



# My God, My Rock

## *An Intimate Story of Hope...*

*As shared by Sarah Buescher*

I love the book of Psalms. You can always go to that book and find empathy within its pages. Regardless of whether you're heartbroken, angry, lost, or overjoyed, there is a verse for you in that book.

There are a few verses in Psalms that mean a lot to me because they helped me get through a few tough times in my life. One of them is Psalm 18:2 which says, "The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

There was a period of time in my life when I held on to this verse with all of my might. A time when I desperately needed to believe that it was true; that God is my stronghold, that He is my refuge. When I was 15 years old my 3 year old cousin, Jonathan, died. He did not die from a car accident or a sickness. His death was not necessarily on purpose, but it could have been avoided.

I come from a big family. My dad came from a family of six, and my mom came from a family of thirteen, so naturally they had seven kids of their own. I grew up for the most part in Texas with my grandparents. My dad, being from Michigan, wanted to move back home and so we did when I was 7. We were in Michigan for 8 years when my grandmother called my mom and asked her to come to Texas and bring back three of my cousins. So they went and returned with Christina 7, Jessica 5, and Jonathan who was 3.

My mom stayed at home most of the time and would often feel overwhelmed by the amount of kids in the house. She was raised with the idea of "spare the rod, spoil the child." So when we would get too rowdy or neglect to do something, we would get yelled at, ridiculed, and sometimes even paddled. I am not saying that we did not deserve it at times, because I know we did. But, there is often a fine line between discipline and abuse, and my mother would frequently cross it.

When we started to get older and bigger than my mom, she stopped paddling us; mainly because she was too weak and too slow. She could not catch us or hurt us like she used to do, so she stuck to yelling and criticizing for the most part. When my three cousins came to live with us she saw it as a new start. She had a chance with two more girls to make them turn out better than I had.

With little Jonathan, she was annoyed. She already had six boys, why did she need another? She began to use him as

a scapegoat. She would keep food from him to punish him for not understanding her when she spoke. There would be times when he would not eat for a whole day.

Eventually he would start to fend for himself and would go into the kitchen at night to find bread, or milk, or anything. When she would find out in the morning she would punish him. Then later that night she would tie him to his bed so he could not get anything without her knowledge. She would bind his ankles and wrists with rope to the head and foot of his bed. He would try to escape, but couldn't, and eventually had permanent rope burns from his attempts.

If she was annoyed with him, she would paddle him. I remember washing him one night and crying in the shower as I massaged his bruised body after he was beat for going to the bathroom in his pants. When she could not bear to look at the bruises she had given him, she would lock him in the cold basement in nothing but his underwear. She did this a lot near the end.

A few times I would be able to sneak away and go down into the basement and hold him, just for a few minutes, enough to warm him up for a little while. I wasn't the only one to do this for him. My brother, Ben, would try to sneak him food and clothes as well. My mom had my other brothers convinced he was evil and bad and they would call him names and make fun of him. Even his sisters turned on him. I remember praying for God to get us out of there, somehow.

Psalm 71:3 says "Be my rock of refuge, to which I can always go; give the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress."

God is our rock and our fortress and He did give the command to save me and my family. On a cold day in February, Jonathan caught phenomena and stopped breathing. An ambulance was called and he passed away on the way to the hospital. After the doctors saw the bruises on his body they called DCFS. Then my brothers, and my cousins, and I were taken away.

An investigation promptly began. The house was searched, pictures were taken, and each of us were questioned. A month later my mom was arrested for child abuse, neglect in the first degree, and manslaughter in the third degree. She was taken to jail with a trial pending.

The investigation took another 6 months. The trial began in September and ended in December with a guilty verdict for 1st degree child abuse and neglect. The other charge was dropped. She was sentenced in January, and lost her parental rights at that time. My dad was given the option to keep us. They offered to help him get his life

back together, as well as helping with food and clothing. However, his communication with my mom would be restricted so he chose to give us up and stay with my mom.

A month after my dad gave up his parental rights he filed for an appeal. When it was denied, he started to demand that either one of my older brothers, or I, should take the blame for what happened and take my mom's place in prison. He would misquote the Bible to us saying "a man shall cling to his wife forsaking all others", telling us this is why he gave up his parental rights and why he was standing by her. He would condemn us and tell us we were going to hell for not taking responsibility for our actions. Eventually, all of us got tired of hearing that, so we stopped all communications.

Adoptions began in April. My aunt and uncle adopted me, and another family adopted all of my brothers. I do not know who adopted my cousins, or where they are, but I am still in contact with my brothers.

Six years later I married Jon and he has helped me to see that I am a child of God, made beautiful in His sight. I never once doubted that God was with me, I just had trouble accepting His forgiveness for what had happened. I was positive I could have done something to prevent little Jonathan's death.

I somewhat believed my mom and my dad when they said I was responsible for what happened. Jon helped me work through all of the sadness and anger. He reminded me God had a great plan for me and that He would stay by my side throughout my life. He reminded me that God's love and forgiveness for me is unconditional.

After I married Jon, I felt confident enough to try and work things out with my parents. I had forgiven them and wanted them to have a chance to meet my husband. I wrote to them to see where they stood on things, but they had not changed. There was still no remorse or acceptance of what had happened. They continue to blame everyone else and they still ask for us to step up and take the responsibility for what we did.

I sent them an announcement of my son James' birth hoping it might change things, but I only received a letter full of orders on what I should do. I might give it another year, or I might just stop communications after we leave Decatur.

Last month my grandfather passed away; he was my mom's dad and had lived in El Paso, Texas. I had not spoken to, or seen, anyone in my mom's family for eleven years; not since my mom was sentenced. I was very nervous to go to the funeral because they are my mom's family and I was not sure if they would be accepting of me and my family.

I repeated Psalm 62:2 in my head over and over again, convincing myself of its truth. It says "He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken." On the plane down and during our layover, I would remind myself to trust in God, that He will be there and He will watch over us.

He did just that. When we landed in El Paso we were met with open arms. We went back to the house where everyone, including my grandmother, was waiting up for us. There were only tears of joy. God blessed us during our time there. Jon was able to meet my grandmother and many of my aunts, uncles, and cousins. My grandmother was able to hold James, and see how I had grown. We laughed and reminisced. It was wonderful.

God did rescue me. He has shown me He is by my side and He will never leave me. He brought me out of a rough situation. He has healed my wounds and made me stronger. He blessed me with a wonderful husband who has a heart for the Lord and He gave us a beautiful son. Now all I have to do is praise Him for his endless mercy and love.

Psalm 18:46 says "The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior!" He wants us to cling to Him; He wants us to look to him in all situations. Whether we are praising Him for His many blessings, or if we are pleading with Him for deliverance, He is there. He was always there with us, walking through that same valley with us, and He will stay with you no matter where you go or what happens.

Our God is faithful and He alone deserves our praise. So praise be to our Rock, exalted be our Savior!!

*Sarah shared her story at the June Women's Christian Network gathering.*

*Sarah and Jonathan are returning to St. Louis where Jon will complete his final year of school at Concordia Seminary to become an ordained minister in the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.*

