

**"Fled for
Refuge."**

By X.

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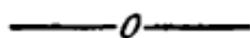
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“Fled for Refuge.”



“THEY tell me I have nothing to fear, but I know better. I am a dying man, and after death there is God to meet, and I am afraid to meet Him. I have lived without Him till now, and now I am dying, and I do not know Him, and I cannot find Him. I am not ashamed to tell you that I am afraid to die without Him!”

The speaker was a man between fifty and sixty, an upright, moral man. He held a responsible post, and had been valued by his superiors, for he carried out his duties faithfully, while his kindness had endeared him to hundreds who worked under him, whose respect he had first won.

Now he was stricken with an incurable malady, and the doctors had told him that three or four months of life were all that remained to him.

He had known for himself that his case was hopeless the moment he heard the nature of his disease, and with its dread name an arrow had pierced his soul, for he knew that he must meet God. It was not the agony of body, it was not the fact of dying, that he feared, but always before him there seemed to stand out the words

"AFTER DEATH THE JUDGMENT."

His friends had tried to comfort him by speaking of his correct life, but his answer was, "God is holy ; my life has not been fit to meet His holy eyes." They urged his church-going, his sacrament-taking, his family prayers. "All the worse for me," he groaned in misery ; "I was praying to a Being I did not know, I was professing to remember One I had never met, and had never wanted to meet till I knew I was dying, and must meet Him. Do not speak to me if you cannot give me anything better to rest upon than

what I have been, for my life has been unfit for God from first to last."

It was while suffering thus, agonies of body, and still greater agony of soul, that he was visited one bright autumn morning, by one who had tasted that the Lord is gracious.

The sufferer welcomed his visitor most heartily, and after a very few words about his bodily pain, which was great, he burst out with the great subject which was filling his whole being. "I could bear it all easily, I believe, if I only knew that I were safe for eternity," he said.

"But," said his friend, "does not the scripture say, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved,' and does not another scripture say, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out'? Are you the first that He has refused to receive?"

"I cannot come; I am afraid to come; it is my sin that keeps me from coming."

"God says, in 1 John i. 7, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' Does not His *all* take in yours too?"

"But my life has been lived without God up till now, it has been a wicked life."

Here his wife interposed. "Oh, Robert," she said, "that is not true; you have been a good husband, and a good father, and a good friend. There is not a man who knows you who does not call you a good man, and I know I do," added the weeping woman.

"Wife, you do not know me. I have just been a hypocrite all my days, fair outside—and a wicked man all the time."

"Well," said his visitor, "listen to what the apostle Paul said to a wicked man: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' The man to whom this was said had been ill-treating God's servants, and had

almost committed suicide, when God's grace stopped him."

"Yes, he had been a wicked man, it is true, but he had not sinned as I have; he had not heard the gospel, over and over again, and gone on just the same. He believed when he first heard, and he had his life still before him to give to God; but my life is over, it is too late for me."

"But Scripture gives us another story of a man, the sands of whose life had more nearly run out than yours have, when he turned round to the Lord. The dying robber, in Luke xxiii., had only a few short hours to live when he repented, and turned to the Saviour, and He did not say to him, 'You are too late!' but, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise!' He had no life left to give to God."

"The thief on the cross—oh! if I were only like him—why he gave the very grandest testimony to the Lord

Jesus that ever was given. He owned Jesus as Lord and Christ when he saw Him dying on a cross by his side, dying seemingly the same death that he was dying. The thief's was great faith, for the very disciples had run away, and his was the only voice raised to confess Him in that awful moment. I would rather have been that dying robber than even the apostle Paul, for the apostle Paul confessed Him after he had seen Him in the glory, but the thief confessed Him, not even when He was walking through the land doing miracles, but when He was dying on a cross, alone and forsaken. I should have had no fear if I could have owned Him thus."

"Well, my friend, leaving the amount of your faith out of the question, can you not trust the saving power of the blood that the Lord Jesus shed there as enough to cleanse even your sins? You say you have found out you are a great

sinner, but is not Jesus a great enough Saviour to save you? His blood is enough to satisfy God, is it not enough to satisfy you? You say it is too late, but the Master of the house has not yet risen and shut to the door. Still the Saviour is saying, ‘Come unto me!’ not ‘Depart from me!’ Still the word is, ‘Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!’”

But nothing as yet seemed to suit his case, or meet his soul's need. Silently his friend looked to the Lord to come in, in His power and grace, and to speak peace to this troubled, anxious one, for it was evident there was no cavilling, no gainsaying here, but a heart that had been probed to its depths, and could not be lightly healed.

The three occupants of that room, the dying husband, the sorrow-stricken wife, and the anxious visitor, sat in silence for some minutes. The suffer-

ing man broke the silence. "I know every word you have read is true, all true for some one else," he said; "but this is my great trouble, I never turned round to the Lord till I knew I had only a few months, at longest, to live—and—yes, the truth may as well come out, I want Him now because I am afraid to die without Him. If I had been well and strong, I believe I should still be going on in the old way. Do you know what I mean? It is a shelter I want, and it is a poor mean thing only to go to Him for shelter. How could He take me? If I had only come to Him before I knew I was going to die, I do not think my sins would have kept Him from taking me; but only to come for a shelter,—oh! He would not, could not have me," and the big man, who had once been so strong, bowed his head on his hands on the table, and his whole frame shook with emotion.

The secret of his soul was all out now, there were no reserves.

"The Lord Jesus will not have you, because you are coming to Him for shelter? Is that the trouble?"

"Yes, that is it, that is it!"

"Oh, then, I have a magnificent message for you out of His own Word—His words, not mine. He promises, and confirms His word by an oath, that those who have 'fled for refuge,' just as you have done, or want to do, may have 'strong consolation.'"

The sufferer raised his head, and gazed earnestly at the speaker.

Opening the Bible at Hebrews vi., his friend said: "Here is God's very message for you, out of His own Word. Listen: 'God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to

lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have *fled for refuge* to lay hold upon the hope set before us' (Heb. vi. 7, 18). There you see that is like you—'Fled for refuge;' and God's word and His oath are pledged that you might have 'strong consolation.' Do you not remember, in the Old Testament, the man-slayer was safe who fled to the city of refuge?"

Bewilderment and hope struggled together on his face as he gasped out, "That is not in the Bible, I never read that, though I know all about the man-slayer, and the cities of refuge."

"Well, it is in my Bible, at any rate, and if you open yours at Hebrews vi. 17, I think you will find it in yours too."

His hand trembled as he grasped the large Bible by his side, and turned its pages eagerly, but incredulity gave place to hope, and hope to deep peace and joy, as he read

for himself the words that had just been read to him. "Yes, yes, that exactly fits me,—'Fled for refuge, fled for refuge;' and there is 'strong consolation' for such, and 'a sure and steadfast anchor' for the soul. God's word and God's oath pledged. I never knew that was in the Bible till this moment, and I thought I knew the Bible. Wife, give me pen, and ink, and paper; let me write it out for myself, and feast on the words, and mark the day in my Bible when I first saw them. Oh, to think He would receive the ones who only fly for refuge to Him."

His wife passed him the pen, and ink, and paper, and he wrote out the verses that had brought peace and rest to his troubled soul. He wrote the day of the month in his Bible, on the margin of the page of Hebrews vi., and then he said, "Will you kneel down and thank Him with me?"

By the help of the table and chair he got down on his knees, in spite of the pain he was enduring, and after his friend had thanked the Lord for His grace to him, he burst forth with such a note of praise and thanksgiving as must have given joy in heaven, joy to the heart of the Good Shepherd, who had found this wandering sheep, and put him on His shoulders, and was carrying him home.

From this day he never had a doubt. "How could I doubt?" he used to say; "I have God's word and God's oath to rest upon, that is a sure enough foundation."

He had read the Bible all his life, so he knew the letter of it wonderfully well, and now the Spirit of God opened up to him its meaning, and when too ill to read, or even to be read to, passages long known in his head, were now a comfort and joy to his heart, and were constantly

coming from his lips. One very favourite verse with him was, “A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa. xxxii. 2).

“That is what the Lord Jesus has been, and is to me,” he said one day, when his friend went in to sit for a while with him. “He was a hiding place and a covert when I needed the shelter so badly, and now He is always refreshing my soul with the rivers of His grace, and I rest under His shadow, when else the burden and heat of the day would be too much for me.”

He could not hold his tongue about the One who had saved him, and all He had done for him, and he was earnest and faithful in his warnings and pleadings with those who were unsaved. Specially was he anxious about those who were trusting to

any doings of their own, telling them his own experience, and pressing upon them to see to it, ere they came to a death-bed, that they were possessors of Christ, and not merely professors of His name. He told out so simply all his own trouble of soul, his unfitness for God, and how he had fled as a guilty sinner to the God-man, who is a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the storm.

His words were used by the Spirit of God to carry conviction to more than one heart, for many of those who visited him constantly, said, "If Robert's life was not good enough for God, what about ours?" and some never rested again till their burden of sin dropped at the feet of Jesus.

He lived more than three months after the morning when he took shelter under the blood of the Lamb slain, and knew that judgment could not overtake him. During those

months he learnt to know that he was not merely sheltered from judgment, but was “made nigh” to God “by the blood of Christ”; was not merely a pardoned sinner, but a child of God, an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ.

His bodily sufferings increased greatly, but his patience was a wonder to all, and was a testimony to the sustaining power of the knowledge of the love of Christ. His one great desire for himself seemed to be to know as much as possible of the One to whom he was going, before he went to Him.

One day towards the end of his earthly history his friend quoted these lines to him :—

“There no stranger-God shall meet thee,
 Stranger thou in courts above,
 He who to His rest shall greet thee,
 Greet thee with a well-known love.”

“No stranger-God,” he repeated, “and yet He was a stranger to me four

months ago, but now His is a well-known love."

Almost his last words, to the friend who had seen him three or four times a week for these months, were—"I shall see Him soon now, and be with Him who loved me, and gave Himself for me—even for me. In His presence is fulness of joy."

Reader, could you enter His presence with the same calm confidence, or are these words still true for you?

"AFTER DEATH THE JUDGMENT."

"When first I heard of Jesus' name,
I only then for refuge came;
I heard that He for sinners died,
And from His heart and wounded side
Had shed the water and the blood
To wash and make me fit for God.

I've found Him meet my every need,
That He a Saviour is indeed;
Each rising want has been supplied
Whene'er to Him I have applied;
He is of grace the treasury,
All fulness dwells in Him for me."

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