

Holding Tightly - 07/02/2016

*"I am the Lord, I have called You in righteousness,
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations,
⁷ To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon
And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.
⁸ "I am the Lord, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images. (Isaiah 42:6-8)*

Beloved in The Lord,

Those that know me well, know that my favourite Hymn is *"Take Thou my hand and lead me."* This Hymn was taught to me by my late mother, who taught it to me as a prayer. This has been my daily prayer from childhood till now. This is a prayer that God always answers with a resounding "Yes"! It is very much God's desire that we would allow Him to lead us. God does not force us to trust in Him, but when we do He leads and guides us.

Our text today is God speaking to His children – the nation of Israel, but these words are also applicable to us today. God says that He has called us in righteousness, that He will hold us by the hand, and appoint us as a light to the nations, to those who are sitting in darkness.

The world today is rapidly declining and becoming darker. There are very many people who are trapped in the darkness of sin. There are many who are groping in the dark seeking the right way.

Life is by no means easy. Life is complicated and at times very difficult. It can be hard to navigate. Every new day is just that – a new day. It is something we have not seen before. Time continually ticks on and we are exposed to new things.

Thank God that we do not have to live without direction and guidance, praise God that we do not have to try to unravel the mysteries of life on our own. God has given us the presence of His Holy Spirit, who resides in the heart of the believer. The Holy Spirit is our guide. God has also given us His Word. The Holy Spirit and the Holy Bible are inseparable, The Holy Spirit works through the Bible. He is the author.

The Psalmist writes: ***"Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path."* (Psalm 119:105)**

God has given us His Word to illuminate the path we are to take. There is only one blessed path in life and that is God's Way. As we considered last Sunday, we are blessed when we find ourselves in the centre of God's Will. We are blessed when we live out God's will for our lives. He knows best because He knows all things.

Sadly, there are people who think that believing in God is for weak people, that faith is a crutch for those who cannot cope with life. There are those who think faith is for the simple minded. Nothing could be further from the Truth. To believe in God takes strength, and it is the wise thing to do, for after all the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom. You can never lose when you trust in God. When you trust in God, then you are safe and secure in Him. When you believe, then all of God's awesome promises are yours. The life of faith is a blessed, good and fulfilled life.

When you trust in God He says: ***I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You.***

Can you fathom that? Almighty God promises to personally hold you by the hand and watch over you?

We read in Psalm 91:

***He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.***

***² I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress,
My God, in whom I trust!"***

***³ For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper
And from the deadly pestilence.***

***⁴ He will cover you with His pinions,
And under His wings you may seek refuge;
His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.***

***⁵ You will not be afraid of the terror by night,
Or of the arrow that flies by day;***

***⁶ Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.***

***⁷ A thousand may fall at your side
And ten thousand at your right hand,
But it shall not approach you.***

***⁸ You will only look on with your eyes
And see the recompense of the wicked.***

***⁹ For you have made the Lord, my refuge,
Even the Most High, your dwelling place.***

***¹⁰ No evil will befall you,
Nor will any plague come near your tent.***

***¹¹ For He will give His angels charge concerning you,
To guard you in all your ways.***

***¹² They will bear you up in their hands,
That you do not strike your foot against a stone.***

***¹³ You will tread upon the lion and cobra,
The young lion and the serpent you will trample down.***

***¹⁴ "Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him;
I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name.***

***¹⁵ "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;***

***I will rescue him and honor him.
16 "With a long life I will satisfy him
And let him see My salvation."***

I quoted the entire Psalm because there is nothing that can really be left out. There are so many beautiful truths contained therein.

The scene here is a beautiful one. God says that His wings cover us as a hen covers her chicks. We are safe and secure under God's protection.

Lately in Sydney we have experienced some volatile weather. There have been a fair few thunder storms. Late on Monday evening I decided to take Zac for a walk to the park. When we left home the weather was fairly good. Suddenly about 20 minutes later, a dark storm cloud rolled in and it began to rain heavily. Naturally Zac and I headed for shelter. Thankfully there was a roofed area nearby that we could shelter. At one stage Zac got scared and wanted me to pick him up, which I did. He felt safe in my arms and settled.

Life is very often like this summer in Sydney. One moment the sun is shining and all is well. Next thing you know, it has got dark and stormy. If we are close to our Heavenly Father, if we are allowing Him to hold us by the hand, then we need not fear. We are sheltered by Him. When we reach out for Him to pick us up, He does. He loves us. In verses 14 and 15 of this 91st Psalm we read: ***"Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name. "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him."***

Another rendition of these verses says "Because he holds Me tight.." Oh how we need to cling to God, to hold on tightly all the time. His will and His ways for us are always good.

How quickly we forget. When the storm has passed and the sun reappears, how often do we wriggle out of the Father's hand and go it alone? What I would like to stress today is that we should never, not even for a moment let go of The Father's Hand.

When I walk Zac, I always keep him on a lead. I have a number of reasons for doing so, but one is so that I can protect him. While I hold his lead, I have a greater chance of steering him away from trouble and protecting him. For example if a big mean dog is approaching I can rein Zac in and keep him from getting in an altercation. I know that both he and I feel better when the lead is on.

We have a beautiful Hymn in Latvian whose opening verse says that the safest place for God's children to be is in His care, under the protection of His arm. The safest and most secure place to be in life is close to God. That is why He lovingly invites us to trust Him. He does not force us but invites us. In Psalm 32 David counsels us: ***"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.
9 Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding,
Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check,***

Otherwise they will not come near to you.

¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked,

But he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him.

¹¹ Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones;

And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.” (Psalm 32:8-11)

David knew from experience, how badly things go when you separate yourself from God and do it your own way.

May we commit to clinging to God. He loves us. May we strengthen our relationship with Him.

Let us daily read, pray and praise Him. May we seek His face and His will and live in His security.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.