

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

CONFESSION OF ENEMIES.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 23RD, 1862, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

“For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.”—Deut. xxxii. 31.

You will at once perceive that the word *enemy* is an analogous word to that of *enmity*, and refers to the state of the carnal mind in its enmity against God. And I shall, then, this morning, concisely in the first place, point out *the contrast between the reconciled mind and the unreconciled mind*; and then *the respects in which our enemies confess the superiority of our Rock to their rock*.

First, then, *the contrast between the reconciled mind and the unreconciled mind*. And as the unreconciled mind is set forth in connection with our text as being in a state of bitterness, in a state of poisonous enmity against God, of course the reconciled mind is one in direct contrast to this. To be reconciled to God is to be planted together into the knowledge of Christ, to know that his work is for ever and ever the end of sin. So that your being brought to believe in Jesus Christ, and to receive him in what he has done, is to have your faith and hope where there is no sin,—sin is ended; where there is no unrighteousness,—righteousness is brought in; where there is no death—there is life; he is our eternal life, and this eternal life is by faith; but then it is a faith that stands distinguished from all other faith. Men may try to persuade us that there is only one kind of faith spoken of in the Bible; but if there be not more than one kind of faith, why is that faith that is connected with saving reconciliation unto God declared to be the faith of God's elect, and declared to be the faith of the operation of God, and declared to be the gift of God; “Unto you it is given to believe in him;” and declared to stand not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God? Here, then, the man who is reconciled is convinced that there is no other way but the Lord Jesus Christ, the end of sin and the end of the law for righteousness, and thereby he is the end of all evil. Now thousands admit this; but then I want to be clear upon this matter this morning—namely, that he is the end of sin once and for ever; there it stands, it is done. And as to the sins of which you are the subjects, they are as much ended as the sins of those that lived hundreds and hundreds of years ago. Christ made an end—there is an end to it, there is no sin in him; and if we, by faith, are united to him, then we are where there is no sin, we are where there is no unrighteousness, we are where there is no fault, we are where not a fault can be laid to our charge. Who shall lay anything to the charge of that man that is thus brought to receive Christ, planted into Christ, and to receive Christ in what he hath done? because if anything be laid to that man's charge, then in comes the great God in his love, and sovereignty, and righteousness, and justifies that man; that man being a believing man, he is justified. Who shall lay anything to his charge? It is God that justifieth; and if any one should condemn, then in come the death, and resurrection, and intercession, and exaltation, and reign of the Lord

Jesus Christ. And who shall separate such an one from this love of God that is in Christ Jesus? Why, suppose now, little one, you were going to die to-day, what are your sins to you? You have done with them; you have to do with the infinite sufficiency of Jesus Christ. God doth not behold iniquity in you, he doth not see perverseness in you; the Lord your God is with you, and the shout of a king by-and-bye shall be your joy, and that in a fulness thereof, and that for ever. Thus, then, we are planted together in Christ Jesus; we are planted where we have life; we are planted where no mildew, no blasting, no canker worm, no caterpillar, no locust, no palmer worm, no evil shall befall us. Take that spiritually, as we stand in Christ; no evil ever befell a man there yet, and never will. And hence that Scripture in John, "There we abide, and the wicked one toucheth us not." And the Saviour dwells upon this as a matter of rejoicing; that beautiful parable of the vine and the branches is, to the people of God, a matter of rejoicing, as I will presently notice. Now he is the Vine, and we thus planted in him. And he lays great emphasis upon our abiding in him; "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." Now what does the much fruit mean? Why, in the first place, knowledge. If you abide in Christ, you will know more of God, and more of his grace, and more of his mercy, than you will in any other way. There is no other way in which the mercy of God can be so known. So, in that sense, you will bring forth much fruit. Now only imagine that your religion consisted of a round of duties, going through so many formalities from time to time, and because you have gone through your prescribed formalities, your conscience is somewhat easy, and you are comfortable. But at the end of any time you may name—seven, or fourteen, or twenty-one years—you would be just as ignorant of God as you are now. Whereas, if you are planted in Christ, and made acquainted with what he is, and what he has done, then you grow in grace, and become more and more acquainted with the new covenant, with the deep counsels of God, with the promises of God, with the love of God, with God himself. So that you bring forth much fruit in thus abiding in Christ. Fruit means knowledge, and fruit means love; you will bring forth much love. Why, I make no hesitation in saying that there will be times, when you are brought into a clear apprehension of what a covenant God is to you in Christ Jesus,—as the branch sometimes of the vine bends down under the weight of the fruit it bears, so sometimes your soul will be as full of the love of God as you can bear. You will feel such a love to God the Father; there will be a sweet embracing the blessed testimony of what he is; there will be such a love to Christ, and such a love to the Holy Spirit, and such a love to God, in that eternity which he hath lighted up with his love, his presence, and his salvation, that you will be happy in that love; that love must abide in the heart, and you will say, Ah, what a sweet way of life is this:—

"Happy the people whose heart is set free,
The people who can be joyful in thee."

But every branch in me—that is, that makes a mere profession of Christ, and does not bring forth any fruit, does not come to any real knowledge of Christ, does not come to any real love to God, has not a real thirst and hunger after him, for prayer is a fruit, and praise is a fruit, and immovable decision for the truth as it is in Jesus is a fruit also—"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." There are many other kinds of fruit that I will not now stop to notice; suffice it to say that this reconciliation to God, this being planted together in Christ Jesus the Lord,—this, I say, is a matter of rejoicing, for the Saviour, after he had given that beautiful parable—I cannot help calling it beautiful, I do so like that one idea, "Abide in me;" why, it is like Noah abiding in the ark until the flood is gone, there was his safety; it is like the Israelite

abiding in the house where the paschal lamb is, and there was his safety; or like Rahab abiding in the house until the spies came and confirmed the oath under which they were to save her life; it is abiding in the appointed place. It is not what Noah's temper, or experience, or feelings were while he was in the ark; but it was his abiding in the ark. It was not what the Israelite might think, whether he was passive, whether he felt rebellious, or doubting, or fearing; but it was his abiding in the house with the paschal lamb. It did not depend upon the state of mind Rahab was in; but upon her abiding in the house. How shall I find language to describe such a privilege as this? How many ups and downs, how many weaknesses, how many faults, how many drawbacks, how many trials are the Lord's people the subjects of! And if no one threw a stone at another until he himself is without sin—I am sure if any one has carried any stones in his pockets to throw at others, he had better throw them away at once; for you may depend upon it, Solomon's words are true, "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." And yet, with all thy drawbacks and faults, abide in Jesus; remain there and say, If I perish, I will perish only here. Precious atoning blood, that sets me eternally free; precious righteousness, that has hushed the loud thunders of Sinai, grasped the lightnings, laid the trumpet aside, answers that which is commanded, and speaks to me in the still small voice that comes down upon the soul like rain, distils as the dew. Thus, then, being planted together in Christ, abide in him; so that, whatever fault you have beside, abide in him. Now, why does the Saviour thus speak? Why does he found our life, our prosperity, our flourishing—indicated by the vine and our bearing fruit—why does he found all this in himself? Why, because we can live in no other way; and also because he likes to see his people joyful in him. Mark his beautiful words: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you." And so, if you hold fast what he hath done, his joy remains in you; it will make your hearts glad in spite of yourselves, and in spite of circumstances, and in spite of Satan. "That my joy might remain in you;"—he indicates what that joy shall be by-and-bye—"and that your joy might be full." Now, what was Christ's joy? We ought to understand that; we ought to get a clear definition of what that joy is; or else we cannot understand whether that which was his joy is ours or not. And he speaks of it thus: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work;" and "For the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame," and now possesses the joy. So then, the joy of Christ was two-fold, namely, the completeness of his work, and the certainty of the glory that should follow. And this is just our joy—the completeness of his work, and the certainty of the promise of God, that there is no coming short of that eternal blessedness into which he himself hath entered.

Now, against this freedom in Christ, this spotless perfection in Christ—against this completeness in Christ, against this eternity of sameness in Christ, against this perfection, beauty, and eternal triumph in Christ, the carnal mind is enmity—cannot understand it. There is nothing that the carnal mind so blindly hates as it does this. And hence, then, in opposition to this reconciliation to Christ—for this is the only way of reconciliation to God; if we are not receivers and partakers of Christ, not only admitting he is the only way—thousands admit that—but there is so little in our day said of the completeness of his work; and men may lift up their pious and hypocritical faces, and pretend that they are too pious to say too much about this matter. The reason that ministers say so little about it is because they know but little of it. My Bible assures me that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and if my soul be full of Christ, his name will be on my lips. If, on the other hand, I am exercised with castings down, bondage, and wretchedness, and a

deep sense of my need of this glorious substitute, this dear Mediator, then I shall speak of the sorrows I feel, of the castings down, the darkness, the bondage; I shall say, with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And we shall find deliverance only where he found it, and that is in the truth "that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh," which the spiritual man cannot, for the fleshly mind means enmity against God; and so the proper meaning of that scripture is, that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after enmity against Christ, but after love to him. That is what is there meant by the flesh and the spirit, because the fleshly mind, as that same chapter shows us, is enmity against him; whereas the spiritual mind is love to him.

No condemnation; what a sweet truth is that! The way is clear between us and the throne of God; the way is clear between us and eternity; the way is clear between us and eternal glory. Well, say you, but there are a great many clouds intervene. But those clouds belong to mortality, to the world, to circumstances, and to death; but there is no cloud belonging to us as we stand in Christ; there it is that he is a morning without clouds; as grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

Now let us look again, then, at our state by nature, in opposition or in contrast to this reconciliation to God. Our state by nature is set forth in connection with our text under the idea of bitterness. Those who hate this Rock, this perfect work,—for so it is called in the preceding part of this chapter, "His work is perfect;" it is said of them, "Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah." Perhaps you will not understand this without I just remind you that as Sodom and Gomorrah stood upon the borders of the Dead Sea, the grapes there grown, as well as the apples, all savoured of the bituminousness of the Dead Sea,—nauseous and utterly unfit for food. Indeed, Oriental travellers tell us,—though I do not put faith in all I read in the books of Oriental travellers, for they fabricate stories sometimes in order to make their books sell; but some of them tell us that the apples of Sodom look very beautiful, but as soon as you touch them they all immediately crush to powder; that that beautiful looking apple is full of a nauseous, poisonous powder, and when you touch the apple it crumbles to dust. And if that be true, I am sure it is a very good representation of a great many professors in our day. They appear very beautiful; they are polished off after the first style of the religious artist; and they keep up, as James Osborne used to say, a florid sort of profession, and look very beautiful; but as soon as you take them in hand, and begin to put them to the test of God's truth, then their bitterness is manifested, then their enmity comes out, then the dust begins to fly; and then you find after all, that while this professor looked so nice outwardly, like the whited sepulchres, there was nothing but bitterness within. This is what we are to understand, then, that both the religion and the irreligion,—both of them, mind,—I will let neither escape if I can help it,—that both the religion and the irreligion of the natural man, both are bitterness against God; their vine, that in which they delight, that upon which they live, is all hostility to God. "Their grapes are grapes of gall: their clusters are bitter." What is your doctrine of free-will but a cluster of bitterness against the truth? What is your doctrine of duty-faith, which people in our day can receive? Shame on that man, shame on him, that professes to be saved by grace, and yet can lend his professedly circumcised ear to a doctrine that palms the damnation of man upon the grace of God, and discovers a responsibility for man where no responsibility exists, and at the same time hides that responsibility that does really exist; making the man's responsibility lie on gospel grounds, instead of making it lie on

law grounds. Shame on the man that professes to be reconciled to God, and yet can practically sanction and be quite at home in a doctrine that contains the germ of deadly enmity against the truth as it is in Jesus. If I go into several parts of England;—I could name one part now, which it would not be perhaps wise to do, where, some years ago, a very celebrated duty-faith man was the pet of the county in which he lived, and very much followed. I make no hesitation in saying, that in the whole range of the forty-two counties of England, there is not one county in all England where the truth of God is now so little known and so much scouted, hated, and despised, as in that very county. And how is that? say you. Why, because duty-faith comes in a feasible manner; it prefaces, and faces, and polishes off its abominations with free-grace doctrines, and keeps the spear hid, as it were, behind, and by-and-bye out comes the dagger and smites you before you are aware of it; up rises the enemy. So you may depend upon it, that all those doctrines that are hostile to the truth, if you receive a doctrine that is hostile to the truth, that doctrine must make you hate the truth; if [it does not do it now, it will do it, whatever be the kind of leaven you receive, that leaven will gradually work and assimilate your mind to itself. If I receive free-grace leaven, then the kingdom of God is like unto three measures of meal, a woman casting leaven into three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. "Their grapes," then, "are grapes of gall; their clusters are bitter." Does it stop here? No. "Their wine," that that cheers them, that that delights them, that that strengthens them,—what is it? Why, "it is the poison," saith this chapter, "of dragons." How did the Pharisees, when they had taken this wine, rejoice in crucifying the Saviour; how did they rejoice in persecuting his apparently defenceless apostles and people of that age; and how many thousands of Roman Catholic priests and rulers, when intoxicated by this wine,—these false doctrines of enmity,—how have they gloried in exercising the tyranny of the dragon over the souls and bodies of men. Their wine, then,—their rejoicing,—is to down with the truth; "Raze it, raze it," say they, "even to the foundations." But our answer is, "If the foundations should be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" The foundations never have been destroyed, and the foundations never shall be destroyed; no; the truths of God are the foundations upon which the people rest, and those foundations are firm. "Their wine," then, "is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps." You see how it goes on, thus descriptive of the bitterness of the carnal mind. Now, this is the state we are all in by nature. Is it so, then, that there was a time when we called sweet bitter, and bitter sweet; when we put darkness for light, and light for darkness? Was there a time when we loved Satanic falsehoods and hated God's truth? Was there a time when we hated everything pertaining to the eternal salvation of the soul? But when the Lord took us in hand, and showed us what enemies we had been to our own souls, what enemies we had been to God, what enemies we had been to Christ, when his arrows were sharp in us, then we fell down before him, and this bitterness was taken away, to return again no more for ever. These are the two characteristic distinctions all through the Bible, namely, love and enmity; bitterness against the truth, and sweetness of spirit, or oneness with it; these are the two great characteristics; and so, here we have enemies and friends. "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."

But I hasten to notice *the sense in which our enemies acknowledge that their rock is not as our Rock.* Let us speak of enemies with pity, and let us bless the Lord for any reason we have to believe that he has brought us out from among them, and reconciled us savingly to himself. Well, then, the man who is not reconciled to God, blindly confesses that is one way in which he judges that his rock is not as our Rock. Suppose, for instance, we take the word *hope*, instead of the word *rock*, in order to

explain the matter, because the word *rock* does convey the idea of hope, God being our Rock—that is, being strong, and being eternal in that strength—he is our hope, and the strength of our hope. Go to the profane man, the wicked man, the man at home in all the profligacies of human life; ask him, “Have you any hope in Jesus Christ?” Why, he will despise your religion,—he will blindly despise your religion; does not know what he is doing, and he is quite proud to think he does not make any professions of religion, and thinks there can’t be much the matter, because he does not make any profession of religion. Just as though it was a credit to him to ridicule his Maker. Just as though it was a credit to him to wend his way to hell, by all the profligacy that he can command. Just as though it was a credit to him to make himself as great a sinner as he possibly can, and entail upon himself the greatest damnation he possibly can. So, then, lie thus boldly and blindly confesses that his rock—his hope—is not as our hope. Then, if you come to the professing man, he does the same. He says, “Away with your Calvinism!” Another will say, “Well, I don’t know altogether about that. Away with your *hyper-Calvinism!*” They get into a passion directly, if we speak upon these matters; and therefore our best way is to say nothing, unless we have a proper opportunity. If we cannot speak to them without getting them into a passion, it is better not to say anything about it; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The young Christian talks a great deal, and thinks but little; but the more advanced Christian thinks a great deal, and says but little; and, depend upon it, that is the best way. Just in proportion as you make your religion a burden to those around you, just in the same proportion you increase their enmity, and do no good. You had better walk along quietly and steadily, and if they like to find out where you go to hear the word, and like to wonder that you can’t go out and enjoy a Sunday’s pleasure, without always being at chapel, why, you have nothing to do with that; that will do more good than all the words you can say; and then, if they are pleased to speak spitefully to you on these grounds, then you can conscientiously say you have done nothing to provoke their enmity; you have said nothing to them to provoke them; you have not tried to irritate them by setting your creed in opposition to their creed, and by entering into a disputation. Therefore I think, as a general rule, the less talk the better. I know there are exceptions to this rule; but, at the same time, when they will at all calmly enter into conversation, we soon find that they themselves confess that their rock is not as our Rock. As to completeness in Christ, “Well,” they say, “that’s very well to be quoted now and then; and as to election, that’s very well to be mentioned now and then; and as to that covenant ordered in all things and sure, and the certainty of the promises, well, they are very well now and then,” they say. That is what they say. But the Christian says, “What, now and then! Why, sir, those things that you say would do now and then are my daily meat, my daily bread, my daily strength, my daily joy, my daily hope; my daily delight.” And thus that which they refer to, as they would to a dictionary, for the meaning of a hard word—it is a mere letter affair with them,—with us it is our rejoicing. So that their rock—their religion—is not as our religion, even they themselves blindly confess. And thus, then, both the profane man and the empty professor blindly acknowledge that their hope is not such a hope as we *hyper-Calvinists* have. I say *hyper-Calvinists*. The word *hyper* means *above*.

Then, secondly, the enemies acknowledge that their rock is not as our Rock. They acknowledge this, sometimes, by the pressure of judgment. What a field does this part of our subject open; were I disposed to expatiate upon it! Were I to go back to the Flood, and to look at Noah, and those with him in the ark, I see a lofty mountain; I see hundreds, if not thousands of people, climbing that mountain. I see them at the

top of the mountain. There they stand, trembling. They see something in the distance; and what is it they see in the distance? It is the ark. "Ah!" saith one, "see how placidly that ark rides on the waters! See how majestically it weathers the storm! See how calmly it sails along! See how safe it is! Here are we, on a plan of our own devising. High as the mountain is, high as we have peaked ourselves, the waters are rising round,—rising, rising, and rising. So that before they were carried away by the rising flood, they would, by a contrast between their own position, and the position of those in the ark, acknowledge that their rock is not as our Rock, and our Rock is not as their rock. This Noah was a free-grace man; he found grace. We hated his doctrine, we hated his plan. But now look at it. Here are we exposed to the flood, and shall certainly be destroyed, while that man is saved." I need not remind you of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. I need not remind you of the rich man in hell, what a judge he was of this matter. He was arrayed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day. "Ah!" he says, "here is the rock for me! Here is a rock that yields me honey and oil, and all good things. Who would be of the religion of that Lazarus? Look at him!—full of sores, lying at my gate. Why, who would have such a religion as his? Who would be in his place? What a poor, miserable affair! Mine is something like a rock."

But by-and-bye the change comes. This man, whose rock was indeed not as the rock of Lazarus, lifted up his eyes in hell. Ask him now, How is it? "for their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." Thou didst despise that free-grace Lazarus; thou didst despise his standing in the order of patriarchal genealogy; for he stood as a son of Abraham after the spirit; the rich man stood as a son of Abraham only after the flesh, and therefore Abraham called the rich man his son; "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." But then he was a son of Abraham only after the flesh; and because he was a son of Abraham after the flesh he thought things must go well with him. But Lazarus was a son of Abraham after the Spirit; he was of faith—a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, then, by the pressure of the solemn judgment of God, how did this man, who in his lifetime was an enemy, judge and acknowledge by the force of God's judgment that "their rock is not as our Rock." But time would fail me to enumerate all that might be said here. I will just throw out a remark, and that is this. Those of you that are placed in your various avocations in life, abide fast by the truth; do that which is right, follow out your position, whatever it may be, for that will never dishonour you if you do not dishonour that. And if you are enabled to do this, and to stand fast, after a time you will see that while some persons may gain some present advantage by giving up their principles, or compromising them, or hiding them, and turning and twisting about to accommodate present circumstances, you will by-and-bye see that such persons will turn and twist, and down they will go into trouble perhaps they will never get out of, while you yourself, by simply abiding by the truth, you will be like Mordecai in Persia, and like Daniel and the three worthies in Babylon, and like Joseph in Egypt; you will have the Lord stand by you, and your very enemies will confess that, somehow or another, with all their wisdom, and all your (in their eyes) apparent want of wisdom, they cannot get on so well as you have, and that their rock, somehow or another, is not as your Rock. I am persuaded—I speak now to the tried children of God—you will often see the hand of the Lord in this; and you will not forget the hint I gave you just now; do not trouble those around you with your religion. When you are appointed to fill a position in life, you are not appointed to be a preacher in that place. People do not take you into a situation to talk about religion, they take you there to do work, and to do it well. Say nothing about your religion, let your religion

speak for itself, for it is a poor thing if it wants speaking for. Hence, one of old said, "Let Baal speak for himself." Why, he could not. Well, then, he is not worth having. So then let religion speak for itself. Stand fast, do all that is right and honourable, and you will see it verified that their rock is not as your Rock. Pray to your Father in secret, if you cannot in public; and your Father that seeth in secret, he will hear you, and answer you, and in his own time reward you publicly.

Passing by a great many things, I come to the last thought, that is this: "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." Our enemies are sometimes judges of this to the salvation of their souls. I like to see that. Rahab is an enemy, as we all are by nature. The Lord opens her eyes, she contrasts the Canaanites with the Israelites; she sees that their Rock, the Rock of the Israelites, is not a fallible rock, a moveable rock, but a strong rock, a mighty rock; and Rahab would wish to change, she would wish to give up her former hope, and come to the hope of Israel. So that she, while by nature an enemy, confessed that her rock was not like the Rock of Israel. Your God is God in heaven above, and God on the earth beneath; your God hath given you the land. Ah! that is the Rock I should like to live in. Will that God be my friend? Yes; that he will. And God did become her friend; and there she stands, and is now standing, before the throne of God in all the spotless perfection of the dear Redeemer's immovable victory and glory, one with those redeemed by his precious blood.

We then come to Ruth. Now Orpah did not see the difference between the two rocks; she went back to her heathen hope, her heathen rock. But Ruth saw the hope of Israel. Ah! thou art going to where the Rock of Israel is, the strength of Israel, the eternity of Israel, the salvation of Israel; there I will be; where thou goest I will go; thy God shall be my God, thy Rock shall be my Rock, thy people my people. Here is the salvation of her soul. So Naaman. But why do I speak of these individual cases? For the sake of simplifying the matter; for what I am now saying, in fact, applies to all the people of God. Look back to the time when your poor blind eyes were first opened; did you not see you were placing your hope then upon a wrong rock, that you were going the wrong way, that you had been deluded? And what was the result of this discovery? Why, you looked upon the people of God, and you said, Happy people they! You looked upon the truth of God, and you said, Blessed truth! You looked at the God of mercy, and you began to long for that mercy; and thus you confessed that the Rock of the people of God was not as your rock. Your rock was fallible, had failed, did fail—a barren rock, and must come to nought; all delusion from first to last. But here is a rock, and you wish now to be an inhabitant of this heavenly Rock, the Rock Christ Jesus. You wish no longer to build on the sand, but now to dig deep, and build upon the Rock of Ages; let him be your hope. So, then, we who were enemies, have thus been led to see that our rock was a rock of delusion; and brought from that rock of delusion to build our hope upon the sure foundation that will never give way.