



The Dungeon

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Isaiah 26:1-4

“For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” - II Corinthians 10:4b

On the coast of Scotland there stands an old castle that contains a remarkable dungeon. It was cut down into solid rock and was called a “bottle dungeon.” The neck was a vertical shaft some six feet deep and wide enough to drop a man through. Below the shaft was the dungeon cut out in the shape of a triangle. Perhaps ten feet across at the top; the dungeon’s circular wall was slanted inward to a point at the bottom. The bottle part was too deep for a person to ever reach the neck. The result was that no one escaped when dropped into it.

The masters of the castle found that all prisoners placed in this dungeon quickly went insane. Except one. One prisoner was different. He was able to retain his sanity though he was incarcerated there for some weeks. His captors drew him out and sought to discover his secret. To their surprise they found it lay in six pebbles that he had in one of his pockets.

The prisoner explained that the circular dungeon and the total darkness left one with no unchanging point of reference. He would, when he felt his mental powers threatened, count his pebbles by moving them one at a time from one pocket to the other. There were always six. With that unchangeable point of reference outside himself, he was able to keep from losing his mind. When his existence seemed an unending, unrelenting nightmare, there was one point of order external to himself, and his sanity rested on that.

Contrary to much of modern thought, the key to the self is not in the self. Without an external point of reference that will not move, we simply wander and lose our touch with reality. This is merely another evidence that we are made to relate to an Other. That Other is the God who made us. Perhaps that is why Israel loved to call its God their Rock. Isaiah spoke of that Rock and of the perfect peace of the one whose mind is stayed on Him.

We need an unmoving center. We have one in Christ if we will accept Him as such. Dennis Kinlaw, *This Day with the Master*, July 2 (Zondervan, 2003).