

CITIES

OF

REFUGE

by Jonathan

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CITIES OF REFUGE

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HOW? WHY?

How could a preacher, mightily used of God, fall into such a problem?

How could he, when he has touched so many others for Christ, experienced such a failure and sin?

Why was he not victorious in his own life, even though he has such a successful ministry?

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The answer to these questions, or the variations of them, in a phrase, would be spiritual pride.

Normally, we would think that the problems are due to adultery, theft, jealousy, etc. All these are true, but only to the extent that they are the manifestations and symptoms of a root problem, which is the pride of life. We will attempt to show you the horror of this sin within the covers of this message.

Before you and I start to think that we are above this problem, or to say, "I would never do thus and so" or "It would never happen to me", beware! We are sowing the seed for our own destruction, just as it did for those individuals whom most of the world (and the church) consider "fallen".

If the devil could set the traps for some of these precious servants of God who started out so consecrated, holy and pure in the work of the ministry (most of them, if not all), he could trap us too~ "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy..." (JOHN 10:10). As these ministers are probably stronger in their walk with God than the average believer and yet fail, who are we to think that we do not have the capacity to falter too?

Now, this is not the time to skirt the issue, not a time for judging, but a time of heart-broken repentance for the wounded in the body of Christ. Our hearts must respond and reach out to those who are in need of restoration and those who need to restore. In these troubled times, we need to seek God and hear what He is

saying to the church, for the ones who have sinned and are seeking to "recover themselves out of the snare of the devil" (2 TIMOTHY 2:26) as well as for those who are hurt by the failures of those who disappointed them and are in need of healing.

To be certain, we should never condone sin, nor should we fail to confront wrongdoing; however, I am concerned that restoration is the responsibility of the church whenever there is genuine repentance on the part of the offender. Unfortunately, the measures many of us in the church deal with those who have fallen into temptation is abominable in the sight of God. It is contrary to the way God has instructed us to deal with them, which reads, "BRETHREN, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (GALATIANS 6:1).

Also, consider the following verses of Scripture,

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 PETER 4:8);

"Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins" (PROVERBS 10:12);

"Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Se'lah" (PSALM 85:2);

"Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine" (EZEKIEL 16:8).

As covering sin (in the sense of being under the blood of the Lamb) was, and still is, God's idea, any attempt to destroy or judge a brother or sister who has since repented would incur the wrath and judgment of God- "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way" (ROMANS 14:12-13). What a sobering thought! You see, any failure, whatever the case, always carries with it its own punishment and for any one to further inflict punishment on the offender is to usurp God's authority and to assume a presumptuous position above God.

When we do not try our best to restore our repentant brother or sister overtaken in a fault, we are in essence, setting our own "laws" and standard higher than that of God's Word. Actually, we are ourselves guilty of the sin of the pride of life as well as the sin of idolatry- "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 PETER 5:5); "Pride *goeth* before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (PROVERBS 16:18); "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 CORINTHIANS 10:14). However, lest some of you think that to befriend the fallen is to approve of their sin or to tolerate their wrongdoing, nothing could be further from the truth...

THERE MUST BE TELL TALE SIGNS AND THE FRUITS OF REPENTANCE

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (MATTHEW 7:15-21).

"The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (PSALM 51:17).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (GALATIANS 5:22-23).

"Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (JAMES 5:16).

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The following questions, when properly answered, will determine and reveal true biblical repentance,

Is the individual's life reflecting the fruit of the Spirit (according to GALATIANS 5:22-23)?;

Is there godly sorrow (according to 2 CORINTHIANS 7:10)?;

Is there an attitude of humility, a broken and contrite spirit (according to PSALM 51:17)?;

Is there a willingness to forsake the wrongdoing (according to ISAIAH 55:7)?

If the answers are in the affirmative, then we must love and support him or her, holding him or her in our prayers,

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (MARK 12:30-31);

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (JOHN 13:34-35);

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (EPHESIANS 4:31-32).

Admittedly, it takes the *agape* love of God to forgive and restore, according to 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7, "Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"; but this is not an option, it is commitment for the highest good and best interest, to the glory of God.

Actually, the only foundation whereby we should disassociate with any fallen individual is when he or she persists in active and open sinning, causing reproach to the name of Christ, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what

have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 CORINTHIANS 5:11-13).

GUARD YOUR HEART AND TAME YOUR TONGUE

"O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (MATTHEW 12:34).

"Thou shalt not go up and down *as* a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I *am* the LORD" (LEVITICUS 19:16).

"The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly" (PROVERBS 18:8).

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (MATTHEW 12:36).

"JUDGE not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (MATTHEW 7:1-2).

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While I strongly believe in exercising "righteous judgment" (according to JOHN 7:24) and the watching of external evidence of repentance and the fruit of the Spirit, I realize that the root of repentance is internal and God alone knows and searches the heart. Hence, by the grace and help of God, I will endeavour to continue to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (JUDE 3) by discerning and exposing false doctrines and teachings. However, the Lord has convicted me in recent times that regardless of personal differences, disagreements or opinions of individuals and personalities, I am not to criticize or gossip about them.

For most of us, nothing is more desperate than the victory we need to hold our tongue. Are we guilty of criticizing and gossiping about anyone? Supposing we personally know of a brother or sister who is weak but sincere, do we keep reminding him or her of past failures, thus placing a stumbling block to where he

or she is more consumed by destructive condemnation than righteous conviction?
If so, we need to repent and say as David said, "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (PSALM 141:3).

GREAT MEN OF THE BIBLE?

How could Jacob, a supplanter, be called a prince of God (read GENESIS 32:28)?
How could God say that David's heart was perfect (according to 1 KINGS 11:4) when he committed adultery and murder (or how could Jesus be called the Son of David, spiritually-speaking, in view of David's failures)?

How could Peter preach on the day of Pentecost and see some 3000 being saved (read ACTS 2:41) when he denied Jesus a few weeks earlier (read MATTHEW 26:69-75)?

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God could have cast away Jacob, David, Peter and many others we consider great men of the Bible according to the natural course of events and what appears on the outward. But God looks on the heart.

It is easy for us to comment on the failures of others but do not forget the admonition of "...considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (GALATIANS 6:1) and "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 CORINTHIANS 10:12).

Consider this: Would you and I have definitely "known and done better" if we were in the position of David (read 2 SAMUEL 11:2-4) and Peter (read MATTHEW 26:69-75)?

No, there is absolutely no excuse or justification for failure and sin always breaks the heart of the Father but "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (ROMANS 5:20). Though God is a God of righteous judgment, His heart always reaches out to the repentant prodigal son, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (LUKE 15:32) even though he "hath devoured (his) thy living with harlots" (LUKE 15:30).

ARE YOU KNOWN IN HEAVEN AND FEARED IN HELL?

"Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the grey twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat" (Teddy Roosevelt)

"Many (or most) Christians and even preachers, little feel the sting of Satan and his cohorts simply because they little impact the world of darkness. Conversely, those that greatly impact the world of darkness, be they preacher or layman, will greatly feel the opposition of demon spirits" (Dr E.M. Bounds).

"When we go to God by prayer, the devil knows we go to fetch strength against him, and therefore he opposeth us all he can" (R. Sibbes).

"It torments the very soul of the devil, to see the Christian under sail for heaven, filled with the sweet hope of his joyful reward when he comes there; and therefore the Enemy raises what storms and tempests he can to hinder his arrival in that blessed port, or at least to make it a troublesome winter voyage" (William Gurnall, from the book, "The Christian In Complete Armour", published by Banner Of Truth).

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I do not want to glorify Satan even in the least, but he's still capable of coming to us like a flood. We need to know his devices- what Satan can and cannot do.

To begin with, no Christian can be demon possessed (read 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16 and 1 THESSALONIANS 5:23). However, it is possible for him or her to be hindered and oppressed by the powers of darkness, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*" (EPHESIANS 6:12).

In fact, I believe the more we desire to do the will of God, the greater the enemy opposes us. We should not be surprised that the more we threaten the world of darkness, the more intense the devil and his spirits will attack and curse us.

David was a man who knew the touch of God. The anointing of God in his life covered not only worship and the writing of psalms, but victories in battle and

warfare as well. But at his greatest hour (Satan attacked him when he was overwhelmed with the pride of life as self gradually became bigger and bigger), David became weary of warfare, "AND it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth *to battle*, that David sent Jo'ab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rab'bah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem" (2 SAMUEL 11:1).

David was not old or physically weak, but he was weary in his spirit. He was just going to have a little spiritual relaxation- and this was when the devil trapped him. I can imagine he must have felt the intensity of warfare and subtly, allowed the pride of previous victories to set in. As a leader, he should be on the battlefield but he remained in palace and was bored. Actually, the battle and root problem of David was not really about the lust of the eyes or the lust of the flesh as it is about...

THE PRIDE OF LIFE

"For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 JOHN 2:16).

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What about us today? In the spiritual realm, are we letting down our guard and are we tired in our walk with God?

We think we are holy because we are diligent in prayer, study of the Word and our witness. Little by little, we begin to take pride in our spiritual accomplishments and fail to realize that it is none of us and all of Him. For example, if we are being used of God in any capacity, as we witness the sick being healed, lives being transformed and demon spirits being cast out, do we inadvertently think that it is somehow our consecration, our faith and applying the right "formula" that cause these mighty things to happen?

Do we see ourselves as "mighty warriors" or merely as earthen vessels of the Master?

When we lean on our experiences of victory in doing the works of Christ (just as David was anointed in battle), what we think we accomplish in the spirit may in

reality, be the flesh. Because pride is so subtle, we have to ask, "The heart *is* deceitful above *all things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (JEREMIAH 17:9).

I don't care who you are, how consecrated or dedicated you are, how strong your walk with God is, subtle pride and deceit is lurking in all of us. We can only plead with the Lord for forgiveness, "I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings" (JEREMIAH 17:10).

If the pride of life is left unchecked, it will set the pattern for individuals (I'm not just talking about the world, but even Christians who know the Lord) to commit the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh. Naturally, for the worldly person, the sin of the pride of life is obvious and manifests itself in attitudes such as being a "self-made man or woman". However, for the Christian, the battle with pride is far more subtle, even cloak in spirituality.

Whenever David committed the sin of the pride of life, even though he was greatly anointed, " ...Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 SAMUEL 18:7), it sets the motion for him to commit the lust of the eyes (2 SAMUEL 11:2) and the lust of the flesh (2 SAMUEL 11:4).

Allow me to illustrate why the committing of the sin of the pride of life usually precedes the lust of the eyes, which in turn precedes the lust of the flesh.

A most classic example is the original effort by Satan directed to Eve, " ...then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (GENESIS 3:5).

When Eve was tempted, she yielded to the desire to be god and hence, committed the sin of the pride of life (trusting one's own ability and power instead of total dependency on God). Once this was committed, the stage was already set for her to commit the lust of the eyes, "And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise..." (GENESIS 3:6) and eventually, the lust of the flesh, " ...she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (GENESIS 3:6).

THE LUST OF THE EYES

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (MATTHEW 5:28).

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The lust of the eyes can be committed in the heart even though the sin of the lust of the flesh may not be committed. Which is why a person who have committed the lust of the eyes may go on to commit the lust of the flesh, if left undealt with.

THE LUST OF THE FLESH

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (GALATIANS 5:19-21).

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To illustrate the impact of the lust of the flesh, which is committed after an individual has already committed the sin of the pride of life and the lust of the eyes, let us consider the evidences of lasciviousness in acts like reading pornography or going to dirty movies.

Another widespread sin of the "children of the last days" is that of rebellion for "rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry..." (1 SAMUEL 15:23).

Such are scenario which point to the question...

WHERE ARE THOSE THINE ACCUSERS?

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By the grace of God, we may not yet commit horrible things like adultery or murder, but are we convicted that if we had already entertained "the pride of life", we would proceed to commit "the lust of the eyes", which would end up into "the lust of the flesh"? This is a spiritual law of "sowing and reaping" (according to

GALATIANS 6:7) and only the power of God can deliver us as we confess our helplessness within ourselves and repent.

In the encounter of Jesus with the scribes and Pharisees who brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery, the Lord knew and saw the hearts of men (read JOHN 8:1-11).

Now, the law demands that if a person commits adultery, he or she must die (read JOHN 8:5). Yet, Jesus challenged them, " ...He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (JOHN 8:7).

Even though the woman have committed the lust of the flesh (adultery) and most definitely the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, what caused even her accusers, namely the scribes and Pharisees to be "convicted by *their own* conscience" (JOHN 8:9) too? Could they also have committed the sin of the pride of life and the lust of the eyes, even if they have not yet commit the lust of the flesh?

TO DESIRE TRUTH IN THE INWARD PARTS

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (PSALM 51:6-10).

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What about us? Do we "beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (MATTHEW 7:3).

When the Lord searches our hearts and we see ourselves as we really are, we will have to quit trusting in the flesh or our self-righteousness and start leaning totally on the Spirit in order to experience the possibility of victory on the premise of Christ's finished and accomplished work on the cross.

The words of Jesus, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (JOHN 8:11) reveals the redemptive heart of God. For what the law was powerless to save, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is

guilty of all" (JAMES 2:10), Christ was made "*to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 CORINTHIANS 5:21). Because of what Christ was to do at Calvary, He was then, as is now, able to silence the "accuser of the brethren" as well as self-righteous people, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (MATTHEW 5:17-18). All of us need the Great Physician, including the Pharisees and self-righteous people. The only reason that prevented them (as are many religious people of our day) from receiving Him was their pride and self-righteous attitude~ "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (ROMANS 10:3).

The statement Jesus made in MARK 2:17 which reads, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" must also be seen in the context of other scriptures such as,

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (ROMANS 3:10);

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (ROMANS 3:23);

"For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (ECCLESIASTES 7:20);

"But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (ISAIAH 64:6);

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 JOHN 1:8).

In the sight of God, all sin is sin. Yet we have the tendency to label sin according to how serious or how light it is, how big or how little it is. We insult the unmerited favour and grace of God when we judge others of horrible sins (for example, adultery, fornication, immorality or murder) but wink at our little sin (such as watching compromising or questionable movies). In some places, we

readily excommunicate believers for committing the lust of the flesh (we should BUT only and only if the individuals are blatantly unrepentant) but yet subtly tempt others to commit the pride of life (whenever we applaud or hero worship Christian musicians or preachers in the flesh, and when it does get into their heads, that is). Do you get the point?

Because the pride of life is usually far more subtle than the lust of the eyes or the lust of the flesh, we usually fall prey to it even before we realize it. By then, it could be too late- strongholds have already been erected in our lives.

If the messages of "what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (REVELATION chapters 1:18 to 3:22) is of any indication, I believe repentance is the watchword God demands from His church today. Primarily, aside from repenting from any lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, we need to repent from the pride of life, of trying to trust in our own strength and ability. God help us look to...

THE ANSWER

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light" (MATTHEW 11:28-30).

"The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (PSALM 51:17).

"...to this *man* will I look, *even to him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (ISAIAH 66:2).

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Since we have identified ego and pride as the root cause of the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh, we need to constantly cry out to God for deliverance. It is a constant, never-ending battle. As such, there is not a once-and-for all, one time, one event kind of experience whereby we will henceforth be immune to pride for the rest of our lives.

However, we can seek to fear and love God so much that we deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Him (according to LUKE 9:23). We need to

recognize our helplessness, unworthiness and wickedness in HUMILITY.
Hallelujah!

Were it not for His grace and mercy, God only knows that I could have fallen into reproach and "the snare of the devil" (2 TIMOTHY 2:26).

Beloved, let us also "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (GALATIANS 6:2).

There was a time I subtly looked down on fellow Christians who are carnal and were not as consecrated to the Lord as I was, but the Lord exposed the pride of my heart. I now have to cry as Jeremiah cried, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou *art* my praise" (JEREMIAH 17:14).

The words of "Amazing Grace" keep coming to me,

Amazing grace!

How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me

I once was lost

But now am found

Was blind, but now I see.

CITIES OF REFUGE

"THE LORD also spake unto Joshua, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, Appoint out for you cities of refuge, whereof I spake unto you by the hand of Moses: That the slayer that killeth *any* person unawares *and* unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall not deliver the slayer up into his hand; because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not beforetime. And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, *and* until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house,

unto the city from whence he fled. And they appointed Ke-desh in Galilee in mount Naph-ta-li, and She'chem in mount E'phra-im, and Kir'jath-ar'ba, which *is* Hebron, in the mountain of Judah. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho eastward, they assigned Be'zer in the wilderness upon the plain out of the tribe of Reuben, and Ra'moth in Gilead out of the tribe of Gad, and Go'lan in Ba'shan out of the tribe of Ma-nas'seh. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them, that whosoever killeth *any* person at unawares might flee thither, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood, until he stood before the congregation" (JOSHUA 20:1-9).

(Please also read NUMBERS Chapter 35).

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In the Old Testament times, there were six "cities of refuge" to protect people who accidentally kill others. These cities provided a haven whereby the killer could flee from the "avenger of the blood", the relative who considered it his duty to repay vengeance. The legality to obtain refuge was determined by a judge, under the government and laws given by the Lord. In a significant way, it was a type and portrayal of the redemptive plan of God even though the law speaks no mercy. Likewise, when Jesus Christ fulfill the law and its demands by His sacrificial death on the cross, He desires every Christian to be a "city of refuge" whereby the heavy laden can receive ministry to find rest in Him (according to MATTHEW 11:28). Under the law of sin and death (ROMANS 8:2), all of us, without exception, deserve condemnation, but "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (JOHN 3:17).

But having received Jesus Christ as our Saviour, the question is, "Are we functioning and serving as "CITIES OF REFUGE" for the hurting heart?"

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ATTENTION, FRIEND: THIS IS GOOD NEWS!

Dear Friend,

We want to take this opportunity to show you God's plan of salvation, according to the Bible. We believe the Bible is the inspired and only infallible and authoritative written Word of God.

If you are not a Christian and you read this, here's an appeal for you to accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. To be included in this invitation, you must have a relationship with Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The choice is yours. If you say "yes" to Jesus, here's what you must do,

Admit the fact that you are a sinner, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23);

Be willing to repent from disobedience and rebellion against God, " ...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3);

Believe that Jesus is your only Saviour, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16);

Confess, trust and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

Please pray this prayer and do mean it with all of your heart:

"Dear Lord Jesus, I now recognize that I am a sinner and I am in need of salvation. I accept the sacrifice You paid for me on the cross of Calvary and I allow Your precious shed blood to cleanse me. I now surrender myself to You and invite You to be my Lord and Saviour. Please come into my heart. Take full control of my life and help me to live and serve You from this moment forward. I ask in the name of Jesus. Amen."

If you prayed this prayer in all sincerity, you are now a child of God. We encourage you to find fellowship in a Bible-believing, Spirit-filled church and obtain a copy of the Bible and that you read it diligently so that you will be the kind of Christian God wants you to be.



"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth" (Isaiah 52:7).

Jonathan Heng was born in Singapore. He was born again at the age of fourteen and baptized in the Holy Spirit two years later. Since then, the calling of God for ministry has been upon his life.

Jonathan served in the ministry of helps and mercy in his high school days and at the age of eighteen, began moving in the exhortation of God's Word and writing onto the printed page. He also communicates on audio/visual music and teaching materials, and composes psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Birthed out of Jonathan's own personal struggles and desperate cry and need for more of Him, it is his prayer that his ministry will encourage hearts to a life of repentance, refreshing, restoration, and revival in the Holy Spirit. Here's an example of a statement he has made reflecting his desire to see people's relationship with the Lord and one another in the Kingdom set on fire: "It is my prayer that the preaching of God's Word will propel and prepare people to practise powerful principles of permanent partnership with a passionate pursuit".

One aspect of his vision is to see lives being touched by the Word of God delivered under the anointing of the Holy Spirit through applied arts, literature, audio/visual mass media (music and teaching) and Information Technology in subservient to the local church, "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Ephesians 3:21).