

Christ Our Rock of Refuge

CHRIST OUR ROCK (Part 3): CHRIST OUR ROCK OF REFUGE: The word "REFUGE" is from a Latin word meaning to escape and depicts a place which provides shelter or protection from trouble, danger or distress. A REFUGE is a place of safety and security. And so it is fitting for David to invite us: "O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes REFUGE IN HIM (the Solid Rock)!" (Ps 34:8-note) In contrast, in his classic Paradise Lost, John Milton writes "Rocks, dens and caves (of this passing world)...in none of these, find place or REFUGE." In the Revelation, kings, great men, commanders, rich, strong, slave and free, all hide themselves in "the rocks" of this world and say "to the rocks "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him Who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev 6:15-16-note, cp Lk 23:30-note, Isa 2:19-note) Spurgeon writes "It will be vain to call to the rocks in the day of judgment, but our ROCK attends to our cries!"

And so we see that every man of every age will chose to hide either in the "rocks" of this passing world or in the "everlasting ROCK" (Isa 26:4-note), a solid, unchanging ROCK (Heb 13:8-note, Mal 3:6-note, Ps 102:26-27-note). Indeed, the believer's sure REFUGE in this world and the next is not a place but a Person, Christ Jesus, our "ROCK in Whom (we) take REFUGE" (Ps 18:2-note), for "Who is a ROCK, except our God?" (Ps 18:31-note). "It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man." (Ps 118:8-note) Spurgeon exhorts us "to let the sandy foundations of terrestrial trust be the choice of fools, but we are to be like one who foresees the storm, and builds for ourselves an abiding place upon the Rock of Ages." Ray Stedman encourages us to "Remember that, when you feel defeated, when you are under attack, when doubts come flooding into your mind. Remember that you are already encircled by the belt of truth. You have found the One who is the solid, unchanging Rock. The words of the hymn express this well: On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand, All other ground is sinking sand." Moses affirms this faith stabilizing truth declaring "The ROCK! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just. A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He" (Dt 32:4-note) Moses then reminds us that the world's "rock is not like our ROCK, as even our enemies concede." (Dt 32:31-note). Dear Father, we who are so prone to wander (and wonder!) ask that by Your sweet Spirit, you might enable us moment by moment "to fix our eyes on Jesus" (Heb 12:2-note), our "spiritual ROCK" (1Cor 10:4), so that we might not be like those of old who so often "neglected the ROCK" (Dt 32:18-note), who quickly forgot "the God of their salvation and who did not remember the ROCK of their REFUGE" (Isa 17:10-note, cp Hos 4:6-note). Amen

OUR ROCK OF REFUGE: THE ROCK OF AGES: In the mysterious, providential working of the Spirit of God (Jn 3:8-note), an uneducated layman named James Morris once preached a simple sermon on Ephesians 2:13-note ("But now IN Christ Jesus [think "safe IN the Rock of Refuge"] you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ") in a barn in Ireland reaping only one conversion (Jn 4:37-38-note), a highly educated 16 yo boy named [Augustus Montague Toplady](#), who had been stirred to attend by an earthquake that had recently rocked the British Isles. "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform. He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm." ([Cowper](#)) As an aside may the profound impact of this one otherwise unknown and unlettered man's words on young Toplady's heart be an encouraging reminder to all of us that the "the Gospel is the (intrinsic, inherent, "self-contained") power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Ro 1:16-note), that the Holy Spirit can speak through anyone (E.g., see Nu 22:28-30-note), and finally that He can make "beautiful (literally "timely in the arrival of") the feet of those who tell good news, who make the Gospel known." (Ro 10:15-note, Isa 52:7-note)

Augustus Toplady soon felt God's call to preach the Gospel himself and this he did for the remainder of his short life of 38 years (1740-1778). During his life he preached thousands of sermons, wrote hundreds of poems, and composed 133 hymns. In 1763 Toplady was walking home, when he was caught in a sudden, violent thunderstorm. At first there seemed to be no hiding place, but he soon spied a cleft in a rock, into which he ran and in which he was able to just barely stand upright. And there he remained for refuge as the thunder roared and the lightning flashed. And as he stood in the [cleft of this rock](#), he redeemed the time (Eph 5:16-note) in a most unique way, for these words welled up in his soul (how fitting that they are in the form of a prayer)

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 pow'r.

Beloved, we have an enduring Rock, Isaiah recording that "The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace (literally "in shalom, shalom"), because he trusts in Thee. Trust in the LORD forever, for (always pause and ask what is the "for" explaining) in God the LORD (literally "in Yah, Yahweh"), we have an EVERLASTING ROCK (literally "a ROCK OF AGES")!" (Isaiah 26:3-4-note) ([Choral Version of Rock of Ages](#)) ([Picture of Rock Toplady Reputed to have hidden for Shelter](#))

O Everlasting Rock,

Sole Refuge in distress,
My Fort when foes assail and mock,
My Rest in weariness!
-H. Bonar

HIDDEN IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK IN TIME AND ETERNITY: When Moses said "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory!" the LORD responded by telling Moses "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand there ON THE ROCK" and "while My glory is passing by, I will put you IN THE CLEFT OF THE ROCK and cover you with My hand." (Ex 33:18, 21, 22-[note](#)) ON the rock, IN the rock, even the ROCK OF AGES cleft for me! Spurgeon asks "O my soul, what is the cleft of the rock where thou must stand, if thou wouldst ever see God's face, and live? Oh, it is the "Rock of ages, cleft for me," where I must hide! Oh, what a cleaving that was when Jesus died! O my soul, enter into the cleft in Jesus' side. That is the cleft of the rock where thou must abide, and see God." In John Bunyan's [Pilgrim's Progress \("Tenth Stage"\)](#), Christian and Hopeful come to a river (Bunyan's portrayal of passing from this world into the next) and "Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good friend Hopeful, he said, I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head; all his waves go over me. Selah. Then said the other, Be of good cheer, my brother: I feel the bottom, and it is good." Stand ON the Rock and IN the Rock of Refuge ("IN CHRIST") in this life and He will give you a firm footing as you walk into the next life, for there is "no condemnation for those who are IN Christ Jesus (our Rock of Refuge)," (Ro 8:1-note) for even death "shall not be able to separate us from the love of God which is IN Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ro 8:39-note). As Queen Victoria's beloved husband Prince Albert lay on his death-bed, he again and again sang the Rock of Ages including the words "Nothing in my hand I bring; Simply to Thy Cross I cling" adding "If in this hour I had only my worldly honors and dignities to depend on, I should be poor indeed." Ira Sankey wrote that "Years ago, when a ship sank in the Bay of Biscay (January 11, 1866), a man who was saved was asked what the passengers were doing when the ship went down. He said that the last he heard was "Rock of Ages," sung by all who could join in it."

Indeed, Moses affirms that "The eternal God is thy REFUGE, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee" (Dt 33:27-[note](#)) and "The last enemy that will be abolished is death." (1Cor 15:26-[note](#)). "Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD" (Ps 104:35-[note](#)), our everlasting Rock of Refuge. As Spurgeon affirms "I am in a cleft of a ROCK which is so enduring that time can never dissolve it. Precious Christ, may I be found in Thee amidst the concussion of the elements when the world shall melt away (2Pe 3:10-12-note), and the heavens shall be dissolved (Isa 34:4KJV-[note](#))! Oh, may I stand in Thee, Thou precious cleft of the Rock, for Thou art all-in-all to my soul!" Puritan Thomas Watson writes that as "the dove hides 'in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the cliffs' (Song 2:14-note), Christ's wounds are the clefts of the rock where the believing soul hides itself!" F B Meyer adds that He "is the Rock of Ages! Time may beat upon Him, but it cannot alter Him or impair Him. Whilst this fleeting breath is drawn, when eyes close in death, when unknown worlds are entered, when the judgment throne is set, always and for ever the soul may shelter in the cleft Rock of the unchanging Redeemer, and Peace, like a double window, intercepts alarm from the heart which is stayed on God and trusting in Him (Isa 26:3KJV-[note](#))."

In fitting tribute to our Rock of Refuge, Fanny Crosby penned these beautiful words: ["He hideth my soul in the cleft of the ROCK \(click to play hymn\)](#) that shadows a dry, thirsty land; He hideth my life in the depths of His love, and covers me there with His hand, and covers me there with His hand." As Samuel Rutherford rightly said we should "Not Build (our) nest on any tree of earth, seeing God has sold the forest to Death. But rather soar upwards to the sure and immutable REFUGE in the Cleft of the ROCK," the "ROCK that is higher than" we (Ps 61:2-[note](#)). John describes the NT parallel of being hidden in the cleft of the Rock writing "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him Who is true, and we are IN HIM Who is true, IN His Son Jesus Christ (our Rock of Refuge). This is the true God and eternal life." (1Jn 5:20-[note](#))

O safe to the Rock that is higher than I
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly;
So sinful, so weary -- Thine, Thine would I be;
Thou blest "Rock of Ages," I'm hiding in Thee.
- Cushing

Are the storm winds raging in your life? Are you hiding in Christ, the Rock of your Refuge? He will "always fill (your) heart with songs of deliverance, whenever (you are) afraid." Listen to this great song ["You are My Hiding Place"](#) (Sung by Selah)

You are my Hiding Place
You always fill my heart
With songs of deliverance
Whenever I am afraid
I will trust in You,
I will trust in You,
Let the weak say

I am strong in the strength of the Lord.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

RELATED RESOURCE - HEBREW WORDS FOR "REFUGE"

Refuge ([04733](#)) miqlat)

Refuge (noun) ([04268](#)) machaseh

Refuge (verb form) ([02620](#)) (chasah)

Refuge ([04496](#)) (manos)

See [discussion of the image of a rock](#) - from [The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery](#) (on internet - an outstanding resource)

May these truths about Christ, the Rock of Ages, the Rock of our Refuge enable each of us to confidently declare with David:

"You are my **Hiding Place**. You will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah (Pause) (Psalm 32:7, cp Ps 119:114)

But as for me, I shall sing of Thy strength;
Yes, I shall joyfully sing of Thy lovingkindness in the morning,
For Thou hast been my stronghold,
And a refuge in the day of my distress.
{Ps 59:16}

I cried out to Thee, O LORD;
I said, "Thou art my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.
{Ps 142:5}

O Rock in the desert, I fly unto Thee,
When tempest and storms sweep the sky.
I hide in the cleft that was riven for me,
For safety on Thee I rely.

O Rock in the desert, my refuge and all,
I hide in my weakness in Thee;
Thy love is a shield and I find sweet repose,
Where grace is abundant and free.

O Rock in the desert that gives perfect peace,
That bringeth a joy to my soul;
I rest in Thy shadow, I hide in Thy cleft,
Thy love doth my spirit control.

Chorus O Rock in the desert, I'm hiding in Thee,
Till the storms of life's journey are past;
Thou Rock of my refuge, my soul safely keep,
O receive it in heaven at last

When Christ is our Refuge, we can experience God's goodness even in the midst of trials. When Christ is our Refuge we are safe from the coming wrath of God. And so Toplady writes "Hide all my transgressions from view."

[A Debtor to Mercy](#)

A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with thy righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring;
The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;

My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.

The work which Your goodness began
The arm of Your strength will complete
Your promise is yes and amen
And never was forfeited yet
The future or things that are now
No power below or above
Can make You Your purpose forego
Or sever my soul from Your love

My name from the palms of Your hands
Eternity will not erase
Impressed on Your heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace
Yes I, to the end will endure
Until I bow down at Your throne
Forever and always secure
Forever and always secure
Forever and always secure
A debtor to mercy alone
-Augustus M. Toplady

Ps 27:5 (Ps 27:3 "Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear.") For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; In the secret place of His tent He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock.

Ps 71:3 Be thou my **strong habitation** ("**Rock of refuge**" - NIV), whereunto I may continually resort...for Thou art my Rock and my Fortress." Notice that this is a prayer.

The phrase "**Rock of habitation** (Refuge)" is translated in the Greek by a word which means "one who holds a shield over" -- a beautiful picture of how our Refuge is our Protector, our "safe House," as it were!

The second word for "Rock" is sela and pictures Christ as a relatively inaccessible rocky cliff, where weary ones can find protection from strong foes (especially the world, flesh, devil). When King Saul sought David's life, David "came down into the rock" (1Sa 23:25) which later was named "the Rock of Escape." (1Sa 23:28). Are you in danger or distress? Are you fearful of strong adversaries? Then by faith run into the Rock, Christ Jesus our Refuge, our "Hiding Place."

David prays "Be Thou to me a rock of repose" (Ps 71:3)

Spurgeon writes that "the deep quiet of the enormous recesses in the lone rocks was remembered by David and wrought into his prayer. What a gracious heart David must have had, to speak like this of his God! He desired...to dwell not merely WITH God, but IN God." he cries, "Be thou my strong habitation." Not merely did he long to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, but he would have the Lord to be his house. He would be surrounded by God, and that not as with a dungeon, in which he was forced to be, but as the habitation of his choice, for his pleasure and rest. He would not merely live in God's world, but within God himself. He would realize the meaning of Moses when he said, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." What a man of God he must have been, despite his infirmities and sins! None but a mind in harmony with God as to the great principles of truth and purity would ever have desired such constant intercourse with God as that which is implied in the words, "Whereunto I may continually resort." If you can repeat the words of David from your very soul, bless the grace of God that has taught you to do so; and if you cannot so pray, breathe a silent prayer to heaven saying — Lord, teach me to love thee and long for thee. I would fain acquaint myself with thee, and be at peace.

God as our refuge...

Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good, A stronghold in the day of trouble, And He knows those who take refuge in Him."

Comment: In the midst of wrath God remembers mercy

Ps 62:8 Trust in Him at all times, O people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a **refuge** for us. [Selah = pause and ponder].

Ps 91:1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say to the LORD, "My

refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust!" 3 For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper, And from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with His pinions, And under His wings you may seek refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.

Ps 5:11 But let all who **take refuge** (Heb = chacah = flee for protection, KJV = "put their trust") in Thee be glad. Let them ever sing for joy; and mayest Thou shelter (Heb = cakak = cover over, defend, hedge in so as to protect) them, that those who love Thy name may exult in Thee.

Is 8:13–14 "It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, And He shall be your dread. 14 "Then He shall become a **sanctuary**; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and **arock** to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Comment: If He is not to you a safe sanctuary, He will be to you a stone that strikes and a snare!

Isaiah 17:9 In that day their strong cities will be like forsaken places in the forest, Or like branches which they abandoned before the sons of Israel; And the land will be a desolation. 10 For **you have forgotten** the God of your salvation And **have not remembered** the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine slips of a strange god.

ROCK OF YOUR REFUGE:

Deut 32:37 "And He will say, 'Where are their gods, The rock in which they sought refuge?

2 Sam 22:3 My God, my **rock**, in Whom I take **refuge**; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my **refuge**; My savior, Thou dost save me from violence.

Psa 18:2 The LORD is my **rock** and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my **rock**, in whom I take **refuge**; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psa 62:7 On God my salvation and my glory rest; The **rock** of my strength, my **refuge** is in God.

Psa 94:22 But the LORD has been my stronghold, And my God the **rock** of my **refuge**.

Isa 17:10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the **rock** of your **refuge**. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine slips of a strange god.

Isa 32:2 And each will be like a **refuge** from the wind, And a shelter from the storm, Like streams of water in a dry country, Like the shade of a huge **rock** in a parched land.

Isa 33:16 He ("who walks righteously and speaks with sincerity...and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil" - Isa 33:15) will dwell on the heights; His **refuge** will be the impregnable (inaccessible, a defensive position, a secure place, a stronghold) **rock** (sela); His bread will be given him; His water will be sure.

Pearson on convey in Pr 30:26: We are taught far more by the conies than to have a prudent regard to our residence and to make it secure. For do what we will, we are at the best but "a feeble folk" in a world full of perils. The real lesson is so to know our lack of spiritual strength as to look above, and resort to God as our strength. "When I am weak, then am I strong," says the Apostle (2 Cor. 12:10), and this paradox should be the Christian's motto. A firm belief in it will make me so distrustful of self as to climb the heights and dwell above the world "in the secret place of the Most High" (Ps. 91:1). Then my "place of defence shall be the munition of rocks" (Isa. 33:16). There "the enemy shall not be able to do (me) violence, the son of wickedness shall not hurt (me)" (Ps. 89:22). Yes, so long as my "life is hid with Christ in God," I am safe; "there shall no evil happen unto (me)" (Ps. 91:10). But I must abide in Christ, not come out of Him, my city of refuge. The moment I do so I am in danger (Numb. 35:26, 27). But oh, what an assurance is mine, that He who points out to the conies their safe abode (Ps. 104:18) undertakes much more for His chosen ones, and is Himself their Rock and House of Defence! Shall it not then be my wisdom and my might to pray unceasingly, "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I" (Ps. 61:2)?

Homilist on coney: Their strength. This consists in **renouncing self**. Their safety is to flee to place of refuge. And as they are so weak themselves, they choose the strongest that can be procured (a cleft in the rock). How wise would be feeble men if they would follow the same tactics. But it is the tendency of man to cling to his own thoughts and his own ways. Each thinks his own efforts, his own plans, his own productions better than his neighbour's. So, especially in religion, man is a feeble creature. If he attempts his own salvation his refuge shall be swept away. But if, knowing his own feebleness, he makes his dwelling in the rock Christ Jesus, he shall be safe. And what a home is that Rock! It contains not only shelter and protection, but provision and joy.

He cannot fail, your faithful God,
He'll guard you with His mighty power;
Then fear no ill though troubles rise,

His help is sure from hour to hour.

-- Henry G. Bosch