

Angela Pound

From Rock to Cornerstone

(As the stone is placed alone: “Before anything else was built, God was already our Rock, steadfast and unshakable.”)

As it says in Psalm 18:1–3 “I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, so I shall be saved from my enemies.”

Rocks are everywhere. From the tiny pebbles of sand on a beach, to the rocks along a river bed, used in construction of wells and bridges, chimneys, and church buildings, roads, and the list goes on.

Our house was built in 1818, yep, it’s old! There have been some upgrades along the way, the plumbing and, electrical to name a few. But we still have many of the old plaster walls, and the only time I peeked up into the attic I could see the beams labelled with roman numerals, put together as if it were a ship. But it’s the basement where I often have to climb down the stair ladder to get things we have in storage, such as our Christmas decorations, bottles for pickling, our wood pellets, among many other things.

When you go to the basement you will see the foundation built of large stones or rocks. I sometimes would question how sturdy this is, as a foundation, but then I remember that this house has been standing for over 200 years, longer than I have, and provided there are no major mishaps, will be standing long after I am gone.

Have you stopped to contemplate the first two verses of the Bible. I bet many of us can recite them by heart, of course, depending on which translation we use. As it says in the NSRV, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” As described, the earth was a formless void, there was darkness which covered the face of the deep. Now this formless void (or known in Hebrew as *tohu wabohu*), despite how it sounds when using the word void, doesn’t mean there was nothing. It signals the presence of a watery, dark, and deadly chaos.

As Ryan Bonfiglio states, “In verse 2 we find God’s wind (or Spirit, *ruakh*) sweeping across the watery chaos like an evening breeze that glides over the surface of a lake. In Hebrew, the imagery has additional layers. The verb translated sweep (*rakhaph*) elsewhere in Scripture is used to describe the activity of a mother bird hovering over her nest. Such hovering is a protective and nurturing posture,

with the mother's wings being a source of refuge for her young."

There was God, before anything else. Before there were walls, before there were beams, before anything was raised into place, there had to be a foundation, a protective refuge. Something strong enough to carry the weight of everything that would follow. Scripture tells us that God is that foundation. Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth," Deuteronomy 32:4 "The Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God, without deceit, just and upright is he;" God - the Rock. The image of God as the rock expresses the faithful love of the Lord despite the people's unfaithfulness.

The fact that God brought creation out of chaos was important for Ancient Israel. Israel was often living in conditions of chaos. As Jeremiah speaks of Israel after Babylon's invasion in Jeremiah 4:23 "I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light." Similar to what we heard in Genesis 1 of void. The ancient Israelites knew that God created life out of chaos in the past, and therefore what he did in the past he could do again. What we see through Genesis is that God does not respond to chaos by demanding conformity or limiting variety and difference, which we sometimes try to do in amongst chaos.

As Ryan Bonfiglio continues, “Our families, churches, and communities all are the products of complex, messy, and often broken systems. We don’t get to parachute in and start creating, loving, and leading out of nothing. We inherit chaos—it is, in fact, the very context for life and ministry. Our calling is thus not to create loving families, healthy churches, and flourishing communities out of nothing. Rather, our calling as disciples and ministers is to follow God’s example of finding a way to nurture something good and beautiful out of the chaotic *tohu wabohu* that we are facing, whatever form it might take.”

The world is not held together by chance or chaos, but by the steady, faithful presence of God. When Genesis describes the earth as formless and empty, it didn’t mean God was absent. It meant God was already there, hovering, holding, preparing to build. Just like the stone foundations of early homes—laid deep, unseen, bearing the weight quietly—God’s work is often hidden but essential. We may not always see it, but everything rests upon it.

The psalmist knew this truth: Psalm 18:2 “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” God is not only the foundation of creation; God becomes the foundation of our lives. As it says in Isaiah 26:4 “Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock.” When storms come,

when walls crack, when what we've built feels unstable, the question is not how strong our structure looks—but what it is built on, what is our foundation?

It was 1985, when a climber by the name of Joe Simpson, was descending Siula Grade in the Peruvian Andes with his partner when he fell and shattered his leg. Believing Joe had died, his partner was forced to cut the rope to save his own life. But Joe didn't die. He fell into a deep crevasse—alone, injured, and unable to walk. With no food, no rope, and no realistic hope of rescue, Joe spent three days crawling across ice and rock, dragging his broken body inch by inch toward base camp. At one point, he later wrote that the only thing that kept him alive was this: whenever his strength failed, he would press his body against the rock, feeling its solidity, reminding himself that something around him was not shifting or giving way. Eventually, against all odds, he reached the edge of the camp and was rescued.

As we heard in Genesis 1, we're told that before there was form, before there was order, the earth was *formless and void*. Chaos. Darkness. The deep. But even there—before light, before land—God was present, hovering, steady, unmoved. Joe Simpson's experience mirrors that chaos.

When he fell into the crevasse, nothing around him was safe. The ice shifted. The snow collapsed. The weather changed without warning. His own body betrayed him. The

mountain didn't become kinder. The conditions didn't improve. Rescue didn't suddenly appear. What changed was where he placed his weight.

In his book *Touching the Void*, Simpson describes moments when pain and exhaustion overwhelmed him so completely that he could not move. And in those moments, he pressed himself against the rock—not because it would rescue him, but because it would *not move*. The rock did not care about his fear or his failure. It simply *was*.

Not fast. Not flashy. Not reactive. Perfect. Steady. Faithful. Again hear what it says in Psalm 18:2 “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

Notice the order. God is not first called *rescuer*—He is called *rock*. Rescue flows from stability. Joe survived not because he escaped the void quickly, but because he learned how to endure it by clinging to what did not shift beneath him. In the same way, Isaiah reminds us in Isaiah 26:4 “Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock.” An everlasting rock does not remove every crevasse. It gives you something solid when you fall into one.

We hear from Moses in Deuteronomy 32:4 “The Rock, his work is perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God,

without deceit, just and upright is he.” As he continues in the same chapter, about the other nations around them, he says, Deuteronomy 32:28–31 “They are a nation void of sense; there is no understanding in them. If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern what the end would be. How could one have routed a thousand, and two put a myriad to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, the Lord had given them up? Indeed their rock is not like our Rock; our enemies are fools.”

Moses knows that Yahweh, His God, their God, is The Rock. Israel’s rebellion against God led to defeat they failed to anticipate. As described in Numbers 14:39-45 Their loss at Hormah was not due to stronger enemies or superior foreign gods, but because the Lord, Yahweh—their true Rock—was no longer with them. When Israel acted apart from God’s presence, much weaker nations prevailed. In contrast, the surrounding peoples were forced to recognize that their gods, their “rock,” were powerless compared to Israel’s God, whose strength and authority stood unmatched. The idea here is not so much that the nations blatantly confessed the weakness of their gods but that they were forced to face the facts when confronted by the awesomeness of Israel’s God. Let me say that again, the awesomeness of Israel’s God, our God.

From now until Easter, we’re going to trace a story the Bible tells—a story told through rocks and stones. Again and

again, Scripture returns to this image, not by accident.

At the very beginning and the very end of the biblical story, stones frame God's work in the world. In between, rocks become silent witnesses to moments of rescue and revelation. A stone placed beneath Moses' weary arms becomes the difference between defeat and victory. A single stone in David's sling brings down a giant when no sword could. And in Daniel's vision, a rock not cut by human hands shatters every fragile human kingdom and grows into a mountain that fills the whole earth—God's reign, unbreakable and everlasting. When Jesus later speaks of building on the rock, of being the cornerstone, of forming a people on a foundation that will not fail, he is drawing on centuries of meaning his listeners already knew. In one word—rock—Jesus reveals the kind of kingdom he brings and the kind of Savior he is: not temporary, not fragile, but steady, faithful, and able to bear the weight of our lives. And so, along this journey we will see how stones are used in different ways: Stones of foundation (what we build on), Stones of remembrance (what we don't forget), Stones of testing (what we face) and Stones that reject or become the cornerstone.

These stones are not only markers in the story of Scripture; they become anchors in the story of our lives. The same God who was revealed as the Rock of Israel is still the One we press against when the ground beneath us begins to

shake. These stones point to one truth: when everything else shifts, God remains. And that truth matters most not in moments of victory, but in moments of chaos. God does not promise a world without chaos. Genesis 1 tells us chaos existed even before sin. But Scripture consistently promises this: when everything else gives way, God does not. Joe pressed his body against the rock to remind himself that *something* was solid. Faith does the same thing. When emotions collapse. When plans fracture. When answers don't come. We cling—not because God suddenly makes the situation safe, but because He is safe.

I have suffered from anxiety, especially years ago. It is only since I have held onto the fact that God is my rock that I have been able to work through these struggles when I feel like things may be out of control or chaotic, when in fact, whether they are or they are not, God is in control. Just last Sunday I received an e-mail saying I was awarded a bursary that I had applied for back in October. At the time I didn't know what it was worth and I had really forgotten about. That e-mail though, had reminded me however, that I had not paid for tuition, which was due in a week. Being right after Christmas, funds were a little lower than they normally were. I was glad to hear about the bursary, but thinking it wouldn't cover all of my tuition for two classes, I knew I had to move around funds the next day to pay for tuition. The next morning, in my bank account, were the funds for

the bursary, which almost exactly covered all of my tuition. I was ecstatic as I thanked God for his provision. When mom called that day I exclaimed what had happened and as she said, God answered your prayer before you even knew it was a prayer.

What I learned in past seasons of anxiety—and what moments like that bursary reminded me of—is that God’s faithfulness is often quiet. He doesn’t always stop the chaos, but He steadies us within it. When our thoughts spiral and control feels like it is slipping away, God does not disappear. He becomes the solid place we can press against when everything else feels unstable. Sometimes that steadiness looks like peace in the middle of fear or chaos. Sometimes it looks like provision that arrives before we even know to ask. In both cases, the lesson is the same: God is not moved by the chaos that shakes us. He remains the Rock beneath us.

That truth does not belong only to ordinary, everyday struggles. It has also been lived and spoken in the darkest places human beings have ever known. I have talked about Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Betsie before, as they were both imprisoned in concentration camps during World War 2. In the camps, Corrie and Betsie secretly prayed and encouraged others. Betsie died in Ravensbrück on the 16th of December 1944, at the age of 59. The last words she spoke to Corrie before she died, were, “You must tell

people what we have learned here. We must tell them that there is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still.” She did not say God removed the suffering immediately. She did not say God explained everything, but what she said was, “God remained, God held, God did not move, even when everything else did.” After the war, Corrie travelled the world speaking about forgiveness and faith. She often described God not as a fragile comfort, but as a solid foundation. She once said, “If you look at the world, you’ll be distressed, if you look within, you’ll be depressed, but if you look at Christ, you’ll be at rest.” God was her rock. A rock doesn’t remove the storm, doesn’t promise ease, but promises stability. Faith built on circumstances will crumble, faith built on God stands even when stripped bare. Corrie and Betsy held onto their faith, knowing that God was there even in the deepest of pits. So, what or who is your foundation?

(Trace a hand over the stone as a gesture of trust.

“Remember God is not moved by the chaos that shakes us. He remains the Rock beneath us.”)