

God our Rock

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Date: 12 April 2020

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- [0 : 0 0] Welcome to our services today and we pray that the Lord would bless us together as we come around his word and as we meditate upon it.
- Let us commence our service today by joining together in prayer. O Lord our God, we give thanks unto thee that we can come with boldness and confidence into thine own presence through the merits of thy Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
- And as we draw nigh unto thee, we seek, O Lord, that it would please thee to grant to us the grace to enable us to humble ourselves in thy presence and to acknowledge our sinnership.
- Give me thee thanks, O Lord, for that great provision which thou hast made for us through thy Son, as the fountain that has been opened for sin and for uncleanness, to which we can come and receive that cleansing that we stand in need of.
- Grant to us, O Lord, today that we would come to that fountain and by faith that we would draw from that fountain. O that we would have that assurance that our sins have been covered, that our sins have been forgiven through the blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
- [1 : 5 6] We give thee thanks, O Lord, for the efficacy of his finished work and for his continual ministry at thine own right hand in the intercession that he makes on behalf of his people and for the great promise of his return to engather his own to be with him forever.
- We pray, O Lord, that thou would look upon us in compassion in these days and that thou, O Lord, would grant to us that we may be led to consider our own relationship with thyself.
- For we acknowledge, O Lord, that so often we are so far away, that so often we are so cold in our devotions and even in our worship.
- But grant to us, O Lord, that we may come to know that nearness to thee, as thou doth speak to us.
- And it is the one who is wise who will consider these things and who will consider his relationship with thyself.
- [3 : 1 3] O Lord, we lament that so little is done in our nation, that so little is done in reference to thyself.
- So few call upon thy name. We find such apathy and indifference and we find such defiance in our land, even when thou hast plagued us at this time, when people give themselves over to music and dancing, to street parties, to house parties, instead of calling upon their God.
- O Lord, the hardness of man's heart. And we fear, O Lord, that even in the midst of our circumstances at this time, and the plague that has come upon us, that will be true of our generation as it was true of others, that they harden their heart against God.
- O Lord, we pray that thou would have pity upon us, that through thy spirit that thou would come and that thou would break down that hardened heart.
- And that there would be many who would call upon their God. O seeking thy mercy, seeking to be reconciled to their God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 43] We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless those who are confined to their homes because of old age and because of the restrictions that is upon us at this time.

O Lord, we pray that even although we may be restricted from our normal duties, yet, O Lord, that we are not restricted from coming into thy presence.

And so we pray that our chamber may be filled with crying into thee, O to have mercy upon us, to shine upon us with the light of thine own countenance.

O Lord, how we need thee. We need thee at all times. We must continually be dependent upon thee. But especially, O Lord, that we would feel that need at this time.

And O pray, O Lord, that we would be of that number, that we would know where we can go with our problems, with all our fears, that we can come and lay them out in thy presence.

[5 : 58] O knowing that thou art the one who can meet with us at our point of need, that thou art the one who can truly bring peace where there is turmoil.

We ask, O Lord, that thou would bless our leaders, bless our Prime Minister. We pray that thou would restore him back to health and strength. And we pray, O Lord, above all, that the bed of his affliction may be a bed of blessing for him.

O Lord, we lament how they go on in their own strength without calling upon their God. O Lord, have pity upon them.

Remember, we pray thee, those who have been touched with this plague. We pray, O Lord, that thou would bring healing into them, into their physical situations, but above all, we pray that thou would meet with them spiritually.

O Lord, thou art the great physician. Thou art the one who can bring healing to the body and to the soul. We pray, O Lord, for our homes and our families.

[7 : 10] We pray for all our loved ones, wherever they may be, that thy known everlasting arms would be around them. We pray for our young people and our children.

O may they grow up in the fear of the Lord. We pray, Lord, for those who are ill among us. We pray that thine healing hand would be upon them.

Remember those who are mourning the passing of loved ones. We pray, Lord, that thine own comfort would be their portion. We ask, O Lord, that as we come together around thy word, that it would please thee to grant to us thine own spirit, to enlighten our understanding, to draw us into thine own world, that we may be refreshed and edified through thy word this day.

We ask, O Lord, that thou would continue with us, that thou would meet with each one of us at our point of need. And all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins is in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen. We shall now read the word of God as we find it in the book of Psalms and Psalm 61.

[8 : 30] To the chief musician upon Nagina, a Psalm of David. Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer.

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, for thou hast been a shelter for me and a strong tower from the enemy.

I will abide in thy tabernacle forever. I will trust in the cover of thy wings. Selah. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows.

Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name. Thou wilt prolong the king's life and his years as many generations. He shall abide before God forever or prepare mercy and truth which may preserve him.

So will I sing praise unto thy name forever that I may daily perform my vows. May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word.

[9 : 49] As we seek the Lord's blessing, let us look upon this psalm today. And I would like especially to draw our attention at this time to the verse 1 and 2 of Psalm 61.

And we shall look at the other verses in the evening. Psalm 61. Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer.

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee. When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

This psalm was written by David. And we have the title to the chief musician upon Nagaina. Now, what Nagaina means we are not sure, for it could be a special tune or it could be a musical instrument.

We just don't know. We are not told the occasion in David's life to which this psalm refers. He is certainly away from Jerusalem.

[11 : 08] He is away from the centre of worship. It could have been during one of his military campaigns or when he was running away from King Saul.

But it is more likely to have been during his exile from Jerusalem, during the rebellion of his son Absalom.

For in verse 6 we read, thou wilt prolong the king's life and his years as many generations. And that would seem to indicate that he is the king.

During the days of Saul, David was, as it were, a king-in-waiting, while during Absalom's rebellion he was the king that his son was attempting to dethrone.

Whatever the occasion, David was experiencing a loneliness coupled with sadness and distress over unspecified troubles.

[12 : 17] He says, my heart is overwhelmed. David was not only lonely but also his life was in danger and he was looking for a place of hiding or a place of refuge and safety.

and so he cries out, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me and a strong tower from the enemy.

David shows us that when we are lonely or having problems and difficulties or our life is in danger and we wonder what shall we do or where shall we go?

David is an example for us for he teaches us that we should draw near to God in prayer. Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer.

David is feeling isolated as it were. He feels that he is at the end of the earth. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee.

[13 : 36] Sometimes because of problems and difficulties in our own life, we may sometimes feel that we have come to the end of our tether.

Where do we go? What shall we do? Well, here is David's example. He turns to God. He comes near to God.

He cries to God. This was not a new experience for David, for throughout the Psalms we have David making a series of earnest, heartfelt appeals to God.

Cry out in his loneliness and despair. For instance, in Psalm 25, he feels lonely and afflicted. And his only recourse was to turn to God and plead for mercy and God's intervention, because his only hope was in God.

Turn thee unto me and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged. O bring thou me out of my distresses, look upon mine affliction and my pain.

[14 : 58] There are many reasons why a person may feel lonely and afflicted and distressed and anxious. One can be alone without being lonely, and one can be lonely in a crowded room.

There is no deeper sadness that ever comes over the mind than the idea that we are alone in the world, that we do not have a friend, that no one cares for us, that no one is concerned about anything that might happen to us.

But on this occasion, if we accept that it was the time when David fled from Jerusalem because of Absalom's rebellion, David was not alone, for he had loyal followers.

As we read in 2 Samuel 15, he had his bodyguard around him and strangely a group of Gittites who were refugee soldiers from Palestine had attached themselves in recent time to David's service and they followed David out of Jerusalem.

Among his followers was Abiathar and Sadoc, Israel's priest and they brought with them the Ark of the Covenant. But David ordered them carry back the Ark of God into the city.

[16 : 30] If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again and show me both it and his habitation. David knew that the only thing that now mattered was whether God granted him favour.

he was aware of his complete reliance on God's grace. David also received news of Hyetophil's betrayal.

Hyetophil is among the conspirators with Absalom and this was shattering news that we know grieved David perhaps even more than even his son's rebellion.

Hyetophil was his close friend and counsellor. David wrote of the plain in Psalm 41 words that Jesus would himself utter in the betrayal of Judas Iscariot.

Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

[17 : 47] You see, what the Lord is doing here is that he has placed David at the point of extremity where in his depressed spiritual state he realised that he needed help.

Even more so he realised where his harsh desire truly dwelt. so, as we said, that one can find himself lonely in a crowded room and that seems to be the experience of David at this time.

What was David's response? Well, we read, and it came to pass that when David was come to the top of the mount where he worshipped God.

Although his son had rebelled against him and although a majority in Jerusalem had sided with Absalom in his rebellion and although his close friend had betrayed him, nevertheless he came and worshipped God.

And the opening words of his psalm, hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

[19 : 27] In our own situation at present, and the restrictions that are upon us, is it not a testing time for us? Do you miss being away from the assembling, the gathering of God's people from the centre of worship?

Is your heart's desire like David's on another occasion, which we find cited for us in Psalm 27? One thing have I desired of the Lord that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

But however far we may be from the comforts of family and friends, God is always a snare. That is why fellowship with God through his word and prayer is the best antidote to isolation.

whether we are isolated from the corporate worship with other Christians, or discouraged by trials, or lonely because of the demands of work, or distressed by the consequences of our own sin, the opening lines of Psalm 61 reminds us to cry out to God, who is graciously willing to listen and to give strength to our fainting hearts.

David's petition to the Lord, lead me to the rock, for he knew that he could not do it on his own strength, that he needed help.

[21 : 18] Now these words can so accurately describe for us the sinish plight. If you are not a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ today, this needs to be your prayer.

Because only Jesus can save us, but we cannot reach him unless God draws us through his regenerating power.

This problem of helplessness arises from the spiritual bondage of sin. As Jesus taught, he said, no man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.

What does it mean to be drawn to Jesus by the Father? Are sinners drawn to Jesus by force? No. God draws sinners to Jesus by changing their hearts from one of unbelief to a heart of faith, setting them free from the bondage of unbelief.

In the book of Acts we are told regarding the conversion of a woman named Lydia, that the Lord opened her heart. That is what God does in drawing sinners to Jesus.

[22 : 44] He opens the heart. A.W. Pink says that the drawing of God is the power of the Holy Spirit overcoming the self righteousness of the sinner and convincing him of his lost condition.

It is the Holy Spirit awakening within him a sense of need. It is the power of the Holy Spirit overcoming the pride of natural man.

So that he is ready to come to Christ as an empty handed beggar. In other words, it is the Holy Spirit creating within us a hunger for the bread of life.

A hunger for Jesus Christ. O lead me to the rock. book. In Isaiah chapter 54, we are told, And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, which the Lord Jesus quotes.

It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.

[24 : 07] To be taught of the Lord or to have learned of the Father is to be convinced, fully persuaded of the truth of the Word of God.

To have the truth of the Word impressed upon our minds and upon our hearts. When the Word of God says, Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

My dear friend, believe it. My dear friend, be fully persuaded of that truth, that there is salvation in no other but in Jesus Christ.

Jesus reminds us that the general call of the gospel, which we'll receive in the preaching of the gospel, is not enough. It saves no one. Even when it is Jesus himself that is the person preaching, because the preaching of the gospel requires the drawing power of God in order to save.

In theology, we call this effectual calling. The effectual drawing of God through the working of the Holy Spirit in a person.

[25 : 35] It affects the mind, it affects the understanding, it affects the will, it affects the whole person. Oh, let us pray to God for his power to bring new life to those who hear his word.

God. Maybe you are listening to this sermon today. Normally, you might not have been in church, but in God's providence, you are listening to the word of God today.

Maybe with your husband, or with your wife, with your family, or maybe just on your own. Maybe out of curiosity. Maybe during the time of restrictions, your conscience is stopping you, telling you that it's only proper that you listen to our sermon today.

Whatever the reason, my friend, it is good that we have come together in this manner with the word of God. But I tell you that if you are not a Christian, this prayer of David is your need today.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. But this is a prayer that the Christian also needs. I don't know what your circumstances are today.

[27 : 01] The Christian is not immune from the normal pressures of life. So today you may be anxious regarding the future. You may be anxious regarding your employment, your family home, your mortgage.

You may be suffering from work stress as you work from home, worried about your own health. You may be feeling very lonely today, very isolated.

Maybe there is a family conflict, maybe there is grief, maybe there is the fear of death. Whatever it may be, we also need this prayer.

and lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Remember that Jesus offered his disciples a most complete cure from the worries of life.

And seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after, and your father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

[28 : 18] In other words, he is saying, do not be anxious because you have a good father who knows what you need. Paul writing to the Philippians writes, be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Jesus says, but rather seek ye the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

In other words, in order to resolve my anxiety and my worries, lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

the rock is one of the titles that is found frequently in scripture in reference to God. Throughout the Psalms, David often refers to a rock as a strong place of shelter from enemies.

In the following Psalms, Psalm 62, he says, He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defence, I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory, the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God.

[29 : 43] In 2 Samuel chapter 22, we'll read that David spoke into the Lord the words of the song and the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and out of the sand of Saul.

And David said, the Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer. This may not be surprising since during the years on the run from Saul, two of David's best hiding places were rocky caves, but he knew that it was God who truly kept him safe.

In Psalm 95, he bids us to make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. In Psalm 40, David speaks of a rock as a sure foundation on which we may stand.

He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of a mighty clay and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. This imagery of God as the rock is not confined to David.

Moses spoke to Israel and said about God, he is the rock, his work is perfect for all his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

[31 : 05] When Hannah prayed, as we find in 1 Samuel chapter 2, she uttered these words, There is none holy as the Lord, for there is none beside thee, neither is there any rock like our God.

And the prophet Isaiah of course tells us a very familiar portion of his prophecy, Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment, and a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a refuge from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

So we see that the Bible frequently uses the imagery of a rock with respect to God and especially to Christ and his gospel. Jesus described Peter's confession of faith in Christ as the rock on which he would build his church.

Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In his Sermon on the Mount, as we call it, Jesus made reference to those who built their house upon the rock.

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and do of them I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell not for it was founded upon a rock.

[32 : 41] This imagery of a rock brings before us the thought of strength and stability and durability. But this morning as we consider David's petition to the Lord to be led to the rock that was higher than himself I want to draw your attention to the words of Paul.

Paul looked back on the rock from which God provided water to Israel in the wilderness and in 1 Corinthians 10 we read And it all drank the same spiritual drink for the drank of that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ.

All these references to a rock that we have mentioned are all worthy of study. However I am only going to make a brief reference to one of them this morning and we shall continue the theme again in the evening.

The rock from which God provided water to Israel in the wilderness. We read about this event in Exodus chapter 17. And what I want to notice here today are two simple things.

The Lord said to Moses Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb and thou shalt smite the rock and thou shalt come water out of it that the people may drink.

[34 : 04] Thou shalt smite the rock and thou shalt come water out of it. The Lord said Behold I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb.

We are not told how God appeared but he was standing there upon the rock but I want in particular to draw your attention to the fact that the rock was smitten or struck with the rod of Moses and out of the rock flowed the water.

Now Paul makes reference as we already intimated to this event and says that the rock was Christ. Christ. What does Paul mean by that?

What Paul means is that the rock foreshadowed Christ. It was a symbol of God and his salvation. The rock was Christ because like the rock Christ was struck with divine judgment.

This is what happened to Jesus on the cross. He was sparing our sins so God struck him with the rod of his justice. The prophet Isaiah says but he was wounded for our transgressions.

[35 : 21] He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him and with his stripes we are healed. The smitten rock foreshadowed the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that when the rock was struck there came out of the rock water. Now water is used in the Bible as a symbol of life through the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament we are told that one day Jesus on his way to Galilee went through Samaria and been wearied on his journey that he came and sat down by Jacob's well.

And there came a woman from Samaria to draw water and Jesus began a conversation with her. Some of you will be familiar with the event as we find it in the Gospel of John chapter 4.

And during the conversation Jesus said to the woman If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee give me to drink thou wouldst have asked of him and he wouldst have given thee living water.

[36 : 36] In those days the expression living water referred to fresh running water in contrast to the sluggish motionless water found in wells.

Then in conversation he went on to say to her water but to water that I shall give him shall never thirst but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

This is of course a reference to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for it is the Holy Spirit alone that gives life. The smitten rock and the water foreshadowed for us what is true of our crucified Christ.

At the crucifixion of Jesus after he had died John tells us but when they that is the soldiers came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already they break not his legs but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side and forthwith came there out blood and water.

Jesus was crucified he was smitten by the rod of God to offer the sinner the greatest gift imaginable that Christ's blood would wash away our sins so that we could stand justified before God but he also offers to send the Holy Spirit to take up residence in our hearts and it required that Jesus be wounded that Jesus be crushed bruised and smitten that his blood be shed for without the shedding of blood there is no remission also that he could send the Holy Spirit as a well of water springing up into everlasting life or to have the Holy Spirit as a fountain welling up within us darkness and the Holy Spirit comes as light casting out darkness he comes as a spirit of truth evicting error he comes as a spirit of holiness subduing the cravings of sin these were the waters which was given us to drink when the rod of

[38 : 54] God Jesus was smitten can we not follow the petition uttered by King David and cry lead me to the rock that is higher than I if you are not a follower of Jesus Christ today if you are not a Christian my dear friend this is your greatest need today to be led to a crucified Christ to be led to a smitten Christ to have the Holy Spirit to come into your life and if you are a Christian today is not this your desire to be continuously led to the smitten Christ to be continuously led to the crucified Christ and for the Holy Spirit to work in your life to help you to mortify indwelling sin and to sanctify you is not your cry today also lead me to the rock that is higher than I

David here speaks of a rock that is too high for him he knows that he cannot reach that secure place unaided in David's case maybe he was thinking of Jerusalem as the place where God dwells that he cannot reach during this time of his exile but maybe because of the turmoil in his mind he was desiring a settled attitude of faith and the peace that that will bring in his own situation he finds that hard to attain because his heart is overwhelmed well whatever the specific situation David is asking God to lift him up to that strong and secure place in our own personal situation when uncertainty and fear may leave us perplexed and with turmoil of mind not knowing what our future holds for us or for our loved ones and our friends what the future holds for us as communities or even as a congregation or even as a church don't we desire a settled attitude of faith that will bring that peace that passeth all understanding but we cannot reach that place unaided so we cry lead me to the rock that is higher than I when we think of

Jesus being higher than we are we might equally reflect on his deity as God the Son we might think of his work on the cross to atone for our sins we might think of his resurrection from the grave and his subsequent ascension into glory where today he sits at the right hand of the father having completed that work that was given him to do having made atonement for our sins having opened that fountain for sin and for uncleanness we think of his continual ministry there we think of the great promise of his return in all these ways we can look up to Jesus and worship him who is infinitely high above us oh may the prayer of David be our continual prayer lead me to the rock that is higher than I may the

Lord bless these thoughts for us let us pray eternal and ever blessed Lord we are conscious today of our own weakness we are as a people without strength but blessed be thy name that through thy spirit that we can be led to the rock that is higher than ourselves and that we can come to that rock and be founded upon that rock we give thee thanks oh Lord that as we stand upon that rock that that gives us that security and peace of mind and peace of heart that passeth all understanding and whatever turmoil that may be in our experience today we pray oh Lord that we would come with the prayer of

David the prayer of thine own people the prayer of those who are anxious those who are looking for a place of security and peace and a place of comfort lead me to the rock that is higher than I oh Lord that thou would bless our homes and our families bless those who are in hospital bless those who have been touched with this plague we pray oh Lord that thou would be with those who find themselves in places of grief and mourning today and we give thee thanks oh Lord that so many that have been touched have been healed and we pray oh Lord that we would turn to thee as a nation oh that we would come in repentance we hear so little of repentance we hear so little of an exhortation to repentance even among our leaders who in their own strength goes on without any reference to

[45 : 16] God oh Lord have pity upon us we pray thee in thy wrath remember mercy remember our NHS remember all our key workers who put their own lives at risk to help others oh Lord we give thee thanks for them and pray that thou would protect them we pray oh Lord that thou would continue with us now this day may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abide with us today and forever Amen Amen