

OUR ROCK

A SERMON

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Preached by Mr. HAZELTON,  
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AT MOUNT ZION CHAPEL, CHADWELL STREET,
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For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." {Deuteronomy. 32: 31}.

These words are among the last that Moses ever delivered from God to the children of Israel. The chapter opens very solemnly and gloriously, Moses said: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech shall distil as the dew." And what was his doctrine? "I will publish the name of the Lord. Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is a rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." His doctrine was the character and the works of God. He says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain;" that is, occasionally and irresistibly; for who can prevent the rain from falling? And as the rain cools, moistens and fertilizes the earth, so the doctrines of divine truth and grace, when they fall upon the heart, cool, comfort and fertilize the soul, and cause it to be as a watered garden. The doctrines of grace cannot be dry, if they a drop as the rain and distil as the dew." The dryness is in the creature, and never in God. The emptiness is in man, and never in the word; and if the doctrines of

divine grace are dry to you and to me, it is not owing to any deficiency in them; but the fault, if fault there be, is always to be found in the creature. And as a shower of rain nourishes the herbs and grass, so the doctrines of grace, and the grace they reveal, nourish and comfort the souls of the people of God. Let us, therefore, love these holy truths and hold them fast, and pray for showers of heavenly rain in connection with them; and let us especially contend for those great facts which are embodied in the early part of this chapter. God is a Rock, His work is perfect. His work in creation is perfect. In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them. Since that day He has never created a stone, nor a drop of water, nor a man, nor a fish, nor a fowl of the air, nor a beast of the field. He finished and completed as a Creator His work in six days: all was perfect and good, according to His own testimony. His work is perfect in providence as far as He has gone with it, for He leaves no imperfections behind Him. Sometimes workmen, even the best of them, do their work in a somewhat imperfect manner, although it is their intention to complete and perfect the work they have in hand; but on reviewing what they have done they are not always satisfied. Our God, however, is always satisfied with what He has done, and on a review of the operations of His hand in the past He is satisfied and pleased. His work is perfect, even when it is not completed, and He will finish the whole. His work of salvation is also perfect, although in some respects it is not yet completed; therefore it is said, "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." Now this is one of the doctrines of grace which was well known to Moses, which He insisted upon and brought before the children of Israel just before he stepped out of this world into heaven, and concerning which he

said, "It shall drop as the rain, and my speech shall distil as the dew." He refers to the name of God, to the perfection of His work, and to His character; that He is a God of truth and without iniquity and that He is just and right. In this manner the good man commenced this song, introducing into it a number of very solemn and important matters until he reiterated the fact asserted in my text, for their rock,—that is, the rock of the enemies of the children of Israel,—"their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."

Now having thus reached the text, let us try to go round and through the fact asserted, and make a few observations upon it.

The first thought that occurs to my mind is this,—That God is a Rock. "Their rock is not like our Rock." This of course is a figurative, but a glorious representation of the everlasting God; God is a Rock, and not sand. I think we have had some holy feeling in singing the words: —

*"On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."*

Was the poet right? Is not the assertion somewhat too wide? Is all other ground sinking sand? Think of those two lines in connection with my text,—"Their rock is not as our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges."

To depend upon our works, our good behavior, and good conduct, is to build upon sand. To trust in national privileges as the Jews trusted for salvation in their relationship to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is to rest on sinking sand. "Do you mean to say, that if we do the best we can, every day and every hour of our life, we shall not be rewarded for so doing?" We may obtain something for doing so here; but our works are not rock, and are

worth nothing as the ground of salvation. In this respect they must fail; they are not perfect, and they are not sufficient to sustain a good, comfortable, or a happy hope as to the future and heaven. God and God only is the Rock. May it be yours and mine, therefore, to be found building upon Him; for He is the Rock of eternal ages. But let us look more closely at this subject.

In the first place, God is said to be a rock on account of His firmness and fixedness.

"Is He a rock? how firm He proves !

The Rock of ages never moves;

And the sweet streams that from Him flow

Attend us all the desert through."

The Rock of ages. The patriarchal age is past and gone, but the rock of that age stands where it stood then, and to day our God is what He was then. What Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Joseph and others found Him to be, that you and I have found the Rock of ages to be to-day. The aspect of the world has changed since the days of the patriarchs, all of whom have left time for eternity, and are now in heaven; and manners and customs have altered and changed: but our God remains, and is the same; for Our Rock is not like their rock, being eternally firm and fixed.

Then we may notice the ceremonial age, which was an important one; for very much was done during that lengthened period of time. Were there two rocks for the two ages? No, one only, even Jehovah. Was He changed or altered in any respect from what He was in the days of Abraham, and Enoch, and Abel? No, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Ages with their freezing cold, and ages with their burning heat, ages with their rivers of blood flowing in war, and ages with all their

multiplied changes came against our Rock, surrounded Him and passed away, and left Him the same, behind them all. This is what He is, my brother; no change can ever take place in Him. He is the Rock of eternal ages; therefore our Rock is not like theirs. And He stood not only during the ceremonial age, but the prophets wrote of Him, rested on Him, entered into Him, leaned upon Him, raised His honors high, and set forth His greatness and His glory ; He was to them, and to the church of God through the whole prophetic age, what He is to us and to all. Another age came, and it is gradually wasting and passing away, the age of Christianity, and we are living in the 19th century of this dispensation, and oh what miserable and wicked attempts are made to misrepresent, or to conceal and hide this great Rock, and the persons who are making those attempts are guilty traitors in the sight of God! But they can neither alter nor move Him. He is, and will and must be, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, notwithstanding all that enemies can do or say. What He was to Paul, what He was to Peter, James and John, the Apostles of the dear and blest Redeemer, that He was to the following generation, and to the next generation also; and as generations rose and lived, and labored, and withered, and decayed and passed away, they all of them left behind them the Rock of eternal ages. When I first knew Him, or rather when my eyes were first opened some years ago, I embraced this Rock for shelter, and entered into Him; and what He then promised to be unto me and to do for me, all that He has been to me, and has done for me. Therefore I take an offering and come into His presence, and proclaim the greatness, and righteousness, and holiness of the character of my Lord. Yes, our dear Lord is a Rock on account of His firmness. He is firm as to His love. There is no love like His; it never

changes; it cannot be greater, it cannot be less than it is; it could not have been earlier, and it will never end. Sin—it is not in the power of sin to damp or cool it; nor to divert or separate it from its objects. It is the love of God, and therefore not moving sinking sand, or soft clay, or changing earth; the love, the everlasting love of God is a Rock. I wish I could bring it vividly before you, and give you a due idea of its fixedness and firmness, amid the ever changing scenes that are taking place in time, in human affection and human character. Here is a fire, the steadiness of whose flame has never been interrupted. Here, to change the metaphor, is a mighty ocean, upon which there has never been a wave, it is placid, calm, serene, quiet, bottomless and shore less. Winds and storms, and tempests have never raised a ripple upon the clear, and crystal and transparent sea of the everlasting love of God. Here is a divine fact vast as God Himself. He does not love a little, nor with an affection that can be measured. His love is Himself, for God is love; and if God can be disturbed, His love may be disturbed; if God is a Rock, and can never move,—then, since God is love, His love is a rock, and vibration or oscillation can never happen there. Oh happy man and happy woman whose souls are lying quietly, calmly and believingly in the everlasting arms of the everlasting and ever-loving God. A Rock—not only as to His love, He is a Rock as to His purposes. "My purpose shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." " My brother," one says, " I have been thinking of what took place the other day; although we made such an arrangement, it now appears that we must alter it, for it will not do to proceed in the direction in which it was determined to proceed." "God is in one mind, and who shall turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth." If I cannot bend circumstances to my mind, my mind must bend to

circumstances. God will never bend His mind to circumstances and events; for His will and not circumstances give shape and form to the intentions of God. He will make everything yield to His own purpose, and never alter His thoughts or change His will. All shall be brought into conformity to the ideas of Him who is a Rock, and whose work is perfect. Then, my brother, what are His purposes concerning us? "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." Did He purpose to save you? Then He will do it. "Oh, but sir, I feel this, and that, and the other." My dear hearers do not just now introduce your poor feelings. They are not rock you know, but like feathers floating in the air; you may feel thus and thus, and be here and there and elsewhere, but do you not know that God purposed to save you ? You know He did so, you know your desire to be saved is so intense that you would give a world to know that you are saved. Then you are saved, my friend; for that burning, prayerful desire is a part of salvation, and a token of life in your heart. This is not a universal feeling. All men and women in the world do not want to be saved. They push away God's truth concerning salvation, and turn their backs upon it, and loathe it on various accounts. They regard it as a state of bondage to keep the Sabbath, or consider it as the Lord's day, to read the Bible, to associate with God's people, and to pray and sing psalms; they deride, or if there are some who do not thus treat the things of God, they treat them with absolute calm, and quiet indifference ; but you are not indifferent; your soul is agitated, troubled and tried, therefore the beginning of salvation has taken place in your heart and your mind. Then I want you to go back to the great origin of this salvation, even the purpose of God; for as He purposed to save you He will do it, although you have such bitter

feelings. He has saved you, although you are the subject of such sorrow. The Rock of ages never moves, and you are on the Rock. You rise and sink upon it, and your hearts are contracted and expanded thereon, but the Rock itself never expands nor contracts and it never shakes. What shaking hearts and trembling minds are found thereon! "Our Rock is not like their rock, our enemies themselves being judges." God is a Rock as to His love and also as to His purpose; and is He not a Rock as to His fullness? The rock in the wilderness was smitten by Moses, and who thought there was water in it that would flow from it after Moses had smitten it, and who thought it would continue to flow and follow the people forty years ! They all drank of that spiritual Rook which followed them and that Rock was Christ. Do you think the water was there naturally or miraculously, even for Christ's sake? There would have been no smiting of the Rock, and no gushing of water from it had it not been for Christ who was behind it all. They all drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them and that Rock was Christ. But the water that followed the children of Israel through the desert was material water, although it was no doubt better than the water obtained from places round about. It was rock water, brought out in a miraculous manner by God for His people. Here we have the Rock of ages smitten.

*"Rook 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,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."*

The water gushed out and flowed among the dry places like a river. Well,

our Christ is a Rock in regard to His fullness, and these streams will ever run with waters sweet and clear. He is inexhaustible, and His blessings cool, comfort, and refresh the soul. We have tasted this water and there is nothing on the earth like it. We would go down upon our hands and knees, and drink and drink again of the water of life that flows from this Divine and glorious Rock. There is no rock like our Rock with regard to His fullness. I must pass from these matters. He is a Rock, then, as to His firmness, His love, His purpose, and His fullness.

I want you to distinguish between immovable and immutable. The Rock of ages never moves, but that which is always in the same place may not always be the same in character. Jesus is immovable and He is immutable also, and can never change Himself. The Rock is always there, and He is always Rock; and the supplies that flow from Him are perpetual, and as I said just now their cooling nature is sweet and heavenly. I was never satisfied, and I never knew the meaning of the word satisfy, till I had a draught of water from this Rock, and was helped to say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." May it be ours to sit under the shadow of this Rock, and to drink of these living streams during the few remaining months or years we may tarry on the earth.

Now their rock and our Rock were objects of trust. By their rock understand their idols, their deities, and by our Rock understand the true and living God. Now both are objects of trust, but theirs is not like ours as an object of trust and confidence. I do not think that the heathen who repose their trust and confidence in their idols are un-agitated and unmoved in trouble, or with regard to the future; but when you and I are helped to cast ourselves unreservedly into the arms of God, and to rest upon the person,

the promise, and the fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we do not go too far when we sing—

*“My steady soul shall fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.”*

Are we in the midst of the sea, and does it rise and rage? do its waves mount up to heaven and go down again into the depths? There is a rock even there, and you and I are upon it, and though the scene is terrible, and everything is in itself most alarming, our steady souls fear not upon the rock, upon which through favor Divine we are resting. Their rock of trust and confidence is not like ours. They shake and tremble, and their hearts rise and sink again; but the good man resting upon Jesus Christ for all he needs here and hereafter is un-agitated, unmoved, and undisturbed. Do you say I am going very high? I do so because I am standing on the Rock—if not experimentally so for myself, I am ministerially so for you. I am speaking of a high point of Christian experience; the child of God is not moved, and cannot be moved, so long as the Holy Ghost holds his feet upon the immovable Rock of everlasting ages. He raised me out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my going; and I could not help singing, for he hath put a new song into my mouth. Their rock and ours differ in this respect,—theirs is an object of sense and reason, but ours is an object of faith. They have no god but what they can see, and the gods they see they have made for themselves and placed in their temples. Their rock is not like ours. Our God is in the heavens, and we say of Him as Peter said, “whom having not seen we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Their rock is an object of reason. One says, “Do you believe what

is stated in the Bible?" Yes, I do, sir. He replies, "I do not. It is contrary to reason." I care not about that, I am not so deluded and empty as to base my firm belief upon purblind human reason. Our reason is not rock. "It is with me, sir." Then your rock is not like mine, our enemies themselves being judges. If you say that what does not square with your reason, you will not believe, you are on the sand, and your building or hope will prove at last to be without a foundation. I shall not build upon reason, nor upon sense, nor upon a God I can see in a niche in a temple; and yet I would as soon build my hope for heaven upon an idol as upon human reason. What are you building your hope upon? The Rock of ages. Where is He? Everywhere. Where is He as the Rock of ages? In heaven, in the gospel, before me—and what is blessed, He is underneath my faith, my hope, my life and underneath my soul. "Why, you are a 'strange man, to build on what is apparently contrary to reason, and which you cannot explain." I am glad I cannot fully explain the foundation of my hope; but my soul is thereon, and I hold fast the Gospel of God. Cleave to your idols, hang on your godless though religious systems, hug your Unitarianism and Socinianism to yourselves as tightly as you can, my faith shall go beyond all sense and reason, and beyond all creatures to the unseen though not unknown God, and all my hope shall rest there, whether I sink or swim, whether I am lost or saved. But I have no doubt with regard to the issue; for

*"I shall see His face,
And never, never sin,
And from the rivers of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in."*

Secondly the appropriation. He is not only a Rock in Himself, He is our

Rock. By the will of His love, and the love of His will, He is our Rock. He will be so because He loves us, and He loves us according to His sovereign will, for He is our Rock with all His heart. Now as He is our Rock—take the following facts. He is our Rock to hide in, not to talk about merely, though if we love His name and hide in Him, we cannot help talking about Him; but He is not only our theme, He is our hiding place. More than that, He is our Rock, because we have been hidden in Him. What is the difference? To hide there is my act, but to be hidden there is the result of an act of another. I run to Him and try to hide myself there, but I am hidden there by God Himself. How is that? Behold, said God to Moses, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock; and I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by." God places His people in the cleft of the rock, so that it is not merely run and hide in Him. We do run, and are favored to hide in Him; but that is not the whole of it. It is the work of God to take the running, timid, trembling soul, and put him into the cleft of the Rock, and then the hand of omnipotent power covers him for ever. "I will cover thee with My hand." And what then? Why, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." Let it be so, O God. We can well bear the sight, and the sight of all that agitates the world if we are in the cleft of the Rock and covered with Thy hand. Well He is our Rock to hide in. He is our Rock to rest upon, to confide in, with a calmness and tranquility of mind, and experience which nothing can disturb. If He speaks peace, war cannot break out; and if He says to the storm, Peace, be still, there is a great calm, for He is obeyed in a moment, the wind drops, the sea becomes smooth, and all is quiet and serene. O, if you are on and in Him, resting upon this Rock, you enjoy a solid peace, such as the world can neither give nor take

away. Your Rock to hide in, and your Rock to rest upon. And what is better, if possible, He is our Rock to inhabit. We live in the Rock of ages. "Let the inhabitants of the Rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains." And then He is ours, as I said just now, as to all His fullness; thus in Him we have peace, safety, and plenty.

Thirdly. God our Rock is incomparable. Their rock is not as our Rock. An incomparable God is ours, an incomparable rock is the Rock of salvation. He is incomparable as to His nature, as to His covenant relationship, and in various other respects also. I have already spoken of Him as the foundation of our hope, the home of our souls, and the rest of our minds. Now what is in Him, and what comes from Him? Honey, water, oil, blood. This is quite in accordance with the type itself, for even in this chapter we read of honey from the Rock. Sometimes infidels have rather sneered at the idea of honey from the rock, quite forgetting that a rock was one of the most common bee-hives in the land of Canaan. They obtained their honey from the rocks. Bees were abundant, and they produced their honey in rocks, so that honey flowing from the rock was by no means an un-frequent sight. This is beautifully descriptive of our dear Lord. Oh what sweetness comes from Him! His word is sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb, and as the honey flowed down the rocks in Canaan, so life, and spiritual heavenly peace flow out of Jesus Christ, the Rock of ages, for you and me. Their rock is not like ours. Then again oil out of the rock. Rather recently, you know, this has been verified; for now we have rock oil in general use, though the oil of Canaan was probably that of the olive. The unction or the oil of the Holy Spirit is perpetually flowing from the Holy One, Jesus Christ. Here is oil to anoint, and honey for sweetness, from our Rock.

There also is water to slake our thirst, and wash our persons and garments in. But here is blood from the rock. You have this thought in the words of Toplady,

*“Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”**

Cleanse me from its guilt by blood—justification, and from its power by the water—sanctification. Water and blood, a double remedy for a double disease, intended to affect a double cure. The blood and water come, and grace flows, and a cure is affected through faith in the dear Redeemer. Their rock is not as our Rock. We sit calmly therein and are safe, or stand upon its summit and look into eternity there from.

Take the following thought, and then I will close. Their rock is not like ours as to guilt. Man has a power within called conscience, and he cannot get rid of it, it is a moral power, and its operations are about moral matters. Sometimes conscience is burdened with guilt, torn, lacerated and bleeding, and there is no help, no remedy for a bleeding conscience apart from blood, and this flows from our smitten Rock. Conscience comes to Christ and relies upon Him. His blood is applied to the wounded soul, and peace, healing, and comfort are experienced. Our Rock is incomparable with regard to the conscience. Incomparable also in trouble. Where is the idol that can help its worshipper in trouble. In trouble the child of God may be calm, and then he says, “My Rock has left the words on record and we believe them with all our hearts.” That ‘all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.’ ”

In trouble what a hiding-place

Have they who know the throne of grace! "

Thirdly, their rock is not like ours as to prospect. Ascend mountains as high as you will, the Himalayas for instance, which, if I mistake not, are the highest in the world, yet you cannot reach heaven nor see into the future. Let me stand, however, upon this Rock of ages, and I shall see the King in His beauty, and behold the land that is very far off, and the future will not seem to be an uncertainty. The rock of idolaters leaves them in doubt as to whether they have souls or not, and what will become of them. Their rock cannot reveal this to them; but standing upon the Rock of ages, we look forward into the future and sing—

"There is my home and portion fair!"

Their rock is not like ours. We die where we live, and we live where we hope to die, on the Rock and in the everlasting arms of God. May the Lord be pleased to command His blessing, for Christ's sake? Amen.