

## Finding refuge in the Lord

Have you ever done something that you regretted and wished that someone would believe you that you regretted it? You know that you've done wrong but would like a second chance and understand that there may still be consequences for your actions.

Joshua 20: 1 – 9

### 1) The Lord is our refuge

- The Old Testament finds its fulfilment in the New Testament and we no longer have Cities of refuge.
  - Psalm 46: 1 – 7 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.
- A refuge is a place of safety. A secure place from all danger outside.
  - For Noah and his family found refuge in the Ark.
  - The Israelites found refuge in their homes with the blood on their doorposts during the Passover.
  - Most cities at that time were walled cities giving refuge to the citizens from outside invaders.
- When we run to the Lord for Salvation, we enter into him by faith.
  - We find our refuge in Jesus.

### 2) The Lord is the avenger of blood

- The avenger of blood was the closest male relative of the person who was killed.
  - He was allowed to legally kill the person who had killed his relative if the person was outside the city of refuge.
- Many people quote the passage of “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” as a legitimate reason to take revenge on someone,
  - That is wrong!
  - That was given as part of the judicial system to state that the punishment must fit the crime. Nothing more and nothing less!
- The law of the avenger of blood no longer applies to us – anyone at the present time.
- God is the avenger of blood. He is the one who avenges and judges all sin.
  - Revelation 6: 10 – 11 They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.
  - Romans 12: 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.
- The whole world lies under the wrath of God
  - Romans 1: 18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

### **3) He protects us from all sin**

- The good news is that he has made for us a city of refuge where we find shelter from his wrath.
- As the person who unintentionally killed someone to find refuge in the city of refuge so we need to run to Jesus our Saviour, the only one who is able to save us from the wrath of God.
- It is he who delivers us from sin on which the wrath is coming and it is he who protects us from sin so that we may walk in it no longer.
- If we happen to sin he is also our advocate interceding on our behalf.
  - 1 John 2: 1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.
- As with the city of refuge Jesus does not protect us if we intentionally carry on in a lifestyle of sin.
  - Hebrews 10: 26 – 31 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

### **4) The Lord is the High Priest**

- The person who takes refuge in the city of refuge is safe there until the death of the high priest. He can then return safely to his home town.
- Jesus is our eternal high priest who will never die. We are therefore perpetually safe in him as our refuge.

### **5) The church is a safe place**

- The cities of refuge were all situated within the community of Israel.
- Now Christ himself is our refuge, and the church is his body.
- The church cannot be divorced from Christ as the body cannot be separated from the head.
- The church then, being the community of believers in Christ ought to be a safe place where people can take refuge.
  - This doesn't mean that the church just accepts wilful sinful lifestyles. It means that it recognises each other struggling on this journey together.
  - We are a community that holds on to truth and exercises grace at the same time.
  - It judges actions by the Word of God but isn't judgmental.
  - Each person in the community of believers has to find refuge in the Lord themselves.