

A Big Two Letter Word

by Jim Cymbala

God is our rock, providing stability, security, and protection from unseen enemies, and He guides us in life's decisions.

Duration: 30:48

Scripture: Psalm 31:1-5, Psalm 91:1-2, John 4:24

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of understanding the different types of literature in the Bible. He explains that some parts are narratives, telling stories, while others are letters full of doctrine. He emphasizes the need to interpret poetic literature, such as the Psalms, by understanding the symbolism and its personal significance. The speaker then focuses on Psalm 31, which describes God as a rock and a fortress. He explores the imagery of finding refuge and protection in God during times of trouble and how this symbolism can be applied to our lives.

Transcript

Sometimes the biggest words in the Bible and in the English language are very small words, not really long words, but very small words. The passage I wanna give you is one full of imagery. And when you read poetic literature, you have to be alert to what do the images mean.

This Bible has different kinds of literature in it. Some of it is narrative. It's telling a story.

That would be like 1 Samuel, which tells just the history, a narrative. 2 Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, those are narratives. The Gospels are narratives.

Then there's letters that are full of doctrine. Those would be like Romans and Ephesians. Those are letters from New Testament apostles like Paul.

And he writes to churches, and it's everyday language. And some of it is very heavy theological verbiage, and then a lot of it is just practical instructions and expressions of affection. And then there's a whole bunch of the Bible, which is poetry.

And when you read poetry, it's much more difficult because you have to step back and not be literal and say every word is to be taken literally, but it's to be looked at, and you have to try to ascertain what does this symbolism mean. For example, we're gonna now discuss from Psalm 31 where it says that God is a

rock. God is a fortress.

Is God a literal rock? Well, no, because the Bible says God is spirit, and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. You have to then step back, and you have to do some thinking, and you have to say what does the symbol mean, and then number two, what does it mean to me? What does the symbol mean, and then what does it mean to me? Let's look at this passage, just three little verses, but it has, ooh, a very powerful two-letter word. So it says, in you, Lord, I have taken refuge.

Let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me.

Come quickly to my rescue. Be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. And now notice the imagery changes in the sense of the movement of this rock.

Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name, lead me and guide me. How could a rock lead you? The only thing that can lead you is something that moves and goes ahead of you, but see, that's the imagery of poetry. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name, lead me and guide me.

So there's another thing we should learn. See, it says, for the sake of your name. Name in the Bible stands for the character of a person.

When you ask in Jesus' name, you're not thinking that that's a mantra that you can use that has power by saying just Jesus' name. It's when you ask in Jesus' name, you're asking in the authority and the character of Jesus. When it says here, for the sake of your name, we love your name, it means you don't just love the name God, it means you love who God is, how God acts, what's the character of God.

This is how name is used in poetry and in the Bible. So now let's see where we are with this and apply it to ourselves and then dismiss. Number one, God, many places in the Bible is likened to a rock.

God is our rock. God is our fortress. God is our strong tower.

God is a rock. God is the place where you can go and be protected because that's what rock meant. So before we get into the moving rock, let's just discuss what that means to us today.

The Psalms, most of them written by David, had many times a military bearing to them. They were written in times of stress. You'll find in life that your best prayers come when you're under the most stress.

The most faith you'll have is when you need it under extreme pressure. We find out that David will be many times be the one saying, I'm being chased by King Saul or other enemies. I have armies against me.

I'm all by myself. I just have a few men with me possibly. Oh God, be my rock.

Thank you God that you are a rock. You are my fortress. So what was he saying? You have to understand that they looked at rocks thousands of years ago differently than we look at rock.

We look at rock and roll. We look at a small rock. We see rocks possibly in Central Park or Prospect Park.

But when you walk down Wall Street, you don't see too many rocks. So rock to them meant everything. First of all, rock meant stability.

You could get in a battle and be on ground that shifted and got money. You can get into quicksand. God help me, I'm sinking.

So rock first meant stability and security. When you were on a rock, you could pivot and position yourself and you could fight because you were standing on a rock. Everything else was shifting sand, but a rock meant stability.

And our God is a rock because where else in life will you find stability except in our God and our Savior, Jesus Christ? Where else will you find stability? What else would you base your peace and your stability on? Finances, politics, the economy? Where else could you find it? Friends, even they could turn against you. Even family can go sideways on you sometimes. Am I correct or wrong? But God, no matter what turmoil you might be in today, when you put your feet on Jesus Christ, when you trust Him and you bring your problems to Him, He is a rock.

He brings stability. He brings a sense of my feet are on the rock. You notice the Bible also says, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. So now let's take the imagery a little further.

Rock means stability. Put your feet on a rock, He in a firm place. But lead me to the rock that is higher.

The main meaning of rock in the Psalms was a hiding place, a fortress. Because when in battle in the valleys, the enemy could overcome you and could get behind you. Encirclement was a terrible thing because now you had a fight on all sides.

There's an old saying that's in Western movies and everything, run to the hills. Let's run away and find our protection in the rocks of the mountains. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I. In other words, in the open field, arrows could get you, every kind of thing could get you.

But when you climbed up and up and up, and now the rocks had little places that you could go in and sometimes they overhung. So you would find safety in the rock. You would be high above the battle where the fight was going on.

You were in a place of safety, why? Because you had found your fortress. You had run to where the rock is. The Bible uses that of God, that when you're in trouble, you run to God who is a rock, who protects you, who wraps his arms around you.

You find a solid place of protection in the shadow of his wings and the shadow of the rock, you find protection. And now you're above the battle. The arrows that could get you down there, they can't get you when you're up in the mountain, in the rock, because God is that protection that we need in the times of battle.

Did you know that most battles for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years were totally won by who could get the high ground? Whoever got the high ground won the battles. Napoleon, the great, infamous, famous emperor of France, Napoleon was a genius because he hardly would ever fight a battle unless he had a strategy where he could get the high ground. You're firing down on the enemy.

The enemy has to come up at you, and you're firing down. When you're on the low ground, you have to fight up. Now you have to make a charge.

And they're on the top firing down very, very hard. General Robert E. Lee, the famous Confederate general who hardly lost any battles, was famous for being so brilliant that he wouldn't hardly ever fight unless he knew he could have the high ground. The high ground meant victory.

They're above everybody else. Strategically, you're well-placed. The famous Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, which many people feel is the turning point of the Civil War, the reason it was fought because, and won by the North, most concede, was because that early, early in the morning before the battle really ensued, the generals there and some strategic people got the high ground.

And now the Confederates, the South, who were famous for fighting from the high ground, they were fighting from the low ground, and victory came to the northern side. And then Lincoln went and made his famous speech, which he wrote on the back of an envelope, the Gettysburg Address, which is one of the great speeches in history. And the whole thing was based on the fact that someone had got the high ground.

How many are happy that when you put your trust in God, he takes you high ground? He takes you above all the arrows, the arrows that could have got you if you were in the low ground. Now they can't reach you. They can't reach you.

Why? Because our God is a rock. He's a strong tower. He lifts us above the battle.

Come on, let's put our hands together and say amen to that. We know that rock, as it's symbolized, is God. Rock means stability.

Oh, I'm just thinking, remember what Jesus said about the wise and the foolish builder? They all built the same house, all had the same construction material. What was the difference? One built on the rock and the other built on the sand. And when the weather got bad, even though the house looked good, oh, how many are happy even when weather gets bad, Jesus is gonna hold us because we're built on a rock, right? And number two, we know that it means safety.

It means a defense. Get to the rock, to the high place, to where you're protected, above the battle with that huge rock. Back then, what would arrows do? If they hit you, they kill you.

If they hit the rock that you're protected by, they fall harmlessly to the ground. The other thing about a rock too was that a rock protected you from the back because if you got your back against the rock, if you got your back against the rock over here, now I can see what the enemy might do, but I'm high up, but nobody can attack me from behind because my back is against the rock, praise God. The rock has my back.

How many are happy? God has our back, right? God is protecting us. He's our rear guard because a lot of times, brothers and sisters, we see the enemy that's in front, but then there's a lot of attacks come from things we don't see. They sneak up from behind, but God says, no, when you run to me, I'll protect you from the unseen attack, from this one who sneaks up behind you.

So God is our rock. He's our stability. He is the one who gives safety and protection from us.

He gives stability in life and he gives protection from all the attacks of the enemy. Now, all of us will be attacked this year in 2017. It's part of spiritual warfare.

Everyone will be attacked psychologically, emotionally, spiritually. Satan will try to bring you into condemnation. He'll try to tempt us.

He'll shoot arrows, fiery arrows, the Bible calls them. In this imagery, God is the one who the Bible says is able to protect us from every weapon formed against us because he is our rock. God is our rock.

Say that. God is our rock. He's the one that brings stability.

He's the one that brings protection. Now, notice also here, we bring this imagery to a close, and this is why poetry is so different and you can't form perfect theology from it. You have to analyze it and apply it carefully.

The rock moves. Because you are my rock, lead me and guide me. So we find out three things here as I close about God.

He provides stability and he lets you build on something solid. Oh, brothers and sisters, don't build your life on something that's gonna rock and roll and shake and shatter, and then it's all gone in a second. It's all gone in a second.

But our God is eternal, amen? He build on him. And he protects us from all the devices of the enemy because he's our rock. Now, the rock moves.

Why does the rock move? Because life entails not only stability, not only protection from unseen enemies, but you gotta make so many decisions. You gotta make a lot of decisions in 2017, all of us. We're gonna come to crossroads, go right or left.

It could be a major change in your occupation. It could be moving to another place that God or the door seems maybe to open, to go to a different apartment in New York City or a house. Or it might be a decision about a personal relationship.

Someone comes in your life, what to do with it. Is it of God? Is it not of God? Are they really a Christian? Is this really of the Lord? It could be a ministry decision. Do I step out and do that thing? I've never done that before.

Does God really want me to get involved in this ministry or that ministry or start a new ministry? There's so many decisions to make. And the Bible says that this rock who protects us and gives us stability, he also will lead us and guide us in the way that we should go. And as we're moving, he will give us protection and stability as we follow his direction.

How many heartaches, how many headaches have come? Listen to me carefully, because we don't ask our rock to lead us and to guide us. We rest in our own understanding, our own intelligence. We think we've analyzed it.

We Google it and we whatever it, and we figure, oh, that's enough. I know what I need to know. I wanna tell you something today.

For 2017, only God can lead us in the way that we should go. Can we say amen to that? Only God can do that. God knows what's around the bend.

You don't know what's around the bend. Pardon my voice for being weak. I've been sick with a terrible flu this whole week.

I was so sick that I got sick of being sick. How many have ever been just like, yuck? I'm happy I'm here today. I just was so sick of being sick.

So forgive my voice. But there's decisions to make. When I think last year of all the decisions that I was confronted with, and I'll be confronted one, little big decisions, how to handle a child.

Deacon Walter, how many children do you have? One. That child is gonna grow through seasons of life. And now, how do you adjust to the seasons of the life of that child? If you have more than one child, how do you treat one versus the other child? You can't treat them the same.

They're not the same personality. What do you do? One is mischievous. The other one is a model child.

Why is that one so troublesome, that other child, right? What do I do? What do I do about this promotion into another department? Or should I look for another job? What do I do with this conflict that's arisen with a believer? How do I settle this? God's not happy that we're fussing and there's a wall between us. What do I do? God, what do I do? Brothers and sisters, if you analyze life every single day, we have all these kinds of decisions we gotta make. And God says, don't do it with your own wisdom.

Tap into my wisdom and my knowledge and my understanding. I will lead you and guide you in the way that you should go. How many of us have ended up bruised and beaten with Band-Aids all over us because we made decisions without asking God to direct us, ran into a wall, got all busted up, and then we come, oh God, help us.

Help me, God. And God says, yes, I will help you and I'll heal you. But oh, I wish you would have come to me at the beginning.

There's a way that seems right to a person, but it's not always the right way. Am I right here or wrong? And our God, his name is Rock. But it's not just stability and protection, it's I'll direct you, I'll guide you.

If you're facing certain decisions today, do you re-up the lease on your apartment? Do you invest that money and that opportunity? I know a lot of you just, you never even think of God. You just do what your brain tells you to do. But I'm telling you, bring everything to the Lord.

Don't you wanna bring everything to him this year? Don't you wanna bring the little decisions and the big decisions and the in-between decisions and say, God, I want your wisdom, I want your direction. Because when God is leading you, you know he's gonna protect you and help you in that way that he's led you to go. So now, we know that God is Rock.

God is protection. God is stability. God gives direction.

But I want you to notice that little two-lettered word. Look at it. In you, Lord, I have taken refuge.

Let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me.

Come quickly to my rescue. Not be a rock, be my rock. A strong fortress to save me.

Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name, who you are, lead and guide me. I've learned in life, brothers and sisters, that you can, in your mind, know that God is a rock, that God gives stability, that God gives protection, that God gives direction, but you never apply it and grab it for yourself because the only way that happens is you go to God and say, God, I don't want you to be a rock or the rock. I want you to be my rock.

I need your protection today. I'm being assaulted in my mind or my emotions. Be my rock.

Be my rock. Be my stability today. Everything in my life is going like this and it's affecting me.

So be my rock of stability. Bring me to that place where my feet are on solid ground because everything's shaking underneath me. That's a bad feeling when everything seems to be moving underneath you.

That can happen in real life in an earthquake and that can happen in spiritually speaking where everything seems, you don't know like what's gonna happen next. Like where do I put my feet down? Where's my peace? Everything is just nerve wracking. I was in San Diego a lot of years ago at a music conference where I was speaking and Carol was doing something there with I think her smaller group a lot of years ago in San Diego.

I went up to the hotel room first and she walked in the room. It had to be maybe 10.30 at night. The news was on and as she walked in the door, I was already in my bed clothes.

She said, well, what happened on the news? And I looked at her and suddenly as I looked at her, the whole room started rocking and rolling. The whole room. I had never been in an earthquake before and it didn't stop after two seconds.

And she looked at me and she said, what is that? I said, I think that's an earthquake. And then I thought, what are we supposed to do when there's an earthquake? Because in Brooklyn, we don't have a lot of earthquakes. We have other kind of quakes, but not an earthquake.

So I said, I think you're supposed to go to the doorway and stand under the jam of the door. So I ran out there. She was dressed properly.

I wasn't. And door flew open and we just stood there and it went on for about 25 seconds. Very bad feeling.

Everything was moving. You didn't know, would it move more? Would it move less? Would it rock and roll more? Would it rock and roll less? And then how long would it last? So we just stood there and now doors were flying open all over up and down the hallway. And then we were like, wow, what is this? And then after about 25 seconds, it subsided.

And we all were excited by it. So we all like walked out into the hallway. All the people started congregating and everybody was, did you feel that? Did you see that? I mean, everything was moving.

And did you feel that? And then after that wore off, we realized that most of us were still in our bed clothes and we were in the middle of it. And women had their hair up and all kinds of things. They could have gotten different channels from other nations, from whatever.

And we just all like looked at each other and went like, whoa, that's how you sleep? Man, that's not cool at all. And we all just kind of drifted back after a while. We were embarrassed we were out there talking.

God says, I'm the rock that will give you. If you're going through shaking right now, you have to say to God before you leave, God, be my rock today. No, not that you are a rock, be my rock.

What good is it if you say, I believe God is this, but he's not it for you? Is Jesus the savior of the world? Yes. Is he the savior of everyone? No, you have to come and say, be my savior. Be my savior.

Until you say, be my savior, he's just the savior of the world, but he'll never affect you. Be my rock today. Be my defense.

I'm being attacked in my mind and all that. I got a tragic message on my phone from a pastor who I help oversee in another part of the country and his son now who had served over in the Middle East. He's going through something and now he made his first attempt at suicide.

And he's coming down to New York, the father, to be with his son who's here. And he's saying, would you please pray? And someone has to guard his mind. God has to be his rock, his protection.

There's so many arrows coming at us. Temptation, discouragement, condemnation, confusion. Oh God, be my rock.

Protect my mind. Protect my back. Protect me, God.

Protect my family. Be my rock. I don't wanna hear a sermon that you are the rock.

I want you to be my rock. And finally, be my rock that guides me and leads me because you're the supernatural rock that moves. I need your direction right now.

Let's close our eyes. Is there anybody here who would say, pastor, I need God to be my rock today? I need him to be my rock of stability. Things are moving on me.

It's like I can't seem to get my feet settled. There's an unsettledness about my life that is robbing me of peace and joy. Or I need his protection.

I'm being assaulted. But God is my, I want God to be my rock. I know he was David's rock.

I wanted him to be my rock to protect me against the unseen enemies too. I could sneak up behind. I want him to cover me all the way around.

I need his direction today. I'm facing some decisions as I begin 2017. Just stand up wherever you are.

I'd like to pray for you. Just stand up where you are. You need God to be your rock in a special way today.

Stand up. I needed to hear that today, pastor, from the word of God. Whether you're standing behind me because you're in the choir in front of me, just stand up and say, I wanna pray before I leave the building that God will be my rock, not the rock, not David's rock, not Jeremiah's rock, not Moses's rock.

I want him to be my rock, my stability, my protection. If you're standing in the choir, you can come and stand behind me. Everybody in the congregation who's standing, come to the altar quickly, come on.

Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters behind me and for the ones in front of me. Be their rock today. Not in their mind, not a verse in the Bible only, but make it personal for them today.

They're reaching out to you. They're trusting you. So honor your word.

Be their rock. Give them that peace and stability that they're asking for today. I ask it in the name of Jesus Christ.

I pray that you will be their rock of protection. Be our rock of protection this day and every day of 2017. Protect us from enemies seen and unseen, two-legged ones and spiritual ones.

Protect us. Don't let anybody sneak up behind us and get us. For you are my rock today.

Help us to live on the high ground in fellowship with you. Where the arrows of the enemy can't get us because we're in a strong tower and a high and a holy place next to you. Finally, Lord, move ahead of us and guide us in the way we should go.

Those who are facing decisions, this very week, give them an indication which way to go, left or right, yes or no. Move or stay. Show them, Lord, show us.

For your word says that you promised to do that for your people. The psalmist knew that he needed your guidance and we do too. Lead us and guide us in the way we should go.

And we're happy that you love us and that you're gonna help us. And this is gonna be the best year of our lives. And now, Lord, let your blessing be upon us all day.

The smile of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let it be with us all, we pray in Christ's name. And everyone said.

Amen. Amen. Can we give God, our rock, a hand clap of praise? Come on, our protection, our stability, our leadership.

Everybody turn around and give someone a hug and a handshake. Blessings on you.

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