

Hymn: Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

"Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" was written by Augustus Toplady, an Anglican minister who felt the call of God on his life when listening to a sermon in 1755, at the age of 15. At 19, he went on to publish his first work, a book of poems exploring themes of God's love, grace, and atonement. In 1762, he was ordained as a deacon, beginning a lifetime of service dedicated to God and the church. Just a year later, he created the words of this now world-famous hymn.

Popular tradition holds that he was inspired to write "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me" while taking refuge underneath a large boulder during a heavy storm. However, most historians agree that this is a false story invented long after Toplady's lifetime. Instead, it is believed that he was inspired to write the words after reading a particularly impactful sermon by minister Daniel Brevint. Whatever the case may be, the lyrics to "Rock of Ages" have had a deep and lasting impact on Christians all over the world ever since Toplady put pen to paper.

The hymn is about taking refuge in Christ, trusting in him for salvation, and being subsequently cleansed from sin by the price He paid on Calvary. In the lyrics, Jesus is represented as a rock beneath which the listener can take shelter. This rock has been "cleft," meaning split in two, describing how Jesus's body was broken on the cross to bring us salvation and deliverance from sins. The powerful metaphor and vivid imagery have impacted countless Christians through the years, serving as a reminder of the price Jesus paid and that we are saved by grace through faith.

In the 19th century, "Rock of Ages" was considered one of the Four Great Anglican Hymns, alongside famous hymns like "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" and "Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending," demonstrating how important it had become.

Many Christians have taken comfort in its words through the years, including important figures like Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria, who considered it his favorite hymn and asked that it be played to him on his deathbed. It was even sung on a sinking ship in 1866, as passengers clung to the familiar and peaceful words during a moment of distress.

Today, it continues to be sung by churches all across the world. Though many other songs written during this period have since faded into obscurity, "Rock of Ages" has endured thanks to its timeless message of salvation and hope.

Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me Lyrics:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood,
from thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure;
save from wrath and make me pure.

Not the labors of my hands
can fulfill thy law's demands;
could my zeal no respite know,
could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone;
thou must save, and thou alone.

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, Savior, or I die.

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,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee.

Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me

WORDS: Augustus M. Toplady, 1776
MUSIC: Thomas Hastings, 1830

TOPLADY
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2. Not the labor of my hands can ful -
3. Noth - ing in my hand I bring, sim - ply
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