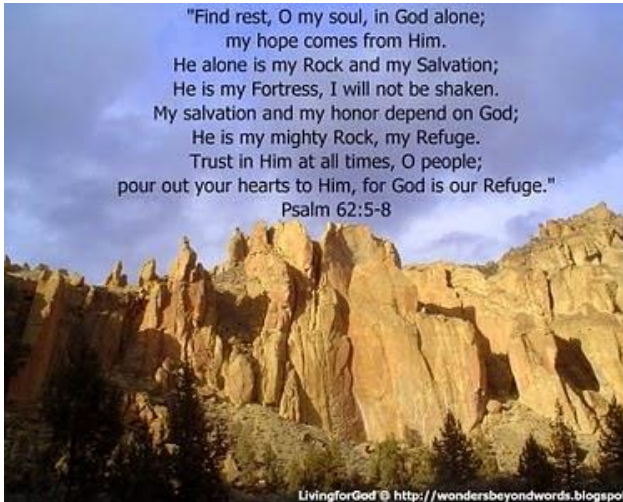


Food for Thought—A Rock of Refuge



Many passages in the Bible compare the Lord to a rock or a great stone, one which provides refuge or safety. Isaiah, for example, describes the Messiah's provision of shelter as being like "the shadow of a great rock in a dry and weary land." If you've ever experienced the heat of the desert, you know that shade can be crucial. If you've ever even just walked down a hot road in the summer you know that if there is a spot of shade ahead on the other side of the road, it is well worth the trouble to cross over and walk on the other side. The scripture also paints the image of the great rock as a shelter from the wind and from storms and as a stronghold of rock that is higher than we are, toward which we run in need. Being at the top of a rocky butte or peak can

protect not only an individual but even protect an army (at least before the development of firearms) not only by giving them the high ground but also by helping them see their enemy approach. The Lord is our refuge, hiding place, shelter, and high ground; and, since we are his followers, he wants us to be like Him in that way. The people around us should see us as a place of refuge; they should see us as someone who will show them mercy, someone who will not say thoughtless things to them, someone who not ridicule them, someone who will speak the truth to them but who will not start gossip about them. He wants us to know the scripture well enough to help one another spot the Enemy from afar but never as fodder for our pride or a glib attitude.

Scripture also gives us one very unusual rock image—the smitten rock. When the Israelites were in the desert and in need of water, God told Moses to do something which must've seemed odd; He told Moses to hit a certain rock. When Moses did so, crucial life-giving water burst out of the rock and become a great stream of water, enough to meet the needs of over a million people and their livestock, and made them able to continue their journey. Paul tells the Corinthians that this Smitten Rock was Christ, and Jesus as man also become the smitten rock again when He was scourged and then nailed to the cross. His self-sacrifice, His willingness to be smitten, brought life—life spiritual and eternal—to our universe for all time. As His followers, we too are called to be selfless for the sake of others, and our sojourn on Earth gives us plenty of opportunities. Every day there will be some things we would like to do that need to be sidelined or things which we'd like to leave undone which need to be done—for the sake of others. And these choices, in large or small ways, can breathe out His type of life and love.

--Sally