



JESUS, THE SINNER'S REFUGE

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





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Jesus, The Sinner's Refuge

SERMON REFERENCE: Joshua 20:1-3

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2471

Jesus Christ is the hero of the Bible; every book, every illustration is about Him. If we look closely, we see He stands in the shadows of the Old Testament; when we do, every detail of Scripture is given a new meaning.

In Joshua 20, God instructs Joshua to explain the cities of refuge to His people:

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, that the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood’” (Joshua 20:2-3).

These six cities of refuge are highly symbolic and teach us more about Jesus, the Sinner's Refuge.

Hebrews 6:18 says, “...we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us...”

There is great significance in the names of these six cities, which reflect Jesus Christ.

- Kedesh means a place of holiness. Above all things, Jesus Christ is holy.
- Shechem means shoulder or support. We are carried on the shoulders of our Savior, who gives us strength.
- Hebron means fellowship; it speaks of Christ, our satisfaction, and the divine joy of fellowship with Him.
- Bezer means stronghold or fortification; Christ is our security, the One who keeps us.
- Ramoth means exalted; it speaks of Christ our sovereign, the One whom we worship.
- Colan means separate; after Jesus, we are not the same. Through sanctification, we are made new day by day.

God wanted people to have safety and refuge, so He strategically placed the six cities throughout Israel. The roads were clear and level with signage that pointed travelers in the right direction.

Likewise, Jesus has made a way to Himself; our City of Refuge is always near. He is closer than our next breath, for everyone who confesses He is Lord and believes in Him can be saved. (See Romans 10:13.) It is not enough to be near the city of refuge: we must enter in and begin a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Life Application

Adrian Rogers says, “To be almost saved is to be altogether lost.” If you are inside the city of refuge, thank God for Christ our salvation, strength, and satisfaction. If you're not, come in today; receive Jesus Christ. Warn and educate friends and tell them about the city of refuge.



Jesus, the Sinner's Refuge

SERMON REFERENCE: Joshua 20:1-3

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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) All of the Bible is about Jesus.
 - i) Sometimes people will ask, "Have you read the four Gospels?"
 - (1) But there are sixty-six Gospels.
 - (a) They are all about the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b) Jesus is the hero of the Bible; salvation is the theme of the Bible.
 - i) We find Jesus standing somewhere in the shadows in all of the Old Testament, if we study it carefully.
 - ii) God wants us to be saved, and He wants us to love Jesus.
 - (1) So, He has tucked away illustrations, even in the Old Testament.
- c) God instructed Joshua to provide six "cities of refuge".
 - i) Joshua 20:1-3
 - ii) Back in that day, if someone were guilty of manslaughter, then there was a person who was a family member of the dead who was called "the avenger of blood".
 - (1) He had the right and the responsibility to track down the killer and to slay him.
 - (2) The Lord realized how this could be abused and misused.
 - iii) The Lord took six cities and made them cities of refuge.
 - iv) The six cities of refuge are highly symbolic and teach us a wonderful lesson.
- d) In today's message, we will look at these cities of refuge and the wonderful lesson that they teach us.

2) THE SAVING NATURE OF THESE CITIES (JOSHUA 20:1-3)

- a) There were cities into which a person who was fleeing from justice could go and be safe.
- b) These cities refer to the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - i) That is what the writer of Hebrews talked about.
 - (1) Hebrews 6:18
 - (a) It speaks of those who have fled for refuge.
 - (b) This is a reference to the cities of refuge.
- c) They represent Christ, our Savior and Lord, who is our place of refuge.

3) THE SIGNIFICANT NAMES OF THESE CITIES (JOSHUA 20:7-8)

- a) There were six cities of refuge.
 - i) They pictured the Lord Jesus Christ by their very names.
 - ii) Kedesh:
 - (1) Joshua 20:7
 - (2) "Kedesh" means "holiness".
 - (a) It was a place of holiness.
 - (3) For us to be saved, to know salvation, and to have eternal life, we must come to the sinless, stainless, spotless, and holy Son of God and let Him make us holy.



- (a) We can never make ourselves holy.
 - (i) Do not try to get better so you can be saved; et saved so you can be better.
- (4) Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness.
 - (a) Bring your sins, your weaknesses, your failures, and your faults to the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (b) Don't try to clean up without Jesus.
 - (c) He is a sinless Savior.
 - (i) We cannot wash clothes and make them clean by washing them in dirty water.
- (5) There is no one else who can save.
 - (a) Mohammad cannot save.
 - (b) Confucius cannot save.
 - (c) Allah cannot save.
 - (i) Only Jesus saves.
- (6) Kedesh speaks of Christ our Savior.
- iii) Shechem:
 - (1) Joshua 20:7
 - (2) Shechem speaks of Christ our strength.
 - (3) The very name "Shechem" means "shoulder" and "support".
 - (a) Jesus is our support; Jesus is our strength.
 - (4) Jesus is the one who carries us on His shoulders.
 - (a) Isaiah 9:6
 - (b) In the parable of the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd goes out and finds the one lost sheep.
 - (i) "He layeth it on His shoulders and brings it back to the sheepfold."
 - 1. Luke 15:3-5
 - 2. He went back because of Christ our strength.
 - (c) Don't get the idea that we must live the Christian life.
 - (i) The Christian life ought to be lived, but it is Jesus Christ underneath with His strength carrying us on His shoulders.
 - 1. Were it not for the strength of Jesus, we never would make it.
- iv) Hebron:
 - (1) Joshua 20:7
 - (2) The word "Hebron" speaks of fellowship and of Christ our satisfaction.
 - (a) Hebron was a place to which the Bible gave the name "fellowship".
 - (3) Not only are we saved by a holy Savior and not only does He carry us through, but He also brings us together that we might have fellowship with one another and fellowship with Him.
 - (a) 1 John 1:3
 - (4) We come to a holy Savior.
 - (a) He is Christ our Savior.
 - (5) We lay our burdens upon Him.
 - (a) He is Christ our strength.
 - (6) We enjoy Him.
 - (a) He is Christ our satisfaction.
 - (7) What our heart yearns for is fellowship with God and fellowship with one another.



- v) Bezer:
 - (1) Joshua 20:8
 - (2) "Bezer" means "stronghold" and "fortification".
 - (3) When we come to Jesus, the holy Savior saves us. And when He carries us in His arms and we enter into sweet fellowship with Him, then we will learn the security that Jesus alone can give.
 - (4) Jesus Christ is our security.
 - (a) We don't keep Him; He keeps us.
 - (b) If it depended upon us living the Christian life, then we never would live it.
 - (5) Give your heart to Jesus Christ today, if you have not already done so.
 - (a) He will be your strength and your fortification.
 - (i) Proverbs 18:10
 - (6) If you sincerely trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, then not only will He save you, but He will also keep you all the way.
 - (a) We have a high priest who is able to save us to the uttermost.
 - (i) This means that He will save us all the way through.
 - 1. He will keep you.
 - 2. He will save you instantaneously.
 - 3. He will be with you continually.
 - 4. He will keep you eternally.
 - (7) "Bezer" speaks of Christ our security.
- vi) Ramoth:
 - (1) Joshua 20:8
 - (2) The Bible word for "Ramoth" means "exalted".
 - (3) It speaks of Christ our sovereign.
 - (a) He is the one high and lifted up.
 - (i) Isaiah 6:1
 - (b) Acts 2:33
 - (i) He is exalted by the right hand of God.
 - (c) Philippians 2:9
 - (4) The glory is that we are seated in the heavenlies with Him.
 - (a) He is exalted.
 - (b) He died for us.
 - (c) He rose for us.
 - (d) He ascended for us.
 - (i) And we are co-enthroned with the Lord Jesus Christ on high.
 - (5) Many Christians have never realized the privilege that they have:
 - (a) Being saved by His holiness.
 - (b) Carried by His strength.
 - (c) Sweet fellowship with Him.
 - (d) Secure in Him.
 - (e) Worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.
- vii) Golan:



- (1) Joshua 20:8
- (2) Golan speaks of separation.
 - (a) It speaks of Christ our sanctification.
 - (b) The word "Golan" means "separate."
- (3) When Jesus saves us, we do not remain the same.
 - (a) 2 Corinthians 5:17
- (4) Sanctification literally means "to be sanctified" or "to be separated".
- (5) Golan means "separated unto joy".
- (6) 2 Corinthians 6:17-18
 - (a) We cannot have fellowship with God and truly worship Him if we are dabbling in sin.
 - (i) He will strengthen us, but He will not strengthen us to sin.
 - 1. He will strengthen us to live right and righteous.

4) THE STRATEGIC NEARNESS OF THESE CITIES (ROMANS 10:6-9)

- a) God wanted people to have safety and refuge.
- b) He put these six cities in strategic places throughout Israel.
 - i) He put some in the north, some in the south, some in the east, some in the west, and one in the center that was very near to everyone.
 - ii) The cities were spread out.
- c) The roads to these cities were always open and clearly marked.
 - i) At a crossroads, there would be a sign pointing in the direction of the city of refuge.
 - (1) If someone was fleeing, then he would not wonder which way to go.
 - ii) These roads, as much as possible, were level so that there would be no impediment or blockades.
 - (1) Stones and trash were removed.
 - iii) The roads were wide.
 - iv) The priests would go out and examine these roads to make certain that they were fit.
 - v) These roads were clearly marked and always near.
- d) Our city of refuge is Jesus, and He is always near.
 - i) Romans 10:6-9
 - (1) We do not have to make a pilgrimage into Heaven, appear before the throne, or ask God to send us a Savior.
 - (a) Jesus has already come.
 - (2) We do not have to go down into the netherworld and ask for Jesus to be raised from the dead.
 - (a) He has already been raised from the dead.
 - ii) Romans 10:8 shows us just how near Jesus is.
 - (1) Jesus is in your mouth, and He is in your heart.
 - (a) How does Jesus get in your mouth and in your heart if you are not saved?
 - (i) "The word of faith which we preach."
 - (ii) When someone preaches, he put, God's Word in your mouth and in your heart.
 - (iii) You are not saved yet, but the Word is there.
 - iii) Romans 10:9
 - (1) Then, if you believe with your heart and confess with your mouth, you will be saved.



- (2) Jesus is closer to you than the person who is sitting next to you.
 - (a) He is in your mouth and in your heart.
- (3) You must believe in your heart and confess with your mouth to be saved.
- iv) No matter how close you are to being saved, no one is almost saved.
 - (1) To be almost saved is to be altogether lost.
 - (2) You cannot say that you didn't have an opportunity or that you never heard.
 - (a) Romans 10:8
 - (i) This is the strategic nearness of these cities.
- e) There was a man who was so near to salvation, but he missed it.
 - i) 2 Samuel 2:17-23
 - (1) The avenger of blood would come and chase a man, and the man would run into the city of refuge and be safe.
 - (2) There was a man named Abner, and Abner killed a man name Asahel.
 - (a) Abner didn't want to kill him.
 - (b) In a battle, Asahel pursued Abner, and Abner killed him.
 - ii) Asahel's brother was Joab.
 - (1) Joab was the commander-in-chief of King David's armies.
 - (2) Joab was also an avenger of blood.
 - (a) He had been looking for a time and a place to slay Abner.
 - iii) Joab and Abner were just outside the city of Hebron, which was one of the six cities of refuge.
 - (1) Joab, in a friendly way, beckoned Abner to come to him.
 - iv) 2 Samuel 3:27
 - (1) Right at the very gates of the city of refuge but on the wrong side of the gate, Abner died.
 - v) When David heard about the death of Abner, he began to lament.
 - (1) 2 Samuel 3:32-34
 - (2) 2 Samuel 3:38
 - (3) David said that Abner did not have to die.
 - (a) Abner was not in chains.
 - (b) It was his choice.
 - (c) David said that Abner died like a fool.
 - (4) David told everyone that Abner was a great man.
 - (a) He was a prince, and he died.
 - vi) Where did Abner die?
 - (1) He died right at the gate of the city of refuge, but he was on the wrong side of that gate.
 - (a) He never stepped in.
 - vii) We read in the New Testament of Judas who kissed Jesus.
 - (1) He kissed the door of Heaven and went to Hell.
 - (2) Mark 14:44-45
 - viii) There are some people who can be so close.
 - (1) Romans 10:8
 - (2) They are right at the threshold of salvation, but they are on the wrong side.
- f) David said that a great man, a prince, had fallen.
 - i) 2 Samuel 3:38



- ii) Some very successful people are going to miss Heaven.
 - (1) In the eyes of the world, they may be a great person.
 - (2) The Bible tells of a rich man who died; and in Hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.
 - (a) Luke 16:19-31
 - (b) Can you imagine his funeral?
 - (i) Someone would make a speech, stating that he was a man of great influence and prestige.
 - 1. A great man in the eyes of the people, but his soul was in Hell.
- iii) People like this are victims of a cunning deception.
 - (1) They don't realize how important it is to deal with their souls.
 - (2) They deal with their bank accounts.
 - (3) They deal with their golf game.
 - (4) They deal with their family.
 - (5) They deal with all of these things, but they don't deal with God.
- iv) You may be a prince in a city, but if you don't give your heart to Jesus Christ, then the Bible teaches that you are a fool.
 - (1) Jesus said to a wealthy farmer who thought he had it all made, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."
 - (a) Luke 12:20
 - (2) It does not matter what else you are doing.
 - (a) If you don't give your heart to Jesus Christ, then you are very foolish.
 - (i) Mark 8:36
- g) When you compare your soul to other things, what is more valuable?
 - i) A bank account?
 - ii) A career?
 - iii) Your sports?
 - iv) What is more important?
 - v) Mark 8:36
- h) Abner was the victim of a cunning deception.
 - i) Joab acted as if he was his friend.
 - (1) Joab put one arm around him; and with a dagger, he stabbed him under the fifth rib.
 - ii) Abner died on the threshold at the steps of Hebron.
 - (1) No wonder David said that he died like a fool.
 - (2) He didn't have to die that way.
 - (a) He should have known about Joab and what Joab wanted to do.
- i) David wept over Abner.
 - i) It is time that we weep over lost souls before they die.
 - ii) All the tears of David could not bring Abner back nor rescue him.
- j) One of these days, it will be too late for tears.
 - i) If we are going to weep over our loved ones, then weep for them now.
 - ii) We have friends, neighbors, and relatives who are being deceived by the devil.
 - (1) They are going to die and go to Hell.



5) CONCLUSION

- a) What can we learn from this?
 - i) If you are already inside, then rejoice in the Savior.
 - (1) Thank God for Christ our salvation.
 - (2) Thank God for Christ our strength.
 - (3) Thank God for Christ our satisfaction.
 - (4) We are blessed if we are inside that city.
 - ii) If you are not inside the city of refuge, if you have not yet received Jesus Christ, then come in today.
 - (1) Proverbs 27:1
 - (2) If you have not yet come into the city of refuge, if you have not yet turned to Jesus and asked Him to come into your heart and forgive your sin, then do it today.
 - (3) You can be a great man and a prince, but you can die like a fool.
 - iii) We need to warn and educate our friends.
 - (1) We need to tell them about the city of refuge (the Lord Jesus Christ).
 - (2) We need to tell them about the deception of the devil.
 - (a) Your children are sitting ducks for the devil.
 - (b) The devil is a liar and a deceiver.
 - (c) He puts his arms around us and acts like he is our friend, but there is a knife that is coming under the fifth rib.
 - (i) He does not want us inside that city.
 - iv) We need to weep for the lost before they die.
 - (1) Jeremiah 9:1
 - (2) Someone has described the modern church as a dry-eyed church in a Hell-bent world.
 - (a) When was the last time you shed a tear for some soul who was mortgaged to the devil?
- a) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- b) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) Acts 16:31
 - i) John 3:16Acts 16:31
 - ii) John 3:16



Jesus, the Sinner's Refuge

SERMON REFERENCE: Joshua 20:1-3

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Take God's Word and find, if you will, Joshua chapter 20. We're going to be in the Old Testament, but we're going to be talking about Jesus, our Lord and Savior. One of the things I've learned about the Bible is all of the Bible is about Jesus. Sometimes people say, "Have you read the four Gospels?" Friend, I've read all sixty-six of the Gospels; they're all about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, Jesus is the hero of the Bible. Salvation is the theme of the Bible. And because Jesus is the hero and salvation is the theme, we find Jesus standing somewhere in the shadows in all of the Old Testament if we study it carefully and look at it, because God wants us to be saved and He wants us to love Jesus. So He's tucked away illustrations, even in the Old Testament.

Now the cities of refuge, when Joshua was leading the children of Israel, were remarkable. And I want us to read today in Joshua chapter 20 verses 1 through 3, "The Lord spake also unto Joshua, saying, 'Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Appoint out for you cities of refuge,'" now just underscore that, "cities of refuge", and I'll talk to you about that later, ""whereof I spake unto you at the hand of Moses. That the slayer that killeth any person unawares and unwittingly may flee thither; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood.'" Now let me tell you what the avenger of blood is. If a man back in this day were guilty of manslaughter, negligent, or unaware of what he had done, there was a person who was a family member who was called the avenger of blood. And he had the right and, in that day, the responsibilities to track down the killer and to slay him. Well, the Lord realized how this could be abused and misused, and so, what the Lord did was to take six cities and make them cities of refuge. Now these six cities of refuge are highly symbolic and teach us a wonderful lesson.

First of all, I want you to notice what I'm going to call **the saving nature of these cities**. And you'll find that Scripture there again in Joshua chapter 20 verses 1 through 3. There were cities there that into which the person who was fleeing from justice could go into that city and there be safe. Now, does that refer to the Lord Jesus Christ? I think it does. As a matter of fact, I think that's what the writer of Hebrews was talking about, and put in your margin Hebrews 6:18, it speaks of those, "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." They have fled for refuge. Doubtless, in my mind, this is a reference to the cities of refuge tucked away there. So just put down, first of all, the saving nature of these cities. And by that they represent Christ our Savior and Lord, who is our place of refuge.

Now the second thing I want you to notice is **the significant names of these cities**. Now what are their names? Well, look, if you will, over here in Joshua chapter 20 and verses 7 and 8, "And they appointed Kedesh in Galilee in Mount Naphtali," underscore Kedesh, "and Shechem in Mount Ephraim," underscore Shechem, "and Kirjatharba, which is Hebron," underscore Hebron, "in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side, Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer," underline Bezer, "in the wilderness upon the plain of the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth," underscore Ramoth, "in Gilead of the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan out of the tribe of Manasseh." Golan, underscore Golan. There were six cities, six cities of refuge.

Now it's an interesting thing as we study this to find how these six cities picture the Lord Jesus Christ by their very names. Look, if you will, in verse 7 again. There is Kedesh. Do you know what Kedesh means?



Kedesh means holiness. Thank God for our holy Savior. Kedesh is a place of holiness. And for you to be saved, to know salvation, to have eternal life, you must come to the sinless, stainless, spotless, holy Son of God and let Him make you holy. Now you can never make yourself holy. Don't try to get better so you can be saved; get saved so you can be better. Listen, friend, if I've learned one thing it is this: that holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. Thank God for that. Come, bring your sins, bring your weakness, bring your faults, bring your failures, bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't try to clean up without Jesus. Thank God He's a sinless Savior. You can't wash clothes and make them clean washing them in dirty water. And there's no one else that can save. Mohammad can't save. Confucius can't save. Allah can't save. Only Jesus saves. You believe that? Amen. So, the first city is Kedesh, and it speaks of Christ our Savior.

Now the second city is Shechem and it speaks of Christ our strength. You see, the very name Shechem means shoulder. It means support. And Jesus is our support. Jesus is our strength. He's the one that carries us on His shoulders. You remember over there in Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6? The Bible says what? "The government shall be upon His shoulders." Do you remember there in Luke 15 verses 3 through 5, in the parable of the Good Shepherd, where He goes out and finds that one lost sheep? And the Bible says, "He layeth it on His shoulders and brings it back to the sheepfold." That's an interesting sheep, a sheep with six legs: four on him on two on the shepherd, and He's going back because of Christ our strength.

Now listen to me, precious friend. Don't get the idea that you must live the Christian life. Now the Christian life ought to be lived, but it is Jesus Christ underneath with His strength carrying you on His shoulders. I've learned that He has done that for me since I was saved as a 14 year old boy. Were it not for the strength of Jesus, I never would have made it.

Now look at the next name, Hebron, there in Joshua 20 verse 7. And the word Hebron speaks of fellowship and it really speaks to me of Christ our satisfaction. Hebron is a place that the Bible gives the name fellowship. That's what the Hebrew name means. And what does that say to us? Well, friend, not only are we saved by a holy Savior, not only does He carry us through, but, hallelujah, He brings us together that we might have fellowship with one another and fellowship with Him. Put in your margin First John chapter 1 and verse 3, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ." So we come to a holy Savior and He's Christ our Savior. We lay our burdens upon Him. He's Christ our strength. And then we enjoy Him. He is Christ our satisfaction. What your heart yearns for is fellowship with God and fellowship with one another. "Friends all around me are trying to find, what the heart yearns for by sin undermine; I have the secret, I know where 'tis found, only true pleasures in Jesus abound." Thank God that Hebron speaks of Christ our satisfaction. What a fellowship and what a joy divine.

And then the next city there in verse 8 is Bezer, and that means stronghold; it means fortification. Now when you come to Jesus, the holy Savior saves you. And when He carries you in His arms, and when you enter into that sweet fellowship with Him, then you're going to learn the security that Jesus alone can give, because Bezer speaks of fortification. It speaks of a stronghold. And that means that He's Christ our security. You don't keep Him; He keeps you. If it depended upon my living it, I never would live it. Friend, let me tell you something. I'm going to ask you today to give your heart to Jesus Christ if you've not done so. And He is the one that will be your strength and your fortification.

The Bible says this in Proverbs 18 verse 10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and are safe." Come to Jesus. I promise you, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you



sincerely trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, not only will He save you; He will keep you all the way. That's what the Bible teaches. We have a high priest who's able to save us to the uttermost. I used to think that meant He could save any kind of sinner. Well, He can, but that's not what it means. It means He'll save you all the way through. He'll keep you. He will keep you. He'll save you instantaneously. He'll be with you continually. He will keep you eternally. Thank God for Bezer, and it speaks of Christ our security.

And then Ramoth. Ramoth means what? Exalted. That's what the Bible word means, and it speaks of Christ our sovereign. He is the one high and lifted up. Acts chapter 2 and verse 33, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted." Speaking of Jesus. By the right hand of God, He is exalted. And again, Philippians 2 verse 9, "Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted Him." Oh friend, what a Savior! Hallelujah. High and lifted up. And the glory is we are seated in the heavenlies with Him. He is exalted, He died for us, He rose for us, He ascended for us, and we are co-enthroned with the Lord Jesus Christ on high. So many Christians have never realized the privilege that they have. Being saved by His holiness, carried by His strength, sweet fellowship with Him, secure in Him, and then worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

And then, Golan speaks of separation, and it tells me of Christ our sanctification. The word Golan means separated. And, you see, when Jesus saves us, we don't remain the same. Second Corinthians 5 verse 17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Now sanctification is a big, double-jointed word that we don't use very much, but what it literally means is to be sanctified or to be separated, and, literally, Golan means separated unto joy. Put in your margin now, in the New Testament, Second Corinthians 6 verses 17 and 18, "'Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate,' saith the Lord, 'and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters,' saith the Lord Almighty." Now you can't have fellowship with God and you can't truly worship Him if you're dabbling in sin. When I say He will strengthen you, He will, but He'll not strengthen you to sin; He'll strengthen you to live right and righteous.

And so, the third thing I want you to think about now. We're talking now about the saving nature of these cities. We're talking to you about the very significant names of these cities. Now think with me about **the strategic nearness of these cities**. Now, you see, God wanted people to have safety and refuge, so He put these six cities out, and over the land of Israel He put them in strategic places. Put some in the north, some in the south, some in the east, and some in the west, and one in the center, very near to everybody. So these were spread out. And then, the roads to them were always open and clearly marked. At a crossroads there would be a sign pointing Miqlat, which mean refuge. So if you're fleeing, you don't wonder, "Shall I go this way or shall I go that way?" These roads, as much as possible, were level so there'd be no impediment, no blockades. Stones and trash were removed. And the roads were wide. They were always open. And the priests would go out and examine these roads to make certain that they were fit. And these roads were clearly marked and always near. Now what does that tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ, the strategic nearness of these cities? Listen folks, your city of refuge is Jesus, and He is always, always, always, always near.

Now I want you to put in your margin, in the New Testament, now, Romans 10 verses 6 through 9. Oh, what a great passage this is, "But the righteousness which is by faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven?" that is, to bring Christ down from above, "Or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead, "But what saith it?" listen to this, "The Word is nigh thee," we're talking about strategic nearness, "the Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart;



that is, the Word of faith, which we preach: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Now what's the writer talking about here in the Book of Romans? He's saying, "You want to be saved? Listen, he's saying, "You don't have to make a pilgrimage into Heaven, and go up there and appear before the throne and say, 'O God, O God, please send us a Savior.'" Why not? Because He's already come, Amen? Now we don't need to go down into the netherworld and say, "O, that Jesus could be raised from the dead. We need Him. Bring Him up from the deep." You don't have to do that. He's already come down. He's already been raised from the dead. And He's very near.

Let me tell you how near He is. He said, "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." "Well how, wait a minute, pastor, how's the Word of God get in my mouth and in my heart? What is this talking about?" Well, he's saying that Jesus is in your mouth, I know this sounds a little bizarre, but now listen to me carefully, and He's in your heart. You say, "Well, now, wait a minute, how did Jesus get in my mouth and Jesus in my heart? I'm not saved. How did He get there?" I just put it there. "How did you put it there?" The Word of faith which we preached. I'm preaching to you. And what I'm doing, I'm putting His Word in your mouth and in your heart. Now you're not saved yet, but he says the Word is there. And then he says, "If you will believe with your heart and confess with your mouth, you'll be saved." It's there. You talk about being close. He is closer to you than the person sitting next to you. He's in your mouth and in your heart. Now you must believe in your heart and confess with your mouth. I don't care how close you are. No one is almost saved. To be almost saved is to be altogether lost. But nobody will walk out of this place today, saying, "I didn't have an opportunity, and I never heard." "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; the Word of faith, which we preach." That's the strategic nearness of these cities.

Now, folks, I want to speak to you about a man who was so near to salvation and he missed it. Would you turn over here to Second Samuel this time, and I want us to continue to think on this theme of the cities of refuge. And this is chapter 3 of Second Samuel.

Let me just tell you a story. We're talking about how the avenger would come and chase a man, and the man would run into the city of refuge and be safe. Now there was a man named Abner. And Abner killed a man named Asahel. He didn't really want to kill him. But in a battle, Asahel was pursuing him, and he killed Asahel. Now Asahel's brother was Joab. Joab was the commander-in-chief of King David's armies. But Joab was also an avenger of blood, and so he's been looking for a time and a place to slay Asahel.

Now here's the background. Joab and Abner are just outside the City of Hebron, which was one of the six cities of refuge. And what happened now is Joab says to Abner, "Hey, Ab, come over here. There's something I want to share with you." And Joab just puts a smile on his face, and in a friendly way he beckons Abner to come to him. It's right there in Second Samuel 3 verse 27, "And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly," that sounds friendly enough. "Come on, there's something I want to tell you, "and smote him there under the fifth rib that he died for the blood of Asahel, his brother." Now right at the gate of the city! Right in the very gates of the city of refuge! But on the wrong side of the gate Abner died.

Now when David heard about the death of Abner, David began to lament. Second Samuel 3 verses 32 through 34, "And they buried Abner in Hebron; and the king lifted up," this is King David, "and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. And the king lamented Abner, and said, 'Did Abner die as a fool dieth? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet into fetters; as a man falleth



before wicked men, so fellest thou.' And all the people wept again over him." And then in Second Samuel 3 verse 38, "And the king said unto his servants, 'Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?'" David wept. He said, "O Abner, that's so foolish. You didn't have to die. You were not in chains. It was your choice." And he said, "Abner, you died like a fool. Like a sheer fool you died." And then he told everybody, "He was a great man. He was a prince. And he died!" And, friend, where did he die? Right at the gate of the city of refuge, but he was on the wrong side of that gate. He never stepped in.

Now I read, in the New Testament, of Judas who kissed Jesus. That's pretty close. He kissed the door of Heaven and went to Hell. There are some people who can be so close. Romans 10:8, "The Word is near them, nigh them; in their mouth and in their heart." They are right at the threshold of salvation. Some of you in this building are that way, but you're on the wrong side.

Now David said, "A great man, a prince has fallen." Do you know some men, some of you businessmen, bankers, lawyers, entrepreneurs; some of you are very successful of this world. You know, the Bible says in Luke 16 verses 22 and 23, "A rich man died, and in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." Can you imagine his funeral? Can you imagine what it must have been like, this rich man? Well, no, you know, if they had automobiles in that day, out front would be a lot of Mercedes and Cadillacs and high-class automobiles. People would be all dressed, and they'd come into the funeral, and the casket would be there and the body. And some man would get up get and make a speech over it. And he says, "Here lies so-and-so, a man of great influence and prestige, and we commit him to the Almighty." A great man in the eyes of people, but his soul was in Hell before the undertaker heard he was dead. Why? Why? Because people like this are victims of a cunning deception. They don't realize how important it is to deal with their souls. They deal with their bank accounts. They deal with their golf game. They deal with their family. They deal with all of these things, but they don't deal with God. Bill Gates, a multi-multi-multi-billionaire, was asked, "Do you go to church?" He said, "No, I don't." "Why?" He said, "It is a waste of time." A great man. His name is known worldwide. Friend, listen, I don't care how great you are, you may be a prince in this city, but if you don't give your heart to Jesus Christ, the Bible teaches you are a fool. You're a fool.

Jesus said to another man who was wealthy and he was a rich farmer. And he said, "I've got it all made." And Jesus said in Luke 12:20, "Thou fool; this night shall thy soul be required of thee." What, it doesn't matter what else you're doing. If you don't give your heart to Jesus Christ, you're very foolish because, you see, the Bible says in Mark 8 verses 36 and 37, "What should it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and yet lose his soul. Or what should a man give in exchange for his soul," I mean, when you compare your soul to other things. What is more valuable, a bank account, a career, your sports, your beautiful yard? What is more important?

Suppose there's a house on fire. And in that house is a mother and her little baby, and that little baby is in the crib. The mother smells the smoke. She sees the flames. She knows the house is going to be consumed. So she goes around and gets the pots and pans and carries them out. She goes and takes the pictures off the wall and carries them out. She goes and gets the clothes from the closet and carries that outside. And the whole time her baby is there in the crib to perish in the flames. You'd say she's insane. Well, listen, you are living for the trinkets of this world. You're a great man, a prince. I want to tell you if you don't care for your soul, Jesus said, "What should it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Now why did Abner do this? Well, Abner was the victim of a cunning deception. Joab acted as if he were his friend. He said, "Hey, Ab, come over here. There's something I want to tell you." And he puts one arm



around him, and with a dagger he stabs him under the fifth rib. And he dies right there on the threshold at the steps of Hebron. No wonder David said, "He died like a fool. He didn't have to die that way. He should have known about Joab and what Joab wanted him to do." And David wept. David wept over Abner. You know, it's time that we weep over lost souls before they die. You see, all the tears of David could not bring Abner back nor rescue him.

In another church, I got a phone call. A lady that I knew well was on the other end. She was hysterical, just hysterical. She was saying, "O Pastor, Pastor, Pastor, Pastor." I said, "Hold it! Tell me what is wrong." She said, "My daddy is in Hell. My daddy is in Hell. My daddy is in Hell. Pastor, my daddy died and he's in Hell." I said, "Your daddy is not in Hell." He was a medical doctor. I said, "Your daddy is not in Hell. Your daddy is in Heaven." She said, "Why do you say that? He wasn't a Christian." I said, "Yes, he was. A few days ago I went by his house and asked him if he knew how to be saved. And he wasn't certain, and I told him. And I asked him if he wanted to receive Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. And he said he did. And I led him to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Your daddy is not in Hell. Your daddy is in Heaven. But now I want to ask you a question. Did you ever witness to your daddy? Did you ever tell him about Jesus? Did you try to get him saved?" Friend, one of these days it'll be too late for tears. If you're going to weep over your loved ones, weep for them now, not after they die. And shed tears for them. We have friends, neighbors, relatives who are being deceived by the devil and they are going to die and go to Hell.

Now what can we learn from all of this? Four things I want to lay on your heart. Number one: if you are inside, if you're already inside, hallelujah, what a Savior! Thank God for Christ our salvation. Thank God for Christ our strength. Thank God for Christ our satisfaction. Thank God, thank God, thank God. Oh friend, we are blessed if we're inside that city, Amen? We're so blessed.

Now number two: listen, if you're not inside the city of refuge, if you've not yet received Jesus Christ, come in today. I would not lay my salvation aside if you were to stack this building with gold and say, "All you have to do is lay your salvation aside for a day." You say, "You're lying." I'm telling you the absolute truth. If you were to stack it with gold from floor to ceiling, wall to wall, and say, "It's all yours if you will put aside Jesus for one day." I wouldn't do that. I'll tell you why. First of all, I might die in that day. The Bible says in Proverbs 27:1, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for you don't know what a day may bring forth." Number two: I would miss loving Jesus for that day. And number three: I would not so disgrace the Lord Jesus to set Him aside for all the gold in the world. Friend, if you have not yet come into the city of refuge, if you've not yet turned to Jesus and said, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin;" do it. I don't care how great you are in this community. You can be a great man and a prince, but you can die like a fool.

Now the third thing I want to lay on your heart is, we need to warn and educate our friends and tell them about the city of refuge, and tell them about the deception of the devil. Your children are sitting ducks for the devil. The devil is a liar! The devil is a deceiver! He's put his arms around you and act like he's your friend, but there's a knife that's coming under the fifth rib. He doesn't want you inside that city.

The last thing I want to say is this: we need to weep for the lost before they die. Jeremiah said in chapter 9 and verse 1, "Oh, that my eyes were a fountain of tears." Somebody has described the modern church as a dry-eyed church in a Hell-bent world. When is the last time you shed a tear for some soul that was mortgaged to the devil?



Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now if you're in that city, thank God for it. If you have a neighbor, a friend, a brother that's not in, begin to intercede for that one. And, friend, if you've not yet given your heart to Jesus Christ, God brought me here, and God brought you here, and God brought His Word here, and God put His Spirit here that you might be saved today. And I want to lead you in a prayer, and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, if you will trust Christ, He will save you instantaneously. He will be with you continually. He will keep you eternally. Would you pray this kind of a prayer? "Dear God, I need to be saved. I need a city of refuge. I know that judgment is on the trail and Satan seeks to slay me. Lord, I need a refuge. And, Lord Jesus, I come to You today. I come to You as a little child. I lay my intellectual pride in the dust and Lord, I come as a little child to You. I trust You to save me. Lord, forgive my sins because Jesus died and paid for my sins with His blood. Come into my heart, for, Lord, You promised to do so. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public, even today. In Your name I pray. Amen.



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