

The Hand That Holds You

I. Under Siege

A. What holds the psalmist captive?

1. Hunted

- a. Warfare - He is surrounded by an army troubles like a *"besieged city."* (v. 22)
- b. Fears for his life - *"They have hidden a net for me... terror on every side as they scheme against me, as they plot to take my life."* (v.4, 13)
- c. The *"exact problem isn't specified, but he asks [God] for protection using an arsenal of relevant metaphors... 'be my rock of refuge, my strong fortress.'" (Longman, 160)* We can pray these words in our distress.

2. Rejected

- a. A reproach
His actions have caused others to suffer
"Because of my adversaries I have become a reproach, especially to my neighbors." (v. 11)
- b. Shame
"Never let me be put to shame." (vv. 1, 17) or *"reap shame."* (Motyer, 75)
"Those who see me in the street flee from me." (v. 13)

3. Depressed

- a. Despair *"My eye is wasted from grief."* (v. 9)
"The eye looks ahead, fixes goals... The failing eye is a picture of loss of hope."(Motyer, 75)
- b. Sorrow
Grief over his sin: *"For my life is spent with sorrow...my strength fails because of my iniquity."*(v.10)
- c. Cut off
From Friends: *"I have been forgotten like one who is dead."*(v.12)
From God: *"I am cut off from your sight."* (v. 22)

B. What can hold you captive?

1. Dark circumstances

- a. Not the way it's supposed to be - Loss, grief, rejection, health, aging, rebellious children, unrealized goals

2. Reproach or shame

- a. Because of your actions; or the actions of someone else.
Can be the result of sin, but not in every case.
- b. Either way, you feel exposed or unrepresentable
Horizontal level, before people – *"an object of dread to my acquaintances."* (v. 11)

Vertical level, before God - our tendency is to run away and hide from God.

But David turns toward God:

"Make your face shine on your servant, save me in your steadfast love! O Lord, let me not be put to shame for I call upon you." (v. 16-17)

*"You will find that once shame has been addressed in your relationship with God, it won't constantly attack you in your human relationships. God identifies it. God experienced it. You are not alone."
(Welch, 41.)*

3. Sorrow over sin

"Without suffering personal anguish over betrayal or moral failure, it is impossible to grow in the Lord. Christ came to teach us this (John12:27, Heb. 2:10-11). The more one acknowledges that his rescue has come only due to God's abundant grace, the more the believer will love the Lord and hate all that detracts from Him." (Robertson, ESV notes)

II. Grasping the hand that holds you

A. The basis of David's appeal to God

1. God's righteousness

"In your righteousness deliver me!" (v. 1)

2. God's name

"For Your name's sake you lead me and guide me."(v. 3)

"Not so much the thought of his own good name put to shame, as that of God's." (Kidner, 148)

B. God holds your circumstances in His hands

"But I trust in you, O LORD; I say 'You are my God. My times are in your hand.'" (v. 14)

1. He is sovereign

a. Over evil

Those who "regard worthless idols, speak insolently against the righteous", and "plot" against them. But God will "preserve the faithful, but abundantly repay the one who has acted in pride."(vv.18,20,23)

"Here is a God who searches and knows hearts, motives, intentions, and outcomes. He is there in all His glory as the searcher of hearts. He is there as the enforcer of moral order. He is there in macro management; He is there in micromanagement. He is God!" (Motyer, 79)

2. He is faithful

The Psalmist recalls past deliverance when God has:

a. Known - "the distress of my soul."(v.7)

God intimately identifies with him in it. "You have searched me and known me, You discern my thoughts, You search out my path, You lay your hand upon me." (Ps.139)

b. Seen – "my affliction."

"This means more than that God merely took note of it. It means God did something about it...he came to David's rescue." (Boice, 271).

c. Delivered - "You have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy."

The word delivered conveys a sense "of handing over into [God's] custody." (Kidner, 148)

d. Set firmly - "Set my feet in a broad [spacious] place."

From running in fear and hiding in the darkness of caves, to being set free "where there is plenty of footing, and room to stand firmly." (Motyer, 75)

3. He is present

"In the cover of your presence You hide [those who take refuge in You]. You store them in your shelter." (v. 19,20)

a. You are covered, no longer exposed.

Jesus absorbed your shame:

Because he was cutoff - "While on a rescue mission of love, He was misunderstood, insulted, betrayed, denied, mocked, spit on, cursed, abandoned, stripped and crucified." (Welch, 178)

So that He could identify with you:

*"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not **ashamed** to call them brethren." (Heb. 2:11)*

So that he could make you presentable:

*"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to **present you blameless** before the presence of His glory with great joy." (Jude 24)*

C. God holds your eternal destiny in His hands

"Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God." (v. 5)

1. **Jesus took these words on his lips** as He was dying on the cross.

a. But Jesus only quoted the first half of this verse. (Luke 23:46)

b. Jesus wasn't redeemed from the *"hand of his enemy."*

c. Jesus suffered death to conquer death - our last enemy.

But *"God's rescue [of Jesus] came in the form of resurrection." (Longman, 163)*

d. The hands that hold you were stretched out on the cross, so that the second half of verse 5 is true for you:

"You have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God."

2. **He has you in His grip**

a. Satan, sin and death have no hold over you. Jesus' resurrection proves these enemies have been defeated.

Jesus has conquered what held us captive:

"When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive." (Eph. 4:8, Ps. 68:18)

b. He won't let go

"I give eternal life to [My sheep], and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand." (John 10:28)

III. Our Response

David ends this psalm with praise and an exhortation to trust and love God.

Taking the offensive:

"Defensive strength is not enough: the right initiatives are as vital as the right refuge." (Kidner, 148)

A. Trust God

1. *“Be strong, and let your heart **take** courage.”* (v. 24)

You aren't the source of courage, God is. Courage comes from believing that God is your rock, fortress, and deliverer, and that He is storing up goodness for you (vv. 3, 8, 19).

Or:

2. *“He shall strengthen your heart.”*(v. 24)

This translation *“seems more meaningful: an assurance of help to those who dare to count on it, rather than a double exhortation. But in either case it does not promise an end to trouble: rather the strength to meet it.”* (Kidner, 150)

3. So *“wait for the Lord”* (v. 24). After all, your *“times are in His hands.”*

B. Love God

*“Love Yahweh, all you His **beloved.**”* (Motyer's translation, v. 40)

1. Loving God is the natural response to *“trusting in”* and *“and rejoicing in [God's] steadfast love.”* (vv. 7,8)

2. A process: *“We have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love...”* (1 John 4:16)

“You can never love God too much, and you can never trust God too much. But you will do both well whenever you reflect deeply on the degree to which He has loved you.” (Boice, 275)

Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever faced a crisis where you felt such distress that you felt cut off from God and or friends? What helped you get through it?
2. When you have struggled with guilt, sorrow or shame, how have you dealt with it? Will David's prayer help you to approach God? How?
3. How does David's request to *“let the wicked be put to shame; let them go silently to Sheol,”* strike you? Do you believe that is an appropriate request for us to pray today? Why?

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