



Age 32

REV. ROBERT WRIGHT CARPENTER

1831 - 1871

CONGREGATIONAL MINISTER



REV. ROBERT WRIGHT CARPENTER

SERMON - LECTURES

AND

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

TRANSCRIBER'S FORWARD

Of our great grandfather Carpenter we have precious little – of his writings and who he really was. He was only privileged to sojourn 40 years on this earth. However, through these three small written pieces, we see a man of great moral rectitude and integrity, a man who is deeply devoted to his Lord and Savior, and a man of rich education. The first piece is his first sermon written at college and which was delivered at Essex on October 8, 1854. This sermon was titled *The Secure Refuge*. The second piece is a rough sketch of *The Secure Refuge*, and is titled *Christ, the Only Hiding Place*. The third work is a *Lecture on Early Christian Life in the Second Century*, delivered at a social tea on January 26, 1865.

The 19th Century English style of handwriting was different than that to which we in 20th Century America are accustomed, and although great grandfather's penmanship was beautiful to look at, deciphering some words was a challenge, as various letters, for instance the T's and the L's, though different letters, were so similarly written as to be hardly distinguishable, for he hardly ever crossed his T's; and some words were broken in the middle to look like two separate words.

My background and high interest in early Christian and Roman history and Greek philosophy facilitated the transcription of the above third work significantly, as some words could only be deciphered through a knowledge in these areas. And having personally experienced the difficulty attached to the reading of his works in their original form, it became clear to me that hardly any one in the family would be willing to expend the necessary effort to fully decipher his writings without at least the assistance of a reasonably accurate computer-printed transcription. I feel a sense of gratitude and satisfaction to be in a position to provide this kind of service to anyone among his posterity who may desire to retain a personal copy of these few writings.

And finally, after reading these lecture-sermons one may be inclined to judge his dear widow of 43 years, our great grandmother Elizabeth Link Hatten, a little less harshly for having disowned her son for leaving England and joining up with "the Mormons". This would be somewhat similar to the son of an LDS bishop among us settling in England, joining some sect of infamous reputation, and later serving as a missionary, raising a family, and holding important offices in the same.

- G. Arthur Carpenter

The Secure Refuge

Psalms 32, first clause, 7th verse, "Thou art my hiding place"

NOTE: This was his first sermon written at college, and was preached at Forest Gate, Essex on Oct. 8, 1854, when he was 23 years of age. Of the three written pieces, this manuscript is the most clean and polished in penmanship. The other two appear to have been prepared in haste as evidenced by the coarser penmanship and the several words that were lined out. Thus, one may conclude that they were drafts or sketches and not the finished piece ready for formal delivery as was this one. Even at best, the style of his penmanship presents a challenge. For example, his "P's" and "F's" and his "G's" and "Y's" can be confused, as well as his "T's" and "L's" since he hardly ever crossed his T's. After much tedious examination, I was able to accurately transcribe every word in this work. Once again, we see that his passion for his Lord and Savior is pronounced, and the depth of his religious education quite evident.

- G. A. Carpenter, transcriber

The experience of wise and good men is at all times useful and instructive, especially on subjects of importance and which relate to the happiness and welfare of others. The Psalm before us is strictly of an experimental character. This may be inferred from the title *Maschil*, or "giving instruction".

David is here speaking of the blessedness resulting from a sense of pardoned sin. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile." (In) this statement he proceeds to illustrate and confirm from his own experience – "When I kept silence, that is did not confess my sin, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Such was the intense mental agony he endured that his body became weak and emaciated, and even the juices of life were dried up as a shriveled plant. No doubt the king performed his daily duties, and his courtiers little suspected the bitter anguish that wrung his spirit. He took his accustomed place in the council chamber and the banqueting hall, but amid all his splendor there was within, this tumult and agitation he so forcibly describes. And such is the condition of all who retain their sins unconfessed and unpardoned. "Whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy".

But now mark the change: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." As soon as the resolution is formed and acted upon, then relief and forgiveness are imparted. David would publish this fact as a blessed certainty and record it for the comfort and assurance of all those in a similar position. "For this, this blessing of pardon shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found"; and then follow the words of our text: "Thou art my hiding place". This passage, though short, contains the very essence of the gospel. And such is the extensive field it presents for contemplation that a lifetime might be spent in the work, and the subject still remain unexhausted.

Man in all ages has sought for hiding places. Conscious of sin, he has endeavored to find a shelter from the wrath of an offended God, to seek a refuge where he could escape the eye of that holy Being in whose sight sin is a loathsome and abominable thing. All the religious systems man has established have had this as a prominent feature of their teaching. Conscience has told him his guilt, discovered to him his peril, revealed his danger, and in order to avert it he has found out a hiding place wherein to conceal himself from the presence of the Lord.

This was the very first act of fallen man. You will remember that our first parents, as soon as "their eyes were opened" and they became conscious of the magnitude of their transgression in eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden on the cool of the day, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. And the Lord called unto Adam and said unto him, "Where art thou?" And he said, "I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid, and I hid myself".

Look at the heathen, past and present. They have the undefinable consciousness of right and wrong, a vague notion that there is a Being different and superior to themselves whom if they offend will hereafter reprove and punish. The moral law of their nature tells them this, and they strive to propitiate the Almighty according to their several notions of what may be pleasing to Him, and seek shelter from his wrath in the varied forms of idolatrous superstition. Mohammedism and Romanism with its creeds, sacraments, and services, what do these teach but the effort on the part of their followers to find refuge in mere ritual observances from God's anger on account of sin, and by works of self-righteousness to make a hiding place for their souls wherein they can abide safe and in secret. The infidel too has his hiding place which is to deny the existence of a God altogether; and behind the curtain of infidelity he flatters himself he shall remain unobserved, and if there be a God, he is safe in this refuge of lies, and challenges the believer to dispute its security.

But these are not the only hiding places wherein men seek concealment from the wrath of God. Look at yonder individual who rises early and sits up late, carries his diligence in business to the extremity of exertion, hoards with a miser's hand his gains, striving continually to increase them. What is he doing? Laying up provision for his family, say you? Nay, rather building a hiding place "paved with gold, ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion." There is another, regular at the public ordinances of worship, upright and conscientious in all his dealings, careful never "to go beyond nor defraud his brother in any matter", the pattern of everything that is amiable and the exposition of every virtue. Why is he so careful to maintain all these? Not merely for the approbation of his fellow men, but that his morality may serve him as a hiding place where he may be safe from the divine displeasure. And thus wealth, morality, amiability of character, religious parentage, and many refuges of like kind do men rely on for safety when "the great day of God's wrath shall come", in which says the Apostle, "Who shall be able to stand?"

All such will prove false and fragile. There is one, and only one, safe hiding place for sinful man to which we would now endeavor to direct your attention; The Rock of Ages, Jesus the Savior, Christ the Redeemer, "in the secret of whose tabernacle being hidden" you are happy in

time and safe for eternity. We remark that Christ is the only hiding place for the sinner.

- I. From the condemnation of a broken Law.
- II. From the wrath of an offended God.
- III. From the outraged mercy of a loving Father. (and)
- IV. From the merited punishment of a just Judge.

- I. From the condemnation of a broken Law.

It is impossible for man to keep perfectly the law of God. We now refer more particularly to the precepts of his word and the Ten Commandments. An individual may not have violated any of them literally, actually committed the sins they forbid, or neglected the duties they enjoin, but scripture tells us that the desire in God's sight is equivalent to the action, and the law notices the disposition as well as the practice. Cherishing revengeful feelings, indulging impure thoughts, harboring unkindness in the breast to those who have injured us, all these are virtual infractions of God's holy law.

Take for instance the first and great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself", on which, said Christ, "hang all the law and the prophets". What man ever has or ever does keep that divine injunction? Does not the daily experience of the most conscientious Christian prove that he comes far short of this sublime behest, to say nothing of those who are not God's people? "Man is verily guilty concerning this matter". But notwithstanding his inability, penalty for its violation remains recorded and condemnation impends over the transgressor. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith it saith to them under the law, that every mouth should be stopped, all the world become guilty before God."

How then is the sinner to avoid this penalty? Where is he to hide from the consequences of his disobedience? Justice, like the avenger of blood, pursues his trembling spirit. To what city of refuge shall he flee, or what satisfaction can he offer? For the one is necessary and the other demanded. Alas! He knows not. But hark! Whilst justice is rigidly enforcing her demands and about to unsheathe her glittering sword, a voice is heard saying: "Lo, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me I delight to do thy will O God, yea thy law is within my heart". 'Tis the voice of Jesus. He magnified the law and made it honorable, fulfilled its minutest requirements by a life of perfect holiness, and by a voluntary death exhausted the penalty man had incurred by its transgression. He took as it were, the two tables of stone and hid them in his riven side, thus having in himself fulfilled their demands and effecting what man was unable to accomplish. Therefore, in the language of triumphant confidence we can exclaim: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again who is even at the right hand of God where he ever liveth to make intercession for us."

II. Christ is the only hiding place from the wrath of an offended God.

“God is angry with the wicked every day. Upon the wicked God shall rain snares, brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup”. These are fearful words and express the magnitude of God’s displeasure against sinful man. We read that before the deluge “God looked down from heaven and saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth”. And oh, what an amount of sin prevails in these later days and amid the blessings of a gospel dispensation! Iniquity pours down our streets like water, and the miasma of the polluted stream rises in thick clouds to heaven invoking the vengeance of the Most High.

Who can contemplate the sins committed in our own country without trembling whilst reflecting on the consequences of such ungodliness? Look at the thousands who regularly profane God’s holy day, the myriads who are the slaves of their sensual appetites, and the far greater number of those who live in a systematic neglect of all the high and holy principles of morality and a daily violation even of those commands which it is in the power of man to practice and the omission of those duties he is able to perform. If we ponder these facts and then consider the character of God as revealed in His Word as a Being of inflexible justice “who will by no means clear the guilty” nor suffer sin to go unpunished, we may well inquire with the prophet: “What shall the end of these things be?” for “Shall I not visit them for these things saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?”

But we should not forget that this amount of transgression is made up of individual sins and that every single sinner is exposed to the wrath of an offended God. Jehovah not only punishes universally but individually, and every one will have to give an account of himself to that Being whose laws he has despised and whose displeasure he has disregarded. Brethren, although you may (have) avoided the grosser sins, you are none the less exposed to the anger of a holy God. As long as you are living in a state of alienation from Him, despising His mercy, neglecting His salvation, refusing His Gospel, and careless of your souls, so long are you liable to his wrath. Review your past lives, enumerate the many privileges you have abused, the many offers of grace you have rejected, the many invitations of mercy you have disregarded, the many expressions of His love you have slighted, the many strivings of His Spirit you have silenced, and think you that He is unmindful of all this, and that His forbearance and longsuffering will continue forever? Lay not, we beseech you, this flattering unction to your souls, for “all unrighteousness is sin”, and there is no sin greater than the habitual refusal of those offers of grace God has made to man in His holy word and the constant neglect of His mercy and love. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?

For we know him that hath said, “Vengeance is mine, I will recompense saith the Lord.” To this vengeance you are exposed every day. This retribution may overtake you ere you are conscious of its approach; and where will you flee for shelter? When the tempest of God’s

wrath descends on your defenseless spirits, to what hiding place will you resort? All those you have erected will be swept away as chaff before the whirlwind. "For who can stand before His indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him."

The only sure refuge is Christ Jesus. Found in him you will be safe from the consequences and condemnation of sin. On His head were expended the vials of God's wrath. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, it pleased the Lord to bruise him", therefore he is fitted to be the refuge for sinful man from the merited indignation of a holy God. By suffering in the sinners' stead and receiving the sinner's punishment a guilty world is relieved from the penalty due for transgression and safe in the refuge Jesus has provided.

But this hiding place is of no avail unless it be entered. The sinner must come to Christ ere he can participate in the blessings of this atonement. Yonder is the city of refuge, "set upon a hill, that it cannot be hid". How calm and peaceful its situation, how strong and safe its enclosure! Haste, sinner, haste! "The heavens are growing black with clouds and wind", and the storm of God's wrath is about to break on your defenseless head. "Escape for thy life! Tarry not in all the plain!" Once entered, thou art secure for ever, but woe unto thee should the tempest burst ere thou hast reached its protecting precincts. "For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up saith the Lord of hosts and leave them neither root nor branch."

III. Christ Jesus is the only hiding place from the outraged mercy of a loving Father.

There is no relationship in which God has revealed himself to sinful man so full of tender associations as that of Father. Divesting himself of the majesty of his glory, he condescends to assume affinity with the creatures he has formed and calls them his children. "I will be a Father to them, and they shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty". Although this is especially true of those who are his children by adoption and grace yet all mankind participate in the paternal care of the great and beneficent God. "Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us?"

This fact is but little remembered and in too many instances forgotten altogether by a large portion of the human family, exciting the indignant reproof of Jehovah. "A son honoreth his Father and a servant his master. If I then be a Father where is my honor? And if I be a master where is my fear?" The daily mercies we enjoy are proofs of His fatherly care. It is He who spreads our table in the wilderness, provides for our returning bodily wants, "keeps our eyes from tears, our souls from death, and our feet from falling"; and thus we walk from day to day in the land of the living.

That we may not remain unacquainted with our duties to Himself and our fellow men he has given us a revelation whereby we may rightly discharge them. Seeing our inability to do any good thing He sent His well-beloved Son, our elder Brother, to sojourn on this earth, presenting

us with a pattern of moral excellence and leaving behind Him “an example that we should head in his steps” and has moreover assured us that He will hereafter give us a name and a place among his redeemed children around his throne in glory. In addition to these general we are also the recipients of particular blessings. Who, on taking a retrospective review of the past, cannot say “Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life”, goodness undeserved, mercy unmerited, for “he hath not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities?”

Sinner, do you ever reflect on these things and realize the obligations you are under to so kind and gracious a God? Notwithstanding all your rebellion and sinfulness, all your ingratitude and impenitence, the mercies of your God and Father are still continued. Though by your conduct you virtually renounce all claims to the relationship yet he does not disown his disobedient child. His love and pity still follow you in the far country where you have wandered, and he anxiously waits the utterance of the penitent resolutions, “I will arise and go to my Father”. Even when obliged to chastise you in order to see whether or no you will acknowledge the relationship, his heart has yearned over you with more than an earthly parent’s love; and he has said: “Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him saith the Lord.”

But count not, we beseech you, on this longsuffering. Whilst there is nothing stronger than a Father’s love there is nothing more terrible than a Father’s anger. Although “he is the Lord God merciful and gracious” yet when that mercy is outraged by repeated neglect it will speedily be changed for retributive and fearful punishment. All who have despised this mercy are exposed to this dreadful chastisement, a chastisement the more severe because inflicted by that Being whose manifestations hitherto had only been those of tenderness and love.

Oh, when the wrath of this angry Parent pursues you where will you hide to escape its fury? What refuge will you seek, where will you conceal yourselves in the day of his visitation? The only sure hiding place is to be found in Christ Jesus. He as your Elder Brother pleads on your behalf with that Father whose mercy and love you have contemned, becomes the Mediator between the adverse parties, and effects a happy reconciliation. We remember how we when children having offended our earthly parents and were exposed to their displeasure, how gratefully we accepted the offers of any one who would intercede on our behalf, and how safe we felt in the shelter of their mediations. Thus, through the prevalence of Christ’s intercession, God’s anger is averted and we are safe from the consequences of neglected mercy.

Brethren, have you fled to this hiding place? Have you entered it by penitence and prayer? Have you in self humiliation exclaimed: “Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee and am no more worthy to be called thy son?” If so, happy are ye; to you shall be extended your Father’s forgiveness, and the joyful assurance of pardon shall be conveyed to your soul. “Son, go in peace thy sins are forgiven thee” so that in filial confidence you will be able to exclaim: “my Father and my God”.

IV. Christ is the only hiding place from the merited punishment of a just Judge.

Although men may escape punishment for their sins in this life, yet a day is approaching “when every one will receive for the things done in the body according to that he hath done whether they be good or bad.” Many flatter themselves because God allows them to pursue their evil ways undisturbed and uncorrected, therefore he will not visit them hereafter. This presumption on the forbearance of God is often the cause of the sinner growing more determined in sin. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet it shall not be well with him because he feareth not God.” Jehovah is a God of truth, and every one of his words endureth forever, not only of promise but of threatening.

We might adduce many examples of this. Because of the wickedness of the antediluvian world, “The Lord said I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them”. But God did not carry this resolution into effect immediately on its utterance. More than one hundred years elapsed. The transgressors thought it forgotten altogether. “For in the days before the flood (we are told) they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and knew (or remembered not) until the flood came and took them all away.”

So the case of the Amalekites. We read in Exodus 17:14, when Israel came out of Egypt, “Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Rephidim ... And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.” Time rolled on. No doubt both by Israel and Amalek, Rephidim was well nigh forgotten but not by God. After four hundred years comes the execution of the threatening. In I Samuel 15:2, the prophet Samuel is commissioned to go to Saul with this message from the Almighty: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not.”

And sinner, do you think that you shall evade a like retribution? Your sins and God’s justice demand that you should not, neither will you. For “The Lord shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who know not God and that obey not the Gospel of Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.” There will be no escape in that day; all hiding places will be useless, for God has said: “Though they dig into hell, hence shall my hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, hence will I bring them down; and though they hide themselves in the lap of Carmel, I will search and take them out hence, and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, hence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them.” You may call to the rocks and the mountains saying, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne”, but they will heed not your voice. Nothing in God’s universe can then

afford you shelter, and you must stand a trembling culprit before your Judge to hear your doom.

Brethren, can you reflect on the defenseless condition of the impenitent transgressor unmoved and unalarmed? Endeavor to realize the awful reality of that day as described in the concluding verses of the 20th chapter of Revelation: the great white throne with its dreadful occupant, the retreating earth and heavens, the sea giving up her dead, the countless throng hushed in silent agonizing expectation, the open books and the voice of God to acquit or condemn (the only sound that echoes through the empty universe) whilst far off is seen the glory of the celestial city and "the blackness of darkness forever". Attempt, we say, to realize this great assize and then inquire whether or no you are prepared with a hiding place to shelter you in that day?

Although unattainable then, we can direct you to (a) safe one now. The Rock of Ages is the only Rock that will remain unshaken, the only hiding place in which you can be safe from the punishment due for sin. Will you enter? We invite you again to Christ, offer you once more salvation through Him; safety for time, security for eternity. Delay not, we beseech you, this provision for your defense. Jesus is waiting to welcome you. The arms of his mercy are widely extended. He himself bids you come, his ambassadors entreat you. Those who have fled to the refuge beckon you to enter. Thickening shadows warn you that the night of eternity is fast approaching. Hasten then, we beseech you, to this hiding place, or else the messenger of the Judge may surprise you unprepared, "and what will ye then do in the day of his visitation?"

May God's Holy Spirit lead you to see the importance of thus "fleeing from the wrath to come", and to His name shall be all the praise. (Amen) Oct. 8th 1854

(First sermon written at college, and first sermon preached on above date at Forest Gate, Essex)