

**ROCK OF AGES**  
**Psalm 18:1-2; 1 Cor 10:4**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Who is this Man??**



Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson has become a huge celebrity in our society. Some of you have no idea who he is; some know, but don’t want to admit it, and some have seen all, or some of his movies. I’ve even seen headlines about him running for office, maybe even President one day.

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/may/11/dwayne-johnson-run-for-president-rock>

But just his name, “The Rock” gives a sense of stability, and when you see him you can see that he lives up to his name – the man is rock solid (they photoshopped his face on my body)

The term “rock” is used as a nickname or a description of something when you want to convey an idea of stability, security, and safety, and Biblically it is applied to God. Psalm 18:1-2

**I love You, O LORD, my strength.**

**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.**

Each time I sing this hymn, Rock of Ages, I think, “that will preach”. This morning, I’m preaching it.

**AUGUSTUS Montague TOPLADY 1740-1778, wrote the hymn in 1776**



Toplady was an Anglican priest, then in 1775 became pastor of the French Calvinist Church in Leicester Fields. He wrote several books on theology and church history and at least 40 Hymns.

Sir William Henry Wills, in a letter to Dean Lefroy, published in the [London] Times in June, 1898, says ‘Toplady was one day overtaken by a thunderstorm on the edge of my property, a rocky glen running up into the heart of the Mendip range, and there, taking shelter between two massive piers of our native limestone rock, he penned the hymn,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,

Let me hide myself in Thee.

A verse listed at the top of the page in the Trinity Hymnal is

**1 COR 10:1-4**

**For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3and all ate the same spiritual food; 4and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.**

(Read the verse out loud together)

I. 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 a double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power.

This first verse proclaims 3 truths about mankind in general, and these are truths that we don't really like to hear. They're all related to the issue of our own inadequacy, and that "doesn't preach" in our culture

Let's be honest and admit that the idea of "being saved" is one that doesn't always land well on modern ears. While the language may sound old fashioned and religious, the concept of needing salvation, is one that most people will connect with, when they are honest.

**1. To be saved we must admit our need for a Rock, or savior, much bigger than ourselves.**

If we believe that we are good, righteous, capable and autonomous in ourselves, then we'll never admit our need to be saved. We'll put confidence in ourselves, or like many who say, "There is nothing after death, we'll think it is useless to even speak of "salvation."

Matt 9:12

Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining *at the table* in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. <sup>11</sup>When the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>12</sup>But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, "*It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.*"

If we don't see that we are sick, we'll never look for healing. Human pride keeps people from seeing our need and believing in God.

There is an expression in French for when people need to leave a situation or get out of a conversation. They say, "je me sauve" = "I'm saving myself", or "I've got to run, or I'm off."

"Saving yourself" may work in such social setting, but it doesn't work in terms of heaven. We simply can't save ourselves. We can deceive ourselves into thinking we can save ourselves, but we can't save ourselves.

**2. To be saved, we need to be changed from within.**

Something has to happen from the inside out and we can't really do it on our own. God must act and give new life so that we can embrace Christ by faith.

While it's all a bit mysterious, the Bible does speak of this in various ways - John 3 - born again ;(Eph 2:4-5)

**But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**

The fancy word for it is "regeneration", which is part of the work of God's grace toward those have been appointed to eternal life - Acts 13:48

Without this work, or call of God, in our hearts we would remain spiritually dead and incapable of ever coming to Christ.

Rom 3, 8 - No one seeks God; we are at enmity with God.

John 6 - No one can come to the Father unless that spiritual ability is given to him.

If we've come to faith in Christ, it is because of the grace of God.

**3. To be saved we need a Redeemer**

Those who are spiritually dead need someone to come and redeem them.

I can't save you because I have sin of my own. Look around; the people around you can't save you because they have sin.

The grace of God displayed through the cross shows the depths of God's justice, love and power. Jesus came and lived the life we should have lived and died the death that we should have died.

His work can cleanse us from our guilt of sin and the power of sin.

Through his death, Jesus pays the debt we owed, and by giving us new hearts and the Holy Spirit he frees us from the power of sin. Do we still sin? Yes, but we have been given a new life with new power, so the dominion of sin is broken.

The GOOD NEWS is that the Holy God sent his innocent Son to deliver us from what we deserve.  
Mark 10:45

**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."**

Our Rock of Ages delivers us from the slavery of sin and frees us to live for His glory.

We bring Him glory by hiding ourselves in Him.

**HE IS NOT ASHAMED TO BE OUR REDEEMER AND OUR ROCK.**

**\*\*FATHER'S DAY SIDEROAD**

Your true strength as a husband and father comes as you "hide yourself" in God through Christ.

It is through surrender to Him and His will that you find the resources you need to walk in repentant faith and wisdom.

Being a spiritual leader in the home means that you would be the one who leans on God in your public and private life.

Dads, here's another tidbit – studies indicate that the spiritual life of your kids is profoundly shaped by YOUR faith and practice, even over the faith and practice of their mother.

<http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/04/11/moralistic-therapeutic-deism-the-new-american-religion-2/>

Your kids need to see a sincere faith lived out in your life so that they don't fall prey to the new American Religion of "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism". Let me explain by quoting an article from Albert Mohler- (linked in sermon notes on the website)

*When Christian Smith and his fellow researchers with the National Study of Youth and Religion at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill took a close look at the religious beliefs held by American teenagers, they found that the faith held and described by most adolescents came down to something the researchers identified as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."*

*As described by Smith and his team, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism consists of beliefs like these: 1. "A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over*

*human life on earth.” 2. “God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.”*

*3. “The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about one’s self.” 4. “God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.” 5. “Good people go to heaven when they die.”*

Friends, that is NOT Historical Biblical Christianity, but sadly it would find a place in many churches. The term was not invented when I was a teen, but it describes my church life growing up.

Dads, we need to model for our kids a Christ centered, Christ exalting life of worship and practice.  
**Heb 12:2**

***<sup>2</sup> Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***

What was the “joy set before him?” It was the bride that he was dying to save- it’s his church, those who trust him, who hide themselves in Him.

\*\*\* End of Sideroad

(Read the verse out loud together)

***II. Not the labors of my hands can fulfill thy law’s demands; could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone; thou must save, and thou alone.***

***Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." Gal 3:11***

Not even the most fair, righteous, gentle, loving, brave and holy woman or man is worthy of entering the presence of God on her own.

EX: Sarah Jones could tell you her testimony of how she was convinced that she would be able to pull it off, until God and reality broke in.

If all the good works ever done by mortal men and women were credited to my spiritual account (or yours), it would not be enough to merit salvation. We tend to think that if we just try our best, then God will find our own merits to be enough. Or He’ll look at our mess and say, “I know they messed up, but I find no intent; they really meant well.”

God holds out His son as savior, and we hold up our resume of “good works” seeking to create our own righteousness. The sad reality is that IT’S NOT OUR SIN THAT KEEP US FROM God, IT’S OUR OWN GOOD WORKS. For years I thought that if I tried to be “good” (as I defined it) or do my best, then that would do the trick with God.

All the labors of our hands cannot fulfill the law’s demands. Sin is such a pervasive power that it taints even our “best good works.” Neither our zeal, nor our tearful sorrow can atone for our sin. Belief in “God” in general, the “man upstairs” or “the force” won’t save us.

THE GOOD NEWS is that God has sent a Savior – he deals with our sin – past, present and future!! CHRIST MUST SAVE, AND Christ ALONE, and we must flee to him as our Rock and hide ourselves in Him and His saving obedience, death, resurrection and ascension.

***Acts 4 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "... 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you***

crucified, whom God raised from the dead-by this *name* this man stands here before you in good health. 11 He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, *but* WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER *stone*. 12 And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

(Read the verse out loud together)

III. Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling; naked, come to thee for dress; helpless, look to thee for grace; foul I to the Fountain fly; wash me, savior, or I die.

In coming to Jesus, we bring nothing but our sin, our pride, and our baggage. If you think you can come to Jesus with your merits to justify yourself, then you have missed the whole meaning of the Gospel.

THE GOSPEL is the announcement of the GOOD NEWS that Jesus has accomplished all obedience through his perfect life and death.

It is not a list of things that we must do to be like Jesus so we can earn our way to God. I say that because the prevailing view of the church's message, in the culture, and often in the church itself, is that Jesus is the best example to follow if you want to be good and get to heaven. It is the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism of the American church.

I've been a Christian for 43 years and in "religious work" for 40, and everywhere I've gone I've found that unchurched and churching people have a similar "salvation by works" sort of mentality.

The default mode of the moralist human heart is that of an earned righteousness and a scale of justice.

God will weigh our good and bad and we get heaven or hell based on how good or bad we are.

Irreligious moralists have their definitions of "good and bad", and each religion has its list. People naturally assume that it is the same way with the Christianity.

The great mystery of the gospel is that, despite our sins and our corruption and the infinite distance between us and God, there is a way for us to enter the presence of the Lord with joy and with full assurance. This divine means is the cross. Jesus opened a new and living way for us through his own body. His cross alone is my support. Is it your only support this morning?

Col 1 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Because of the peace that Christ made with God, we can face life and death with a supernatural inner peace.

Daniel Draper, an English Methodist, spent thirty years planting churches and schools in Australia, then took a year's furlough in England. When the time came to return to Australia, he boarded the steamship London. A gale hit the ship in the Bay of Biscay, and Draper spent his last hours evangelizing the 250 passengers.

In the end, only three passengers were rescued, and one of them reported Draper's last words: "Those of you who are not converted, now is the time; not a minute to be lost."

As the ship slipped beneath the sea on January 11, 1866, the passengers were singing Augustus Toplady's famous hymn "Rock of Ages" in their final moments."

(Read the verse out loud together)

While I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyelids close in death, when I soar to worlds unknown, see thee on thy judgement throne,

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.!

EX: A man in our church in France had a friend who as very ill. His doctor asked him if he was ready go. He wasn't. God was gracious and he lived longer. But death came later for Pierre, just as it comes for all of us.

The fallacy of our government as God culture is that "if we do or don't enact this or that piece of legislation or treaty, then PEOPLE WILL DIE." News Flash - We're all going to die one day, no matter what legislation we enact.

God has fixed a day in which he will judge the world, in all justice, by Jesus Christ. On this day, all the human beings who have lived on the earth will stand before the tribunal of Christ. It will no longer be possible to get behind our reputation, or behind our professional success.

That day there will be no place for us to get away from the righteousness of God except in Christ, the Eternal Rock.

**THE ROCK OF AGES IS SOMEONE WE MEET-**  
**He is the friend of sinners who provides the righteousness that we lack.**

#### **ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT**

When we sink our roots into God as our Rock, we find stability and strength in our relational life. We are enabled to love others rather than use them.  
God is the "rocky" soil that actually creates lasting growth.

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