

# God Is Our Rock and Refuge

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July 26, 2014

We were able to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in Australia one year. I can't even remember exactly when it was. It had to have been somewhere in the mid, maybe to the late, '80s. And we spent there two weeks and obviously we spent a good deal of time at services and doing the things we went there for but I always wanted to visit more in Australia.

And one of the places I wanted to visit was Ayer's Rock. I've always heard about that. It's just this huge rock sticking up with nothing around it. It's like 350 meters, which I think that works out to about 1150 or so feet, which is somewhere a little less than a quarter of a mile. And it's almost six miles around. According to geologists, there's even more of that underground—such a huge rock!

We think about how dense a rock is. Some of the mountains we have are nothing but pure rock. We always think of that as something that's immovable. It's solid. It's dense. It's stable. We're going to look at some scriptures that use the metaphor of a rock.

And we can relate that to the instability we all find in our lives these days. In fact, if you think about that, it's almost a hallmark of our lives these days—the instability. Even though it might not be at the forefront of our mind every day, there are all kinds of things that just seem like they're more and more unstable.

You can think about some of the things that we're vulnerable to. We've had, even in our own state here, we've had some fairly recent disasters—all the fires. Three hundred and some homes destroyed in one wildfire, the Oso mudslide that we had. I saw in the news the other day that they finally found the last body. It was woman and she was buried under twenty feet of mud. Things like that happen.

We have an uncertain economy. We could wake up one morning and every cent we have could be worth nothing. We have that uncertainty. Again, we might not think this every day, but it's kind of there in the back of our mind.

And also another one is ID theft. You could be checking your bank account one day and find out there's nothing there because someone has stolen your ID. And even if you have ID protection, I don't know if everyone realizes it or not but sometimes when you call whoever you have that—it's fairly inexpensive insurance—but if you call them, they'll give you a number to call. You have to deal with it. So that's the way some of that works.

And look around the world. Look at the things that are going on. We now have a terrorist state in the Middle East. It's something that is, at least in our times, is something that's unheard of.

Another thing that we don't think about too much, but look how we're all kind of tethered to all the electronics that we have. I'm looking at Neil with their laptop over there.

But when you think about that, we have abundant electricity. We have the infrastructure. We have our roads. We have the water. We have sewer. We have all of those kinds of things and we just take that for granted. But you have to think about what if those things went away.

When I was in the military, I was in a lot of third-world countries and they don't have the advantages of some of the things that we do. Brown-outs and black-outs and just plain outages are fairly common in some countries of the world, especially third-world countries.

And you have to think about again, "How long would we last without all these things?" If something were to befall us, how long would we last? Really? The whole fabric of our society right now is tied to social media. And again we're tethered—it seems like—to these things. It seems like nobody anymore can even communicate face to face.

I have to wonder. This kid I saw one day. He was going full tilt on a skateboard on a sidewalk—leaping, jumping off the street, jumping the curb up and down on the phone. How does he do that?

And then again, this whole idea of terrorism in the world, we had the thing on the news the other day where they're worried now that they are getting so sophisticated with some of the explosives that they can actually get those things through security and maybe cause some airline crisis. They want to kill people.

And again, the point I'm trying to make here is: If we had to do without these things or something were to befall us, some kind of disaster or something like that could rattle our spiritual house, whether we just want to crawl under the covers or maybe just crawl under the bed and just kind of escape all of this—or a worse case scenario—would we just give up? Because that's possible.

In the spring holy days we talked about the Israelites leaving Egypt and we kind of disdainfully look at some of the things they went through. You know they had God right there. They had the cloud and the column of fire and all that at night. And what did they do? Three days later and they wanted to go back. When you think about that, we probably wouldn't do all that much better today, if you really think about that if we had to do without all of these creature comforts and all of the things we're so used to.

And again the point I'm trying to make is that we have the potential for this physical, this mental, this emotional stability. And again, we might not think about that every day, but the potential is there.

And we realize too, being God's people, being centered, being stable in our lives is important. It may even determine our physical survival at some point in some circumstances. But more importantly we need to be very concerned about our spiritual stability and our ultimate spiritual survival.

What I'd like to do today in the message is to get a little bit of a perspective on this. And again, thinking about the stability, those solid things we need, the spiritual things that we need in our life, we need to look to that real source of unchangeable stability. And the title of the sermon that I have today is:

### God Is Our Rock and Our Refuge

There are two things there that I'd like to address. And if you'd be turning over to Psalm 62 please, we're going to look at this Psalm here by David and as we know, David experienced a lot of instability in his life—a lot of it. I actually have a commentator that said this Psalm couldn't have been by David or for David. It was actually put together by a director of music. If you look at Psalm 62 verse 1, it says, "For Jeduthun, a Psalm of David." He said, "Well, this couldn't be about David because David never had any of these things go wrong in his life." And I thought "Where do they find these guys?" Where do they find these commentators? Anyhow in Psalm 62 and I'm going to be using the NIV for a few of these scriptures. In Psalm 62 beginning in verse 1 from the NIV and it says a Psalm of David. It says:

***Psalm 62:1.*** Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.  
2) Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.  
(NIV)

And yet they relate to the things that were going on in his life. We have a lot of that history. Verse 3:

3) How long will you assault me? ... (NIV)

He's talking about his enemies, the people who attacked him constantly.

3b) ... Would all of you throw me down—this leaning wall, this tottering fence?  
(NIV)

Commentators look at that a different way. They look at it as maybe his lofty position that they want to remove it from him. But it could be an aging king, kind of leaning, kind of tottering.

4) *Surely they intend to topple me from my lofty place; they take delight in lies....*  
(NIV)

They slandered him every chance they got.

4b) *... With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse.* (NIV)

So he had his political enemies. They outnumbered him and they attacked him from every angle. Verse 5:

5) *Yes, my soul, [shall] find rest in God; my hope comes from him.*

6) [Again] *Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.* (NIV)

And again, metaphorically it's referring to God like a mighty, immovable stable solid rock, spiritually speaking. Verse 7:

7) *My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.*

8) *Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, ...* (NIV)

And that's what we do. That's what we should do when we're in trouble.

8b) *... for God is our refuge.* (NIV)

Going down to verse 11:

11) *One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: "Power belongs to ... God,*

12) *and with you, Lord, is unfailing love"; and, "You reward everyone according to what they have done."* (NIV)

God pretty much gives people what they deserve.

And David wasn't the only one. He wasn't the only one that said such things about God. You know Moses learned in his turbulent life that God was the only stable immovable thing for him. It was the only stable influence in his entire life. And like David, he expressed this in a song. Deuteronomy 32 and if you've ever studied this song, it's kind of a prophetic song. It seems like it's a framework about Israel in the coming years—about how they turned away from God, how they left God, how they slipped off into idolatry. They just didn't trust God anymore and we'll see that as we go through this. But again Deuteronomy 32 beginning in verse 1 from the NIV:

**Deuteronomy 32:1.** *Listen, you heavens, and I will speak; hear, you earth, the words of my mouth.*

2) *Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.* (NIV)

He's hoping that something would be produced from this. Verse 3:

*3) I will proclaim [or publish] the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! (NIV)*

Verse 4, the same as the psalm:

*4) He is the Rock, ... (NIV)*

And Moses uses this term 5 times in this song.

*4b) his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God ... (NIV)*

And we know God never changes. He is immovable in that sense. He is stable in that sense—never changes.

*4 continued) ... who does no wrong, upright and just is he. (NIV)*

And it goes on in this song to say how God physically delivered the Israelites and how they should have responded to God's love and His care for them. And the lyrics of the song kind of recap the things that are going on and it talks about God's care and deliverance.

And we can ask ourselves going through here, "Do we look at God as our stability, as our Rock in our lives?" Not just in a philosophical sense, but when everything goes wrong, when our backs are against the wall, when the chips are down and the strain and the pressure and everything is on us, do we look to God for that source of strength, for stability? Because sometimes we do get shaken in our lives with the things that go on.

We have family things that go on that affect us personally. We have things from the outside that affect us personally. It just happens to us. And, again, what happens if all those conveniences that we talked about are gone, when the infrastructure is threatened, all those things we depend on—the electronics, no water, no sewer? Those things haven't happened yet to us, but they could.

Everywhere that I drive on the freeway, the whole country's falling apart. We have bridges that are being closed because they can't do the maintenance on them. They can't keep them up. So our infrastructure is kind of crumbling right underneath us.

And the point being, then: What happens to us whenever we do get a genuine wake-up call that forces us to focus on the reality of the things that could happen and sometimes may happen, and, in fact, will happen in the future? We know that some of these things are going to happen. How do we react? Do we then look to God? Do we look to and

look at that relationship that we have with God the Father and with Jesus Christ? Good questions for us going through here.

But continuing down in verse 5, continuing in the NIV:

*5) They are corrupt and not his children; to their shame they are a warped and crooked generation. (NIV)*

That's what happens to all human generations. Without God we do become shameful. And I don't know about you again, but we can look around and it looks like our moral compass is just kind of spinning—spinning in the wind. We don't seem like we have much that we're ashamed of anymore. We just approve everything. We make laws to let us do things we shouldn't be doing. Verse 6:

*6) Is this the way you repay the Lord, you foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?*

*7) Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past... (NIV)*

That could include for them way back into Egypt. And we could also look forward today.

*7b) Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you. (NIV)*

And in some cases, people were still alive. They were there. They had some firsthand experience. Verse 8:

*8) When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.*

*9) For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.*

*10) In a desert land he found him, ... (NIV)*

One of these days maybe someone will go back and look at Ezekiel 16 where God actually uses the analogy of picking Israel up like a newborn child that is basically dropped in the dirt. And God picked that child up and nurtured it and gave it everything. And then that child turned against God. That's in Ezekiel 16.

Continuing verse 10:

*10 b) ... He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye,*

*11) like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft.*

*12) The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him.*

*13) He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields. ... (NIV)*

God took care of things, took care of Israel.

13b) ... *He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag,*  
14) *with curds and milk from herd and flock and with fattened lambs and goats, with choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat. You drank the foaming blood of the grape [a reference to wine]. (NIV)*

But in verse 15, it said:

15) *"But Jeshurun grew fat ... (NKJV)*

The Brown, Driver, Briggs' definition of Jeshurun, it means *upright one*. That's what that term means. Moses must have included that as kind of a sarcasm here because what it is it's supposed to be describing the ideal character that God wanted from Israel—but they were anything but that because it goes on to say:

15b) ... [they] *grew fat and kicked; ... (NIV)*

In other words, they resisted God.

15 continued) ... *You grew fat, you grew thick, ... (NKJV)*

"You're all beasts!" Remember back in Deuteronomy about mid chapter where Moses warned the Israelites, "Whenever you go to the land that I'm giving you and you have goodly houses and all that, don't forget God!" And that's kind of what it's repeating here.

But the last part of verse 15:

15 continued) ... *Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation. (NKJV)*

We need to come to the place in the future where God could say that of us. We used to say the Book of Acts was an incomplete book; that one of these days it's going to be completed. Maybe there will be a whole history of God's people. We don't know. Maybe it will be called "the Book of the Ecclesia." We don't know.

But we don't want our names in there where God would say, "They lightly esteemed me." We don't want that. But unfortunately, if we're really honest with ourselves, there could be times when God could say that about us. Right? I mean it does happen. We don't want that to be the pattern. We don't want that to be the perception that God has of us, but sometimes it just happens.

And again, things get to us. They do. We think we have our highs and our lows. We know that. And there are even some times when we do forsake God. We just through a lack of zeal or we have some distractions where we just don't pay that much attention to our relationship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ. We just let those things slip. But, thankfully for us, at least these days we can repent. God's still there. He'll still take care of us. We can still change those things. We can start responding to God the way we should under any kind of duress.

But continuing in verse 16 of Deuteronomy 32—and we get a little bit of a picture. We're talking about human beings here and generations. All those things are in the context. And unfortunately, I think, these things extend down to us these days. Verse 16:

*16) They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols.*

*17) They sacrificed to false gods, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your ancestors did not fear. (NIV)*

Your ancestors knew nothing about these things. Verse 18:

*18) You deserted the Rock [The NIV says], who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth. (NIV)*

We must never forget that Rock, how He provides for us. Basically, we were bought with a price. We belong to God. We'll talk a little bit about that later, but verse 19:

*19) The Lord saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters.*

*20) "I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful. (NIV)*

And in their case, they simply didn't believe that God would provide for them, that God would fight their battles for them. They stopped believing that. Verse 21:

*21) They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding....*

.....

*23) "I will heap calamities on them and spend my arrows against them.*

*24) I will send wasting famine against them, consuming pestilence and deadly plague; I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust.*

*25) In the street the sword will make them childless; in their homes terror will reign.... (NIV)*



Do you get a picture here of things that actually happen in the future to the Israelites? And may happen to us? The Book of Revelation talks about a tribulation coming and you can kind of see some of these things here.

*25b) ... The young men and young women will perish, the infants and those with gray hair.*

*26) I said I would scatter them and erase their name from human memory, ... (NIV)*

And again, just think back in your mind to Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28—the blessings and cursings. These are the cursings. These are the result of people that have left God. And talk about instability in their lives! God gave them what they basically asked for, what they needed. Verse 27:

*27) but I dreaded the taunt of the enemy, lest the adversary misunderstand and say, 'Our hand has triumphed; the Lord has not done all this.' (NIV)*

They're taking credit for it.

*28) They are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them.*

*29) If only they were wise and would understand this and [see] what their end will be!*

*30) How could one man chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the Lord had given them up? (NIV)*

You think about how that could happen. Well, God stopped protecting them then and He could do that again. And if the Rock, if God isn't part of your life, and more importantly if we cut the Rock out of our lives, then the odds can be overwhelming. That's what this is talking about—the outnumbering, the odds against someone. And those things can overwhelm us. One can chase a thousand or two can chase two thousand if God with not with you, but if God is with you, you can turn that around; you can do the chasing.

And the point using this analogy here is: We don't need to be afraid of insurmountable odds if we stay with God, if we don't leave God, if we don't forget God, if we don't abandon that Rock that we have, that stability that we have.

You know we still have to talk to God. We still have to ask Him to deliver us, to help us but we don't need to be afraid. Verse 31, he goes on to say:

*31) For their rock [He's talking about other nations and other peoples.] is not like our Rock, as even our enemies concede. (NIV)*

And we know there are a number of accounts where people are fighting, warring against Israel and they recognized there was a superior force there. They didn't understand it.

But that expression there, “not like our Rock”, it’s kind of like people today in different religions. It’s not really our place to look down on people that worship a god, but the point here is that they’re trusting in something less than the true God. And we don’t want to be like that. We don’t want to be trusting in a little rock or a little god. We want to be trusting in the true God. We want to have a relationship with that true God, that true Rock because that’s where real genuine spiritual sustenance comes from.

Let’s continue down in verse 32. Still in Deuteronomy 32, down to verse 32:

*32) Their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are filled with poison, and their clusters with bitterness. (NIV)*

Reaping bad fruit of bad behaviors.

*33) Their wine is the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras.*

*34) “Have I not kept this in reserve and sealed it in my vaults?*

*35) It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them.”*

*36) The Lord will vindicate his people and relent concerning his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, ... (NIV)*

They’re by themselves again just like when they started. Verse 37:

*37) He will say: “Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in, ... (NIV)*

We can inject ourselves there again. If we’re looking to a faulty rock, we can only give as much as that rock can deliver to us. That’s all we can get. If we don’t trust in the true God, that’s all we’re going to get, but we know that true Rock.

And again, the point I’m trying to make is: That’s where our ultimate blessings are and our ultimate deliverance.

In saying all this, I’m not saying that we should blindly not prepare or do anything for ourselves. I think we know better than that but just the idea that if we do prepare—and there’s Biblical principles of how we should prepare for bad times—lay up a little money or do things like that, prepare for that. But it’s foolish just to say just to do things blindly and say, “Well, God’s going to provide.” That happens sometimes; because if you think about that preparation that we might do, in the end that’s not going to save us. It’s not going to save us at all. It’s not going to deliver us. Nothing wrong with doing this.

The point I’m trying to make here: It should not be our total focus, what we ultimately trust in. We can do those things and they’re good, but our trust should be in God our Rock.

Verse 38:

38) *the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter!*

39) *“See now that I myself am he! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.*

40) *I lift my hand to heaven and solemnly swear: As surely as I live forever,*

41) *when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me. (NIV)*

Let's jump down to verse 43.

43) *Rejoice, you nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants;... (NIV)*

Does that remind you of a scripture? Revelation 6:10 where God says He'll do that. Continuing that verse:

43b) *...he will take vengeance on his enemies [continuing that verse] and make atonement for his land and people. (NIV)*

And then it goes on; it finishes up here. The song Moses is encouraging people to take heart just to obey God, to do the things that they should be doing. And it kind of ends up in the end of the chapter and the end of the song where God told Moses he's going to die. He doesn't get to go into the Promised Land because of His disobedience. Being the leader, he has to pay a very severe price here. He gets to climb Mount Nebo and he dies there. He doesn't get to go into the land.

Let's turn over to Psalm 90; still talking about the Rock part. In Psalm 90, this is a prayer of Moses. In Psalm 90 verses 1 and 2 and this is from the New American Standard.

**Psalm 90**

*A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.*

1) *Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.*

2) *Before the mountains were born or ever You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. (NAS)*

I like from the Holman Christian Standard Bible, those same verses, Psalm 90:1-2. It says:

**Psalm 90**

*A Prayer of Moses, the man of God.*

1) *Lord, You have been [a] refuge ... (HCSB)*

Instead of a “dwelling place.”

*1b) in every generation.*

*2) Before the mountains were born, before You gave birth to the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity, You are God. (HCSB)*

So we've just seen from that short review how God and Jesus Christ should be the real stability in our lives. There is that solid foundation. Just like David, Moses, and others have learned through history, those same principles apply today, especially maybe in our particular age. And whenever things now or in the future become too much for us, that's where we should run; that's where we should look for our spiritual salvation.

You would think that would be a given. You really would, but we remember ... and I'm going to take a little flashback into history here—church history. And I apologize to anyone that doesn't have this Church history. You would think it would be a given that we'd look to God, that we'd run to God for everything.

But do you remember when we looked to another place for our salvation? We kind of looked back and we saw it as kind of a temporary holding place—maybe a half-way house on the way to God's Kingdom. We focused on that as our refuge, unfortunately. Maybe some folks didn't. If you didn't and you're out there somewhere, well good for you!

We ran across this word "refuge" back there in Deuteronomy. You don't need to turn back there, but back in Deuteronomy 32:37

***Deuteronomy 32:37.*** *He will say: 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? (NKJV)*

And that "refuge" is actually, again from the BDB definition, is *to seek refuge or flee for protection*. That's what that means, *to trust in God, to flee there for protection*.

And in verse 38 there it said; it referenced:

***Deuteronomy 32:38.*** *'Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine... (NASB)*

The last part of the verse says:

***38b) ...Let them rise up and help you, let them be your hiding place! (NASB)***

And again, from the BDB, that's what that word means there—a *hiding place, a shelter, or a secret place*.

And remember? We're talking about God as a rock and a refuge. Now we're going to talk about the refuge part because in the larger context, it's all relevant to our salvation. But in the past we had ... and I know I mentioned this before, but we had an unhealthy focus on this refuge for the whole church. We called it a place of safety. That's what

we called it. We even semi-officially ... Nah. No, we officially said, identified that place of safety as Petra—Petra, Jordan.

And here's kind of the way the narrative went for us. And again, I know almost everyone here can relate to this. It's a place where we were going to be whisked off to. Well, we were going to get phone calls the way I remember it. We were going to get phone calls and we were going to be sent to an airport.

And we were all going to be whisked away from the U.S. in L-1011s I believe it was. And that was an awful plane. It was taken out of commission, but we were actually told that God caused that and they were going to somehow be re-commissioned so we could use them. That's an awful plane. I landed one time in Atlanta where that guy slammed that into the airport so hard. We thought the landing gear was going to come up through the bottom of the airplane. But somehow we were going to be flown to Jerusalem, then to Jordan.

We had a traveling evangelist back then, if you can remember that. And I'm sure we all do. He told us in great detail how this was all going to happen. And that God couldn't possibly let Herbert Armstrong die until all this took place. That was like forty years ago as near as I can remember—maybe thirty or forty.

But that was all great stuff for us. We were going to escape the tribulation. We weren't going to be tortured. We were going to be in a place of final training while the world disintegrated around us. And I'm not kidding in all this. We lived and breathed this stuff. Remember every time we'd go to the Feast or maybe when the holy days came around we'd say, "Well, maybe we're going to flee this time." Or if we were at the Feast "Maybe we were going to flee while we were at the Feast and not go back home." So maybe you should take some extra clothes or some toilet paper. Remember that was a big deal—the toilet paper. Again, I'm not really trying to make fun of that. Actually I kind of hope there is a place of safety.

But I'm trying to make a point here that teaching was, unfortunately, a "safe your life" teaching.

That's exactly what it was. And we knew many, many people that came in the church because they were afraid they were going to have to go through the tribulation. It happened all the time. And look what happened to the Church when it fell apart. All those things went away.

And we used some scriptures to support the idea of Petra. And again, I'm not, hopefully, I'm not disrespectfully saying things here. I'm not trying to offend anyone. Over in Revelation 12, we used some of these things to support the ideas we had. Revelation 12, and this from the New King James, and beginning in verse 12, 12 and 14.

**Revelation 12:12.** *Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! ... (NKJV)*

There are going to be some bad times coming.

*12b) ... For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*

And we'd go back and forth whenever we thought Satan was cast down. You remember that. Verse 13:

*13) Now when the dragon [Satan] saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman [the Church] who gave birth to male Child [Christ].*

*14) But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [three and a half years], from the presence of the serpent. (NKJV)*

And that word "fly" there is interesting because that actually does mean *fly*. I heard once in a sermon that that's the only place in the New Testament that that word is used and it does mean literally *to fly*. It doesn't mean just leave in a hurry. It just means *fly*. Again, I'm not even speculating on how that might happen.

But another scripture we used was Isaiah 16 for Jordan. You may or may not remember some of these. I'm not trying to stir up good or bad memories, but in Isaiah 16 verse 4, it says—and again from the New King James.

**Isaiah 16:4.** *Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab [Jordan]; be a shelter to them [It means a hiding place.] from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. (NKJV)*

Well, we made an extrapolation there. We really did because if you go back to the previous chapters, it's talking about Babylon, Assyria, the Medes. They were oppressing. They were invading and marauding these nations around them. Moab was one of them and God gave them relief. God granted that. It doesn't say anything there actually about Petra being a hiding place. That idea you know, that actually predated the Church by ... One individual I read the information, he said that predated the church by about a century because that's really nothing all that new.

I heard—I won't mention the name—but a well-known minister one time, they were doing a tour of Israel and they were in downtown Jerusalem. And they overheard a couple of tourists talking. And they said, "Let's grab a bus and go over to Petra. We've heard that a lot of Christians think that's a place of safety." And we thought we had the exclusive revelation to that information. Didn't we?

You know the evangelicals; they have their rapture theory about a place of safety/protection. They have the same idea. They look at it differently, of course, in the outcome. They think a place of safety is actually, they're going to be kind of vacuumed up off the face of the earth and they're going to be in God's Kingdom.

I don't know if you're familiar with that Left Behind series. Tim LaHaye actually co-authored some of those. Some of those are novels, but he also wrote some nonfiction books on prophecy. And again, I heard that one place in there—and I couldn't verify this because I couldn't find anything in our library and frankly, I didn't want to buy the books—but he actually mentions Petra as a place where they think they're going to be raptured to, a place of escape in one of these non-fiction books.

If you look up "Petra" on *Wiki*, there's a lot known about it. It's one of Jordan's most popular tourist sites. For about \$3500 you can get a complete tour of Israel and Petra—very popular. People like to go there. And it is a fascinating place. It's a beautiful place. I remember some of the folks in the church used to have some books about it. I haven't seen one of those for a long time. But it's a beautiful place. It's very artistic, a lot of caves there. Remember when we all thought we'd have one? And the Bible does use that term for caves like a "cleft in the rocks."

The movie "Indiana Jones: The Last Crusade," at the end there where they're coming out through the canyon and you can see in the background that's the treasury. Do you remember when we were taught there are things there to accommodate a lot of people? There's nothing behind those facades. They're tombs; they're tombs for the Nabataean royalty which are the people which built Petra. That's what's there. And the caves are tombs.

And I know the whole idea of fleeing and going to Petra is near and dear to people's hearts. I know people, even today, make sure their passports are up to date so they'll be all ready to go. Some groups dogmatically teach that—that they're still going there! You can get a lot of mileage out of controlling people and that's part of what's wrong with that idea to save your life, or "We're going to escape." It's a teaching based on fear.

But the fundamental question for us and what I'm trying to get at is: Where should our mind be focused? Should it be focused on that as one step in our salvation process? Where should it be?

There's no real stability there. The whole idea again was to escape that horrible persecution—only if you were righteous enough. Do you remember that one? Better yet if you made sure you were in the one true church listening to the leadership—which we should be doing if it's the right leadership, if everything's being done right—but we were led to believe that was a sure ticket to a place of safety and ultimately to God's Kingdom. But how logical is that when you look at some of the scriptures?

There are several words for persecution and it all basically means *to pursue*. Today we would say, “being chased” if we’re persecuted in that sense. And a lot of us have been persecuted in some small ways. We just have. And it does say in Revelation 12 that Satan was wrought, persecuted the woman, but what else about this Church. Revelation 12 verse 17, let’s get some context from the chapter. And again, you know in hindsight I’m not trying to second guess some of the conclusions that were drawn even if it was on circumstantial evidence, but in Revelation 12:17, let’s look at a few things here.

**Revelation 12:17.** *And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)*

In other words, it’s the true church. But remember what Paul told Timothy over in 2 Timothy 3 verses 10 and 12 as a reference? You don’t need to turn there. Paul told Timothy, he said:

**2 Timothy 3:10.** *But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11) persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.*

Verse 12 is important.

*12) Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus [keeping God’s commandments, doing the things we should be doing] will suffer persecution. (NKJV)*

That’s what Paul told him.

So how do we reconcile some of these scriptures? And what I’m trying to get at: Is there an absolute guarantee of protection, a place of safety?

In Revelation 12 still going down to verse 9:

**Revelation 12:9.** *So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

*10) Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.*

*11) And they overcame him [the Church resisted Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony [the way that they lived], and they did not love their lives to the death. (NKJV)*



I think that the only way that I can make sense out of these scriptures that somehow in the past were not mentioned in the context of going to a place of safety and actually saving our hide was that, the only way I can make sense out of it and reconcile some of these scriptures is to realize that God chooses who will be and who will not suffer persecution, martyrdom. Some will die for their beliefs and some won't.

Over in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, I don't know whether we've looked at this scripture this way, but in 1 Corinthians 10 verse 13. We turn to this scripture many, many times. We've heard it many times used different ways. 1 Corinthians 10:13, again from the New King James:

**1 Corinthians 10:13.** *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (NKJV)*

And again, maybe we've not looked at it this way or not, but what Paul is clearly saying here, "God knows who's weak and who's strong." God knows that.

Over in Revelation 6 verse 9, take a quick look at the fifth seal. The fifth seal is during the tribulation. Revelation 6:9.

**Revelation 6:9.** *When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of [them] who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. (NKJV)*

You know we were once told that the Laodiceans were the ones that were going to be persecuted, were the ones that were going to be slain. It doesn't say that. Does it? It says, "These were the ones that kept the testimony, God's Laws, and God's Commandments." And the Laodiceans are lukewarm. They're not doing much of anything. They have a weak relationship with God and with Jesus Christ.

Verse 11, another scripture that might give us a problem if we think a certain way, if we're going to have kind of an easy escape, verse 11 of Revelation 6:

**Revelation 6:11.** *Then a white robe was given to each of them [those slain]; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (NKJV)*

A lot of martyrs here but you have to realize these people are going to be strong spiritually. They have a strong relationship. They've lived like they should have. Saving their lives, which is a very natural thing to do (We all want to do that.), was not the number one priority in their lives. It just wasn't. And again, I'm not trying to shoot down the idea of a place of safety or suggest an alternative. I'm not even going to go there, but just to inject some reality into this whole equation.

What did Christ say? Matthew 10. And I hope you realize that I'm only pulling in a few scriptures here—just a few, just a handful. And we could kind of put some of these scriptures together with Luke 14 when we're counting the cost, whenever we're first called. Matthew 10 verses 38 and 39:

**Matthew 10:38.** *And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.*

*39) He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. (NKJV)*

And the point there being: No matter what you're going to be resurrected anyway—no matter what.

Verse 28, going back up to verse 28:

**Matthew 10:28.** *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (NKJV)*

And again you have to think about this. If it's the Laodiceans that lost their lives and the righteous that are going to survive, well, how come these apostles and the early disciples and Jesus Christ Himself lost their lives? No one was more zealous; no one was more committed. And Christ was absolutely sin free. So you see it doesn't make any sense to me that only the lukewarm Christians are going to die and everybody else is going to be whisked off. It just doesn't make much sense.

I hope I'm not upsetting anyone. Ephesians 6, let's go down to verse 13 through 16. "Therefore,"... we've read this many, many times but again I'm trying to pull these scriptures into the context of what I'm talking about.

**Ephesians 6:13.** *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, ... (NKJV)*

Why? It goes on to say:

*13b) ... that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

*14) Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,*

*15) and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

*16) above all, taking the shield of faith ... (NKJV)*

And in the Greek if you look that up, that means a great big shield. And what do you do with a shield? You hide behind it. And it's talking about using that faith. He goes on in verse 16:

*16b) ... with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. (NKJV)*

And the reason faith is so important to us in the whole idea of what I'm talking about because do you remember that scripture says we don't know the hour and the day when all these things are going to happen? We also don't know where; we don't know how; and we don't know who. That's all included in that. We have to trust God for the outcome. That's where the faith comes in.

Let's turn over to Hebrews 11. You knew I was going to go there. I know you did. Hebrews 11 and it talks about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Sarah, and others as we know. Hebrews 11 dropping down to ... let's drop down to verse 13 where it says:

***Hebrews 11:13. These all died in faith, ... (NKJV)***

As we go on the context here, we're going to see that's not always a natural death.

*13b) not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

*14) For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. (NKJV)*

In other words they trust God for the future. And even if there is a physical place of safety, it's temporary. That's all it is. And the spiritual one is permanent. That's what we're trusting God for. Verse 15:

*15) And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. (NKJV)*

They'd have been safe there. Right? Kind of like the Israelites when they left Egypt. Then it goes on to talk about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab. Verse 32:

*32) And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets.*

*33) who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,*

*34) quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

*35) Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. (NKJV)*

Some were spared physically. Some died.

*36) Still others had trial [severe trial, obviously here] of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. (NKJV)*

Some were beaten like Paul and some of the other apostles. Some were in prison, but God still took care of them all through that. And again, ultimately God still takes care of us. Verse 37:

*37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— (NKJV)*

And again, all of those things we might have to do without. This doesn't even sound good to us. We're really spoiled in our day and age. We really are.

*38) of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. (NKJV)*

It doesn't imply caves in Petra.

*39) And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,*

*40) God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. (NKJV)*

And again, God always did the choosing. And He will in the future. No organization, no man, anyone has that prerogative to make that choice. And again, wouldn't God know who was weak and who was strong enough for these things?

What about the elderly? I've sat in the hospital and held the hand of an elderly widow who had no clue where she was at. In fact, when she first called, it was pretty late at night. She thought she'd been kidnapped. She was basically losing her mind. She never left the hospital. I'd go up and I'd hold her hand and I'd hold that frail little hand. The skin so almost transparent you could see the bones in her little hand. And what about people like that?

God knows the difference. He knows who would need protection and who technically would be able to handle some of the things that may happen sometimes. There's always a purpose. We look back on the apostles and some of the early disciples and wonder why they had to give up their lives. Well, there was a purpose to that. Sometimes we don't understand it completely.

And you have to ask the whole question: When are we going to get it that God cares about us? What He's after is our minds, a converted mind. Not really trying to preserve the bodies. He's after a mind that doesn't concentrate on the carnal human existence, but a changed mind that thinks like He does. That's a mind He can use.

And again, the whole point here is: A place is not an answer, if we're wasting our time focusing on that instead of what God wants.

Matthew 24, this is in the context of the tribulation, leading up to it and during. Matthew 24, let's drop down to verse 22.

**Matthew 24:22.** *And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.*

23) *"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.*

24) *For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (NKJV)*

We know those things are prophesied to happen.

25) *See, I have told you beforehand.*

26) *"Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go [up]; ... (NKJV)*

Don't go there. If you think about that, it's going to be kind of crowded.

And another thing—and my dumb mind thinks this way—but I think about what about the sanitation issues? They barely manage now in Petra with the tourists. And I forgot; I read how many tourists are actually there every day, every week, every month, etc.

Let's go down to verse 29.

**Matthew 24:29.** *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

30) *Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (NKJV)*

And in verse 31, what's going to happen?

31) *And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (NKJV)*

God's people wherever they will be.

I've heard it ridiculed that "Well, a place of safety wouldn't be in our homes." But it's kind of interesting to me to realize that we're taught very plainly that we're saved by the blood of Christ and in the Old Testament the first Passover the blood was on the doorposts of their homes. That may or may not mean anything at all but....

And again, I think if you're trying to promote an idea, you can say that things have to be a certain way, but God is the one that does the choosing—of the place, of how it's going to be done, and who. God does the choosing.

And my whole point of doing this is trying to just make the point very, very clear where our focus should be. It should be at all times under all circumstances on the rock that matters. Trusting in God as our true refuge—that's where our trust and faith and it all should be.

But just in closing I'd like to look at a few scriptures. Psalm 92 verse 12 through 15:

**Psalm 92:12.** *The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (NKJV)*

He's using a metaphor here comparing a tree as something strong, majestic, deep roots, good soil. There's a reference in my Bible to Jeremiah 17:7 and 8, which again I'll read. It's just a reference. It says:

**Jeremiah 17:7.** *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. (NKJV)*

The focus is in the right place. Jeremiah 17:8.

*8) For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; ... (NKJV)*

When troubles, trials, disasters, whatever it may be, he's not afraid. He doesn't need to be afraid.

*8b) ... but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought [things out of our control], nor will cease from yielding fruit. (NKJV)*

Producing the fruit of God's spirit which we should be doing, but let's continue in Psalm 19 verse 13.

**Psalm 92:13.** *Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.*

*14) They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing,*

*15) to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. (NKJV)*

Just over a little ways in Psalm 94. In Psalm 94, let's drop down to verse 17.

**Psalm 94:17.** *Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul would soon have settled in silence.*

*18) If I say, "My foot slips," ... (NKJV)*

Sometimes it does when we let down.

*18b) ... Your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up. (NKJV)*

We can repent. We can change that. Verse 19:

*19) In the multitude of my anxieties within me, ... (NKJV)*

Again, all those things we're vulnerable to, and in some cases, some of those things that we not only suffer now but may suffer in the future.

*19b) ... Your comforts delight my soul. (NKJV)*

In other words: trusting in God for the ultimate outcome. Verse 20:

*20) Shall the throne of iniquity [that's Satan ruling mankind temporarily], which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You? (NKJV)*

It shouldn't. It shouldn't have any fellowship, any place in our mind. Verse 21:

*21) They gather together against the life of the righteous, and condemn innocent blood. (NKJV)*

There will be persecution and suffering—innocent blood. Verse 22:

*22) But the Lord has been my defense, and my God the rock of my refuge. (NKJV)*

In Psalm 95, just one verse, verse 1:

**Psalm 95:1.** *Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! ... (NKJV)*

We have a song for this.

*1b) ... Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. (NKJV)*

And then we can't at all leave our Savior out of the picture here in this whole context. 1 Corinthians 10, 1 Corinthians 10:1.

**1 Corinthians 10:1.** *Moreover, brethren [Paul tells them.], I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2) all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3) all ate the same spiritual food,*

*4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (NKJV)*

In Psalm 91 from the New King James, verse 1:

***Psalm 91:1.*** *He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. (NKJV)*

Not some place—in God’s shadow, under God’s protection. Verse 2:

*2) I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust.”*

*3) Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler<sup>d</sup> and from the perilous pestilence.*

*4) He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and [your] buckler. (NKJV)*

All those things we trust in that taught us the faith that we have. Verse 6 or verse 5 says:

*5) You [won’t] shall not be afraid of the terror by night, ... (NKJV)*

Verse 6:

*6) Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. (NKJV)*

That’s very futuristic, as many of the Psalms are.

*7) A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. (NKJV)*

Only what God allows. Again, God does the choosing. Verse 9:

*9) Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place,*

*10) No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;*

*11) For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. (NKJV)*

Verse 14, let’s jump down to verse 14.

*14) “Because he has set his love upon Me, ... (NKJV)*

And the Psalmist here has never esteemed God lightly at all like the Israelites did.



*14b) ... therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. (NKJV)*

And again, the whole point in addition to the other points I've tried to make is: A place of safety has never been a salvational issue.

Our focus and concentration needs to unequivocally be in the right place or it just simply won't work for us. Romans 14 is a reference. And the context here in Romans 14 is about being judgmental, but it injects something here that should override everything in our lives. In Romans 14 verses 7 through 9:

***Romans 14:7.*** *For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.  
8) For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. (NKJV)*

We belong to Him!

*9) For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. (NKJV)*

No matter what the case is, we're still in God's care.

And the very final scripture in Colossians 3 verses 1 through 4:

***Colossians 3:1.*** *If then you were raised with Christ, seek [or focus on] those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.  
2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (NKJV)*

Verse 3 is very, very important for us.

*3) For you died [when we were baptized], and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (NKJV)*

That's your real place of safety. That's the only real place of safety that we have.

Verse 4, the outcome:

*4) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (NKJV)*

Brethren, let's never forget God the Father and Jesus Christ who are our real rock and our real refuge.