can go on sinning as I please"? Does that satisfy your conscience? Well, then, you have a mighty mean conscience. What would you think of a boy and girl, brother and sister, whose mother lies sick in the house. The boy was sick a little time before, and the mother had watched over him so faithfully and tenderly that she had caught his sickness; she had brought him back to health, but she was lying very sick and almost at the point of death. She had told the children that they could go out into the garden, and said, "There are some flowers out there about which I am very careful. I do not want you to pick them." So Johnny and Mary go out, and Johnny goes to work to do just what he was asked not to do. His sister expostulates, and says, "Johnny, did you not hear mother tell us not to pick those flowers, that they were very precious and that she did not want them picked?" "Oh, yes," says Johnny.

"Then why pick them?" asks the sister. "Because," says Johnny, "she loves me so, Mary. Don't you know how she loves me, how when I was sick mother gave up sleep and everything, and watched over me through the nights? Don't you know that she is sick there now because she loves me so? And so I am now going to do the very thing she told me not to do." What would you think of a boy like that, and what do you think of the man or woman that makes their boast of the love of God, and because God loves them, with such a wonderful love, make His love an excuse for sin, make God's love an excuse for rebellion against him, make God's love a reason for a worldly life? I should think you men and women would despise yourselves. Oh, the baseness of it; oh, the contemptible ingratitude of it; oh, the blackheartedness of it, making God's wondrous love, that gave Jesus to die on the Cross of Calvary, an excuse for sinning against Him!

Is your universalism making you a better man or woman? Oh, how many men grow careless, grow worldly, grow sinful, grow indifferent, because somebody has inoculated them with the pernicious error of eternal hope. How many men there are alive now, once earnest in the service of God, who are indifferent about the condition of the lost, the worldly, and the careless, because they have read some books undermining, or trying to undermine, the doctrines of Jesus and the Apostles. With what honeyed words the Professing Church to-day is promulgating the doctrine of eternal hope, which is an infernal lie. Will it stand the test of the dying hour? Oftentimes it does not. Dr. Ichabod Spencer, one of the most able and faithful pastors America ever had, tells how, when pastor of a Presbyterian church in Brooklyn, he was called to see a Young man who was dying- His wife and mother were members of the church, but this young man was not. The doctor went to see him, and tried to lead him to Christ; but he turned and said, "It is no use; I have had many chances, but I have put them all away and I am dying, and shall soon have to go; it is no use talking to me now." And he was in great agony and distress of soul. Then the father came in and heard him talking said groaning, and he said, "My boy, there is no reason for you to take on so. There is no reason for you to feel so bad. You have not been a bad man; you have nothing to fear." The dying young man turned round and said to his father, "You are to blame for me being here. It I had listened

to mother when she tried to lead me to a good life, instead of listening to you, I should not be in this strait. Mother tried to get me to go to Sunday school and to church, but you said God was so good it did not matter; and when mother tried to take me to church you took me fishing and hunting and pleasuring; you told me there was not a hell, and I believed you; you have deceived me up to this moment, father, but you can't deceive me any longer. I am dying and I am going to hell, and my blood is on your soul." Then he turned his face to the wall and died. Men, you turn people into sin by preaching a doctrine that contradicts the teaching of the Son of God. It means that you are deceiving the men you are rocking to sleep in sin, and they will live to curse you some day. And you men who are in health and strength are building upon a false hope. Death will tear away the veil that blinds your eyes to-night.

Will it stand the test of the judgment day? When you go up into the presence of God will you look up, and when He asks about your sin, will you answer, "Yes, Father, I did sin; I did trample Thy laws under foot; I did neglect prayer, neglect the Bible, neglect the house of God, neglect obedience to Thee; I was worldly and careless, but I have a good answer. Father, my answer is this: I knew Thou wert a God of love, and gave thy Son to die for me on the Cross of Calvary, and as I knew Thou wert so loving, I just went on trampling Thy laws under foot"? Will you do that? It won't stand the test.

4. A fourth refuge is infidelity. How many men there are, who, when asked to become Christians, turn and say, "I do not believe that the Bible is the Word of God. That is an old superstition that is worn out. I do not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. In fact, I am not quite sure that there is a God. I am not a Christian, and you can call me what you like. Call me an infidel, an agnostic, what you please; but I do not need any Christ, and do not believe in Him." He tries to comfort himself with infidelity. Hundreds of thousands are doing this in London tonight. Apply the tests. Does that meet the highest demands of your own conscience? When conscience asserts itself, and comes to you with its majestic demands, does it satisfy your conscience, to say, "I do not believe in the Bible or in Jesus Christ; I do not believe in God"? Is your infidelity making you a better man? I have yet to find the first man or woman made better by infidelity. I have known men to be made adulterers by infidelity; I have known men and women to be made suicides by infidelity; I have known men to be robbed of business integrity by infidelity; I have known men who were made deceivers by infidelity and ran away from their wives and went with other women. I could stand here by the hour and tell you of the characters I have known to be shipwrecked by infidelity. I have yet to find the first man that was made upright or moral or clean by infidelity. I stood up one night in my church in Chicago. The church was full, and a great many infidels were there. I had invited them to be there, as I was talking about "Infidelity: Its Causes, Consequences and Cure." I stopped in my sermon and said, "I want every man in this audience to-night that can honestly testify before God and this audience that has been saved from drunkenness by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to stand up"; and two or three hundred men stood up as having been saved from drunkenness by the Gospel of Christ. I said, "That will do.

Now we are going to be fair and give the other side a chance, and I want to ask any infidel in this audience to-night that has been saved from drunkenness by infidelity in any form to stand up." I looked round; at first I thought there wasn't any one standing up. At last, away under the gallery, I saw one, a very ragged looking sort of a Senegambian, and he was drunk at the time; that is an actual fact. Thank God, he went down into the inquiry-room afterwards, and thought it over. Men and women, infidelity undermines character, infidelity robs men and women of purity, infidelity makes your clerks and cashiers unsafe. You know it.

Will your infidelity stand the test of the dying hour? A great deal of infidelity does not. A friend of mine who took part in the American Civil War, and fought for the North, told me a story about a man in his regiment

who had been boasting in camp of his unbelief. On the second day of the battle of Pittsburg Landing this man said to his comrades of his company, while waiting for the word of command to go forward, "I fear I am going to be shot this day; I have an awful feeling." "Oh, that's nonsense," they said, "it's just a premonition, a superstition, and there's nothing in it." Soon the command came, "Forward!" and that company marched up the hill, and just as it went over the crest there was a volley from the enemy's guns. The first one sent a bullet through his chest near his heart, and he fell back, and as they carried him to the rear, he cried, "O God, give me time to repent!" It took only one bullet to take the infidelity out of him. It would take less than that to take the infidelity out of most of you here to-night. Will it stand the test of the judgment day? Will you go up into God's presence, and when asked to answer for your sin, will you say: "Well oh God, Thou knowest I did not quite believe You existed; I did not believe the Bible was Thy Word, and that Jesus Christ was Thy Son. I was an infidel; that is my answer"? Will you do this? I will tell you how to try it.

Go home to-night, and go down on your knees, and look up into God's face, and tell Him you are an infidel, and that you do not believe in Him, or in His Son, or in the Bible, and that you are willing to stand the judgment test. I went down in a meeting like this one night to the last row of seats at the back of the hall, and I said to a man there, "Are you a Christian?" "I should think not," he said; "I am an infidel." I said, "Do you mean to tell me you do not believe Jesus Christ is divine?" He said, "No, I do not." I said, "Just kneel down here and tell God that." He turned pale. And I say to you to-night who profess to be infidels, "Go and tell that to God alone, not when you are trying to brave it out in the presence of others, but alone; meet God alone. Get down before Him, and tell Him what you tell me."

5. There is one more refuge of lies-religion. Religion is a refuge of lies. Religion never saved anybody. You say, "What do you mean?" I mean just what I say-religion never saved anybody. Trust in religion is one thing; trust in the personal Christ is another thing. There is many a man who trusts in his religion and yet he is not saved. You go to men, and they say, "Yes, I am religious; I go to church every Sunday; I read my prayer-book, and say prayers regularly every day; I read my Bible; I have been baptized; I have been confirmed or united to the Church; I have taken the Sacrament regularly, and that is what I am trusting in." Is it?, Then you are lost. Let us apply the tests. Does your religion satisfy the highest demands of your conscience? Does it satisfy your conscience, when it points out your sin, to say, "I go to church; I read the Bible; I have been baptized and confirmed"? Does it really give your conscience peace? Is your religion making you a better man or woman? There is a great deal that is called religion that does not make men and women better.

There is many a man who is very religious, and goes to mass or to church every Sunday in the year; he goes to Confession very frequently, says his prayers regularly, reads his Bible, and partakes of the Communion; he has been baptized, he has been confirmed, and yet he is just as dishonest as any other man in the community. There is many a man who is very religious, and yet oppresses his employees in the matter of wages, or robs his servants in his home. Many a most religious man is a perfect knave. Such religion will not save him, but damn him with a deeper damnation.

Thirdly, will it stand the test of the dying hour? There is a great a great deal of religion that does not. How many people have been very religious, and yet when they come to die they tremble with fear.

Will it stand the test of the judgment day? Jesus Christ says it will not. In Matthew vii. 22, we read: "Many shall say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" -that is, they have been very religious; and Jesus

says, "I will say unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Friends, if you have nothing to trust in but religion you are lost; it is a refuge of lies.

Well, then, is there any refuge? There is. The verse before my text gives it, Isaiah xxviii. 16: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." That foundation stone is Jesus Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus." As I said before, it is one thing to trust in religion, and it is an entirely different thing to trust in Christ. Oh, friends, if your trust is in Christ it will stand the test, it will meet the highest demands of your conscience. When my conscience accuses me of sin, I say-

Jesus paid my debt,

All the debt I owe;

Sin had left a crimson stain,

He washed it white as snow.

"He who had no sin was made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He Himself bore my sin in His own body on the Cross"; and that satisfies the conscience. The blood of Jesus Christ gives the guilty conscience peace. Trust in Jesus Christ makes me a better man. It has completely transformed my life, my outward life and my inward life. It will stand the test of the dying hour. Oh, how often I have gone to the room of the dying man who was trusting in Jesus, and he has looked up into my face with radiant confidence, without a tremor of fear, trusting in Jesus.

I remember one day I was told that one of the former members of my Bible class was dying, and I went to his house. I walked in and he sat there propped up in bed. He was dying very fast. I said, "Mr. Pomeroy, they tell me you probably cannot live through the night." "No" he said; "I suppose this day is my last." I said, "Are you afraid?" He said, with a smile of perfect peace, "Not at all." I said, "Mr. Pomeroy, Are you ready to go?" He said, "I shall be glad to depart, and be with Jesus Christ." When Mr. Moody was facing the other world there was no fear. At six o'clock in the morning his son was by his bedside and heard him whisper, "Earth is receding; Heaven is opening; God is calling." Then later, "Is this death? This is not bad, this is bliss, this is glorious." Still later, some one began to cry to God to raise him from his bed of sickness, and he said, "No, do not ask that. This is my coronation day; I have long been looking forward to it. Don't call me back; God is calling me." Oh, friends, a living faith in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Saviour, will stand the test of the dying hour. It will stand the test of the judgment day. If it is the will of God, I am ready to go and meet Him at the judgment bar to-night, and, when He asks me to answer, I have but one answer, the all-sufficient answer, "Jesus." That will satisfy God.

Throw away your refuges of lies to-night. The hail will soon come and sweep them away; "the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies." Throw them away to-night. Take the only sure and true refuge, Jesus Christ.

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