

Rocky Thoughts

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.”~ Matt. 7:24-25

Rocks and stones have long been used to give color and balance to life. Whether clinging to principles built on stone, being a rolling stone which gathers no moss, or building on the solid rock, writers and leaders have used the words to inform and elevate the moment.

When Jesus says to build our houses on the rock, he is talking about faith, and ultimately upon him, as he is the rock of all rocks. The “rock of ages, cleft for me” as the old hymn goes.

But subsets of rocky ideas are in abundance over the centuries. Take, for instance, Jean-Paul Sartre, noted French novelist and philosopher. “Only the guy who isn't rowing, he tosses out, “has time to rock the boat.” Or throw stones, or otherwise hinder and criticize progress. If we examine our lives, we might discover whether we are a perennial rock or a painful rocker, and make the change to get that boat going forward. What this change does is take the focus off ourselves and put it on helping and lifting up others, where it belongs.

Will Rogers used to say that “Diplomacy is the art of saying 'Nice doggie' until you can find a rock.” Sometimes you just have to wait a little while for a maximum impact. If we choose our words and actions wisely, we will be a rock to others instead of a stumbling block to all.

Singer Johnny Cash knew how to move forward. “You build,” he says, “on failure. You use it as a stepping stone. Close the door on the past. You don't try to forget the mistakes, but you don't dwell on it. You don't let it have any of your energy, or any of your time, or any of your space.”

If we have had tough times, we do not have to stay there. Prison cells become mansions, illness becomes a butterfly of change, and pain becomes a doorway to healing. God helps us to do this when we place our trust in Him. “The LORD is my rock, sings the Psalmist, “and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock.”

When we try to go our own way, we run into stone walls, become stumbling blocks to others. Trusting in God is a way of rolling away the stone which keeps us in the tomb. We can ask God to remove the obstacles which hinder and cause darkness, and to be that rock on which we can stand forever.

Are we a blockhead for Beelzebub, or a stepping stone to salvation? It's a choice, and we may be closer to the devil than we think. It's time to wake up, ask God to roll away that stone of selfishness, and look to build walls which help others toward safety and joy.

Perhaps we begin by looking at our own selfishness. Remember the people getting ready to stone the woman? Jesus says, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to cast a stone." If we look deeply at ourselves, there will be no stone casters among us, for we all have that rockiness of sin in our lives.

Then we move on to the serious things. The things which matter most, like unity, peace, love, faith. We get involved in building a better tomorrow rather than frittering away the days or hours.

Horace, the great Roman writer, born in 65 BC, commented on this. "The foolish are like ripples on water, for whatsoever they do is quickly effaced; but the righteous are like carvings upon stone, for their smallest act is durable."

I don't know about you, but I'd rather be a carving than a ripple. God wants us to do great things which lead to life. He wants us to live higher, dig deeper, build better mousetraps which will last forever. That only happens when he becomes our rock.

Sometimes we have to do the same thing again and again to get the desired result. "Look at a stone cutter," hammers out Jacob Riis, "hammering away at his rock, perhaps a hundred times without as much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the hundred-and-first blow it will split in two, and I know it was not the last blow that did it, but all that had gone before."

So don't give up, dear reader, even if we do not see a change at first. After all, a day to the Lord is like a thousand days in our sight. He'll get around to it in his time, and at the perfect moment for a seemingly worthless pile of pebbles to become the finest sculpture.