

# Being in The Hand of God

Men who have heard and received the calling of the Gospel become “renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Col. 3:10), as they seek to conform to the likeness of Yahweh, as revealed in Christ. The seed of the Word is implanted into their hearts, producing “a new creation”, a new man of the spirit whose life is patterned after that of the Master. They become “born from above” (Jno. 3:3), and thereby become “the Sons of God” (1 Jno. 3:1). Although it doth not yet appear what they shall be, they know that when Christ is manifested from heaven, they shall be made like unto him, being partakers of Divine Nature, or Immortality. Such is the High Calling which we have been called to, brethren and sisters – just behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!

Being the Sons of the Living God is a most privileged position indeed. It is a position of responsibility, for we who seek the Divine Likeness must seek to crucify the flesh daily, as our Master spake concerning the man that would follow him: “let him *deny himself and take up his cross daily*” (Lu. 9:23). The warfare against the flesh is truly a gruelling one indeed – yet it is needful, for how can one expect to be a partaker in the victory of the warfare if he does not fight? And in our endeavours we are not left alone. We have a powerful arsenal of spiritual weapons at our disposal, which are mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin (2 Cor. 10:4). The Father is with us, and will not forsake us. We are, as it were, in His protecting Hand, ensuring that the enemy - Sin in all it's manifestations - will not prevail over us, so long as we retain our trust in Him.

This is the truth of what is expressed in today's reading from the book of Ecclesiastes:

“ ... I considered in my heart even to declare all this, *that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God; no man knows whether love or hatred awaits him*” (Eccl. 9:1 TS).

No man knows what lies ahead for him before his days of immortality. No man knows whether love or hatred awaits him in this life. But what we do know is “that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). Though we may appear to suffer under the common lot of mankind, we know that actually our afflictions comprise a Divinely regulated chastisement, designed to perfect our characters that we might be suited to a life of immortality. We commit all things to our Maker in faith, knowing that we are in His Hands, and that all that happens to us will turn out for the best at the last. The Master gives us that assurance, saying:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall not die in the *aion, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand*. My Father ... is greater than all; and *no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand*.” (Jno 10:27-29).

Being in the hands of the Father and Son, we are comforted in all our afflictions, knowing that the chastisements we suffer are but tokens of our Father's love for us

(Heb. 12:6), and that we will not be tested beyond our limits (1 Cor. 10:13), even though it is through much tribulation that we shall enter into the Deity's Kingdom (Acts 14:22). We remain fully persuaded that:

“neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Master” (Rom. 8:38-39).

Nothing can separate us from the Love of God ... except one thing which the Apostle doesn't mention in this place – *ourselves*. If we forsake Him, and depart from His Ways, we shall remain in the congregation of the dead, and shall not be translated into the inheritance of the saints in light. But so long as we retain faith in the Revealed Ways of the Almighty, we are assured the victory in the warfare in which we are engaged.

This promise of Divine deliverance from evil features in many parts of Scripture, most notably perhaps, in the book of Psalms. In Psalm 34, David was “moved” by the Holy Spirit to express his trust in Yahweh:

“this poor man cried, and Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of Yahweh encampeth round about them that fear him, *and delivereth them*” (Psa. 34:7).

Though we may not readily perceive the Angelic Host encamped about us (cp 2 Kings 6:17), the reality of them remains. Here is the promise: “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 Jno. 4:4; cp. 2 Kings 6:16). In us dwells the spirit of Christ - to the same extent as we are filled with the spirit-word that Christ spake. The Word, which is the Sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), and the Angelic ministers who abound all around us comprise the powers that will keep us from the evil in this world.

Notice, David did not say that the Angel would prevent evil from coming (for it is Divinely regulated evil that forms the basis of our chastisement), but rather that the Angel would deliver the saints out of that evil when it came. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” he wrote in the same Psalm, “But Yahweh delivereth him out of them all” (Psa. 34:19). And as we look unto Jesus, our Great Redeemer, we behold not a man who rejoiced in earthly matters, but “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). His sufferings were intense and unremitting, yet he did not waver from the path that lay ahead of him; rather he set his face as a flint as he purposefully walked down the path which led to Calvary. In him, we have the supreme example of enduring suffering for righteousness' sake – and though he despised the shame, yet is he now set down at the Right Hand of God – and we are in His Hand, for our lives are hid with him in God (Col. 3:3).

These comforting words of Psalm 34 are an allusion back to the words of Jacob at the time of his decease. The story of Jacob is the story of a man who began life by seeking to use his own hand to overcome the flesh, yet who came to trust in the Hand of Providence instead. We read in the Genesis account, that before the birth of Jacob and Esau, the twins struggled against each other in the womb:

“... the children struggled together within her (i.e. Rebekah); and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of Yahweh. And Yahweh said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen 25:22-23).

The two people would be separate from the womb; there was to be an enmity between them. Jacob, who was to become a man after the Spirit - loved of God - and Esau, the man who God hated, being a man of the flesh (Rom. 9:13). But Jacob had to learn reliance upon God. He began his life grappling against his brother (the flesh) under his own might, with his own hand:

“The first came out red all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and *his hand took hold on Esau’s heel*; and his name was called Jacob” (Gen. 25:25-26).

Beginning by wrestling with his fleshly brother with his own hand, Jacob, through the trials that came upon him, eventually learned reliance upon the hand of Yahweh. So it was that at the end of his life, when he blessed Joseph, he said:

“Elohim, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the Elohim which fed me all my life long unto this day, *the Angel which redeemed me from all evil*, bless the lads ...” (Gen. 48:16).

These are the words that are picked up again in Psalm 34: “*the Angel which redeemed me from all evil*”. Jacob - now Israel - came to recognise the work of the Angel in his life, and desired that the same Angel would bless Joseph’s sons, following his decease. He recognised that his own hand could not save him; he must rather rest in the Hand of God.

The exhortation is given in the first Epistle of Peter, to “Humble yourselves therefore *under the mighty hand of God*, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:6-7). These words are certainly applicable to Joseph, as he endured a period of humiliation and shame before being elevated to being a ruler in Egypt, but they apply to Jacob also (cp. 1 Pet. 5:5 with Gen. 25:23), who endured much evil in his time, yet was exalted with his son in Egypt in due time – and who presently resides in the dust of the earth awaiting the coming day of awakening, when he shall rise to inherit glory, honour, and immortality in the Age to Come. And the exhortation is equally applicable to ourselves; we must submit ourselves to the care of Yahweh, trusting that His Angels encamp round about us, and will deliver us according to the Wisdom of the Father, knowing that our Master’s return is but a lifetime away for each one of us.

Another Psalm which expresses David’s confidence in the Father’s hand is Psalm 31. There we read:

“I trusted in thee, O Yahweh: I said, Thou art my Elohim. *My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me*” (Psalm 31:15).

In these words, we find the spirit of Christ speaking, for a few verses earlier it is written:

“*into thy hand I commit my spirit ...*” (Psa. 31:5).

These words quote our Master upon the Cross, as recorded in Luke 23:46. They therefore express our Master’s trust in his Father’s hand, that he would deliver him from all his enemies, and restore him once again to the land of the living. Accordingly this verse continues:

“ ... thou hast redeemed me, O Yahweh El of truth”

Messiah’s trust in the Almighty Hand of his Father was absolute. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:22). Whatever difficulties we may be facing in life, we would do well to reflect upon the sufferings of Christ. In him, we see an absolute confidence that the Father would deliver him from the worst that could happen to him. “When he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him out of death, and was heard in that he feared ...” (Heb. 5:7).

As we come to consider the emblems of the bread and the wine, we do so from the aspect of beholding our suffering Saviour: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Yet we see in him also an example of endurance in tribulation, as it is written:

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:22).

The steps of Christ lead us beyond the crown of thorns to a crown of glory. They may well lead us through hard times, into times of difficulty and tribulation, yet at the last all of our sufferings will seem to be but a “light” affliction for the eternal weight of glory which is laid up for us. Let us therefore commit ourselves into the Hands of Yahweh, as unto a faithful Creator (1 Pet. 4:19), and look to the better days that lie ahead, when we shall live and reign with our Elder Brother, our redemption being secured both through his sufferings, and resurrection to glorious immortality.

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