

# The Rock of Ages

## JESUS CHRIST: THE ROCK OF AGES

Looking at the Names of Jesus is like looking through a kaleidoscope, for with every twist of the tube, the bits of colored glass change, each time creating a beautiful pattern.

**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.

**Illustrations of My Feet on the Rock:** Among the safety rules a mountain climber must remember as he scales rocky cliffs is this: Keep three points on the rock. This means that if he moves one foot, his other foot and both hands must be solidly positioned. If he is going to move a hand to a new grip, his other hand and both feet must be secure. This brings to mind a sermon I once heard called "Three Sisters of Salvation." These are grace, mercy, and peace. We are given our salvation as a gift of God's grace. His wrath is withheld from us because of His abundant mercy. And His peace helps us stand in quiet confidence when the howling gales of adversity swirl about our lives. They will give us security during our spiritual mountain climbing experience. Let's appropriate these gifts through prayer and obedience to God's Word. We will stand secure in the storms of temptation and evil if we keep advancing on these "three points on the Rock."

**The Solid Rock:** A century ago an ocean liner sank off the southwest coast of England, taking many people down with it. A 16-year-old galley boy, who was tossed up along the rugged shore, survived by clinging to a rock all night long. When he was finally rescued, he was asked, "Didn't you shake as you were clinging all night to that rock?" The boy replied, "Yes, of course. But the rock never shook once." The ancient Israelites learned from their experiences in the desert that rocks were more than masses of stone. A rock could serve as shelter from a sudden storm. It could provide a cool shadow from oppressive heat. It was a stronghold and a place of safety from enemies (Ps. 61:2,3; 62:1,2; Isa 32:2). Just as the Hebrews found the rock of their salvation in the Lord who brought them up out of Egypt, so we find our rock of salvation in the One who through His Son delivered us from bondage to sin. When storms of trouble threaten to overwhelm us, we can cling to Him in faith, thankful that our Rock is our unshakable refuge. —V. C. Grounds "The Rock of Ages is our Refuge and Strength."

Christians find safety not in the absence of danger but in the presence of God.

The castle at Edinburgh, Scotland, was built to provide great security for its citizens. Strategically situated atop a high overlook, its massive walls offered protection for the townspeople whenever invaders approached. Yet as impenetrable as this great fortress seemed, it once fell to hostile forces. Man's best efforts never provide complete security against temporal disaster and no security

from eternal disaster for all outside the Rock of our Salvation.

The storms of our life prove the strength of our anchor. And when your anchored to the Rock, the anchor holds!

You may tremble on the rock of ages, but the rock will never tremble under you.

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

**Spurgeon:** A good Welsh lady, when she lay dying, was visited by her minister. He said to her, "Sister, are you sinking?" She answered him not a word, but looked at him with incredulous eye. He repeated the question, "Sister, are you sinking?" At last, rising a little in the bed, she said, "Sinking! Sinking! Did you ever know a sinner to sink through a rock? If I had been standing on the sand, I might sink. But thank God, I am on the **ROCK** of ages, and there is no sinking there!"

**Spurgeon:** O YOU who in these regions profess to abide in the Lord, may you dwell deep in Christ. When you get upon the rock of Christ Jesus you are safe, but when you get into the rock then you are happy. A man on the rock will be subject to the wind and to the rain, to the damp of dews, and to the heat of the sun; but, Oh! a man in the rock—it does not matter to him what weather it is—whether it blows or shines, he is sheltered. Oh! to get fully into Christ—to have a deep experience of our union with him, and a solemn conviction, deepening into a full assurance, of our exaltation in him! Beloved, this is indeed to dwell in the Goshen of Christianity. This is to drink the choice wines of the kingdom. The nearer to Jesus the more perfect our peace. The innermost place of the sanctuary is the most divine. (Flashes of thought)

**Spurgeon:** A dear brother reminded us that we may tremble on the rock, but the **ROCK** never trembled under us. Another reminded me of a remark I made some time ago: "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee" (Ps. 56:3). "Well," I said, "that is going to heaven third-class, but the better way is to go to heaven first-class: 'I will trust, and not be afraid' (Isa. 12:2), letting no fear come in at all, but depending entirely on what God has declared in his Word."

**Spurgeon:** All the bread your soul has eaten has come down from heaven, and all the water of which it has drank has flowed from the living **ROCK**—Christ Jesus the Lord. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** Christian, mix not only thy wine with water, do not alloy thy gold of faith with the dross of human confidence. Wait thou only upon God, and let thine expectation be from him. Covet not Jonah's gourd, but rest in Jonah's God. Let the sandy foundations of terrestrial trust be the choice of fools, but do thou, like one who foresees the storm, build for thyself an abiding place upon the **ROCK** of Ages. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** It is well there is One who is ever the same, and who is ever with us. It is well there is one stable rock amidst the billows of the sea of life. O my soul, set not thine affections upon rusting, moth-eaten, decaying treasures, but set thine heart upon him who abides for ever faithful to thee. Build not thine house upon the moving quicksands of a deceitful world, but found thy hopes upon this **ROCK**, which, amid descending rain and roaring floods, shall stand immovably secure. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** It will be in vain to call to the rocks in the day of judgment, but our **ROCK** attends to our cries. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** It is a most blessed thing to have no props and no buttresses, but to stand upright on the Rock of Ages, upheld by the Lord alone. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** I would live in Christ's heart; in the clefts of that **ROCK** my soul would eternally abide. The sparrow hath made a house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God; and so too would I make my nest, my home, in thee, and never from thee may the soul of thy turtle dove go forth again, but may I nestle close to thee, O Jesus, my true and only rest. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** It often makes their hearts dilate with joy to think of its immutability, as a covenant which neither time nor eternity, life nor death, shall ever be able to violate—a covenant as old as eternity and as everlasting as the **ROCK** of ages. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** Blessed are the waves that wash the mariner upon the **ROCK** of salvation! Losses in business are often sanctified to our soul's enriching. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** Our afflictions are like weights, and have a tendency to bow us to the dust, but there is a way of arranging weights by means of wheels and pulleys, so that they will even lift us up. Grace, by its matchless art, has often turned the heaviest of our trials

into occasions for heavenly joy. "We glory in tribulations also." We gather honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty **rock**. (Gospel Extracts )

**Spurgeon:** In seasons of severe trial, the Christian has nothing on earth that he can trust to, and is therefore compelled to cast himself on his God alone. When his vessel is on its beam-ends, and no human deliverance can avail, he must simply and entirely trust himself to the providence and care of God. Happy storm that wrecks a man on such a **ROCK** as this! O blessed hurricane that drives the soul to God and God alone! (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** Conscious of their own natural defenselessness, the conies resort to burrows in the rocks, and are secure from their enemies. My heart, be willing to gather a lesson from these feeble folk. Thou art as weak and as exposed to peril as the timid cony, be as wise to seek a shelter. My best security is within the munitions of an immutable Jehovah, where his unalterable promises stand like giant walls of rock. It will be well with thee, my heart, if thou canst always hide thyself in the bulwarks of his glorious attributes, all of which are guarantees of safety for those who put their trust in him. **Blessed be the name of the Lord, I have so done, and have found myself like David in Adullam, safe from the cruelty of my enemy; I have not now to find out the blessedness of the man who puts his trust in the Lord, for long ago, when Satan and my sins pursued me, I fled to the cleft of the ROCK Christ Jesus, and in his riven side I found a delightful resting-place.** My heart, run to him anew to-night, whatever thy present grief may be; Jesus feels for thee; Jesus consoles thee; Jesus will help thee. No monarch in his impregnable fortress is more secure than the cony in his rocky burrow. The master of ten thousand chariots is not one whit better protected than the little dweller in the mountain's cleft. In Jesus the weak are strong, and the defenseless safe; they could not be more strong if they were giants, or more safe if they were in heaven. Faith gives to men on earth the protection of the God of heaven. More they cannot need, and need not wish. The conies cannot build a castle, but they avail themselves of what is there already: I cannot make myself a refuge, but Jesus has provided it, his Father has given it, his Spirit has revealed it, and lo, again to-night I enter it, and am safe from every foe. (Morning and evening)

**Spurgeon:** SINCE our Lord Jesus Christ has taken away the curse due to sin, a great rock has been lifted out from the river-bed of God's mercy, and the living stream comes rippling, rolling, swelling on in crystal tides, sweeping before it all human sin and sorrow, and making glad the thirsty who stoop down to drink thereat. (Flashes of thought)

**Spurgeon:** WHILE your bark is tossed about at sea, it is very likely that she wants a new copper bottom, or the deck requires holy stoning, or the rigging is out of repair, or the sails want overhauling, or fifty other things may be necessary; but if the wind is blowing great guns, and the vessel is drifting towards those white-crested breakers, the first business of the mariner is to make for the haven at once, to avoid the hurricane. When he is all snug in port, he can attend to hull and rigging, and all the odds and ends besides. So with you, child of God, one thing you must do, and I beseech you do it. Do not be looking to this, or to that, or to the other out of a thousand things that may be amiss, but steer straight for the cross of Christ, which is the haven for distressed spirits; fly at once to the wounds of Jesus, as the dove flies to her nest in the cleft of the rock. (Flashes of thought)

**Spurgeon:** Israel rested safely beneath the blood-besprinkled habitations of Egypt when the destroying angel smote the first-born; and in the wilderness the shadow of the pillar of cloud, and the flowing **ROCK**, gave the weary pilgrims sweet repose. At this hour we rest in the promises of our faithful God, knowing that his words are full of truth and power; we rest in the doctrines of his word, which are consolation itself; we rest in the covenant of his grace, which is a haven of delight. (Morning and evening)

**Spurgeon:** (Pr 10:9) HIS walk may be slow, but it is sure. He that hasteth to be rich shall not be innocent nor sure; but steady perseverance in integrity, if it does not bring riches, will certainly bring peace. In doing that which is just and right, we are like one walking upon a **rock**, for we have confidence that every step we take is upon solid and safe ground. On the other hand, the utmost success through questionable transactions must always be hollow and treacherous, and the man who has gained it must always be afraid that a day of reckoning will come, and then his gains will condemn him. (Faith's Checkbook)

**Spurgeon:** Broad rivers and streams produce fertility, and abundance in the land. Places near broad rivers are remarkable for the variety of their plants and their plentiful harvests. God is all this to his Church. Having God she has abundance. What can she ask for that he will not give her? What want can she mention which he will not supply? "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things." Want ye the bread of life? It drops like manna from the sky. Want ye refreshing streams? The rock follows you, and that **ROCK** is Christ. If you suffer any want it is your own fault; if you are straitened you are not straitened in him, but in your own bowels.

**Spurgeon:** If you would reach to something higher than ordinary groveling experience, look to the **ROCK** that is higher than you, and gaze with the eye of faith through the window of importunate prayer.

**Spurgeon:** Thank God, then, if you have been led by a rough road: it is this which has given you your experience of God's greatness and lovingkindness. Your troubles have enriched you with a wealth of knowledge to be gained by no other means: your trials have been the cleft of the **ROCK** in which Jehovah has set you, as he did his servant Moses, that you might behold his glory as

it passed by. Praise God that you have not been left to the darkness and ignorance which continued prosperity might have involved, but that in the great fight of affliction, you have been capacitated for the outshinings of his glory in his wonderful dealings with you. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** May your character not be a writing upon the sand, but an inscription upon the rock!

**Spurgeon:** Turn thee to Jesus anew; he has not forgotten his love to thee; his grace is still the same. With weeping and repentance, come thou to his footstool, and thou shalt be once more received into his heart; thou shalt be set upon a **ROCK** again, and thy goings shall be established. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** Huber, the great naturalist, tells us, that if a single wasp discovers a deposit of honey or other food, he will return to his nest, and impart the good news to his companions, who will sally forth in great numbers to partake of the fare which has been discovered for them. Shall we who have found honey in the rock Christ Jesus, be less considerate of our fellow men than wasps are of their fellow insects? Ought we not rather like the Samaritan woman to hasten to tell the good news? Common humanity should prevent one of us from concealing the great discovery which grace has enabled us to make.

**Spurgeon:** We cannot live on the sands of the wilderness, we want the manna which drops from on high; our skin bottles of creature confidence cannot yield us a drop of moisture, but we drink of the rock which follows us, and that **ROCK** is Christ. When you feed on him your soul can sing, "He hath satisfied my mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's," but if you have him not, your bursting wine vat and well-filled barn can give you no sort of satisfaction: rather lament over them in the words of wisdom, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** If we indulge in any confidence which is not grounded on the **ROCK** of ages, our confidence is worse than a dream, it will fall upon us, and cover us with its ruins, to our sorrow and confusion. All that Nature spins time will unravel, to the eternal confusion of all who are clothed therein. The Psalmist was wise, he rested upon nothing short of the Lord's work. It is the Lord who has begun the good work within us; it is he who has carried it on; and if he does not finish it, it never will be complete. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** Our Lord Jesus is ever giving, and does not for a solitary instant withdraw his hand. As long as there is a vessel of grace not yet full to the brim, the oil shall not be stayed. He is a sun ever-shining; he is manna always falling round the camp; he is a **ROCK** in the desert, ever sending out streams of life from his smitten side; the rain of his grace is always dropping; the river of his bounty is ever-flowing, and the well-spring of his love is constantly overflowing. As the King can never die, so his grace can never fail. Daily we pluck his fruit, and daily his branches bend down to our hand with a fresh store of mercy. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** When at any time your prayer flags, let faith support one hand, and let holy hope uplift the other, and prayer seating itself upon the stone of Israel, the **ROCK** of our salvation, will persevere and prevail. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** The hill of comfort is the hill of Calvary; the house of consolation is built with the wood of the cross; the temple of heavenly blessing is founded upon the riven **ROCK**—riven by the spear which pierced his side. (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** If the Lord be with us through life, we need not fear for our dying confidence; for when we come to die, we shall find that "the Lord is there"; where the billows are most tempestuous, and the water is most chill, we shall feel the bottom, and know that it is good: our feet shall stand upon the **ROCK** of Ages when time is passing away. Beloved, from the first of a Christian's life to the last, the only reason why he does not perish is because "the Lord is there." (Morning and evening: Daily readings)

**Spurgeon:** What the sun is to the day, what the moon is to the night, what the dew is to the flower, such is Jesus Christ to us. What bread is to the hungry, clothes to the naked, the shadow of a great **ROCK** to the traveler in a weary land, such is Jesus Christ to us. What the husband is to his spouse, what the head is to the body, such is Jesus Christ to us.

**Spurgeon:** It does not matter how heavy troubles are if you can cast them on the Lord. The heavier they are, so much the better, for the more you have gotten rid of, and the more there is laid on the **ROCK**.

**Spurgeon:** "If Moses had his cleft in the **ROCK** where he could see the back parts of his God, we also have had our clefts in the rock where we have seen the full splendors of the Godhead in the Person of Christ! "

**Spurgeon:** There is never a flood for the wicked without an ark for the righteous! Never shall a storm sweep over the earth till God has prepared a great **ROCK** wherein His people may be hidden."

For and Therefore -

Let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down Your ear to me; deliver me speedily: be You my strong rock

for an house of defense to save me. For You are my rock and my fortress; therefore for Your name's sake lead me, and guide me.' [Psalm 31:1-3] See how logical David is with his, 'for,' and, 'therefore'? It is the very essence of prayer to be able to urge pleas with God and to say to Him, 'Do it for this reason,' or, 'Therefore, do it for such another reason.' I would that we, all of us, studied more fully this blessed art of pleading with God bringing forth sound arguments as we approach Him."—1899, Sermon #2645

**Spurgeon:** The Believer has received Christ into his trust, and this he did at his spiritual birth. He received Christ into the arms of his faith. He took Jesus Christ to be, henceforth, the unbuttressed pillar of his confidence, the one **ROCK** of his salvation, his strong castle and high tower. And, in this sense, every soul that is saved has 'received Christ Jesus the Lord.'"—Volume 53, Sermon #3030

**Spurgeon:** "It appeared a little mistake that Moses made when he struck the **ROCK** instead of speaking to it, and yet he could not enter into the promised rest because of his offense. A small action may involve a great principle and it is for us to be very cautious and careful, searching out what the Master's will is, and then never halting or hesitating for any reason whatever, but doing His will as soon as we know it. Christian life should be a mosaic of minute obedience. The soldiers of Christ should be famous for their exact discipline."

**Spurgeon:** "O my Soul, what is the cleft of the rock where you must stand if you would 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 hole in Jesus' side! That is the cleft of the Rock where you must abide to see God!"—Volume 54, Sermon #3120

**Spurgeon:** "Our sorrows are not worth a thought when once compared with His! Sit down under the shadow of the Cross and you will find a cooler shade than that of a great **ROCK** in a weary land."—Volume 60, Sermon #3395

**Spurgeon:** Believer, look back through all thine experience, and think of the way whereby the Lord thy God has led thee in the wilderness, and how he hath fed and clothed thee every day—how he hath borne with thine ill manners—how he hath put up with all thy murmurings, and all thy longings after the flesh-pots of Egypt—how he has opened the **ROCK** to supply thee, and fed thee with manna that came down from heaven. Think of how his grace has been sufficient for thee in all thy troubles—how his blood has been a pardon to thee in all thy sins—how his rod and his staff have comforted thee. When thou hast thus looked back upon the love of the Lord, then let faith survey his love in the future, for remember that Christ's covenant and blood have something more in them than the past. (Morning and evening)

#### **Related Resources:**

[The Rock of our Salvation -William S Plumer \(1867\)](#)

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**CHRIST OUR ROCK (Part 2): CHRIST THE SMITTEN ROCK.** The background for this title of Christ is found in Exodus 17 which describes God's response to Israel's second "NO WATER" experience. In Exodus 14 Israel was delivered THROUGH THE WATER. In Exodus 15 they were tested first with NO WATER and then BITTER WATER. Thus it is not surprising that Paul reminds us that these Old Testament events "happened to Israel as examples and were written down as warnings for us" (1Cor 10:11) "to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures (OT) we might have HOPE (not a "hope so," but a "hope sure," an absolute assurance that God will do good to us in the future)." So as we look briefly at these OT events which prefigure Jesus as our Smitten Rock, "may the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in HOPE by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Ro 15:13).

**EXODUS 15:22-26:** After Israel had experienced the "mountain top" triumph of divine deliverance through the Red Sea, "they traveled for three days in the desert without finding water." (v22). Isn't this so often our experience that times of great testing follow times of great triumph? And so it behooves us to "be as watchful after victory ("Red Sea experiences") as before the battle!" (A. Bonar) With throats parched Israel "came to Marah (Means "Bitter"), but they not drink its water because it was bitter." (v23) Spurgeon writes that "The relief which seemed so near was snatched away: the cup was dashed from their lips" and so they "grumbled against Moses" (v24), who himself recorded that it was "there God TESTED them!" (v25). Spurgeon adds "what a sudden change from the sound of the timbrel (Ex 15:1) to the voice of grumbling! Such are the changes of our OUTWARD conditions and of our INWARD feelings, so fickle and so mutable is man. What is there that can be RESTED upon in this mortal life?" Our only sure REST in this life is Christ, "the Rock of our Refuge" (Ps 94:22), "the Rock that is higher" than we are (Ps 61:2), the One Who will bring us "up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and set (our) feet upon a Rock making (our) footsteps firm." (Ps 40:2). As David rhetorically asked "Who but our God is a SOLID ROCK?" (2Sa 22:32) And so when Israel was TESTED they failed to REST on the Solid Rock, refusing to trust in Jehovah's promises of His presence, His power and His provision. Instead of giving thanks in everything (1Th 5:18), they grumbled. They refused to believe the truth that the more an "oak of righteousness" (Isa 61:3) is shaken by the winds, the more deeply are its roots driven into the Rock Who is Christ. How often I am like Israel when tested!

Exodus 15 also teaches that God TESTS us, not because He does not know us, but because we don't know ourselves, for we are

prone to forget that our "heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick." (Jer 17:9) Such trials are important to our spiritual growth, for as someone once said, the gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials. As Spurgeon said Israel would not have had need for "wilderness WITHOUT if there had not been 'wilderness' WITHIN, nor would there have been a DROUGHT OF WATER for their mouths if the Lord had not seen a DROUGHT OF GRACE in their souls. We are fine birds till our feathers are ruffled and then what a poor figure we cut! We are very apt to talk more about our bitters than our sweets; and that is a serious fault. It were well if we have fewer murmuring words for our sorrows, and more songs of thanksgiving for our blessings (Ps 145:10)." Indeed, as Calvin said it is "in the darkness of our miseries, that the grace of God shines most brightly."

God allows tests to help make us better, not bitter. He knows that we always learn more from our TRIALS than from our TRIUMPHS. And so He TESTS us to encourage our spiritual growth and bring out the best in us, while the devil TEMPTS us to bring out the worst in us and to encourage spiritual immaturity. Wiersbe adds that "The attitude that we take toward our difficulties determines which direction life will go, for what life does to us depends on what life finds in us. If we trust God and obey His Word, we'll pass the test and grow; but if in unbelief we complain and disobey the Lord, we'll fail the test and remain immature (Jas 1:12)." At Marah despite Israel's grumbling (failing the test, remaining immature), God in His great mercy (not giving them what they deserved) and grace (giving them what they did not deserve) quenched their thirst by "making bitter water sweet" even revealing Himself by a new Name, JEHOVAH RAPHA, the LORD our Healer (Ex 15:25-26). "Oh yes, there are many virtues and many blessings in the bitter waters of Marah! Often have we found it true that 'Sweet are the uses of adversity' for there are some of our graces which would never be discovered if it were not for our trials." (CHS)

**EXODUS 17:** In Exodus 17, as Israel "camped at Rephidim (means "Rest"!), there (again) was NO WATER to drink" (v1) causing them to quarrel and grumble against Moses, prompting Moses to ask "Why do you TEST the Lord?" (v2-3) Instead of crying out **TO** God, they cried out **AGAINST** God! Do we ever cry out AGAINST rather than TO God? Spurgeon writes that their testing of God "was the proof of their imperfection: they were impatient and unbelieving. Have we not too often fallen into the same sin? Brethren, let your conscience answer!" And remember that we TEST the Lord "when we openly and unbelievably question His ability or defy His authority by what we say or do. We deliberately adopt a disobedient posture and dare God to do anything about it. We never solve our problems by blaming others (Israel blamed Moses and ultimately God). Israel's real problem was unbelief and a desire to go back to the old life (Ex 16:3). REMEMBER! Every OBSTACLE we meet is an OPPORTUNITY for TESTING ourselves and TRUSTING our Lord, for going FORWARD or going BACKWARD." (Wiersbe) I am convicted...Is that how I view the obstacles God allows in my life?

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff ("the staff of God" Ex 17:9) with which you struck the Nile (Ex 7:20-21), and go. "Behold, I will stand before you (Note: God Himself stood on the Rock! ~ His glory cloud or Shekinah) there on the ROCK at Horeb (means "barren"); and you shall STRIKE THE ROCK, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (vv 5-6) R C Sproul explains that "Moses lifts the ROD OF JUDGMENT (as evidenced by bringing death to fish in the waters of the Nile, Ex 7:20-21, and Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, Ex 14:16, 21-28) and strikes the ROCK on which GOD STANDS and with which He is symbolically identified. God is not guilty, but He bears the judgment!" In the NT, Paul explains that the SMITTEN ROCK was "a SPIRITUAL ROCK which followed Israel; and the ROCK WAS CHRIST." (1Cor 10:4) Fanny Crosby pictured this NT fulfillment of the OT picture of Messiah our Rock, writing "Though my weary steps may falter, And my soul a-thirst may be, Gushing from the ROCK before me, Lo! A Spring of joy I see." Amen!

Just as life giving waters flowed from the rock smitten by Moses to quench the thirst of a multitude, the smiting of the rock prefigured the life giving waters that flowed from Christ's pierced side (Jn 19:34), providing "LIVING WATER" to many, the Rock Himself declaring that "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (Jn 4:10, 14) (Play - [Spring up oh well](#)). All who drink of this water may joyfully sing "I've got a river of life flowin' out of me. Makes the lame to walk and the blind to see. Opens prison doors, sets the captives free. I've got a river of life flowin' out of me. Spring up Oh Well. Within my soul. Spring up Oh Well And make me whole. Spring up Oh Well And give to me That life abundantly." (P. Wickham) At the termination of the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus cried out saying "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of LIVING WATER.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (Jn 7:37-39) John MacArthur comments that "The impartation of the Holy Spirit is the Source of spiritual and eternal life," for as Jesus said "It is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing." (Jn 6:63).

Adrian Rogers writes that "Jesus, the Rock of ages, was smitten for us; and, because Jesus was smitten for us, out of His riven side, came forth water. And, that water represents the Holy Spirit, which is the water of life." G Campbell Morgan adds the exhortation that "The Church must drink of that Rock-water, flowing clear as the Holy Spirit of Pentecost; for only thereby will she be able to cope with her spiritual foes. Drink, ye thirsty souls, drink, yea, drink abundantly and deeply, for Amalek (a picture of our fallen flesh - Ex 17:8) will be upon you to-morrow; but he will have no power at all against those who have cleansed themselves in the healing streams of the blood and have learned to drink of the living water." Let it be so dear Lord. Amen.

And so when Christ our Rock was smitten on Calvary, living water was made freely available. All who are thirsty and drink from the Rock of our Salvation receive eternal life and "rivers of living water" which picture the indwelling Holy Spirit and the supernatural life He enables. How fitting that Paul describes the Holy Spirit as the One Whom the Father "POURED OUT upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." (Titus 3:6, cp Isa 44:3, Joel 2:28-29) In sum we see that there could be no Pentecost without Calvary, no living, gushing waters without the smiting of our Rock Christ Jesus. And so in both the Old and the New Testament we see God's great and gracious invitation to drink from Christ the Smitten Rock. Isaiah writes "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters." (Isa 55:1) John closes with a similar invitation "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." (Rev 22:17) Are you thirsty?

The words of Horatius Bonar's hymn beautifully testify of Christ our Smitten Rock and the Living Waters that flowed forth His pierced side on Calvary's Cross...

### **I HEARD THE VOICE OF JESUS SAY**

“Behold, I freely give  
The living water; thirsty one  
Stoop down and drink and live.”  
I came to Jesus and I drank  
Of that life-giving stream;  
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
And now I live in Him.

Here is Michael Card's Great Version of **"I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say"**