

dential mercy of his God enkindles hope ; he hopes even unto death. Languor and disease, sorrow and trouble, infirmity and sickness, cannot weaken and destroy his hope ; nay, the approach of age and death itself only tend to brighten and enlarge and elevate their hope. The hour of dissolution, that solemn moment which transfers the penitent sinner from the prison of hope to that of despair, becomes to him the messenger of peace and joy and comfort, bringing to him on its wings a hope full of immortality, opening to him the prison door, and introducing him to the glorious liberty of the children of God. But now,

*Secondly.* Let us turn our attention to the admonition given in the words of the text, "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." The language is evidently that of *earnest solicitation*. Imminent peril is threatened. The flying captives, who have thus escaped their prison, are in danger of being seized and retaken by the enemy ; there is an impregnable fortress opened into which we are invited to turn.

We can have no hesitation in applying this language to Christ. "The Lord," says the prophet Micah, "the Lord is God, a stronghold in the day of trouble." "A man," says Isaiah, speaking of Christ, "a man shall be a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." "Thou," says David, "art my hiding place ; thou shalt preserve me from trouble ; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." Whatever the dangers which threaten the prisoners of hope, in Christ a sure and effectual protection is found. Does the prisoner of hope fear exceedingly and dread the righteous anger of God ? Is he alarmed at the storm of just retribution which hovers over his head ? Here is a refuge, here is a stronghold, -- Christ the advocate with the Father. Sin has been pardoned and justice satisfied by His atonement ; mercy and love are extended to the guilty culprit for His sake. Yea, the very oath of Jehovah himself is pledged that they might have strong hope who have fled to this refuge. Does the sinner dread the requirements of a broken law ? Christ has fulfilled its demands, and complied with its every requirement ; there is a full and com-

plete righteousness prepared for him. Or, again, does he dread the assaults of Satan ? "When his enemy shall come in as a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Satan himself has been vanquished by Christ. No weapon formed against him who has taken refuge in Christ shall ever prosper. This stronghold is safe, is impregnable. Or does he dread the sorrows, the troubles, and afflictions of life ? Here, again, he is permitted to cast his burden upon the Lord ; he is privileged to believe that all things shall work together for his good. Yea, he can even rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of his salvation, amid the wreck of earthly things, amid the agitations, confusions, troubles, disorders, of every temporal convulsion. Mark the language of the Psalmist, when sheltered in this refuge, when lodged in this stronghold ; "God," he cries, "God is our refuge and our strength, therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Or, finally, does the poor prisoner shrink back from the prospect of death, and does he dread or shudder at the last enemy of man ? Even here, even against this enemy, has Christ provided a remedy, for He has extracted the sting of death ; He has despoiled the grave of its victory, so that it is but the opening of the prison door, and the entry to the blessings and life and joy of Christ, and the peace and happiness of a glorious eternity.

But, in order to render this stronghold available, it must be actually entered. All other refuges and sources of relief must be relinquished and abandoned. All other posts must be forsaken as untenable, and the sinner must flee to Christ, and to Him alone, as the only refuge. As Noah of old fled for refuge to the ark when the overflowing waters were about to cover the earth ; -- as the man-slayer was directed to flee to the city of refuge, lest the avenger of blood should overtake him ; -- or, as Lot fled when the fire and brimstone overwhelmed the cities of the plain ; so, in like manner, must the trembling sinner flee to Christ ; every other refuge is a refuge of lies ; he must come and repose his *eternal* all in Christ alone.

Need I remind you, my friends, how