

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Picture David in the Strongholds of En Gedi, surrounded by high cliffs and massive rock formations, but it was God who saved him once again from Saul. That is when he wrote the words of Psalm 18:2 “The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” God is a more sure defence than the high cliffs and caves of En Gedi.

Behold Your God - He Is Your Strong ROCK!

-I- He is a Rock of Defence.

God saved David that day, and Saul went away ashamed of his actions and for a brief time stopped chasing David. David had many enemies, but none of them could overcome David. Many would credit David's great military strategy and being a mighty warrior! But David knew it was because the LORD was a strong rock of defence, a mighty fortress. And David praised God for delivering him in this and many other Psalms.

God is still a strong rock of defence for all who put their trust in Him. He is able to save us from every type of danger. You know how the fires in Spokane destroyed 1000 homes and businesses. A member of Trinity, our sister Congregation in Spokane, named Kevin, lives in the evacuation zone. He says He prayed that God would protect his home and neighbourhood. Here's a map of the fire zone. Kevin's home is right in the centre of hundreds of homes destroyed by fire, yet his home and neighbourhood was unharmed. God truly is a strong rock of defence. Whatever troubles and dangers may come up in your life, turn to the Lord and trust in Him. He is a strong Rock of defence.

Let's join in singing, A Mighty Fortress is our God. **Hymn 262**

We turn next to Isaiah 26:4: “Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.”

-II- He is a Rock of Stability.

The Rock of Gibraltar has become a symbol of lasting, unchanging stability. It has stood guarding the entrance to the Mediterranean sea for over 4000 years virtually unchanged. What a fitting picture of the LORD our God. He is “an everlasting rock.” God says in Malachi 3:6 “For I am the Lord, I do not change.” God's Word is not outdated or irrelevant today, as some claim. His word is just as true and relevant to our lives as ever. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”

Since God and His word does not change, He is completely reliable. We can depend on His promises 100%. Nothing else in this world is completely reliable? The Prudential insurance company uses the Rock of Gibraltar as their logo. They want to transmit the idea that they are solid and will always be there for you. Yet it has happened many times when people do have a claim on their house, insurance companies will find some little hidden

clause that excludes their particular problem and they don't pay anything. Nothing in this world is completely reliable. People tell lies, they make mistakes, they go back on their word. Even people who have the best of intentions, something may come up beyond their control and they can't keep their promises.

In contrast to all that God is an everlasting rock who does not change. He never changes His mind or His standards, and nothing can prevent Him from keeping His promises. Balaam contrasts God with humans in Numbers 23:19, "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" That is why Isaiah tells us to "Trust in the LORD forever." Depend on Him, He will never fail you. When we do trust Him forever, Isaiah says in the verse immediately before our text. "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." 26:3). Perfect Peace comes when you trust completely in God. That is especially true when you truly trust that "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," when "we confess our sins" unto Him in faith. Depend on your everlasting, unchanging rock. For He is not like people, who say they forgive but then still don't talk to you or treat you the same. God forgives and lavishes His love upon us. And keeps us until we will live with Him in the perfect peace of heaven.

Confession of Sins: Since God gives us this sure promise, let us come before our God and confess our sins to Him, trusting Him fully for His forgiveness.

Let us sing of our Everlasting Rock of Ages. **Hymn 376 Rock of Ages.**

You know, I always thought the "Rock of Ages, Cleft for me," was a reference to when Moses wanted to see the glory of God and God said He would put him in the Cleft of the Rock and cover him while God passed by him and then allow Moses to see his back, especially as it continues, "Let me hide myself in Thee." That is a fitting picture as well. But as you read on you realize that the hymn is actually comparing Christ to the Rock that Moses struck and God caused it to cleave or split and water flowed from the rock for the people to drink. The Apostle Paul says "that Rock was Christ," in 1 Cor. 10:4 Just as the Rock was split and water flowed for the people, so Christ was struck with a spear and water and blood flowed for the cleansing of our sins. So stanza 1 continues, "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." Then we sing in St. 3, "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!" Christ is truly our **Rock of Ages.**

-III-

King David says in Psalm 40:1-4, "*I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. 2 He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, and gave me a firm place to stand. 3 He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord. 4 Blessed*

is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!”

-III- He is a Rock to Stand On.

I was probably about 8 years old when my family went to watch the salmon spawning in a little creek not far from our home in Lynnwood, Washington. As we were exploring along the creek, I jumped off a rock onto what looked like solid ground. But as soon as I landed, I began to sink. When I tried to pull my feet out, I couldn't. I just kept sinking deeper and deeper. I was almost up to my waste in mud by the time my dad got to me and pulled me out. Boy was it good to stand on solid ground again!

That is a pretty good description of what the lies and deception of the world can do to a person. They appear solid, based on “science” or based on human experience. The experts have shown... They can suck you in and not let go. I once talked with a person who was brought up in a Lutheran Church, but now the lies and deception of the world got their grip on her and she became an agnostic. I said, isn't that very unsettling not to know whether there is a God or not, not to know whether there is a heaven or hell, not to know what will happen to you when you die? She said, for her it was very freeing. She was convinced there was no way to know, and so she didn't need to worry about it. She could live the way she wanted without the thought of a god watching her every move. It may be very freeing, until troubles and hardships come and she has no one to depend on. It may be freeing now, until she dies and must face the God that she was ignoring all those years. She was stuck in the mire of deception.

I have often talked about how the hope of the world is nothing like the hope of the Christian. It's not that the meaning of the word hope is any different. It all depends on what your hope is based on—what you are standing on. A person's faith and hope is only as good as what they place their faith in. The Atheist has a faith, believing that there is no god and that everything just came about by itself. So his hope is that there is nothing after death, therefore there is nothing to fear. But what happens when Christ comes and raises them from the dead? Then they will realize their faith and hope was placed in a lie. It's just sinking sand. Then it will be too late.

Some believe that God will save them because they are a good person. Others believe that God will save everyone, that there is no such thing as hell. Again their hope seems solid now, but it will prove to be nothing but sinking sand in the end. Thank God that He has pulled us out of that “pit of destruction,” and that “miry bog” of deception and has placed us on the solid Rock of His word. He is the Rock of our Salvation. King David says in Psalm 61:2 “From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” God and His word is that Rock. He is higher than all the false beliefs and hopes this world has. May we stand firm on that Rock always.

Truly Blessed are they who Hear the Word of God AND Keep it!

Confession of Faith - Apostolic Creed

Hymn 370 My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

Matthew 16:13-19 *“When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ 14 So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ 15 He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ 16 Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ 17 Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

-IV- He is the Solid Foundation of His Church and Our Life.

That confession that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” is the solid Rock that Christ builds His Church upon. There is no other foundation for His Church. Jesus says that Peter was blessed because that truth was revealed to him by the Father. We too are blessed! We can thank and praise God that He has revealed this truth to us and opened our heart to believe it so that we are build as living stones upon that foundation. There are so many Pastors who use God’s word but they are building on a different foundation. How can you know who to believe? Paul answers that question in Romans 3:3-4. He is talking about the Israelites who lost their faith. He says, “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar.” We can be absolutely certain that God’s word is true. That is the only foundation for our faith. We can only know who to believe by comparing what they say to what God says. We need to judge everything according to His word of Truth. His church is built on the solid foundation of God’s word of truth. Everything else is sinking sand.

That foundation of the Church is also the foundation for our life. Remember Jesus’ words in His Sermon on the Mt. “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” Matt. 7:25-27 There will be storms in life. Some of them will be very severe. But when you build your life on the solid Rock of God’s word by hearing His word and putting it into practice, then you will be able to weather every storm and stand firm in the faith. As King David said in Psalm 62, which was suggested for you to read in preparation for your worship today. Verses 5&6, “My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.” Amen.