

A storm, a cleft in a rock, and a playing card

"...they hid among the rocks"
1 Samuel 13:6 (NIV)

One of the truly great hymn writers of the Christian church was Augustus Toplady (1740-1778). He was an Anglican priest and apparently had a remarkable experience one day as he was travelling and a violent rain storm occurred.

Toplady took refuge in a cleft of a rock along the way and it provided him with some shelter from the fury of the storm. While waiting out the storm from his place of safety some thoughts came to mind of how God is a rock and shelters His people from the storms of life.

Then he started to form a poem in his mind. It seems a playing card was on the ground near his feet and he took it up and wrote the verse that he had composed. It was thought that it was published just 3 years before his death and 12 years after it's composition.

Read the lines of the first

verse of this hymn:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood,
from thy wounded side
which flowed,
be of sin the double cure;
save from wrath and make
me pure.

In the years since his hymn was written countless thousands of people have taken comfort from this prayer to Jesus and have sung or recited these words to bring peace to their hearts in tragic situations.

Apparently William Gladstone, former Prime Minister of England, had this hymn sung at his funeral in Westminster Abbey. Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria of England died at the young age of 42. As he lay dying he had this hymn, Rock of Ages, sung to him.

In many Scriptures God is called a Rock (e.g. Psalm 18:2; 95:1) Also Jesus, our Lord is called the Rock

(e.g. 1 Corinthians 10:4) So God takes to Himself the thought of people finding security and refuge in Him who is as solid as a rock.

It can be remarkably comforting to consider the Rocky Mountains in Canada or the Alps in Switzerland and meditate on how stable and unmoveable they are. Then transfer that thought to the God who made everything and how stable and unmovable He is for all who seek refuge in Him.

Have you ever prayed the verses of this hymn Rock of Ages? The words are a most magnificent call to Jesus to be everything to us in the storms of life. Are you hiding yourself in the Rock today?

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