

WE HAVE MADE LIES OUR REFUGE

ISAIAH 28:14-15 • TV137A

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Isaiah 28:14-15

“Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.”

We are turning in our Bible today to the **Book of Isaiah**. I want to read a passage of Scripture which is recorded in the **28th chapter of Isaiah, verses 14 and 15.**

Now, here’s the title of this message: **“WE HAVE MADE LIES OUR REFUGE.”**

I’m reading from **verse 14 of Isaiah 28** in which the prophet of God wrote: *“Wherefore, hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem.”*

Now, this is a word of warning to the religious, yea especially, to those in leadership who rule and teach and preach in religious circles: *“hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men that rule this people in Jerusalem.”*

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Here is what he says: *“Because you have said, we have a covenant with death and with hell are we at agreement. When the overflowing scourge, (that is, the flood of God’s judgment and wrath shall pass through), it shall not come unto us or upon us for we have made lies our refuge and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: We have made lies our refuge.”*

Now, that’s a harsh statement, but the Word of God is saying here that many religious people have a false refuge and will one day perish under the judgment and wrath of almighty God. *“We have made lies our refuge.”*

Now, many people recoil, from preaching like this and some choose to ignore it and some even despise any suggestion or insinuation that they may, perhaps, have missed a saving interest in Christ.

When we preach like this they say: “are you suggesting that I’m not a Christian? Are you insinuating that I have a false profession and do not know the Lord? Do you mean you think that I’m not saved?”

When we talk about a false refuge and a false hiding place and building our foundation on the sand and seek to warn religious people; they become indignant; they are offended; they recoil from preaching like this.

“Are you suggesting that I’ve missed Christ? Are you suggesting that all of my works and my religious efforts and my giving and praying are to no avail?”

My friend, you can hardly ignore these warnings since there are so many of them in the Word of God. Listen to just some of them: Now, the Bible is a book of promises, but it is also a book of warning too. I’ll give you just a few of them:

It says in the **Book of Jeremiah** that *“the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”* Then the question is asked: *“who can know it?”*

And then again, our Lord said in **Matthew 7**: *“Many shall say to me in that day: Lord; have we not prophesied in your name, in your name cast out devils, and in your name, done many wonderful works? Then shall I profess unto them; I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

Paul in **2nd Corinthians 11** says: *“Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith. Know ye not your own selves how that Christ dwelleth in you, that is, unless you are reprobate?”*

Listen to this sharp warning from the pen of the apostle Paul in the **Book of Hebrews**: *“take heed brethren, take heed brethren.”* He’s addressing the church; *“take heed brethren lest there be found in you an evil heart of unbelief.”*

Then, the apostle Peter wrote: *“Wherefore, the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.”* Give diligence to do this. Make your calling and your election a desperate and diligent inquiry.

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Then, listen at our Lord again: *“These people call me Lord with their lips but their hearts are far from me.”*

Some will quarrel and get angry at this type of preaching but we must do it. I would not needlessly wound or offend one sheep of Christ. I would not offend one who really loves the Saviour. I would not cause a person to despair who is under the blood of Christ.

But, my friend; your soul is too precious and too valuable and judgment is too certain and terrible and eternity is too long and hell is too fearful for you to be indifferent and presumptuous in this matter.

It is true, if you miss Holy Spirit regeneration and Holy Spirit conviction, we are going to miss repentance in faith. Genuine repentance toward God and genuine faith in Christ Jesus is born of Holy Spirit conviction and Holy Spirit regeneration.

If we miss repentance and faith we are going to miss Christ and if we miss Christ, no matter how much religion we have, no matter how strong our profession, or our zeal for God, we are going to miss eternal life.

Now, it is evident from the Scriptures that there are some things that all men know, that is, to some extent. It is evident from this Scripture here. Let me show you our text one more time over in **Isaiah 28 verse 15**; he says: *“Because you have said, we have a covenant with death and with hell are we at agreement, when the overflowing scourge or judgment shall come through, it shall not come upon us, or unto us; we have a refuge, we have a hiding place.”*

Now, God says that it is a false refuge and it’s a hiding place of lies, but nevertheless, they say, “we have it.” So, there are some things that are evident to me from this Scripture, the first of which is this:

First of all: Most men believe to some extent that there is a God!

Now, Paul is talking about Israel in **Romans 10**, he says: *“they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge.”* So, a man can believe there is a God; the devil believes there’s a God. James said that: *“You believe there is one God, you do well. The devil believes and trembles.”*

A man can believe there is one God and he can have a zeal for God and enthusiasm for God and still not know the Lord. The apostle Paul didn’t know Christ; (before conversion) he didn’t know God. He had a great enthusiasm for religion and for God and for the Old Testament Scriptures.

Secondly: Most men know that sin has entered this world and that God is offended because of our sins and that God intends, in some way, to judge our sin.

Now, these people knew this, otherwise, they wouldn’t have cared about a refuge, they wouldn’t have cared about a hiding place. They wouldn’t have even talked about hell or talked about the overflowing scourge of God’s wrath and these things.

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So, they were aware that they were sinners and they were aware that God was offended with them. They were aware that there was going to be a judgment or a day of reckoning, a payday, someday. They believed that.

Thirdly: Most men know, to some extent, that death comes to all men, and after that judgment, after death there is judgment and there is an accounting to be given.

Now, these people take the time on a lot of these things, God, sin, death, judgment, and eternity. These people take the time and the trouble to establish some sort of refuge, some sort of hiding place, some sort of hope, some sort of religious profession.

They go to the trouble and they take the time to establish some sort of refuge, some sort of religious profession because we hear them talking about it.

They say: “We’re not afraid to die. We have a covenant with death. We are not afraid to die.” Have you heard people talk that way? “Well, I’m not afraid to die.”

Then, they said: “We are in agreement with hell.” We believe that there ought to be a hell. The people who are great rebels ought to perish in hell but we don’t expect to be there. We have an agreement with hell.

Then, they say, “When the judgment comes, we are going to be saved.” Why? “Because we have a refuge, we have a hiding place. We are not afraid to die. We are not afraid of the judgment. We are not afraid of hell because we have a hiding place; we have a refuge.”

But, the charge comes from God. And He said: “*You have a refuge,*” (that’s true), *but it is a refuge of lies.*” The Lord says: “Yes, you have a hiding place but it’s a false hiding place. It won’t shield you; and it won’t protect you and it won’t deliver you.”

He said: **Isaiah 28:20**; “*For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.*” You have a bed and you are resting comfortably upon it but you are going to find it’s too short and you will have a cover that you are going to discover that’s pretty narrow. “*We have made lies our refuge.*”

Could that be true of you and could that be true of me; it is true of many professing religionists. Our Lord Jesus Christ had 12 apostles and one of them certainly did not know Him. The apostle Paul talked about Simon Magus, and he talked about Hermogenes, he talked about Hymenaeus, and he talked about these different ones that had forsaken him, that had left him.

Then, John talked about those, “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*” They departed from us because they were not of us. If they had continued, if they had been of us, they would have no doubt continued with us.

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What are some of the false refuges that men establish today? I want to give you four or five. I want you to really think as I talk with you about this problem today, a refuge of lies. I want you to consider this and make a personal application of these Scriptures and of these statements:

First of all: Some of today's false refuges, here's one and I believe this is one of the greatest problems of all: men have a wrong idea of sin!

This may sound strange to you but the average person, preacher included, does not even know what sin is. I am persuaded of that and I'm convinced of that. The average person, preacher included, does not know what sin is.

We know what the products of sin are. We know what the results of sin are. We know what the fruits of sin are but the average person could not, to save his life, define sin.

We confine sin to an act or to a word or to a deed, whereas sin is really the nature or the principle that produces the evil act. Sin is the nature or the principle that produces the evil deed. Sin is the nature or the root or the principle that produces the evil act. For example:

The Pharisee, the religious man who went to the temple to pray, he didn't even know God. Our Lord Jesus Christ indicated that this man was not justified; he did not know God.

He perished, and yet he boasted of having no sin, though he said: *"God I thank you that I'm not like other men; I fast, I tithe, I give alms. I'm not an adulterer, I'm not an extortioner, and I'm not like this publican."*

This man boasted of having no sin, like the rest of the Pharisees, they said to Christ: *"we be not sinners."* Though this man, who did not even know God, boasted of having no sin! The apostle Paul, who we know knew God and called himself, *"the chief of sinners."*

How do you reconcile that? How do you deal with that? If sin is just an outward act, if sin is an evil deed only, if sin is a profane word only, if that is all there is to sin, then the Pharisee was correct; he had no sin because outwardly he was moral.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: *"You are like a whited sepulcher, (a tombstone); on the outside you appear beautiful but on the inside you are full of dead men's bones."*

But here, the apostle Paul who was also a moral man, whose words were words of kindness, his deeds were deeds of kindness, whose acts were acts of love, and yet, he said: *"I'm the chief of sinners."*

Religionists today boast of having their sin eradicated. Many denominations throughout this land say, "we don't sin." They are offended if you call them sinners. "We don't sin; what do you mean we are sinners, we don't sin?"

Yet David, a man after God's own heart, said: *"my sin is ever before me."* Yet Isaiah said: *"I'm a man of unclean lips."* Yet Job said: *"I abhor myself; I repent in sackcloth and ashes."*

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So, here's our problem. We have a wrong idea of what sin really is. We have confined sins as an outward act; if we could stop these outward acts and these outward deeds and these evil words then we must stop sin.

My friend; sin is a nature. It is a principle; it is a root within; we are born with it. We are plagued with it. It lives within us. These things that we do outwardly are but the results of sin; they are the fruits of sin and they are the products of sin. They are the inward sins.

A man steals because he is a thief. A man kills because he by nature is a murderer. Our Lord Jesus Christ said: *"You've heard it said by them of old times."* Now, He is talking about the teachers of Scripture, the Pharisees, the Scribes and Sadducees.

These men interpreted the Scriptures for the people and Christ said: *"you have heard them say: thou shalt not kill. I say unto you: to hate your brother in your heart is to be guilty already of murder,"* to feel enmity toward him, to have an ill feeling toward them in your heart is to be guilty already, though you never commit the deed.

Our Lord said: *"You've heard it said by them of old time: thy shalt not commit adultery but I say unto you the lust in your heart, to have the thought of evil in your heart, is to be guilty already of adultery."*

"It's not that which goeth into the mouth that defileth a man; (it's the stuff that comes out of his mouth, out of his heart) "for out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, adulteries, blaspheme, lies, covetousness, envy, jealousy, and hatred."

My friend; our false foundation has been laid on this precept: we have a wrong idea of what sin really is. Sin is a nature, it's a root, it's called a body of sin, and it's called a law that wars in our members. It's called a reigning, sovereign, and king in the flesh.

It has to be dealt with. It has to be blotted out. It has to be put out by the power of God, only by the power of God, and that when God puts this old flesh in the ground and takes us to be with him in glory. So then, we have a wrong idea of what sin is.

Secondly: Another false refuge is a wrong idea of the love of God!

This is another real problem today. It's just sweeping our country. Everybody says: "God is love, God is love." That's true but God is just and God is holy and God will punish sin.

That's true God is love, absolutely true, but God is holy and His holiness has got to be dealt with as well as His love; it's got to be expressed; God will punish sin.

Somebody else says: "God is merciful," and I say you are right; you are just as right as you can be but my friend; God is righteous also and His law must be honored.

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Somebody else says: “But God is gracious.” That’s true but God is a just God and God will deal with sin. His law must be honored. His justice must be satisfied.

You see, that’s why Christ became a man. *“He was made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem those born under the law”* because every person who is redeemed must honor the law, obey it, fulfill it, and satisfy it.

Well, we can’t do it; *“what the law could not do because of the weakness of the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.”* Every man’s sin must be paid for. That’s why Christ died on the cross, to pay our sin debt, to put away our transgressions.

That’s what led Job to cry: *“how can man be just with God? How can he be clean that’s born of a woman? Behold the moon it shineth not. The stars are not pure, clean, in God’s sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man that drinks iniquity like the water.”*

Yes, God is merciful but He’s merciful in Christ. *“There’s therefore, now, no condemnation to them who are in Christ.”* Yes, God gives us peace but that peace is in Christ. *“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Yes, God is love but God’s love is in Christ. **Romans 8:39** says: *“Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ our Lord.”*

A false refuge; I’m troubled about it. I’m concerned as I face a generation of religious people; their religion is sweeping the country. There are churches on every corner.

There are people making professions of faith, thousands upon thousands, upon thousands, who have a totally wrong idea of what sin is, a totally wrong conception of God’s attributes, and God’s holiness, and God’s love.

I will tell you something else: a false refuge or a false profession of religion is one that does not produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit in a man’s life.

Now my friend, I am saying that any profession of religion that does not change your life and change your walk and change your conversation and change your attitude and change your motive is a false refuge.

Now, let’s get close to home; it’s a false refuge that allows a man to be saved and not love the Word of God, not bow to the Word of God, not submit to the Word of God and not absolutely desire to know the Word of God.

It’s a false refuge that allows a man to love God and hate his neighbor; that’s a false refuge. It doesn’t matter if he’s a preacher or a musician or a deacon or whatever. It’s a false refuge that allows any man to love God and hate his neighbor.

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It's a false refuge that forgives a man of his sin while he refuses to forgive other people. That's a false refuge. It's a false refuge that says a man will worship God eternally in heaven who does not worship God on this earth. That's a false refuge!

I just read the other day about a church with 1,800 members who only have six or seven hundred on Sunday morning. Well, that's ridiculous! There are 1,800 people who say they are going to worship God in heaven, yet, they don't worship here on earth.

What makes you think you will worship Him in heaven? It's a false refuge that gives a man an idea that he is going to love God forever and worship God forever and he doesn't worship God now.

It's a false refuge that gives a man a hope for heaven while he lies and he cheats and he steals and profanes God's name and has no works of faith or labor of love. That's a false refuge!

I know works do not save, Christ saves. There's nobody saved without works. I know that prayer does not save, Christ saves, but no one is saved who doesn't pray.

I know that love does not save, Christ saves, but no one is saved that does not love. *"He that loveth not, knoweth not God for God is love."*

I know that going to church and being identified with the people of God and worshipping God on the Lord's Day does not save, Christ saves.

But, no one that is saved who does not worship God; there is no one is saved who is not identified with the people of God. Christ said: *"You deny me before men; I will deny you before my Father which is in heaven. You confess me before men and I will confess you before the Father."*

You say: "We've got a refuge." God said it is a false refuge. "Oh, we've got a hiding place." You are hiding in falsehood; that's what God says. *"It's a refuge of lies."*

I'll tell you another refuge and this one is one of the chief of our generation, that is, another false refuge is an old experience, an old experience that stays old. This is today's chief refuge: "I'm saved; I'm a Christian, I was sprinkled as an infant."

Is that your refuge? Is that your hiding place? Is that your confession of faith? Someone else says: "Well; I made a profession when I was a child. I remember I was 10, 11, 12, 13 or 14 and I made a profession of faith."

"You can't tell me that I'm not saved." I can't tell you but God can tell you. An old experience that stays old is as dead as it was when you had it.

Somebody else says; "I accepted Jesus and I was baptized." Someone else says: "I joined the church." Now you listen to me, my friend; repentance is not an isolated act. If any man ever repented, he continues to repent. If he ever quits repenting, he never did repent.

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Faith is not an isolated act. Faith is a state of being. Faith is a condition. Faith is a product of a life principle which God puts in a sinner in regeneration. If a man ever believes in Christ, he keeps on believing in Christ.

If he ever stops believing in Christ, he never did believe in Christ. I am telling you the truth. This is what John was saying when he said: *“they went out from us. They did it because they were never were of us. Had they been of us, they no doubt, would have continued.”*

That which does not grow is dead. Grace grows! Now, this pulpit before me will never grow; it's dead but I will tell you, I'll grow, and you'll grow. Our bodies continually change. Someone said, “They completely change every seven years.”

Children grow, plants grow, flowers grow, vegetables grow, and everything grows. But, some of these church members, they have made a profession of faith when they were 14 years old. They walked down an aisle under the high pressure call, or an invitation of some Hollywood evangelist.

They got their names on the church roll, were baptized, and that's the last the church has seen of most of them. They don't have any love for God, or love for people, or hunger and thirst for righteousness.

They don't have any prayer life and they don't have any study life. They are not growing in grace, they are not progressively being sanctified by the power of God and their faith is not growing.

Nothing is growing; they are dead, twice dead, plucked up by the roots and subjects of hell and fit for the burning. I am being honest with your soul this morning.

You say: “I've got a refuge; I'm not afraid to die.” God says it is *“a refuge of lies.”* “But, I'm not going to hell.” He said: *“Unto falsehood have you hid yourselves. You have a bed that is too short and you've got a cover but it is too narrow.”*

Here's another one: “Well, tomorrow;” that's another false refuge. Multitudes hide behind this intention, these good intentions: “I'm going to do something about my relationship with God tomorrow. I'm just too busy today. I've got just too much to do. I've got too many irons in the fire.”

“I'm too involved and I know what you're saying is true, Brother Mahan. I know there is a life to live and a death to die, and a judgment to face, and an eternity to spend, but I'm just too busy and too involved and there is just too much on me right now.”

There was a man one time by the name of Felix who heard the apostle Paul preach and reasoned with him about the saving interest in Christ. He said: *“Paul; you go your way now,”* (and he trembled). *“But, when I have a more convenient season I am going to send for you,”* but he never did.

My friend; the road to hell is literally paved with good intentions. Tomorrow you will be dead. Tomorrow you will stand before God. Tomorrow you will be in hell. *“Today is the day of salvation!”*