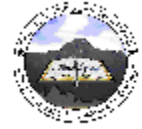




On The Frontier



“For The Glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

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Rock Of Our Age

When considering the character of the Apostle Paul the following verses are most profound:

I Corinthians 15:9,10

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Ephesians 3:8

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

I Timothy 1:15

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief [first in rank and influence].

Paul was a man deeply dedicated to God. A man who set aside his personal comfort and well-being for the sake of the Gospel. Because of his commitment we have the seven Church Epistles, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon and Hebrews. He is to be counted among the “holy men of God” who spake (and wrote) on God’s behalf.

II Peter 1:21

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

If it were not for men like Paul, we would not have “the prophecy” so vital to our understanding of God. Yet, this man spoke of himself as least of the apostles. He recognized that he was who he was only by the grace of God. His life contained the “stuff” legends are made of and he referred to himself in the Holy Writ as least of all saints and chief sinner! He more than earned the right to pen the following:

Philippians 2:3-8

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Paul was a rock to his age and to ours. There are others who are as the rock of our age but Jesus Christ is the Rock of ALL ages! Even Israel knew this, though often they refused to acknowledge it.

I Corinthians 10:1-13

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

Some of them chose to worship the “gods” of Egypt rather than the One True God. They opted to disregard and disrespect His Word. The results were awful.

Verses 5-13

But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer [allow, permit] you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape [an exit], that ye may be able to bear it.

I'm very thankful that God will not allow me to be tempted above my ability to resist! Aren't you? God is wonderful to us all the time. Isn't He? There's always an escape from temptation accessible to us. Whenever I read this verse in Hebrews I'm reminded of the lighted exit signs in movie theaters. No matter how dark the theater is, you can get out if you walk towards the sign. So it is with temptation, God always provides a well lit path away from it.

Take note, if you will, the temptation of the people of Israel was idolatry. In like manner we are tempted daily to put something ahead of God. It matters little what it is, anything that takes His rightful place is an idol. It could be your job, spouse, children,

yourself or your accomplishments. The bottom line is, GOD FIRST! Paul never forgot this, which is why he is such a tremendous example to us. A rock to our age because he never put himself or his deeds above The Rock or His Son. Furthermore, no man can be a rock to his age without the utmost of respect and reverence for God and the things of God. We all must have something to build our lives and service upon. For Paul it was God and His Son. Paul not only spoke (and wrote) God's Word, he lived it! This is a vital principle which must be observed by all of us. No man can do the really great exploits except God be his Rock. Nevertheless, there are those who choose rocks other than our God and His Son. Remember, a building is only as strong as its foundation, therefore choose your rock wisely.

Deuteronomy 32:30,31

How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?

For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter:

Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.

Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?

To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things

that shall come upon them make haste.

For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.

And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted,

Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.

Consider what the Rock, Jesus Christ had to say on this very principle:

Luke 6:47-49

Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:

He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.

But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

God's people knew from days of old that He is the Rock and that His promise was to bring forth His Son, also to be known as the Rock. Both of these appellations are figurative and described quite well in God's Word by passages such as the one we just read. God is the Rock, Jesus Christ is

the Rock and men who give their lives in service are to us rocks.

Deuteronomy 32:4

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.

II Samuel 22:1-4

And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:

And he said, The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;

The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.

I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

Psalms 18:31,46

For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

Psalms 31:3

For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

Psalms 62:6,7

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.

David acknowledged his dependence upon God without hesitancy. He knew that all he was or ever would be was only because of God's goodness to him. Consider the words of David in his greatest act of dedication:

I Chronicles 29:10-22

Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.

Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own.

I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure

in uprightness. As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:

And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.

And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king.

And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings unto the LORD, on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel:

And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the LORD to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.

David had no misconceptions about his success and where it came from and he too was a rock to his age and ours. What of our beloved Paul, what kind of man does God's Word declare him to be?

Acts 15:26

Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The men in this verse are Paul and Barnabas. There were others that strived together with them but these two are premier. They were rocks to their age and certainly Paul is to ours as well. How very thankful we should be for men like this, not to mention our Lord and Savior! He of course stands head and shoulders above the rest. But were it not for men like Paul and Barnabas we would know nothing of our Lord. Men like Paul not only received revelation to record God's Word but they put their lives on the line to safeguard it and make it known. Where would we be without men like them?

At this time of year our Nation celebrates her heroes, most of whom remain unsung. My heart has become increasingly aware of their contribution over the years and this year I'm finally at the place where I'm beginning to understand. I don't know why it has taken me this long but I'm blessed that things are sinking in. I wonder how many of us take for granted the sacrifices of those who've gone before us? The prosperity we enjoy today is only possible because of the men and women who came out of the depression era determined to make a better life for those that followed. These men and women were indefatigable. They were willing to lay it all on the line, even their lives. Most of them grew up without any of the comforts and conveniences that we so arrogantly take for granted. They had little to eat and less to wear. Did they whine and complain? No! They rolled up their sleeves and went to work.

Gary Lantz (columnist for America's First Freedom) said the following: "I once asked my father what he did to survive the Depression, and his answer was matter of fact. "I heard they were hiring in the oil fields near Salem, ILL.," he said. "So I hitchhiked across three states to the work camp and stood in the employment line every morning until the boss finally said he'd give me a job just to shut me up. I had a wife and an infant son and I had to have work. I would have stood there until hell froze over if that's what it took."

Quite a different attitude is prevalent today! Men like Gary's dad were born in hard times, their families pioneers in an unforgiving land. Gary writes, in a recent column entitled "A Letter To Our Fathers," the following:

I can't imagine the oppressive grimness of the Depression, yet austere monuments remain to remind us that the prosperity we enjoy today grew out of heartache - heartache tempered by the stubborn tenacity to endure.

You see it in the dilapidated houses and skeleton barns that still stand barely upright out on the plains, '30's homes now with little more remaining than rafters and frail walls, and maybe a door swinging rhythmically in the unrelenting wind. Families clung to the land until the crash and the drought combined to force them out. Then, as Oklahoma balladeer Woody Guthrie chronicled in song, these tough pioneer folk simply told their remaining neighbors "so long, it's been good to know you," packed a few meager belongings on a rickety truck and set out down the highway, seeking work that would buy the milk and bread that would nourish the greatest generation this country has ever known.

These were men and women who celebrated good times when that meant food in their bellies, clothes on their backs and a roof over their heads. Having come out of the Great Depression these folks were ever so thankful for the little that they had. Remarkably, this is the very same generation that answered our Nation's call to fight in the most horrible war the world had ever seen. They are the ones who brought this Nation of ours to its great heights. An enemy more vicious than could be imagined was defeated and freedom for the generations to follow was once again preserved. Had these men and women shirked what their hearts knew as the only right way, things would be quite different today. Our Nation and much of the world would be subject to cruel bondage. Most likely you and I would not be using English as our main language and much of what we enjoy today, including our religious freedoms, would be well out of our reach.

Because these great men and women gave so freely we have prosperity. Our Nation is among the richest. We have technology, we have education, we have equality for all. Yes, even the great civil rights achievements can be credited to them. Home ownership (the Veteran's mortgage), college educations, technical and trade schools, commerce and shipping and even air travel are all a result of the efforts of the generation that is to me one of the greatest our Country has ever known. Honestly, I'm just scratching the surface of all they made available, there's so much more.

The sad thing is today we are far too politically correct to give credit where credit is due. We dare not offend anyone or say the wrong thing! What a sham!!! The generation of my father (and perhaps yours) is almost gone.

It's been about 56 years since the close of WWII and the baby boom. The men and women who survived are now quite old and we are seeing the last of them pass one by one. They remain dignified if not grey and they stand tall and proud even though their bodies are savaged with age. We must remain humble and thankful in their memory and presence.

Lest they go unmentioned we should not forget our founding fathers and signers of the Declaration of Independence. They were a generation magnificent unto themselves and to the many generations to follow.

They pledged: "For the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of the Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."

It's easy to sit in a movie theater watching a war movie, safe and sound and with a bag of popcorn in your lap. In like manner, it's easy to read the Bible and forget that these were men with lives, loves and families. They had feelings just like we do. They had dreams and aspirations, fears, laughs, children, pets and desires. But most of all they had heart, they were men who hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They understood that freedom is expensive, it's paid for in blood. The greatest freedom being purchased with the most precious blood. It's easy to read about the Lord Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the tree, so easy. But we must never forget or take for granted the reality of it all. Were would we be if not for Jesus Christ? Where would we be if not for the holy men of God who spake as moved by holy ghost? Where would we be if not for the founders of this great nation of ours. Where

would we be without the generation of our fathers. Where would we be if not for Christ's sacrifice?

I Peter 1:18,19

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

I for one am overwhelmed with thankfulness. For my Lord, for the Word of God and for those brave souls who died so that I could hear and choose. One of America's greatest generations is about to slip into oblivion. Let's be as dauntless today as they were then in protecting freedom so the generations that follow us have the same benefits we have had. Were it not for the generation of my father I would never have heard God's Word. Not only did they protect my freedom to hear it, but they spoke it to me as well. As long as I have breath in my lungs I will be thankful for them. I'm thankful for those that labored and sacrificed. I'm thankful for the man that taught me the Word of God. I'm thankful for my father and mother and for their fathers and mothers. I'm thankful for the generation of my father as it is a rock to my generation, a rock of our age. I pray God I honor their memories always and should I ever be asked, rise expediently to whatever the occasion demands.

The following passage comes to mind:

I Timothy 6:3-16

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus

Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;

He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Notes