



THE eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. (Deuteronomy 33:27)

There are great old hymns that reveal our Lord as a Great Refuge to which the sinner may find safe harbor – hymns such as *Rock of Ages* by Augustus Toplady; *Brightly Beams our Father's Mercy* by Philip Bliss; and one great hymn that is dear to my heart, *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms* by AJ Showalter of Dalton, Georgia. Mr. Showalter, a lay evangelist, wrote this at Cherry Log Methodist Church (White, GA) in 1887 when answering a letter to a bereaved man whose wife had recently passed away in north Alabama. The words of Deuteronomy 33:27 (quoted above) came to the young man's memory, and the words to a new hymn flowed almost without human thought from his pen. The hymn went around the world in three months without the aid of telephone or television. The Christian, as a member of the Bride of Christ (Church), leans upon the Lord whenever the travel is wearisome and the soul faints. ⁵ *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.* (Song of Songs 8:5)

In order to enjoy the protection of a REFUGE, we must enter in at the Gate of the Refuge.. That Gate, or Door, is Christ. ⁹ *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.* (John 10:9) In today's environment of loose preaching and marginally biblical theology, I feel the need to emphasize that Jesus is not simply the DOOR, but the **only** Door and means of admittance into the Refuge of God. All other doors are 'trap doors' leading to darkness and damnation. If you were able to inspect the graves of Mohammad, or of Gautama Buddha, you would find the dust of their bodies remain still in the earth. But if you went to a certain borrowed Tomb in a Garden outside Jerusalem, you would find an empty Tomb in which its occupant only rested over the Sabbath and rose on the third day. If we are in the refuge provided by Mohammad or Buddha, we will be destined to share their eternal tombs; but if we are in Christ, there is no death in Him, and we have an eternally living refuge, and an empty, borrowed tomb in our future.

Christ is our Great Rock of Refuge as Toplady so beautifully expresses consistent with Holy Scripture. In his hymn the Rock to which Toplady refers is that Great Rock which both led and followed Israel in the Wilderness, and out of which flowed living water at Mt. Horeb. That cleft Rock is the very Rock of Calvary whose side was cleft by a sword and from which wound flowed both blood and water. ⁴ *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.* (1 Corinthians 10:4) It is that Great Massive Rock (Petras) upon which the Church is founded and not that 'chip off the old Rock,' Peter, which was a stone (petros) from that Rock. Remember that our natures are changed by the justifying redemption of Christ and our continual sanctification in following Him. Though we may be tiny stones, we nevertheless are composed of the same nature as the Rock from which we are hewn.

Christ is also our Great Harbor of Rest from which we are protected from the seasonal storms of life. He is our Fair Havens to weather the immoderate waves of the sea for a time. If we reject The Fair Havens, we place our souls in jeopardy for the time. (Acts 27:8). Our ships of soul may sooner break apart and subject us to peril of soul from which we may only recover after much trial and testing (as was Paul's experience on the storms of the sea).

On my visits to Haiti, I was impressed by the name and layout of the main harbor there. The Harbor is named after the capital, Port au Prince, which means "Port of the Prince" which is Christ. The harbor is well-protected and meanders from the open sea to an inland haven protected on three sides by a land mass. There is a great lighthouse centrally located in the Harbor which proclaims a place of refuge to seaman fighting the tumultuous waves and billows of a storm at sea. Its beams sweep the waves and beckons to these men to "take refuge in my haven." But, as the ships of sea approach the harbor inlet, they discover that the channel into the harbor is winding and circuitous. So, further assistance is required from some source. That further source of help comes in the form of lower lights position along the shores of the harbor to help direct the navigator to the Great Lighthouse where certain safety resides. In our earthly journey, that Great Lighthouse is Christ; and the Lower Lights are His people who help lead lost men and women to the source of refuge.

The Lord is not only our Rock of Defense, but our Fortress to whom we must resort for cover. This is so important for us to know that the Lord has reiterated the fact over and over in His Word. One law of learning is this: "Repetition aids recall." Those points that the Lord desires us to commit to unfailing memory are pointed out more than once in His Holy word. Here are just a few passages reminding us of our Fortress in Christ: ² *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* (Psalm 18:2) He is not only our walls of protection, but our deliverer who must seek us out when dangers threaten. Then, too, He is our High Tower from which we can detect the enemies movements against us in prophecy. ³ *For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.* (Psalm 31:3) Because we bear His Name, He not only leads us in safety, but guides us from His protective Presence in the rear echelons of our march. (see also Psalms 71:3, 91:2, and 144:2, plus many more).

⁵ *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.* (Psalm 27:5). His PAVILION is a royal palace of comfort and security which serves as well as a place of worship (Tabernacle). We shall be securely situated in His Pavilion and worship and praise Him day and night. Our Lord is more than a 'place' of living, but LIFE itself to those who believe. ³ *Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.* (Psalm 71:3) The term used for habitation is a Hebrew word

meaning the 'abiding place of God'. In Christ there is no death and, if we are IN Christ, we shall live in Him for He is our LIFE. *I am the **WAY**, the **TRUTH**, and the **LIFE**.*

Our Lord is a GRACIOUS and GENTLE Refuge. His Commandment is love, and love covers all. ⁴ *He shall cover thee with his feathers, and **under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*** (Psalm 91:4) His FORTRESS is a place of safety and confidence. Its walls are designed for protection, not confinement (as is a prison). As our faith grows stronger day by day, we will have tested the Lord's love and providence towards us, and we will have found it sure. We trust in Him as One who loves us beyond all measure of human love. ⁷ *Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.* (Psalm 63:7) The love of God cannot be measured in human terms. Certainly, there are mothers and fathers who would willingly lay down their lives for a son or daughter; but what of a stranger's son or daughter – or the son or daughter of a staunch enemy? Well, God has done that for us. *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:8)

In our day, not only will some mothers not lay down their lives for their babies, but some are even willing to kill their own offspring either in the womb, or even after birth! This is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord.. ¹⁵ *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.* ¹⁶ *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.* (Isaiah 49:15-16) Yes, indeed, He remembered each of His chosen as He hung between Heaven and earth at Calvary. He even had our names CUT (graven) into His hands there. He is ever alert to our wellbeing.

When our Lord crested the summit before Jerusalem for the last time, He wept over that sordid little city. ⁴¹ *And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,* ⁴² *Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* ⁴³ *For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,* ⁴⁴ *And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.* (Luke 19:41) Our Lord experienced sorrow and remorse for a city which He knew would brutally torture and crucify Him in a matter of days hence. In another place, He laments the destiny of Jerusalem: ³⁴ *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!* ³⁵ *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* (Luke 13:34-35)

The chicks flee to the shelter of the mother's wings at the first hint of danger. The mother will suffer even a death by fire before deserting those chicks. Do you have that confidence that God will likewise save you from every threat of Satan's devices?