

Many of you are aware that I'll be away from this pulpit for next several weeks—and since we finished chapter 4 of John's gospel last week—I thought I'd preach a free sermon this week—this way we'll simply pick up with chapter 5 when I return (God-willing)...

Most of us were raised with a tuff-guy mentality—that basically believes we shouldn't back down—and never, under any circumstances run—running is a demonstration of weakness—but this is very different from what Scripture teaches—for it asserts—there is a time for everything—and there is indeed a time to run—but the wise man not only knows WHEN to run but WHERE—our text tells us where we must run—"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe..."

I. The Text Explained

II. The Text Applied

I. The Text Explained

1. Here I simply want to briefly explain the five key phrases or words within this text—[1] the name of the LORD...
2. Simply put—God's name is the same as God Himself—it refers to the sum total of His divine attributes or perfections...
3. Ex.34:5-7—"Now the LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation..."
4. In other words—the NAME of God is described as various attributes—merciful, gracious, longsuffering, etc...
5. Thus—when Solomon says—"the name of the Lord is a strongtower"—he means—God Himself is a strongtower...
6. CHS—"If we come to the bottom of things, we shall find that the basis of the security of the believer lies in the character of God..."
7. Now—before I go further—I need to first make a necessary clarification—God IN CHRIST in a strongtower...
8. God OUTSIDE of CHRIST is not a strongtower for anyone—only in Christ is God a strongtower for His people...
9. Now—it's very possible to say—Christ Himself is our strongtower—into whom the righteous run and find safety...
10. Or else, it's simply best to say—God in Christ is our strongtower—in Christ all of God's attributes are for us...
11. In Christ—every attribute is for us—including His holiness, justice, righteousness, patience, mercy, grace, and love...
12. These are all harmonized in Christ, and in Christ, each one becomes a chamber of protection within this tower...
13. Thus—by "the name of the LORD" is meant—the totality of God's divine perfections harmonized in Jesus Christ...
14. Or, put another way—God HIMSELF in Christ is our strong tower—God Himself is our Rock and Refuge...
15. Ps.18:2—"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold..."
16. Ps.61:3—"For You have been a shelter for me, a strong tower from the enemy" Ps.144:2—"My lovingkindness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield and the On in whom I take refuge..."

17. [2] Is a strongtower—this is a common metaphors of God—with many related imageries, such as refuge, rock, stronghold, and fortress...
18. The concept of a "strong tower" brings to mind the image of strong towers ordinarily constructed around city walls...
19. In olden days—when an opposing army approached a city—a horn would blow, alerting the residents of the city...
20. The people of the city would run into these towards—and there be set on high—safe from all their enemies...
21. These towers would protect them for two reasons—they would be made from strong material, and they would be elevated...
22. God is STRONG—that is powerful and mighty, and a TOWER—He elevates them above and over their enemies...
23. Thus—the metaphor of a strong tower—portrays God Himself as a shelter—a refuge—from all our enemies...
24. [3] The righteous—that is—those who are justified by Christ's righteousness and characterized by righteous living...
25. The righteous, that is Christians, those who have come to Christ—those who know they need a strong tower...
26. This is contrasted in v11—"The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his own esteem..."
27. Simply put—he trusts in riches—this is where his confidence resides—they are like a high wall in his own esteem...
28. But—every unconverted person has his OWN strong tower—riches, pleasure, fame, acceptance, or self merit...
29. Or, perhaps it's simply the refuge of blind fate—believing that things will work out—that things will get better...
30. Or else, many make various religions their refuge—and some even call Christianity—but it's a false imitation...
31. But—in contrast to all these—the righteous have a strong tower—and it's nothing less than the NAME of the LORD...
32. [4] Run to it—by "running" is meant faith—the righteous runs into the name of God by faith in Jesus Christ...
33. Throughout Scripture—faith is described by walking and running—coming to Christ with the feet of the soul...
34. Thus—by "running" is meant the lively exercises of faith—which presupposes a sense of need and danger...
35. Ps.91:1-2—"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust..."
36. Running into the name of the LORD is the same thing as trusting the name of the LORD—we run by faith...
37. But I go a step further—the righteous run into the name of the LORD by faith as expressed through prayer...
38. FAITH and PRAYER these are the means the righteous run into the name of the LORD—and are set at high...
39. Thus—throughout the Psalms the Psalmist fills his prayers with the many attributes or perfections of God...
40. Ps.91:14-15—"I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him..."
41. Ps.62:8—"Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Selah..."
42. [5] And are safe—the Hebrew word literally means—"to be high or lifted"—it refers to—"an elevation unto safety..."
43. The name of the LORD is a strong tower—those who run to Him are safe—they are lifted above their enemies...

44. That is—there is comfort, encouragement, strength, protection, security, and wisdom—within this strong tower...
45. Ps.62:6-7—"He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength and my refuge, is in God..."

II. The Text Applied

A. By way of implication

1. Here—I want to suggest one very important implication found in this text—the righteous have a reason, or reasons, to run...
2. Only a fool would refuse to run when there are genuine reasons to run—but tragically by nature we're blind to these reasons...
3. But—the righteous have had their eyes open to certain dangerous—from which they now unashamedly run...
4. Let me simply say—these are our enemies and they are many—and they are too strong for us to face alone...
5. [1] The wrath of God—this is the first danger the righteous are awakened to—God's wrath because of their sin...
6. For example, under the OC provision was made for those who accidentally killed someone—they were called cities of refuge...
7. If someone accidentally killed his neighbor, the next of kin (the blood avenger), could revenge his dead relative...
8. Thus—what the man had to do was flee for his life to the nearest city of refuge, where he would be safe from harm...
9. These cities were typical of Christ—the refuge that every awakened sinner flees for safety from God's wrath...
10. Heb.6:18—"those who have fled for refuge"—that is—have found refuge in Christ from God's holy wrath...
11. [2] A guilty conscience—that is—when our conscience condemns us for our sin—either past or present sin...
12. That is—sometimes our conscience will condemn us for sins committed in the past or else recently committed...
13. The subject of a guilty conscience is complex—let me simply say sometimes it's warranted and sometimes it isn't...
14. But—either way, let me simply say—a guilty conscience can be a very serious foe that creates great havoc...
15. And—where can the righteous go to deliver them from this quilt—but the name of the LORD—God in Christ...
16. [3] The trials and troubles of life, Job 5:7—"For man is born for trouble, as sparks fly upward"—its inevitable...
17. These troubles vary—physical, relational, financial hardships—persecution, abandonment, and bereavement...
18. I've quoted many times Acts 14:22—"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God (heaven)..."
19. Christians share the regular sorrows of this world with the unconverted—we get sick, grow old, and experience death...
20. The thinking that Christians some how are immune to these is foolish—Christians are not free from these things...
21. In addition to these—they encounter the peculiar struggles and hardships associated with identifying with Christ...
22. [4] The temptations of this world—this world is filled with various things—that intend to drive us from Christ...

23. Increasingly—I'm reminded that this world is a battlefield—and we as Christians—dwell behind enemy lines...
24. [5] The fiery darts of the wicked one, Eph.6:16—"take the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one..."

B. By way of instruction

1. Not only have the righteous been wakened to their need to run—but they also know where to run—they don't run aimlessly...
2. Now—this doesn't imply that Christians always run to their strong tower in the way or manner they should...
3. To keep with the imagery—they often hesitate and even at times run to other refuges that prove insufficient...
4. Thus—I want to suggest 5 helps to assist you in running into the name of the LORD—and there be set on high...
5. [1] Become increasingly acquainted with His name—many Christians have weak knowledge of who God is...
6. But—you and I will hesitate to take refuge in His name—if we remain unclear on the nature of God's name...
7. This will become more clear if you remember—we run to the tower by faith and knowledge is essential to faith...
8. Thomas Watson—"Knowledge carries the torch before faith"—thus, the more light there is, the easier it is to run...
9. Ps.9:9-10—"The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You..."
10. Notice—it is "those who know Your name" who will "put their trust in Him"—what is—"to know His name..."
11. Well—obviously it first means—they know God—through Christ, they know Him personally and savingly...
12. Thus—the knowledge I here speak of is an experiential knowledge of God and—each of His divine perfections...
13. CHS—"By knowing his name is also meant an experimental acquaintance with the attributes of God, which are everyone of them anchors to hold the soul from drifting in seasons of peril..."
14. Let me illustrate—let's liken every attribute to an individual chamber within the strong tower of God's name...
15. The person who is well acquainted and knowledgeable—is able to more intelligently find refuge in each one...
16. Unfortunately—many Christians know a few of these chambers—but are virtually ignorant of their multitude...
17. For example—many Christians know of His love, mercy, and grace, but what about His patience, faithfulness, and sovereignty...
18. The name of God is very large—it consists of many rooms—or, put another way—there are many attributes...
19. And the more familiar we are of each attribute—the more intelligently we will be able to run to the right one...
20. That is—specific attributes must be trusted—we must take refuge in precise attributes that answer to our fears...
21. J.W. Alexander—"We may take refuge in every name and attribute as in a separate chamber of our fortress..."
22. This can be illustrated in the NT—in that the apostle Paul, especially, appeals to a specific attribute to meet specific needs...
23. For example—after he exhorted the church at Rome to pursue peace, Rom.15:33—"Now the God of peace be with you all..."

24. Elsewhere—he refers to "the God of hope," "the God of comfort," "the Father of mercies," the God of grace..."
25. The point being—he appealed to specific attributes that meet specific needs—he ran to specific chambers within that name...
26. [2] Remain ever close to and mindful of His name—simply put, the closer we remain to the tower the easier it's entered...
27. Thus—what I'm here referring to is this—Christians need to live in close communion and fellowship with God...
28. The further we are living from God—the greater distance we have to travel, as it were, to enter our strong tower...
29. Hymn—"O let me feel Thee near me, the world is ever near; I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear: My foes are ever near me, around me and within; But Jesus, draw Thou nearer, and shield my soul from sin..."
30. Now—here I must clarify—in one sense—God can never be any closer or further from His beloved people...
31. But—there is another sense in which—we sense AS IF we are distant from God—in terms of intimate communion...
32. How do we keep near His name—let me suggest three simple ways—[a] remove every obstacle between us...
33. When it comes down to it—there's largely one thing that hinders the felt-sense of God's presence—undealt with sin...
34. [b] Diligently us the means of grace—this is how any relationship remains strong—mutual communication...
35. Through the Scriptures God speaks to us—and through prayer we speak to God—these are absolutely essential...
36. [c] Behold His name throughout creation—we refer to this as general revelation—which tells us about God...
37. I think sometimes we undervalue this form of revelation—for it provides us with a real knowledge of God...
38. Rom.1:20—"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, bring understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse..."
39. Thus—historically we understand that God makes His name known through two books—creation and Scripture...
40. In Scripture God reveals Himself more fully and clearly—yet, He also reveals Himself through what's made...
41. Thus—there is a sense in which we should ever be mindful of God's name—as it is revealed all around us...
42. Ps.8:9—"O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth"—that is—as manifested in creation...
43. Hymn—"This is my Father's world: He shines in all that's fair; in the rustling grass I hear him pass, He speaks to me everywhere..."
44. [3] Remain fixated on the single door into this tower—remember, our strong tower is not God, but God in Christ...
45. For example—if were to liken the ark to God's name, Christ Himself would be the only entrance into that name...
46. Ps.27:5—"For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock..."
47. Everything we seek is sought for the sake of Christ—God be merciful, gracious, and powerful—for Christ's sake...
48. [4] Remember the insufficiency of every other refuge—that is—no other refuge is sufficient to provide safety...
49. [a] People—that is—other people, be they siblings, spouses, parents, pastors, or counselors (esp counselors)...

50. Now—let me clarify people are helpful providing they merely, one way or another, point you to the strong tower...
51. But—people, as ends in themselves, will always fail you—they will always prove to be a very sorry refuge...
52. [b] Duties—tragically, many Christians simply through themselves in their duties—whether it's housework or paperwork...
53. [c] Means—by this I refer to the means of grace—remember, these were never intended to ends but only means to an end...
54. [d] Faith—this of course doesn't make any sense—our refuse isn't in our running—but it's in our strong tower...
55. [5] Be convinced of His willingness to shelter you—this can be illustrated in the father of our Savior parable of the returning son...
56. Isa.30:18—"Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him..."
57. For example—we've recently had several thunderstorms—let's say for whatever reason—my youngest child gets locked out of the house...
58. Let's say—my 7 yr old son was letting the dog out and he gets locked out—there he is pounding on the door to get in...
59. What am I going to do as I hear his cries and screams for help—I'm going to run as fast as I can to let him in...
60. Well—brethren, if this is true of me, who by nature is evil, how much more is it true of our heavenly Father...

C. By way of invitation

1. Here—I want to invite all of us to run to the name of the LORD—first I want to invite the righteous and then unrighteous...
2. [1] To the righteous—though we know where to run—we remain in need of constant reminder and encouragement...
3. [a] Those who are tired and worn-out—who have all but given up—run to the faithfulness of God—for that which He started He will finish...
4. [b] Those who've been stretched on the rack of physical pain—run to the wisdom of God—for He knows what's best...
5. [c] Those plagued with doubts and fears—run to His immutability—for God can never change or deny Himself...
6. [d] Those who continue to stumble and commit sin—run to the mercy of God—for His mercies are new every day...
7. [e] Those who lost all sense of joy and communion—run to the love of God—for His love is eternal and unending...
8. [2] To the unrighteous—though it is true our text doesn't apply to you directly—this strong tower is open also for you...
9. But—in order for this strong tower to be initially entered—you can not enter it as righteous—but as unrighteous...
10. You see—the name of the LORD is not a strong tower for you—as long as you remain in your native condition...
11. But—it can become a strong tower to you—if you enter it for the sake of Christ as a guilty, unrighteous, sinner...
12. Rom.10:13—"For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved"—that is—calls upon Him as unrighteous...