

PLACES OF REFUGE (1)

By Keith Greer

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” {James 1:17} Since time began, we’ve understood that every good thing we have in this life comes from our merciful and loving Father in heaven. He bestows blessings on us at any time, in any place, by whatever method He chooses. While it is true that God is unrestricted and unlimited in what He may or may not do, it is also true that at times, He puts restrictions on the circumstances under which we can obtain His blessings. When such restrictions come, we much accept them in faithful obedience, or reject them in unbelief.

Please understand that God blesses all men—even those who reject Him. “That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” {Matthew 5:45} Yet, His special spiritual blessings are only for those in Christ—His children. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” {Ephesians 1:3} Do we ever show a lack of faith seeking God’s blessings by not using them and not according to His stipulated terms?

Refuge in the ark. “Then the LORD said to Noah, ‘Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation...’ So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood.” {Genesis 7:1,7} God determined that men’s hearts were continually evil {Genesis 6:5}. He determined to eliminate from the earth every living thing to which he had given life—except Noah and his family. God spared Noah and his family because they found grace in His sight {Genesis 6:8}. To gain the blessing He offered, they had to build the ark according to the specification He gave them—and they did {Genesis 6:22}, and then they had to enter the ark. Unless Noah had believed God and followed His instruction, no blessings would have resulted. “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” {Hebrews 11:7}

In a Ship. “Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, ‘Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.’” {Acts 27:31} Paul was on a ship headed toward Rome. On the ship with Paul were 276 other people. God had told Paul he would bring him to Rome to be a witness for Christ—He just did not tell him all the details about how it would come about. They had gone two weeks without seeing land, had eaten little food, and had thrown the cargo into the sea. They had given up all hope of being saved from disaster. Paul told the men, who were considering taking the life boats and making a run for it, that unless they stayed on the ship, they would be lost. In the valley of decision, they stayed. “And the soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.” {Acts 27:42-44}

We see the same thing at the time of the Passover, “And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.” {Exodus 12:22} There are places of refuge—for those who trust God and have faith in His promises! How did God save Israel’s firstborn that night? By their faith— demonstrated by placing the blood on the doorposts of their houses, God had provided a “refuge” for their children but they had to follow his instructions to receive it! ***