

# The Rock of My Salvation

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of remembering God and trusting in His strength, warning against the consequences of forgetting Him and idolizing created things.*

**Duration:** 36:15

**Scripture:** Proverbs 1:24-31, Proverbs 29:1, Isaiah 17:10-11

**Topics:** "Faithfulness To God", "Spiritual Distractions"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the significance of a song given by God to Moses in the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy. The song was meant to be memorized and passed down through generations as a reminder of God's blessings and the consequences of forsaking Him. The speaker highlights how the Israelites would often forget God in times of prosperity, leading to oppression and captivity. However, when they called upon God in their distress, He would hear and bless them again. The sermon emphasizes the importance of remaining faithful to God and not allowing material possessions to distract from a relationship with Him.

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## Transcript

Let's pray. Father, truly our soul does trust in you. And we thank you, Lord, for the help that you give to those that do put their trust in you.

Lord, we pray that in this day in which we live, when so many are trusting in so many other things, turning to other things for help and for guidance, Lord, keep us true, keep us faithful, keep us, Lord, ever in mind of who you are and what you want to be to us, that we might draw from you, Lord, daily that strength that we need, that help that we need. Bless now, Lord, the study of your word this morning. Open our hearts.

Let us hear the word of God as it speaks to us on the issues of our lives today. In Jesus' name we pray, amen. You may be seated.

Looking forward to tonight as Skip Hysick will come to lead us through the word of God. God has blessed Skip in a very unusual way. There in Albuquerque, God used him to start from a home Bible study to one of the largest churches in the United States.

He's been anointed by God in the teaching of the word, and I know it's going to be a great blessing to us as he leads us through tonight beginning with Isaiah 17 and going through chapter 19. Looking forward to

having this gifted man come and share his gift with us tonight as he teaches us the word of God. I would encourage you to be here tonight and to enjoy with us this messenger from God.

This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the 17th chapter of Isaiah verse 10 and 11. The Lord said, Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and have you not been mindful of the rock of your strength? Therefore shall you plant pleasant plants, and you'll set your gardens with strange slips. And in the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning you will make your seed to flourish.

But the harvest will be a ruin in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow. Here in chapter 17, the Lord tells the judgment that will come first of all upon Damascus. The first two verses are dealing with God's judgment on Damascus.

The rest of the chapter deals with God's judgment upon Ephraim, which is the northern tribe of Israel. Inasmuch as Ephraim was the largest and the leading tribe, the whole of Israel was often referred to as Ephraim. These two had confederated together to stand against the threat of the Syrian invasion.

And because they were trusting in their alliance, God declared that they were going to be destroyed, that they would both go into captivity, that the majority of the people would be taken as captive and repopulated in other areas. Just a few people in remote villages would remain in the land, but the strong cities would be forsaken. And then God tells them the reason why this judgment was going to come upon them.

First of all, God said, you've been looking to your altars, which are the works of your hands. They had built altars to other gods. They had forsaken the altar of the Lord there in Jerusalem.

And from the beginning of the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, they had built altars unto other gods. In fact, we do read in 2 Kings chapter 16, where Ahaz, the king of Israel, had gone to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria. And he saw there an altar that was in Damascus.

And King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest the blueprints of that altar, according to all of the workmanship. And Uriah the priest built an altar that was similar to that in Damascus. So when the king had come from Damascus, the king saw the altar and the king approached the altar and he offered the burnt offering and the meal offering and poured out the drink offering.

And he sprinkled the blood of the peace offerings upon this false altar to a false god. They had created their own objects of worship. Having forsaken the true and the living God and the worship of God, they began to worship things from their own imagination.

I'm always surprised at what strange and weird things people will believe and people will worship when they reject the worship of the true God. It seems like, well, the scripture says, Paul said that um their foolish hearts were darkened and professing themselves to be wise, they actually became fools. For they began to worship and serve the creature more than the creator who is blessed forevermore.

I'm amazed when I look at the people that go over to worship Sai Baba there in India. Really some of the most, by the world standards, intelligent people in the world. Many college professors, many doctors, many lawyers.

They make the pilgrimage to India to hear this man with this squeaky little voice tell how that he went through a transition and how that he is God. And they worship this Sai Baba as God. That always amazes

me, the foolish things people will believe, the foolish things they will worship when they quit worshipping the true and the living God.

We have the new age movement, very strong, very powerful. They are enacting a lot of legislation that deals with our lives. For they worship nature.

They have a greater interest in the welfare of the snail darter minnow or of the kangaroo rat than they do of children or humans. Watch closely and you'll see that those same people that are prating and demonstrating for abortion rights are the same ones who chain themselves to trees to save them from being cut down. Did you know that it is against the law to possess the feather of a raptor bird? The owl, the condor, the eagle, if you have in your possession a feather from one of these birds, you can be imprisoned and fined.

If you are walking, say, through the forest and you see a colorful feather on the ground and you pick it up, if there happens to be a forest ranger there, he can arrest you for holding that eagle feather or condor feather or hawk feather. You're not to touch them. Did you know that the county of San Bernardino set aside 100,000 acres as a habitat for a fly? You can't go on that acreage because that little fly might land on you and you might swat it.

And so they are seeking to protect this little daisy fly. They're in a hundred thousand acres of the San Bernardino forest. Did you know that the county of San Bernardino spent one million \$200,000 to build roost for eagles up in Big Bear? Set up poles and even make artificial trees because they felt that with all of the building of houses that the eagles didn't have proper places for roosting.

And so \$1,200,000 was spent to build these eagle roost. The only problem, the eagles will have nothing to do with the roost that have been built. They won't go close to them.

They still build their house and their nests are actually on some of the houses that they were trying to save, you know. Well, also there in San Bernardino, \$1 million a year is spent for the bear habitat to make a safe place for the bears to live. And yet they will issue a bear tag to you so you can go out and shoot a bear.

I sort of feel like what Isaiah says in chapter 19, that the rulers of zone are fools. Their wise counselors give them senseless advice. We're being taxed billions of dollars each year to support the government to make up these kinds of rules in order to strip you more and more of your freedoms.

It'd be safer being a kangaroo rat than a child. Isaiah said they are worshipping the things that their fingers have made. Now, this speaks to me of art.

An artist who skillfully uses their fingers to produce beautiful paintings or beautiful sculptures or beautiful music and all the works of their fingers. They began to worship them. God has skilled many people in different areas.

It's a delight for me to hear or to see a person who is truly gifted as they perform and using their skills to create beautiful things, paintings, music, literature. I believe that people who have these gifts, that they are actually gifts of God. Now, my father was an artist, but somehow I didn't get those genes.

I did, but I passed them on to my son. I can't draw a fish, but both my father and son are great artists. My father was, my son is, and the skills, it's just an innate kind of an ability.

They can draw something and you know what they're drawing. You can see it there. And it's something that I admire.

I used to love to watch my dad draw. And it was just always one of the things as a child growing up, I enjoyed watching him exercise this ability and skill that he had. But these things are not to be worshiped.

They're to be enjoyed. God gave us all things to enjoy, but not to worship. But people so often begin to worship the artist or the art.

And that is a perversion to take and use these gifts of God and use them to advance causes against God. I think of so much of the art that is being supported by our National Endowment for Arts that is blasphemous kind of art as people are using their talents to blaspheme God with their artwork. I believe that every gift like this has its highest expression when it is devoted to the glory of God.

As Bach on every one of his compositions inscribed to the glory of God, there the talent, the gift is being used in its highest expression. But these people in verse eight were also worshiping sex. It speaks of their groves and their images.

The groves in the Hebrew is Ashereth. Ashereth was the female goddess of sex. The groves is a reference to the place where they would worship Ashereth.

The images were pornographic idols that were carved that were designed to arouse a person sexually. And thus, the people were given over to the worship of Ashereth, the female goddess of sex. They were living in a sex-crazed society.

It's important for us to realize that the reason why they no longer existed, that the devastation from God had come upon them because they had given themselves over to the worship of sex. It's interesting that God gave them many wake-up calls, but it only caused them to think of God for a moment during the crisis. The moment the crisis would cease, they would go right back to their practices of the worship of the false gods, the images, and these other things.

The general trend, however, was always downward. It was always a little worse than the last time. I believe that God has been giving wake-up calls to America.

I believe that 9-11 was a real wake-up call from God to our nation, which has been straying and turning from God. In fact, when you read of Israel, you'll see so many parallels between Israel and the United States. As we move on into the book of Jeremiah, you'll see the parallels are just so many that you'd almost think that Jeremiah was talking to the United States as he talks of the things that they were doing that was bringing destruction upon them.

I remember after 9-11 watching our congressmen standing there on the steps singing, God bless America. And I was touched and I was moved by that. But it was only a short time.

As soon as the crisis seemed to be over, we were right back to business as usual. The creating of legislation that freed more and more ungodly opportunities for people to follow their flesh. They created more laws that would restrict a person's right to worship God after the dictates of their own heart.

In Proverbs 29 verse 1, the Lord said, He that being often reprov'd, if he hardens his neck, he will suddenly be destroyed. And that without remedy. We've been often reprov'd, but it seems like we are

hardening our hearts against God and the things of God.

And I think that it only is a token of the coming judgment of God. Suddenly destroyed, God said, and that without remedy. I wonder just how long will God continue to hold our nation up when we as a nation have let him down.

Isaiah tells us another one of the reasons why they went into captivity and were destroyed is that they had forgotten the God of their salvation. Over and over, God had saved them from their enemies. The nation seemed to go through cycles.

They would call upon God. They would worship God. They would serve God and God would bless them and God would prosper them.

But in their prosperity, they would forget God. They would begin to in their prosperity, amass many things for themselves. And in the devotion to these material things, they would forget God.

And so God would allow an enemy to come against them and to take them captive and to oppress them. And during this time of oppression, they would call upon God and they would return to God and God would hear them and God would answer their prayers and God would bless them and God would prosper them. And in their prosperity, they would turn from God and go again into oppression.

And it was a repeated pattern. It was a cycle over and over again through the book of Judges until finally God said to them in Judges 10 verse 11, did I not deliver you from the Egyptians, from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, from the Philistines, the Sidonians also, the Amalekites and Maonites? When they oppressed you, you cried unto me, I delivered you out of their hand. Yet you have forsaken me and you have served other gods.

Therefore, I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen. Let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

Basically, God said, you've turned a deaf ear to me. I'm now going to turn a deaf ear to you. I will deliver you no more.

And what a tragic day when God says to a people, that's it, I've had it. Call upon the gods that you've been worshiping. Let them help you.

Let's see what they can do. I'm tired of this business of just turning away from me, only coming in the hour of need. In Proverbs chapter 1 beginning with verse 24, God said, because I've called and you have refused, I've stretched out my hand and no man regarded.

But you've said it not, all of my counsel. You would have nothing to do with my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity.

I will mock when your fear comes, when your fear comes as desolation and your destruction comes as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then shall you call upon me, I'll not answer. Then they will seek me early, but they'll not find me.

For in as much as they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would have nothing to do with my counsel. They despised all of my reproof. Therefore, they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and they will be filled with their own devices.

There comes a time, as when in the days of Noah, where God says, my spirit will not always strive with flesh, with man. When man turns his back upon God, God is long suffering. He's merciful.

He calls to us. But there will come a time when God will no longer call. God will no longer deliver.

God will turn us over to the gods that we have enshrined. Isaiah said, one of the reasons why they went into captivity and were destroyed is that they had not been mindful of the rock of their strength. They had put God out of their minds.

That is the true and the living God. They probably removed the 10 commandments from the classrooms. They could no longer teach the children songs that were of God, the creator.

They could speak freely of the other gods. They could teach the children how Allah is worshipped. They could give children information concerning Ashereth, the sex goddess.

They could instruct the children in safe sex and demonstrate for them the use of condoms. In fact, they probably even passed out condoms in school. But they had put God out of their minds.

And these other gods were being worshipped. They lived as though the true God did not exist or did not matter. God here is called the God of their strength.

So often, we attribute the strength of the nation to other things than reality. The strength of our nation lay in the fact that of those who signed the declaration of independence, all but two of them were practicing Christians. That our nation was founded on a faith and a belief in God.

But we have revised history. And we are teaching the children that the strength of the nation is our democratic processes. Or the strength of our nation is the free enterprise system.

And they had not been mindful of the rock of their strength. God is called a rock in many places in the scripture. It's used in an allegorical sense for strength.

We say He's as solid as a rock. It's used in an allegorical sense for a place of shelter. Oh, safe to the rock that is higher than I, my soul and its conflicts and sorrows would fly.

Solomon tells us about the Koni, a feeble folk, but it makes its home in the rocks. And thus, the rock is used as a symbol for defense. In 2 Samuel 22 one, David spoke unto the Lord the words of this song.

In the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all of his enemies and out of the hand of Saul, David said, the Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer. God is my rock and him will I trust. He is my shield and my salvation, my high tower and my refuge, my savior.

He has saved me from violence. The rock is also used allegorically as a symbol of stability. We used to hear solid as the rock of Gibraltar.

Many places in the scripture, God is used as, rock is used as a symbol for God. As in Deuteronomy 32, 18, in this song of Moses, you are unmindful of the rock that created you. You've forgotten God that formed you.

This 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy is extremely fascinating. It is a song that God gave to Moses and commanded Moses to teach it to all of the children and they were to teach it to their children and each

generation was to memorize this song. So that in the day that you go into captivity and you are singing this song, the light will be turned on because you'll realize that the reason why you are in captivity is you have forsaken God.

You've been unmindful of the rock that created you. You've forgotten the God that formed you. So the song goes on and it tells about God's blessings and all upon the people and they all memorize this song.

It became sort of a national anthem of sorts for the children of Israel. But as the song progresses, it tells about how that they turned away from God. They've forgotten God.

They've forsaken God. They began to worship other gods and thus the captivity and the sorrows and the miseries and all that would come upon them as a people for their forsaking of the true and the living God. Interesting how melodies and how songs will sort of stick in our minds and we sort of sing them without even thinking of the words.

But this song was intended that when the judgments of God did come and they would sing it, all of a sudden the words would make meaning to them and they would understand the reason they were going through such suffering, such hardship, such trials. This morning we sang, Stand up, stand up for Jesus. Stand in his strength alone.

The arm of flesh will fail you. You dare not trust your own. Ephraim, the northern kingdom, had trusted in their alliance with Syria to deliver them from the Assyrians who were conquering the world at that time.

Their alliance failed. They were taken captive. They ceased to be as a nation.

Too many times in the midst of the battle as we are fighting against temptation, we as Israel forget the God of our salvation. We're not mindful of the rock of our strength and we try in our own efforts to defeat the enemy, only to find ourselves going down to defeat and carried away captive to the things that we've been practicing, no longer free to worship and serve God. Tragic day when people forget and are unmindful.

Of the rock of their strength. Father, we pray that you'll help us this day to realize that our strength is in our rock and that rock is Jesus. And Lord, how often have we fled to the safety of the rock? How often have we drawn from the strength of the rock? How often, Lord, have we found our security in the rock? Thank you, Lord, for all that you are.

Thank you, Lord, for all that you are wanting to do for us. May we always be mindful of you and of your love. And may we always, Lord, depend upon you for our help and for our strength comes from the Lord.

He is our rock. He is our fortress. He is our defense.

And we thank you, Father, that you never fail those who trust in you. Guide us now, Lord, and lead us to the rock that is higher than we are. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Shall we stand? I realize that it is very possible that even this past week, you've received a wake-up call from God. You've sort of strayed, sort of been unmindful of the rock of your strength.

And as a result, things are going sour. Relationships are going bad. And God's given you a wake-up call.

The wake-up call can come in many different forms. Your husband walking out. Your wife asking you to get out.

Being sued. Losing your job. All of these things, I believe, are wake-up calls from God.

When we start to get careless, when we start to get complacent with the things of God, the things of the Spirit, God sends these wake-up calls. What I do is important at that point. Do I seek the Lord? Do I return? Do I remember God, the God of my salvation? Do I seek the strength of the rock? All important.

The pastors are down here at the front. They're here to pray with you. If God has sort of given you a wake-up call, maybe the death of a friend, or a severe accident, or illness, or these things are all wake-up calls.

God is saying, don't get complacent. Don't forget me and your dependence upon me. These men are here to pray with you, to help you reconnect with God today, and to find God's help, to find God's strength, which he is desiring to display and to show to you because God loves you.

And so I would encourage you, make your connection with God today. These men are here to help you to do that. As soon as we're dismissed, I would encourage you, come on down and let them pray with you.

Get things right with God, and you'll find out that the other things will straighten out in a hurry. Seek first the kingdom of God, his righteousness. All these other things will be taken care of.

And so may the Lord be with you, and may we ever be mindful of the God of our salvation. May we never forget the source of strength for our lives is in the rock, Christ Jesus. Amen.

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