

The Hands of Jesus Bound

John 18:1-14

There is a spectacular double promise in the 49th chapter of Isaiah's book of comfort worth everyone's careful notice. With a love better than that of a mother, and a beauty more pure than a young bride's, the Lord opens his heart to his captive people in Babylon to look and hear: Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me. (Isa 49:16)

That is a double promise – hands and walls. Their walls, their temple was in rubble – torn down by the Babylonians, torn down by their own idolatry – their own hands! But the Lord says – your walls are continually before Me – a wall, a city, a temple made without hands, above, in the heavenlies.

And more, you are registered as citizens of that city, that church, that family – not in a book, with pen and ink; not even engraved on a stone or brick by hammer and chisel; no, but on the Lord's own hand – both hands; the Lord holding you, calling you by name, as though He would lose a piece of Himself if you were lost.

7 centuries later, the same God would speak on earth the same truth: I give unto them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand!

But as we come to the Garden in John 18, we find those hands of our Savior and our God, bound by the rough ropes of the soldiers in verse 12: arrested Jesus and bound Him – they tied His hands and brought him to the Jewish high priest.

This is the first violent act against Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as He is going to the cross. This isn't the first time evil men thought to capture him, to do him harm – some have been scheming to do this for years. This isn't the first time an attempt was made to take Him by force, but at other times Jesus miraculously passed through their midst. Even here, their first attempt found them pushed back and on the ground, when the Lord says, "I Am"!

But now they put their hands on His hands; they tie His wrists; they bind Him and lead Him away.

Let us begin our first point with the question – why His hands? What has He done? What accounts for this mob coming after Him in the middle of the night, to carry Him away as some dangerous man?

When we see police arresting someone, holding them on the ground or putting them against the car, we naturally wonder – 'what did they do? They must have done something bad.'

What did Jesus do? What did those hands commit that now they are shackled? Did he murder somebody – are his hands covered in blood, like Barabbas, the robber? Did he raise those hands in leading a riot, an uprising against the government, like others had done? Had stolen with those hands – taken what was not his – another man's property, another man's wife, another man's good name?

NO – none of these things could be found in those hands.

Instead, those hands were not only free from all guilt, they were full of good works. His hands touched the lepers and the sick, and made them whole; raised up the lame and made them walk; blessed the little children brought to Him and fed the thousands in countryside.

Those hands were lifted up – holy and harmless – in prayer, night and day. They labored for others; not a single finger raised against God or good. Those hands had just healed the ear of his enemy. They corrected the foolish zeal of his disciple. Those hands set free those taken in sin but now forgiven through His touch. Even Pilate would in a few hours wash his own hands in symbol of his being clean from Jesus' innocent blood.

No – those good hands – the hands of God in the flesh – could be no other than good, holy, kind, perfect. Jesus was, and continues to be, hated without a cause. This is man's sinfulness – resisting that which is godly, pure, and excellent. We would arrest the hand of God because our hands have reached out and pulled the forbidden fruit to our mouths.

But in truth the hands of Jesus are freely given more than they are taken. He whose hands did such wonders in His humbled state, could just as easily resisted arrest – He who was not a criminal.

What had Jesus just done to this entire band of soldiers – upwards of 200 men – He put them on their backs by a word! Did Jesus not say that 12 legions of angels could be summoned for his rescue? And was not one at the ready who had just comforted Him in his prayers, in his bloody sweat on that cold night?

This is our second point – He is given more than He is taken. He submits far more than He is forced. How can it be otherwise?! He whose hand made the universe! He whose mere word spoke the heavens and the earth into existence! He who right then was upholding all things by His power!

But why? If He could escape, why didn't He? What man in his right mind, seeing a way out of suffering, and oh, what suffering! The death of the cross! Who would not turn and take that other way? Jesus had just prayed – if this cup can pass from Me; but not my will but yours, Father, be done? This is the cup passing you by, Jesus! Why not take it?

He could, but then He could not be our Redeemer, could not be the Lamb of God, led innocently and freely to His sacrifice, His death.

Verse 4 says that Jesus knew all the things that were coming upon Him. He had been saying now for weeks and months that the Son must go to Jerusalem, to be handed over to the authorities, to be abused and beaten and scourged, then to be crucified, and rise again the third day.

What He does here is a picture of my salvation and yours. The authorities would come and arrest us for the sins we have committed, the crimes worthy of punishment before the judge. We will perish for our transgressions against God and man. But Jesus steps in to take our place. He draws them to Himself. See the words in verse 8: “if you seek Me, let these go their way.”

And not one of them is lost! NOT ONE!

That is such a wonderful truth – that these freely bound hands of our Lord were upon His disciples, protecting them, loving them, leading them – unworthy as they are, failing as they are!

So many wonderful truths of Jesus' purpose to come to be our Savior is fulfilled as He puts His mighty hands into the those of His enemies, and frees His followers – and frees us too! Jesus was bound that I might be free; tried and convicted that I might be released; broken and

crushed that I might be made whole and complete; He died so I might live; He was buried so I might rise with Him!

Do you see how your life is found and bound up in this One in this Garden on this dark night? Your life is not found and bound in anything less than your Creator so humbling Himself to take your place in your sins! How we try to make our lives to consist in the things that we have or enjoy – and not in Him! How we sin against His love!

So we have learned that Jesus' bound hands are so for more reason than the ropes used by the soldiers.

For what did they bind Him? No crimes of His, no sins of His!

Why then did He allow Himself to be bound when He could have escaped? His love for His people tied and bound Him.

This brings us then to our last point – that His hands were tied by others than these enemies and by His own permission.

His Father tied His hands here – as sure as Abraham tied Isaac and laid him on the altar and stretched forth as lamb for sacrifice. This again is not against the will of the Son, for the Son and the Father from all eternity covenanted to save a people – a great host which cannot be numbered – from their sins and the hell they deserve.

This meant the Son would freely give Himself into the hands of His Father's justice; the Father would freely give His beloved Son into the hands of judgment we deserved.

Jesus was also tied by the hands of devil – not only heaven but hell meet in this Garden. In Luke's parallel account, Jesus said "While I

was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.”

What is that power of darkness but the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Satan, who accuses the people of God for their sins?

The Witch of Narnia comes to Aslan the Lion and leads him away tied and bound to be slain.

The devil believes he is delivering the death blow to the head of the King, when in fact, it is His heel only; a heel is bruised, and in that bruising, instead the head of the serpent is crushed; death is killed; the grave is swallowed up in life.

Heaven and hell are here – but so are His sheep. You have tied Him up; your sins put Him there and wrapped around his wrists again and again, tighter and tighter.

His hands are bound in your hands; you lay your hand upon His head and pronounce your sins over the scapegoat, on the day of atonement.

Our sins arrested Him and put Him in chains; our sins mocked Him as King and put a fake reed for a scepter into his hand; our fists were lifted up in triumph as we cried out, Crucify, Crucify; our hands threw a cross beam over His shoulders and our hands drove the nails into his; our hands were raised to seal Him in His tomb.

The world and the church, God and the Devil, friends and enemies, all were against Him – in different ways and with different motives and with different parts to play.

But at the center – Jesus is not passive only. He is like mighty Samson of old, who could not be bound until he sinned away the secret of his

hair and vow. But this New Testament Samson is bound because of His faithfulness to His secret and His vow: ²⁶ *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; we have blessed you from the house of the LORD.* ²⁷ *The LORD is God, and He has given us light; bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. (Psalm 118:26-27)*

Jesus actively puts Himself at the center, takes into His mighty hands the pillars of unbelief and sin, and pulls them down upon his own head; an act, not of despairing suicide but calculated warfare. Indeed, when He pulls down the pillars of sin and death, He becomes the head of the corner and builds a new temple by his broken flesh and shed blood.

Here is the wonderful paradox with which we leave off today: the chains of Christ set free those bound in sin.

The great 53rd chapter of Isaiah outlines how the death of one – His grief, His being smitten by God, the Lord pleased to put this lamb to slaughter – silent, crushed for our iniquities, pierced for our sins, the scourging of our peace upon Him – and we are healed; we are spared what we deserved; we are justified; we have our sins carried away; we divide the spoil with our Great Conqueror!

See how freely and fully Jesus went to the cross for sinners! See how He treated His enemies – ‘Father, forgive them!’ ‘Weep not for me, mothers – oh, weep for your children who will not see or received this great gift given to them!’

Now if in His lowest and humblest He so lovingly spared not Himself to be your Savior, how much more now that this hard work is completed, now that He has said on the cross, ‘It is finished?’ How

much more now that He is at the right hand of the Father, as a Prince and a Savior, why? To grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins?! (Act 5:31)

As the truth dawns on us that all that He is doing in His sufferings, His agony, His being judged by God for our sins – our hearts cry out like Spurgeon described it – ‘stop, Lord; please stop; enough! I am not worthy of this! Return to heaven where you belong; I deserve to go to hell, where I belong. Such love is far, far too much for me!’

But that is the surprising way of our Savior, isn't it? The world says that God helps those who help themselves. But heaven says God helps those who are helpless, and leaves all the rest to help themselves.

His way is one of grace – pure and sheer grace. Are you your own Savior? Are you one who says, ‘I don't need a Savior – I am not bound in my own sin.’

Oh, come to the cross today! See what heaven thinks of your sin! See how hell wants you to turn and run from the cross unto a black and dark eternity! See the joy of those around you who have found this Jesus of Nazareth – who once marched against Him as an enemy, but who have bowed the knee, and found Him to be their all in all!

His bonds set us free; His yoke is easy; His burden is light.

Those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead - who delivered over because of our transgressions -

who was raised because of our justification.

Who was delivered? Jesus our Lord. By whom was the Lord Jesus delivered? The Father. For whom was Jesus the Lord delivered by the Father? those who believe, those to whom is credited His righteousness.

Jesus the Lord was Delivered over to death, to the cross, to the grave, for, because of, our transgressions.

The hands that delivered Him;
the nature of His being delivered over to death for our transgressions (the terms used earlier in chapter 3)
His full sufferings for sins - not His own but that of others; exclusive actions)