

Scripture Standard

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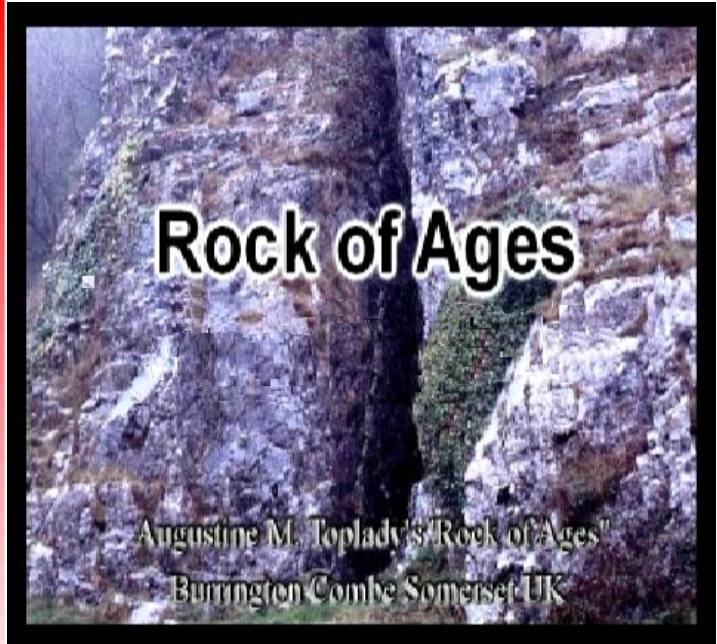
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The ROCK of ages

Derek Daniell, Tunbridge Wells

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure:
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

This great hymn was written by Augustus Toplady, a country parson who, when returning home one Sunday evening, sheltered from a storm in the cleft of a rock in Burrington Coombe, Somerset.

Growing up in nearby Bristol this was a place we visited often and though I moved to make my home in Kent I took every opportunity to visit the “Rock of Ages” in the foothills of the Mendip Hills. There are three great truths in this hymn, that God is our Rock, Refuge and Redeemer.

David in writing his psalms expresses his thankfulness that God was his **rock** and **refuge** especially when being hunted by King Saul. David also acknowledged that the Lord was his **redeemer**. Psalm 31:1-3 ***In you, O Lord, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame, in your righteousness deliver me: Incline your ear to me, rescue me speedily, be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. For you are my rock and my fortress and for your name's sake you lead me and guided me***” ESV. See Psalm 18:2, 6; 61:1-3.

Our ROCK

Our Rock is Jesus Christ, on whom we are to build our lives, for all other ground is sinking sand, Matthew 7:24-25. He is our shelter in a time of storm. Jesus the Christ is also **The Rock** on which the Church is built, the foundational fact of faith, Matthew 16:18 and there is no other foundation, 1 Corinthians 3:11. **The Rock** was with the nation of Israel in the wilderness to protect and provide for them, even though God was not well pleased with them, see 1 Corinthians 10:1-5.

Our REFUGE

Our Refuge is in Jesus Christ for ***“our life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life is revealed, then {we} also will be revealed with Him in glory”***, Colossians 3:3-4. For ***“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ...”***, Psalm 46:1-7. We are reminded that God put Moses into the cleft of a rock and covered him there with His hand as a **refuge** to see His glory as He passed by, Exodus 33:17-23.

Our REDEEMER

Our Redeemer is Jesus Christ because He paid the price for our redemption, Romans 3:24, “In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”, Colossians 1:14. Job knew that his redeemer lived and would one day stand on the earth, Job 19:25. David in Psalm 19:14 assured us that “the Lord was his rock and Redeemer.” It was through His death on the cross that Jesus purchased our redemption, Hebrews 9:12, Galatians 3:13; Titus 2:14.

The last verse reminds us that the Rock of Ages is for life, but read verses 2 and 3.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyes are closed in death,
When I soar through tracts unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgement throne;
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

Paul sums up our victory in Jesus Christ our Rock in Romans 8:31-39. ***“What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ... But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life ... nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

Daniel and Civil Disobedience

Jonathan Ashurst, Byron, GA.

What should you do if the government tells you to do something wrong?

Daniel and his three friends were good examples of how to both obey God and show honour to the authority he has placed over us.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four young Hebrews, taken away during the Babylonian captivity (about 580 years before Christ was born). King Nebuchadnezzar wanted these intelligent young men to be trained as his advisers. Far away from their families and communities, they were now expected to live like the Babylonians. According to the Law that God had given, the Hebrews were not supposed to worship idols or eat certain types of food. But in this foreign land, who would ever know?

Despite the temptations all around him, Daniel resolved to stay faithful to God.

”But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” (Daniel 1:8)

Daniel and his friends decided early in life that they would follow God. However, they were not haughty; they humbly asked the man in charge for vegetables to eat instead. They were allowed to try this diet for ten days. After ten days, since they looked healthier than the other young men, Daniel and his friends were allowed to follow the law of God by keeping the Jewish diet.

God has set up government for our good (Romans 13:1-7). We should obey the authorities in our life, as long as they do not tell us to do something morally wrong (Luke 20:25, Acts 5:28-31, Titus 3:1). If the government tells us to do something against God's will, we should react as Daniel did:

- 1) He decided in his heart to obey God. (Daniel 1:8a)
- 2) He humbly asked for an appropriate alternative

(eating vegetables instead of meat), but was determined to do what was right, whether or not the alternative was granted. (Daniel 1:8b,12)

3) He did what was right and accepted the consequences. (Daniel 1:13)

4) He gave God the glory. (Daniel 1:17)

From this point on in the book of Daniel, we see that God blessed Daniel and his friends for their faithfulness. Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (also known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) later refused when King Nebuchadnezzar commanded them to bow down to his golden statue. When the king ordered that they be thrown into the fiery furnace, God miraculously kept them from harm (Daniel 3). Many years later, Daniel disobeyed King Darius' edict by praying to the true God. Though Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, God shut the lions' mouths (Daniel 6:22-23). The four friends were respected leaders under two different empires and four different kings, including Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. Daniel and his friends obeyed their leaders unless doing so would bring dishonour to God. Through their faithfulness, God was glorified (Daniel 3:28, Daniel 6:26-27).

Read the book of Daniel this week to see how he and his friends stayed faithful to God while living under a secular government. Let's follow Daniel's good example by submitting to the authority that God has placed over us, by obeying them in every situation unless they tell us to disobey God, and by honouring God as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Walk and Talk God's Way

V. Sujatha, Stretford

God has created us in the likeness of his own image and breathed into us the Breath of Life (Genesis 2:7). He could have just made us the way he wanted us to be like. He could have programmed us to work and act in a particular way only. But he gave us the ability to think and choose and now man has the scriptures to know and differentiate between right and wrong. But still there is no man who has not sinned (Romans 3:23) and none worthy to stand in front of God.

Very often we imitate other people, without thinking whether it is right or wrong, or its consequences. When there are two choices, a broad and a narrow, many people follow the broad, easier way and they talk about the great things they can get there. But we see only a very few chosen people following the narrow and difficult path, who believe it will lead to the most precious treasure. It is in our nature to follow the broad way because we see many people believing in it. Man's desire to follow man (Galatians 1:6-10). Christ said:

Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction and there are many who go in by it, Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13,14)

To those who are in the faith, I encourage you: Be brave! Roar like a lion! Abandon all cowardice and hesitation which doesn't achieve anything in this hasty world of madness. You must have the courage to bear anything at any time and to be firm in our faith no matter what turns up. If you believe in the Lord, you should preach his word

to the whole world, wholeheartedly and with everlasting zeal. Even if the whole world opposes you. You should not turn from the path of righteousness, not even if Satan offers the whole universe to you with all its beauty and glory. You should stand firm in your faith and obey the Lord, just like Christ did (Matthew 4:8-10).

You should be ready to proclaim the Lord's message with a smile to achieve the mighty goal (2 Timothy 4:7). Your life should not only be an open book but it should itself be a message - the Message of Christ.

BETTER ?

James Neil, Skelmersdale

We all have our own opinions on which "*things*" are "*The best*" ranging from washing powder to cars and we can all be absolutely convinced that we know the best brands to use in any of perhaps hundreds of commodities. Yet isn't it true to say that very often, when it comes to reality, our opinion is just our own personal opinion, our preference? ... and is it not true to say, that we can even be guilty of assessing people by the criteria of whether their opinions are the same or different to our own?

I feel sure that most, if not all of us, are familiar with the expression "*Birds of a feather flock together*" and it is perhaps natural that like minded people do seek each others company. For example, people interested in photography will form clubs, as will those interested in fishing or a multitude of other activities. In itself this would seem to be harmless and even beneficial, as in many instances these clubs and organisations do offer people with disabilities the opportunity to become involved in their local community.

However, there is a distinct danger in being drawn to a person, or perhaps a group of people, just because of mutual agreement or interests, be it in the form of a hobby or indeed any kind of activity. In any such circumstances we need to be on our guard against being diverted from the really important things in our life.

Each of us make the choice as to what we consider to be "*The important things and people, in our life*" and sometimes, perhaps, we do not find it as easy a choice as we first believe it to be. If we are not careful we begin to neglect those things which we would, if asked, claim to be top of the list in order of importance. We can soon get to the situation where we convince ourselves that what we are doing is "*for the best.*"

The scriptures are full of examples of this ...

Joshua 18:3 Joshua said "*How long will you neglect to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?*"

Hebrews 2:3 "*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*"

No matter how well we can quote these scriptures and convince ourself that we are in control of our priorities, if we are not willing to take an honest look at ourselves then (as the writer to the Hebrews puts it) we cannot escape. As Christians, we should be the ones who have an influence on others, not the other way round.

That which is best for us is not always the easiest for us to do, like the old saying "*The best tasting medicine does not always do us the most good;*" however, as Christians we should be striving to show to the world a better way and this is best done by example.

Again to quote the writer to the Hebrews and this time chapter 6:9

"But, Beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation."

What better can we do than to fulfil the essence of these words from the writer to the Hebrews and to seek out and follow the better things and so make sure that we get our priorities right.

The Adversary

Rose M. Payne, Kentish Town

When did we last hear a reference in a sermon to the devil and all his works? Preachers prefer to dwell on the love of God. Reference books about the Bible barely give Satan a mention, and an opinion poll once showed that even those people who believed in God often disbelieved in the existence of the devil.

The writer once overheard a lad saying, "I wouldn't mind going to hell, because you would be allowed to sin as much as you liked there." In fact it would seem to be impossible to murder, steal or commit adultery in hell, and we know there is nothing there to drink (Luke 16:24) so there is no drunkenness either. The only remaining sins would be those of the mind, such as hatred, and existing with those would be a fearful prospect. One result of such widespread ignorance is a lack of urgency about making a decision for Christ. Many people seem to arrive at the end of their lives unsure whether there is any judgement to come, but supposing that they will get by because they are no worse than their neighbours.

Presumably, it suits Satan that people should disbelieve in him. Unlike God's holy angels, he scarcely makes any personal appearance in the scriptures. At the beginning he was obliged to do so, because he could not then influence humans directly. As long as there was only one man created, the devil could take his time, but when Adam was given a wife, Satan must have been in a hurry. If any children had been born to Adam and Eve while they were still sinless, the devil would have had to tempt each one separately. Satan could not masquerade as another human being, since there were no others about, but he had to appear and speak to Eve, so took the form of a serpent. When Adam and Eve had both fallen to his temptation, he was able to infect the whole human race, very much like a computer virus (Romans 7:23).

Satan's other recorded personal presence in this world was when he tried to tempt Jesus in the wilderness and failed. But in the book of Job, we see how he operates in the background, while his works are blamed on the wrong people. Job was blamed for his own misfortunes, while Job himself was tempted to question God. The same thing goes on today. Is there a rise in crime? Then blame the police for not stopping it. Is there trouble within families? Then blame the social workers. And so many people ask "*How could a loving God allow this or that to happen?*" and their faith in God is weakened. This comes about because of a lack of understanding of the real cause of evil.

The apostles were quite sure that their life was a daily struggle against the devil. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul makes it clear that their fight was not against the Jewish authorities or the Roman government, but against the evil power which influenced them in the background. To

overcome the enemy it helps to understand his methods (2 Corinthians 2:11). The devil wishes to undermine the very best endeavours. At one time he was targeting the Apostle Peter (Luke 22:31), and he succeeded in directing Judas (John 13:27). He also influenced the well-meaning, but mistaken, Saul of Tarsus to persecute the church, before the Lord intervened (Acts 22:3-5).

So, in our teaching, let us not neglect warning our hearers about the evil one and his eternal abode, for doing this gives meaning and urgency to the offer of salvation.

THE NEXT WORLD

Ian S. Davidson, Motherwell

A lot of the people I have known and loved are now in the next world. I cannot help but think to myself from time to time what they are all doing. They might be dead to me, but they, of course, are alive to God. The Sadducees in Jesus' day were rather like the humanists today. They did not believe in a life beyond the grave. We recall the tale of the woman who married seven times. Surely the man from Nazareth would have trouble answering this question: *"Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her"* (Matthew 22:28; Mark 12:23; Luke 20:33). I quote from Matthew's gospel: *"Jesus answered and said unto them, You do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the*

dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at His doctrine" (Matthew 22:29-33). F.F.Bruce has written: "It is inaccurate to say, as has sometimes been said, that the Sadducees' canon was restricted to the Pentateuch (this was true rather of the Samaritans); but they would certainly venerate it as supremely authoritative, and Jesus appealed to it..."

PARADISE

Jesus said to the thief on the cross: "*Today you shall be with me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43). Jesus, of course, returned to earth from paradise, but isn't the thief, who was on the cross, still there, awaiting the final judgement? I am aware that *hades* (Hebrew: *Sheol*) is a divided place or state. The account of the rich man and Lazarus proves that to me (Luke 16:19-31). The righteous are in "*Abraham's bosom*" (16:22) and the wicked are in a state of torment (16:23). The beautiful word *paradise* is found in only two other places in the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 12:4: "*...how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful for a man to utter.*" (Many commentators are of the view that Paul was speaking of himself here.) Revelation 2:7: "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; to him who overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*" A.M.Hunter has written: "*About two centuries before Christ was born the Hebrews rose to the great belief in immortality – to the faith that the friends of God do not perish but are in His holy keeping forever. But where? Not, as they had once believed, in a dim and dreary underworld, called Sheol, beyond the jurisdiction of the Almighty, but in a hidden paradise prepared by God for*

the righteous. So 'paradise' became another name for the abode of the blessed after death."

CONVERSION

There is an advert going around right now, which reads: "*Turn your Business Dream into a Dream Business .*" An equally good advert would be: "*Turn your Paradise Dream into a Dream Paradise.*" But how does anyone make it to paradise? How can anyone be sure that their dream of paradise will come true eventually? It will not come true as the result of the throw of dice or being rather nice or anything like that. It will come true as the result of turning - turning to Christ through obedience to His gospel. This is conversion. Conversion is at the heart of the Christian system. Conversion has to do with a change of life. As a change of life it is called "*repentance unto life*" or "*turning to the Lord.*" Remember, the entire change of man by the Christian system consists of four things: a change of views; a change of affections; a change of state; and a change of life. Alexander Campbell has written:

"A Christian is, indeed, one whose views are enlightened, whose heart is renewed, whose relations to God and the moral universe are changed, and whose manner of life is according to righteousness and true holiness." But what of those who turn away from God and disobey Him? Paul wrote: "*And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them who know not God and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power...*" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

CONCLUSION

Dear reader, where will you spend eternity? In the next world, will you gain paradise or lose paradise? At the judgement, which words will you hear? *"Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world..."* (Matthew 25:34) or: *"Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels..."* (Matthew 25:41). Heaven is an everlasting reality and hell will be an everlasting reality too. Once in either, one is there to stay forever. The next world will be wonderful for the few, but disastrous for the majority. As a believer, I do not only look ahead to heaven, but I've also booked my seat ahead for heaven. Jesus made the booking possible. Jesus said to the church at Laodicea: *"To him who overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne"* (Revelation 3:21).

A New Beginning

Andrew P. Sharp. (Easthouses) Newtongrange.

Beloved - To some a new beginning is just another day. To others it might mean something special.

In Christ Jesus, God offers a new beginning to all who respond to His call. Having faith in the One who died for your sin and was resurrected from the dead can, and will, make a new beginning for you.

God offers you the opportunity of a lifetime: your sins washed away and a new life in Jesus the Christ. In this you have a real purpose and meaning in your life. Your life now counts for something: something of permanent value.

We need to realise that the new beginning God gives His

people through justification, presents you with a new obligation, as a follower of Christ.

God called the Israelites out of the bondage in Egypt to a new beginning. Likewise today he calls you out of bondage of a sort to safety and security. Why should this be? "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" (Romans 3:23) You see, we all need a new beginning to the saving of the soul. The realisation of this should lead to joy.

Those of us who are in Christ have both a duty and an obligation to fulfil. We need, as never before, to disseminate the truth of the gospel to all who would listen. Sow the seed. God will deliver.

Every day should be a new beginning in spreading the good tidings of Christ's saving power. Beloved, it is expected of us as Christians.

A new day, a new year, a new beginning! It is in your power to help someone to achieve this: do so and so be it. We are encouraged in scripture to ask of Him, and God will give any, and all, the chance of a new beginning.

He will justify you and empower you by the Holy Spirit through faith in His son, Jesus Christ.

Beloved, it is time for new beginnings, whether it is yourself, or a friend or someone else. Take time to be holy and let God lead the way.

HEBREW DATING CHARTS

The printer is offering these at less than cost.
See the insert for details and how to order them.

NEWS and INFORMATION

BAPTISM

Please rejoice with us at Beulah Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield at the baptism of Rebecca Faulks on Wednesday the 17th. of August. Her request to be added to the Lord's church is something the brethren and sisters have been praying for and we give thanks and praise to the Lord for showing her the true path to righteousness

Dennis Faulks

BIBLE QUESTION BOX

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Saturdays

6.00 pm Refreshments

7.00 pm Message

February 11

May 12

August 11

November 10

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STRETFORD, MANCHESTER. 2012

Saturday Gospel Meetings

7.00 pm The Green Hut

538 Kings Road, M32 8JT

March 17

September 15

October 20

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www.eusebos.eu/d4web4s/longford.htm

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