

## The Hands of Christ are Bound

John 18:12 & Matthew 26:55-56, Lent Evening II

February 27, 2013

Beloved of the Lord.....It is always in the nature of man to think he can do whatever he wants to. The natural man does not like to think he is weak or daily in the hands of God's mercy, but he likes to think, we like to think, our life is in our own power and we can do whatever we want. When God became incarnate, namely Jesus added to His divine nature a human nature of flesh and blood, the whole world was opposed to Him. Though Jesus was harmless as a dove, men hated Jesus because He exposed their sin. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Their evil works being made known, the Jews made several attempts to murder Jesus but each one failed. In John seven they sent soldiers to capture Jesus but they returned empty handed saying, "never a man spake like this!" There was also the time Jesus was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. When He admonished the Jews for their unbelief the Bible says, "All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way." They were either paralyzed in their body, or blinded, but the point is there was nothing they could do against the Son of God. His time had not yet come. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Tonight then as we see our dear Lord Jesus being "captured" and "bound" with cords, let us understand His hands were wounded, that our hands might be free to serve the Lord in gladness, for by His stripes we are healed.

There was not only Judas, but a large band of soldiers that evening sent to capture Christ, even a multitude. **FIRST** there were the soldiers of the Temple-guard, namely police whose duty was to maintain order in the Temple. **SECOND**, there were the lightly armed servants of the high priest, like Malchus in particular whose ear was cut off but then healed. **THIRD** there were the enemies of Lord Jesus themselves, the chief priests, captains and elders. They had previously plotted with Caiaphas to capture and murder Jesus and

apparently they wanted to see this capture first hand. The **FOURTH** group of people in the multitude were the Romans soldiers. The High Priest Caiaphas, had requested these from Pilate in case there was an uproar from the people who followed Jesus. These soldiers were a smaller detachment from the five or six hundred stationed at the Roman fortress of Antonia. During the Passover Pilate was sure to have many soldiers stationed in Jerusalem because the Jews were known to be rebellious and they hated Rome.

Since it was the time of the Passover, there was also a full moon that night, for we know the Passover was always observed on the 14th of Nissan. Nevertheless this multitude came with "lanterns and torches", for they expected to hunt and search for Christ. They didn't know Jesus was waiting for them to offer Himself. The Bible says, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth." Although the chief priests and elders had been very determined not to murder Christ at the time of the Passover, "lest there be an uproar" among the people, when Judas came offering to betray Jesus, they just couldn't resist. Their lust for blood blotted out the common sense they held before because it was God's will that Christ be offered right on the Passover Day. When we thus see the blemish of our sins and the impurities of our sinful thoughts, even the multitude of our transgressions, we need to remember Jesus offered Himself as the Paschal Lamb for us. As long as this world stands, this Paschal Lamb is a sweet smelling savour to our God whose wrath passes over our sins falling upon Christ on the cross. He burned like a sacrifice in anguish, because our sins were there. To believe in Christ as God would have us believe, is to have the blood of Christ upon the doorposts of our heart. Being cleansed by this blood we should daily "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth." Lying is not an option. The truth is the only option for God commands it.

Jesus spoke only the truth when He admitted He was Jesus of Nazareth. We remember when Jesus said, "I am he", "they went backward, and

fell to the ground." Think now of how foolish it is for them to stand back up on their feet again and continue with the arrest? Such is truly a sign of Satan's power in them, and it was indeed "the hour of darkness." Yet Jesus still speaks as the light, and notice His question to the multitude, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me." By these words Jesus is appealing to their conscience. If this arrest was just and right, why didn't they arrest Jesus in the day publicly in the temple? And what was His crime? They didn't charge him with any crime so this was not lawful but lawless. This was revolution and rebellion.

This is why Jesus said in John three, "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." This passage condemns the soldiers that night, but it also condemns us. What sins do we commit under the cover of darkness? We don't gossip in front of the neighbor we are gossiping about, but we do it behind their back, in darkness. Likewise when no one is looking, we search the internet to find things our eyes should not see, but God sees all we see and He searches the heart and knows. Psalm 94 says, "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" At times we wonder, "How can God stand me? How can God look at me when I can't look at myself? How can He see me as a dear child when I am so wicked and vile and full of sin and rebellion?" But this answer is easy if you are a believer, though we struggle to believe. God looks upon believers through the merits of His beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased. He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but passed from death to life.

It is not then in any wise something our hands have done, but all is about the hands of Christ. Hymn 389 says, "Not what these hands have done, Can save this guilty soul; Not what this toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole. Thy work alone O Christ, Can ease this weight of sin; Thy blood alone O lamb of God can give me peace within." These hands which the soldiers bound belonged to a True Man of flesh and blood, yet these were God's hands. No ropes or cords could ever hold such hands, nor could any chains or steel cables bind them. These were the hands of our Creator. We know this because the Lord says

in Isaiah 54, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD." We are servants of the Lord today, because our Lord Jesus Christ first served us. Jesus says in Isaiah 43, "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

These were the hands that had touched the eyes of the blind giving sight. These were the hands that placed in the midst of His disciples. These were the hands that washed the disciples' feet. These were the hands that "took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi." These hands gave life to dead hands, and later these same hands would give life to the world, by being nailed to a cross. Look at your own hands and consider there are no wounds there. Then look at His who were wounded for you.

These hands give us the peace of God which surpasses all understanding. This is the peace our hearts enjoy knowing for His sake, all our sins are forgiven. Even after Jesus died and rose again in glory, Jesus kept and retained the nail prints in His hands and feet, as a sign and token of His love for us today. That is why we sing "Take my hands and let them move, At the impulse of thy love." It matters not if the world uses their hands against us for evil, even with swords and staves, Jesus has used His hands for good, and these wounded hands give us life everlasting. Amen.