

Hands - Holy or Defiled?

by Stella Paterson

It is with fear and trembling that I begin to share what the Lord has laid on my heart, lest my flesh get in the way of His message.

All too often we humans attempt to understand the things of the Spirit, with our inherent knowledge of good and evil. That very knowledge is a great obstacle when it comes to knowing the depths of the riches of what we can have in Christ Jesus. So here, we will look at several things the Lord has revealed. And I implore you to open your *ears* to hear what the Spirit would have you know, that He might bring you into a more intimate relationship with Jesus and our Father.

Speaking figuratively for the most part, do we fully grasp the importance attached to the way we *handle* those things our Lord considers *holy*? Is it possible that we fail to see how easily our hands can be defiled? Or that by *touching*, we can defile that which is *holy*? As simple as the answer is, we must not trivialize the importance of it, and the enormous impact *hands* can have on our spiritual lives.

What are hands?

Those strange-looking, yet dexterous instruments found at the end of our arms are multi-functional. But we will not focus on the physical aspect of these very necessary parts of our body. Rather, let us hear what the Bible says about them.

Both the Hebrew and Greek words for *hand* have the same definition--"power or means." In both Old and New Testaments we find the word used in various applications, but the meaning is always basically the same. There are some instances where reference is made to the "left hand," the "right hand" or "at hand," and these are translated from other specific Hebrew or Greek words. The words we are looking at are the Hebrew word *yad* which means "a *hand* (the *open* one (indicating **power**, **means**, *direction*, etc.)"; and the Greek word *cheir* which means "the *hand* (literally or figuratively [**power**]; especially [by Hebraism] a **means** or *instrument*)." (Emphases added)

Hands are symbolic of the power of the one whose hands they are. Maybe we could see our hands as an extension of *self*, or the *power of self*, as is borne out in numerous accounts throughout the Bible. One of the first of which was Genesis 3:22, when man discovered the power of *self*. "*And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he **put forth his hand**, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. . .*"

Defiled hands

Man's *hands* had already been defiled once his eyes were opened and he saw the capabilities that were his in his fallen state. It was now 'normal' for him to *take hold* of whatever he desired, and if he had taken and eaten of the tree of life, it would have been by the power of his own *hand*. It was for his, and our, protection that the Lord drove man out of the Garden of Eden, and away from the tree of life.

The devil is the father of lies, and he also 'fathered' flesh, which makes liars of all flesh. You see, the devil lied to Eve and deceived her into taking the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She gave it to Adam and they both ate the fruit, and ultimately were reduced to mere creatures of sinful flesh. When God asked them about it, Eve told Him the devil had deceived her. But Adam, already functioning in his new-found rebellion against the Creator, said "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." (Genesis 3:12) Eve was honest and spoke truthfully about being lied to, but Adam chose to blame God for his own failure to obey the Lord's command. 'Passing the buck' and lying have been around for a long time.

When Jesus was speaking to a number of Jews, some came to believe in Him, but others, not having ears to hear, still sought to kill Him. To those who believed Him, He said "*If you abide in My word, truly you are My disciples. And you shall know the truth, and **the truth shall set you free*** [Greek: 'exempt from mortal liability']." (John 8:31b-32) This is what He said to the others:

Why do you not understand what I say? Because you are unable to hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you desire to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar, and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. (John 8:43-45 EMTV)

While speaking with a sister the other day, she pointed out the correlation between lies and flesh, and ultimately Truth and Spirit. Flesh results in death but the Spirit gives Life. He is the Spirit of Truth! Think about these truths, and ask the Lord to reveal them and make them perfectly clear to you. A word study on "truth" will be coming soon. With it, we will be able to meditate on all that is said about truth in the New Testament, looking to the Holy Spirit for a greater revelation of Truth and Life.

Now let's look at a few passages in the Old Testament, where man's *defiled* hands were always against the purposes and plans of the Almighty. Without elaboration, the references speak for themselves.

And there you shall serve gods, the **work of men's hands**, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. (Deuteronomy 4:28)

For I [Moses] know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because **you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.** (Deuteronomy 31:29)

And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, in that **they have forsaken me**, and have burned incense unto other gods, and **worshipped the works of their own hands.** (Jeremiah 1:16)

In Ecclesiastes we find an admission of the futility found in the works of man's hands. "*Then I looked on all **the works that my hands had wrought**, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, **all was vanity and a striving [grasping] after wind**, and there was no profit under the sun.*" (Ecclesiastes 2:11)

If only we could understand that anything wrought by our own *hand* amounts to nothing more than trying to "catch wind," which is impossible. We are not speaking only about the obvious, when it comes to the *works of our hands*. There is a depth of truth that is absolutely vital for us to understand, and I pray the Holy Spirit will give us great revelation, so that we may be completely submissive to His voice. As James said, "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. **Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded** [Greek: 'two-spirited']*." (James 4:8)

Authoritative hands

Hands have also always been used as instruments of authority. The difference between *holy* and *defiled* hands is obedience and disobedience, as we see in the following examples:

When the Egyptians were pursuing Israel, and they came to the Red Sea, the Lord told Moses to stretch forth his hand. Out of obedience to the Lord, Moses' outstretched hand caused the Red Sea to part, and Israel crossed on dry ground. On its own, Moses' hand had no power--only in obedience to God was there power, because it came from God. (Exodus 14 & 15)

At another time, the Lord told Moses to **speak** to a rock so that Israel could have pure water to drink. Instead, Moses took his rod in his hand and struck the rock, out of which flowed water, but his disobedience caused the Lord to be angered. This is what the Lord then said to Moses and Aaron: "*Because you believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.*" (Numbers 20:12)

What a seemingly simple matter, because on other occasions Moses had been instructed to use his rod in a similar way. But he disobeyed the Lord's instruction to "speak." This made all the difference, and ultimately he was deprived of the privilege of leading Israel into the Promised Land.

Touching

In the Old Testament times, *touching* could bring curses or even death. To refer again to the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3:3 contains the words of Eve to the serpent, "*God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you **touch** it, lest you die.*" Then in the New Testament, we know that *touching* brought healing to some who *touched* Jesus, or to those whom He *touched*. Maybe "touch" would make another good word study.

Under the Old Covenant, the priests were the only ones who were allowed to carry the Ark of the Covenant. No one else was permitted to *touch* it, or even approach it. The Lord God had said He would meet with the people from between the wings of the cherubim and above the lid of the Ark, which was referred to as the "mercy-seat." It was a holy place because of the visitations there from the Lord, where He would give them commandments for the children of Israel.

Under the New Covenant, every believer has the Spirit of the Lord dwelling in them. He speaks directly to them, rather than through the leadership, as it was in Old Testament times. But how many *leaders* are there today, who *touch* the saints of God in an 'unholy' manner, with false doctrines borne out of misinterpreted Scriptures? *Touching* is done both physically and figuratively, but we are speaking of a 'figurative' *touching*, even though we do hear of 'physical' *touching* as well. But that is another matter, albeit very hurtful to the *touched*.

Because of a bias against women, some Bible translators have used words that mislead, rather than translating directly from the Greek. Two passages have been used to keep women *in their place* and to silence them. (1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35) If Paul had a problem with women speaking as led by the Lord, he would not have given such clear acknowledgment to the ones who had influenced him in his walk with the Lord. Romans 16, at first glance, appears to be nothing more than greetings Paul was sending to some of the saints. But upon studying the passage, checking word meanings from the Greek, we find some women who had been very instrumental--even in leadership. This is very controversial, I know, but it is only one example of the *touching* that takes place in the Lord's body. One half of His body (men) is attempting to paralyze (silence) the other half (women), when in Christ there is neither male nor female. This is a whole topic of its own so we'll leave it for now.

At the same time, it can never be emphasized enough, the harm that comes from some Bible translators' bias. Another prominent passage that is misused by

'leadership' in 'churches' is this one, in Hebrews: "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*" (Hebrews 13:17 KJV)

A less 'heavy-handed' translation is found in the English Majority Text Version. "*Obey your leaders, and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*" (Hebrews 13:17)

This book, written to the Hebrews, speaks mainly of the need to *entrust their spiritual wellbeing to Christ*. The admonition to *obey* and *submit* to the ministers of righteousness is not a command to obey hierarchical overlords in whatever they choose to demand. The onus is on the ministers to prepare the body of Christ to walk in complete trust in Him, always mindful of His soon coming.

The body of Christ is in a time of preparation for her meeting with Him, and any minister who, with his *hand*, pollutes her in any way through self-serving efforts to *rule over the church*, will pay an enormous price. As shepherds, they are to keep watch over the souls of the flock--not make themselves *fat* at the expense of the sheep, as Jeremiah prophesied with a firm warning to *pastors*. "*Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.*" (Jeremiah 23:1)

Are shepherds the only ones guilty of *touching* what they ought not? How often do we miss the Holy Spirit's leading, and rush head-long into places or situations where we have no business being? How often have we *touched* something sacred to the Lord, because we listened to our lying flesh? The Lord may be doing a work in another soul, and we, in our natural mind *decide* we ought to do something; whether out of sympathy or a sense that it is the 'Christian' thing to do. Maybe the Lord has allowed some difficulty to come into the life of another, and He has a purpose in it--most often, likely, to bring them to a place of forsaking self and having perfect trust in Him. But instead we, in our self-righteous *goodness*, try to relieve the suffering we see in that one who needs to have his eyes fully fixed on the Lord. Yes, there are times when we are to care for the widowed and fatherless, and these are obvious to us, but that is another topic.

Touching life

Allow me to share a couple of homely illustrations of how we may sometimes *touch* life with our *hands*.

While at a church camp in my late teens, a few of us were water-skiing. It was my first time, and they told me to hold the handle on the rope, lie back and let the life-jacket keep me afloat, with the skis sticking out of the water in front. They put

the boat in gear and started moving, but instead of my coming up on the skis and skimming across the water, I fell. I hung on tightly to the rope which dragged me down under the water when it should have pulled me up on the skis--had I not fallen. The skis were flailing around with my feet still in them as the speed of the boat dragged me along. I soon was in desperate need of air and, in my panicky thoughts, figured since I was down there, I would surely find some air to breathe. What a futile thought! By then they discovered I was no where to be seen, except for the rope, leading down into the water. They stopped and came back. At the same time, I let go of the no longer taut rope, and came to the surface. Had I only known to let go when I fell, the life jacket would have brought me to the surface. With my *hands*, I tried to pull myself up from below the surface of the water where others have drowned. If only I had surrendered my own attempts to survive, and let go, allowing the life jacket to do its work, I would not have ended up water-logged, covered in bruises and exhausted.

How often do we believe our life in Christ can be aided by *touching* with our *hands*? When all the while, if we were to let go and let God, He would carry us, so that we would not be so *bruised* by our own efforts? How often do we hang on for dear life, believing our efforts count for anything, when all the Lord wants is for us to simply rest in Him, and allow His *Life jacket* to raise us above the death that is inherent in our flesh?

The second illustration is from my three month stay in hospital in 2003. At the onset of Septic Shock, my lungs had begun to fill up, and I had great difficulty breathing. The memories of that night are quite sketchy, but in a somewhat delirious state I vaguely heard 'them' say they needed to "get her out of here." They rushed me to Intensive Care and started to insert the ventilator down my throat. Even though only semi-conscious at the time, I can still recall the feeling of suffocation. Several people were standing over me, holding me down while I tried to fight them with my *hands*. I thought they were the ones keeping me from breathing, but they were actually trying to save my life by getting me hooked up to a breathing machine.

There again, with my *hands*, I was trying to keep from losing my life. If I had only known to let go of my efforts and let them perform their life-saving work, they would not have had to tie me down then drug me to paralyze me.

How often do we struggle against what the Lord is trying to do, in order to preserve our life in Him? Instead of letting go and resting in His work in us, do we cause Him to have to 'paralyze' us with some situation or event to stop us from fighting against Him? As long as we are in this mortal body, our flesh will constantly war against the Spirit. What He asks is that we put our faith in Him--and REST!

In *touching* the Life He placed in us by His Spirit, we are using defiled *hands* to desecrate what is His holy 'territory.' He alone is able to make us alive and to perfect the work of regeneration that will make us fit for His Eternal presence.

In [Separated Unto the Holy Ghost](#), Andrew Murray said, "May God therefore help us all to be afraid of touching 'the ark of God' except as we are led by the Holy Ghost."

Some final thoughts

In spite of our flesh, God is greater. He will do whatever it takes, in His infinite wisdom, to bring any one of us to the place He desires us to be in Him. Our resistance to His working will only prolong those things He allows in our lives, to bring us into complete reliance on Him. He loves us that much! Jesus' words confirm it.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (John 10:27-29 EMTV)

This next passage speaks volumes. In Acts 17, Paul was speaking to the people in Athens about their worship of "an unknown God." (Verse 23) He proceeded to tell them about this God: "*The God that made the world and all things therein, he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples **made with hands**; neither is he **served by men's hands**, as though he needed any thing, seeing **he himself gives to all life, and breath, and all things** . . . for in him we live and move, and have our being.*" (Acts 17:24-25, 28)

Can we truthfully say that our *hands* are holy? Can we, without trepidation, lift them up to Him in praise, knowing that we have not *touched* or *defiled* that which belongs only to Him?

Let us pray this prayer with Andrew Murray:

God forgive me that I have not honored the Holy Spirit as I should have done, that I have grieved Him, that I have allowed self and the flesh and my own will to work where the Holy Ghost should have been honored! May God forgive me that I have allowed self and the flesh and the will actually to have the place that God wanted the Holy Ghost to have.
~ *Separated Unto the Holy Ghost*

