

**ONE ROCK THAT DOESN=T ROLL**

Dr. John Allan Lavender  
Heb. 13:8; Psm. 18:2

In the fall of 1956 I had the privilege of conducting a evangelistic crusade for the Calvary Baptist Church of Clinton, New Jersey. It was a thrilling experience because there were a number of unusual conversions, including a blind man -- a woman who was dying of cancer -- and a husband of one of the women of the church for whom the people had been praying for many years.

However, my most vivid recollection regarding the campaign is an experience that introduced me to a thing called *Rock N= Roll.* Following the first Sunday evening service a sharp looking teenager with long sideburns and a haircut that closely resembled the south end of a duck going north, came up to me and with an air of suspicion said, *Do you dig Elvis?*

I didn=t quite know what to say, and so I responded, *Why, son, I think he=s the most ...* and, as I paused to search for words he grabbed me by the hand and said, *Daddy-O, you are right! He is the most.* Before I could say another word, he shuffled off to a gang of teenagers who were standing over in the corner of the church. He said something to them and they looked at me with kind of a bewildered reverence and I overheard one of them say, *Gosh, he digs Elvis!*

Apparently that was all right, because those kids were out every night. They sat on the front pew and looked up at me with expressions of thunderstruck awe on their faces, hanging onto every word I said. One night, the boy who had started it all came up to me and said, *Daddy-O, you=re so far out the trolley doesn=t even run there anymore.* I think that was supposed to be a compliment.

At any rate, with that introduction, I began to give the whole subject of Rock >N Roll music

something more than a casual thought. I discovered it has become the subject of great debate among parents and teenagers, psychologists and sociologists.

Many psychiatrist take the point of view that Rock &N Roll is a defiant expression of the emotional insecurity of today=s teenager. They point out that the modern adolescent is torn between his father=s command to get to work and his mother=s plea to wear his boots. He has a deep longing to stand on his own two feet, and yet, at the same time, he has a deep need to be supported. And, by embracing Rock &N Roll, he is able to satisfy his need for independence by defying his parents, who, by and large, seem to despise this particular Aart form,@ and at the same time gain the support he needs by belonging to a well-defined group of fellow fanatics.

Interpreters of musical trends look upon Rock &N Roll as a definite expression of our unsettled and restless times. The clanking guitar, the thumping bass, the unintelligible sounds, the irritating sameness all sung in a kind of lamentable croak, combined to give an expression of the restive, confused, unsettled atmosphere that is so much a part of our world today.

They point out that even as the Negro spirituals are a plaintive expression of the pathos and longing of the Negro people, and the psalms are a vivid portrayal of the spiritual and emotional quest of the Hebrew people, so, too Rock &N Roll with its heavy beat, hooting saxophone, nasal quality and accompanying epileptic gyrations, expresses the frustrations and fears of a world facing the constant specter of hostile nations flexing their nuclear missiles and threatening to exterminate society with a few well-placed bombs.

Some of our more thoughtful observers point out that there is something more than mildly wrong with our sense of values, when a Rock &N Roll idol can earn almost as much in one hour on television as the President of the United States, with all of his incredible responsibility, is paid in a year.

Only recently Time Magazine reported with tongue in cheek that Elvis is growing more sedate in

his old age. They point out that his favorite mode of transportation is no longer his Ablack Harley-Davidson motorcycle, his royal purple Lincoln Continental, his red Messer-Schmidt, his yellow Isatta, his pink or yellow Cadillac, but a sumptuous black Bunkerish Cadillac limousine. @

But they hasten to add that his fans need not fear that austerity has struck their idol, for he still commands \$100, 000 per hour for a television appearance.

A few months ago this intriguing young gentleman produced another record that sold well over two million copies. This soulful song has the following lyrics:

AEverybody in the whole cellblock  
Was dancing to the jailhouse rock:  
Mumble, mumble, crash, boom, bang,  
The whole rhythm section was a purple gang. @

I don't know how those heart-rending words affect you, but they strike me as a rather powerful argument for prison reform!

Even the intelligentsia seem to be caught up in the wave of enthusiasm which has surrounded Rock & Roll and the slang expressions that accompany it. I heard the other day about a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Harvard who went up to the dean and said, ASee ya later, alma mater. @ And the dean=s classic reply was, AAfter awhile, bibliophile. @

The mania has also caught hold in the grade schools. Last year my little daughter came home from kindergarten and said with a twinkle in her eye, ADaddy, why did grandma put wheels on her rocking chair? @ I said, AHoney I don't know. Why did grandma put wheels on her rocking chair? @ With a loud guffaw Jody answered, ABecause she wanted to Rock & Roll. @

Well, no matter how much we kid this new musical phenomenon, we must nevertheless admit that while we might nostalgically long for a less epileptic form of entertainment, as a definite

expression of the frantic frenzied times in which we live. Rock & Roll is here to stay.

For that reason, psychiatrist suggest that parents join their children in listening to this music, attempting to lift their sights to the better forms of it, seeking also to show their teenagers that while this particular music is an outgrowth of our unsettled and uncertain times, there is a certainty, a security, and a serenity available today if they only seek it. And that leads me into the main body of my sermon. This morning I would like to introduce you to AOne Rock That Doesn't Roll.@ I would like you to meet one who is absolutely trustworthy, absolutely stable, absolutely sure. The one who is Athe same, yesterday, today and forever@ whom David called Amy rock and my fortress, my strength, in whom I trust.@

This morning I would introduce you to Jesus Christ, the Eternal contemporary, who is the same today as He was yesterday and as He will be tomorrow. Notice, first of all, that Jesus is

### **Changeless in His Matchless Person**

There is an ancient legend about a wise man who lived in the city of Baghdad. His name was Hakeem and many people went to him for counsel which he gave freely to all asking, nothing in return. It is said that one day there came to him a young man who had spent much upon the marketplace but have received very little for the money he had spent. He said, ATell me, wise man, what must I do to receive the most for that which I have to spend?@

Hakeem answered, AA thing that is bought or sold has no value unless it contains that which cannot be bought or sold. Look for the priceless ingredient.@ ABut what is the priceless ingredient?@ asked the young man.

The wise man looked down at him and said, AMy son, the priceless ingredient in every product sold in the market place is the honor and the integrity of the man who makes it. Consider his name before you buy!@

I say to you this morning that the priceless ingredient in the Christian faith is the good name, the honor, the integrity of Jesus Christ. Consider His name before you give way to the frantic frenzy of our weary world. Consider His name before you place your soul upon the auction block of the world=s religious market. For, I unhesitatingly say that Jesus Christ is the rock of our salvation. The shelter in a time of storm. The one sure, constant, changeless One who remains steadfast when all else is gone.

When He walked upon the earth 2,000 years ago, there was a winsomeness and graciousness about Him that drew people to Him with magnetic power. Little children loved to climb upon His knee and wind their lacy arms about His neck. Strong men were willing to leave everything for the privilege of walking with Him. He knew how to capture peoples=hearts and of all the people who ever lived, Jesus Christ is the only one of whom it can be said, AHe is altogether lovely.@

As someone has pointed out,

AIf we were looking for the highest example of meekness this morning, we would not look to Moses, but to Jesus, who was indescribably meek and lowly in heart. For the highest example of patience, we would not look to Job, but to Jesus, who when he was reviled, reviled not again. For the highest example of wisdom, we would not look to Solomon, but to Jesus, who spake as never a man spake. For the highest example of pity, we would not look to Jeremiah, but to Jesus, as he weeps over the city of Jerusalem saying, OOh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered you under my wings as a hen gathers her chicks, but you would not.= For the highest example of love, we would not look to John, the beloved, but to Jesus, who while we were yet sinners loved us and gave himself for us. All other men have but a fragmentary goodness and greatness, but that of Jesus Christ is complete, perfect, and undefiled.@

The searchlight of scientific investigation has been focused upon him for centuries and yet,

having scrutinized the thirt three years of his earthly life, they have never found one suggestion of sin, one idol word, one selfish act. He was and is the Great Unlike. The one who stands above all others. And, after nineteen centuries, he is still the same. He still fascinates the minds of people. He still disturbs the souls of people. He stills wins the hearts of people. For Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is changeless in his matchless person. But note, also, that Jesus is

### **Changeless in His Magnificent Purpose**

Almost the first things said of Jesus in the New Testament is this,

A Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins@ (Mt. 1:21).

Later when he was asked for his reason for coming into the world, he said,

A I am come to seek and to save that which is lost.@

And though nearly 2,000 years have passed since he died upon his cross, his purpose remains the same. He died to win and to woo people to God.

Someone has said,

A When Mohammed sees a soul lying at the foot of the hill of difficulty, he explains, >It is the will of Allah.=

When Buddha sees a soul at the foot of the hill of difficulty, gazing wistfully towards the Temple Beautiful surmounting the top of the hill, he say, >When you pass thru 1,000 incarnations, you may begin to climb the hill of difficulty toward the Temple Beautiful=

When Confucius sees a soul lying at the foot of the hill of difficulty he says, >If I had seen you before you fell, I could of told you how to keep from falling down the hill.=

But when Jesus of Nazareth sees a soul at the foot of the hill of difficulty, he hastens down the hill, throws his arms of infinite tenderness and love about that one, and bears him or her to top of the hill of difficulty, and together they enter the

Temple Beautiful, the person leaping and walking and praising God.@

Jesus had only one objective when he came into this world.

He did not come to save us from sorrow, for he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

He did not come to save us from temptation, for he was tempted in all points as we.

He did not come to protect us from abuse, for he, himself, was bruised and wounded.

He came to seek and to save that which is lost.

And though the years have rolled by with irresistible tread, Jesus Christ remains the same in his magnificent purpose. He still pursues people. He still seeks people. He still searches for people. He still stands and knocks on the door of people=s hearts saying,

AIf anyone will open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with Me.@

AThou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from sin.@ No wonder his people should sing,

AThere is no name so sweet on earth,  
No name so sweet in Heaven,  
As the name before his wondrous birth  
To Christ, our Savior, given.@

Somewhere I read about a contest held in which a prize was offered for the one who could give the name or word around which clustered the greatest joys and sweetest memories. Some gave the word Amother@ and they talked about her tender love and care in infancy and her guidance through the days of youth. Others talked about Ahome@ and mentioned its childhood joys and precious fireside memories. Others thought AHeaven@ was the most beautiful word, and they spoke of the fellowship of the angels and the companionship of the saints. But the one who won the prize wrote simply, AJesus is the name above all other names and the word above all other words.@

He was right! Jesus is the most precious word that is ever rolled through finite mind or passed by the tongues of men and angels. A full tide of eternal glory and overflowing bliss flows forth from him who bears that name. For Jesus is man=s way to God and God=s way to man, the one and only Jacob=s ladder between heaven and earth.

How wonderful to be able to say,

AOur Lord, our life, our rest, our shield  
Our rock, our food, our life,  
Each thought of thee does constant yield  
Unchanging fresh delight.@

Yes, Jesus is unchanging in his magnificent purpose and yesterday, today and forever he is the savior of mankind. And then will you see him as the One who is

### **Changeless in His Mighty Power**

There can be no doubt about the fact that when Jesus was upon earth, he possessed tremendous power.

For instance, there was a time when, as he slept in the bowels of a little boat, a terrible storm arose. When his disciples came and aroused him, he simply walked to the edge of the little storm tossed vessel, and stretching forth his hand, said, APeace, be still.@ And the winds and the waves fell silent at his feet.

There was the time when the crowd had followed him into a lonely desert place and they had nothing to eat. But once again, Jesus was not disturbed. He simply took the five loaves and two fish of a little lad, and demonstrating his mighty power, he poured his sufficiency into their insufficiency and they became enough to feed a mighty multitude with twelve basketfuls left over.

There was the time, while he was away preaching, his friend Lazarus fell sick and died. When

Christ reached his home he found that Lazarus had been buried for four days. But Jesus simply ordered that the stone be rolled away and, once again giving proof of his mighty power, he cried,

ALazarus, come forth! And he that was dead came forth,  
bound hands and feet with grave clothes.@

There was no question about the fact that when Jesus was upon earth, he had mighty power. Power to heal the sick. Power to feed the hungry. Power to still the storms. Power to quiet the distressed. Power to comfort the sorrowing. Power to save the lost. And the power Christ possessed when he was upon earth, is still his! He may be out of sight, but he is not out of service! He is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

AHe is (still) able to save to the uttermost them  
that come under God by him@ (Hebrews 17:25).

And those he is able to save, he is able to keep. For, in the matchless words of Paul,

AI am persuaded that He is able to keep that which  
I have committed unto Him against that day.@

Make no mistake about it my friend, you can place your confidence, your trust, your hope, your faith in Jesus Christ. For he is changeless in his matchless person, changeless in his magnificent purpose, changeless in his mighty power to save. And then, may I remind you that Jesus is

### **Changeless in His Measureless Love**

Hymnology is not always theology, and sometimes the language of our hymns does not coincide with the language of our bible. But there is a great truth of that song which has thrilled so many of us --

AThe love of God, how rich and pure,  
How measureless and strong.  
It shall forevermore endure  
The saints and angels song.

ACould we with ink the ocean fill  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill  
And every man a scribe by trade.

ATo write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry,  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole  
Though stretched from sky to sky.@

The love that sent Christ to the cross to die for the likes of Peter and James and John is the same love that stretches into your heart and mine this morning. His love is measureless, limitless, changeless. For his love is like a circle. It is without beginning and without end. As the poet declares so beautifully --

AGod=s love no end nor measure knows  
No change can change its course,  
Eternally the same it flows  
From one Eternal source.@

They say that all rivers stop when they reach the ocean. I would like to add, all rivers but one -- the river of God=s love! It didn=t stop when it reached the ocean, it flowed on and on until it swept into my heart. And oh how I wish I had adjectives and superlatives enough to tell you of the glory of Jesus Christ. Thank God, he is a changeless Christ in a changing world. Thank God, this rock of our salvation remains steadfast and sure. Thank God, for a living and loving Lord who is able to save all who come to God by him.

Someone has said:

AAre you an artist? He is altogether lovely.  
Are you an architect? He is the chief cornerstone.

Are you an astronomer? He is the bright and morning star.  
Are you a biologist? He is the life.  
Are you an educator? He is the great teacher.  
Are you a student? He is the incarnate truth.  
Are you a florist? He is the Rose of Sharrom, the Lilly of the Valley.  
Are you a geologist? He is the Rock of Ages.  
Are you a judge? He is the righteous judge.  
Are you a newspaper man? He is the good tidings of great joy.  
Are you a philosopher? He is the wisdom of God.  
Are you a theologian? He is the author and finisher of our faith.  
Are you a Christian? He is the Savior, Redeemer, and Lord.  
Are you a sinner? He is the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

Christ is the wonder of the world, the hope of the lost, the glory of the ages and the diadem of Heaven. In and thru hm alone we have a love that can never be diminished, a light that can never be darkened, a life that can never die.

Oh, my friend, are you looking for certainty and security and stability in the world of confusion, conflict and crisis? If so, then turn your eyes upon Jesus. For he is the Rock That Does Not Roll. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Give your heart to him and you will find everything your heart desires and, with psalmist, you will say,

AThe Lord is my rock and my salvation,  
my strength in whom I trust@ (Psalm 18:2).