



Rock of Ages

Rock of Ages revisited album
Track 1

Traditionally, it is held that Toplady drew his inspiration from an incident in the gorge of Burrington Combe in the Mendip Hills in England. Toplady, a preacher in the nearby village of Blagdon, was travelling along the gorge when he was caught in a storm. Finding shelter in a gap in the gorge, he was struck by the title and scribbled down the initial lyrics.

Rich's 12 bar blues arrangement of this classic hymn became a favourite at our church in the mid 2000s. The band was originally called Rock of Ages, owing to this. And so when we recorded our first demo cd, this was the obvious choice for the first song. It has since become our signature song, and one that we never get tired of playing.

Verse 1

- "Rock of ages, cleft for me"
 - I have heard married couples refer to their spouse as their "rock". But no human can be a solid rock on which you stand. Jesus alone is our Rock of ages! **In what ways is Christ like a solid rock?**
 - Read Psalm 18:2.
 - The word "cleft" means "split" or "severed". Though he is the great Rock, He was broken on the cross for us.

- "Let me hide myself in Thee"
 - And so we can hide in the shelter of our great Rock of ages. Toplady wrote these words having found shelter in a "cleft" rock during a great storm.
 - What are you seeking shelter from at the moment?
 - **In what ways do you seek shelter in the storms of life?** In what ways can we actually find shelter in Jesus?

- "Let the water and the blood from Thy wounded side which flowed"
 - Read John 19:34.
 - The New Recovery Bible says this about this verse: "Two substances came out of the Lord's pierced side: blood and water. **Blood is for redemption**, to deal with sins, for the purchasing of the church. **Water is for imparting life**, to deal with death, for the producing of the church." Which leads us straight into the next line:

- "Be of sin the double cure: Save from wrath and make me pure"
 - And so the water and the blood provide a double cure for sin: not just saving us from the wrath of God that we deserve for our sin, but also making us pure and

holy in the sight of God (not by anything we've done, but by His grace alone). We now have the power to live a life of purity, through the Spirit.

- Does your relationship with God focus strongly on both of these points? That he has redeemed you from punishment by the blood, *and* given you a new life in Christ?

Verse 2

- "Not the labours of my hand can fulfill Thy law's command"
 - Read Galatians 2:15-16.
- "Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow"
 - The hymn writer names two great godly traits here: zeal, and sorrow.
 - **What does he mean by zeal?**
 - **Why do you think he lists tears flowing as a godly thing?**
- "All for sin could not atone"
 - In other words, all the zeal you can muster, and all the godly sorrow and tears you can shed mean nothing in earning your salvation. None of that can atone for any sin.
 - Read 1 John 2:2. **What atones for our sin?**
- "Thou must save and Thou alone"
 - Read Acts 15:10.
 - The Jewish Christians were trying to impose all sorts of moral rules on the Gentiles. But Peter said that it is not through moral works, but by grace that we are saved. Jesus must save us, Jesus alone. Not our good works.
 - Question: **why then do we do good things at all? Do our morals and holy living count for nothing?**
 - Read 2 Tim 1:9.

Verse 3

- "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling"
 - **Do you wear a cross? Or have a cross in your house somewhere? Why?**
 - Catholic crosses have Jesus on them, Protestants have empty crosses. **Which do you prefer?**
- "Naked come to Thee for dress, helpless look to Thee for grace"
 - Read Revelation 3:17.
 - The people in the passage are wealthy, but are described as "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." Though they have material things, they are missing out on what is important: God's blessing.
 - **How can someone with all the money in the world be "naked" and "helpless" before God?**
- "Foul I to the fountain fly, wash me Saviour or I die"
 - More water imagery is used here, to tell of how our sins are *washed* away by Jesus.
 - Read Psalm 36:9.
 - **In what ways is Jesus our fountain of life?**
 - **Does your quiet time refresh your soul?**

Verse 4

- "While I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyes shall close in death"

- This is reminder of our own mortality.
- Read 1 Cor 15:57. **What is our victory our death?**
- **Does this change the way we *live*?**

- “When I soar to worlds unknown, see Thee on Thy judgement throne”
 - Read Matthew 25:31-33.
 - We talk about God washing our sin away. **Why then does he still judge at the end?**

- “Rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee”
 - Read Jude 25.
 - God gets the glory through all the ages!

Listen to the song again, thinking about the words.

Key focus: What main point are you going to take away from today?

For the week ahead:

- Am I standing firm on the Rock of Ages?
- Am I taking shelter in Him?
- Am I *deeply* thankful for his blood which atones for my sin?
- Do I do good things to try earn his approval? Or out of gratitude?
- Am I clinging to the cross?
- Do I acknowledge my own helplessness, and be thankful for grace?
- Am I allowing Jesus to wash me?
- Am I living giving God the glory in my life?

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Words by Augustus Toplady
1763

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Save from wrath and make me pure

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Can fulfill Thy law's commands
Could my zeal no respite know
Could my tears forever flow
All for sin could not atone
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Verse 3

Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to the cross I cling
Naked, come to Thee for dress
Helpless, look to Thee for grace
Foul, I to the fountain fly
Wash me, Saviour, or I die

Verse 4

While I draw this fleeting breath
When mine eyes shall close in death
When I soar to worlds unknown
See Thee on thy judgment throne
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