

January Devotional: The Hand of the Lord

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I have been gripped by following references to the “right hand of God” and “the arm of the Lord” in my own Bible reading. Throughout scripture we see the “right hand” of the Lord and his “outstretched arm” as repeated images used to show God’s mighty power, judgement, salvation, deliverance and personal intervention. God’s right hand also describes his authority as reigning King and his power over his enemies. If we follow through from the beginning of scripture to Revelation we see not only his right hand at work on behalf of his people but also a need for his people to remain in his hand by their love and obedience. When they do not worship him and give their hearts to another, they are vulnerable to the hand of the enemy. When they take control themselves without listening to the Lord, they are trusting in their own right hand and this never brings safety, good relationships, provision or victory.

There are powerful narratives and prophecies, Psalms and letters in both Old and New Testament that can draw us to a higher expectation, a deeper trust and real surrender to the God’s “right hand”. Some of these passages contrast God’s “arm” or “right hand” with our own right hand- trying to do things in our own strength, struggling to trust God completely, anxiously trying to control or doing things our own way in pride, without seeking the Lord. Think for example of Abraham, and Hagar as he was anxiously waiting for God to bring descendants and tried to work out God’s plan by his own “arm” (Genesis 16). In Numbers 13 and 14 God’s people are unable to enter the promised land and a generation dies in the wilderness because they panic at the possibility of fighting inhabitants by their own “arm” and forget the power of God’s right arm to fight for them.

When Jesus comes into the world as God’s right hand bringing salvation of all the nations, his people do not recognize his outstretched arm. The religious leaders never expected the right hand of the Lord to look like the hand of a tiny baby, a strong carpenter or a compassionate healer who touches the lepers and the sinners. The right hand of the Lord worked salvation for us when the hands of Jesus were stretched out on the cross. The Holy Spirit has been poured out so that each of us can recognize his right hand at work and be free to welcome Jesus to take our lives into his hand. Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of God and raised us to be with him and live in that royal place of a new identity and a cleansed heart. Again and again in our daily thought patterns, desires, reactions, prayers, words, actions, in how we use our time and money, in our families, work and ministries, we need to choose to surrender our right hand for God’s right hand.

Here are just some of the key passages for us to pray over. (NIV translation). Make sure to welcome God to speak to you by his Holy Spirit then read the passage prayerfully before you look at the questions. Write down some key verses and any specific things the Lord is asking you to pray on, remembering his mighty hands are loving, healing, redeeming, freeing hands.

Try to do this slowly, over a number of days and take time to pray honestly at each point, expecting the Lord to move in you through each Scripture.

1 Samuel 7:3

So Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

1 Samuel 12:10

¹⁰They cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned; we have forsaken the LORD and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths. But now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve you.'

1. Look at these 2 verses from 1Samuel. What do they say about our response to God if we expect him to deliver us out of the hands of the enemy?
2. What do we need to turn away from and which words describe how we return to the Lord?
3. Is there any area of my heart where I have "forsaken the Lord" or put other things before him?
4. Am I valuing, celebrating, seeking wisdom from or putting my energy into something in my culture that is not from God?
5. Is there any area of my family, my relationships or my heart that is vulnerable to the hand of the enemy because it is not fully surrendered to the Lord?

Psalm 44:3

³It was not by their sword that they won the land,
nor did their arm bring them victory;
it was your right hand, your arm,
and the light of your face, for you loved them.

1. What does this verse say we cannot do by our own arm?
2. How does the 2nd half of this verse describe the Lord's personal intervention? How does this encourage you?
3. Is there any place where I am trying to fight for myself or for others by my own "right arm"?
4. What are the battles in me or around me that only the Lord can fight by his "right arm"?
5. How do these verses speak to me about the value of time in prayer?

Psalm 31:14-16

¹⁴But I trust in you, LORD;
I say, "You are my God."

¹⁵My times are in your hands;
deliver me from the hands of my enemies,
from those who pursue me.

¹⁶Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.

1. How does verse 14 show an attitude of our hearts that welcomes God's hand to move in our lives?
2. What does verse 15 say about what it looks like to live a surrendered life?

3. How does verse 16 echo the end of Psalm 44:3 (above)? How does this connection between God's hand, his face shining and his love, touch you?
4. Is there any part of my heart where I am struggling to trust the Lord as "my God"?
5. How do I need to surrender more of "my times" into God's hands:
6. For the past? The present? The future?
7. What would it look like for me to commit my life into God's hands in a way that leads me out of fear of the enemy or fear of people or of anything that comes against me?

Isaiah 41

¹⁰ So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

¹¹ "All who rage against you
will surely be ashamed and disgraced;
those who oppose you
will be as nothing and perish.

¹² Though you search for your enemies,
you will not find them.

Those who wage war against you
will be as nothing at all.

¹³ For I am the LORD your God
who takes hold of your right hand
and says to you, Do not fear;
I will help you.

¹⁴ Do not be afraid, you worm Jacob,
little Israel, do not fear,
for I myself will help you," declares the LORD,
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.....

²⁰ so that people may see and know,
may consider and understand,
that the hand of the LORD has done this,
that the Holy One of Israel has created it.

1. Look at verse 10. What does God promise you and what will he do with his right hand?
2. Where do you need to receive those words today?
3. Read verse 13 again. What does this verse say God will do with our right hand if we let him?
4. How does this tender picture of surrendering your right hand (our own strength, wisdom, ideas, pride, anxious control) into his right hand, challenge and comfort you?
5. Is there any place in my life, family, work or ministry where I am trying to do things by my own right hand?
6. What would it look like for me to receive these words and let God put my right hand into his?
7. Look again at verse 20. When we surrender our right hand for the Lord's right hand what is the outcome in others?

Psalm 73:23

²³ Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.

1. How does this verse echo Isaiah 41? (Above)
2. Where do I find it so hard to believe these promises or to live in this certainty, trust and surrender instead of self will, control or fear? (Bring those things to the Lord today)

Isaiah 64

⁸ Yet you, LORD, are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.

1. What does this verse say about God's hands and our relationship with him?
2. What would it look like for me to put myself fully into God's hands:
As my Father?
As my potter?
3. What particular areas can I begin to pray this way, seeing myself as clay in God's good, skillful hands and as a child trusting and listening to my Father?

Isaiah 62

³ You will be a crown of splendor in the LORD's hand,
a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

1. How does this verse describe what it looks like to belong to the Lord?
2. What do these beautiful words say about what God can do if we surrender to his hand in our lives?

Colossians 3

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

1. Verse 1 says that we have been raised with Christ. Where does this verse say Christ is?
2. How does this honored place in verse 1 encourage us about who we are in Christ and what defines our life; where we live now?
3. Do I believe this for myself and how would my heart and life be changed if I did?
4. If we have died and our life is hidden with Christ in God at his right hand, what does verse 1 and 2 say we can do?
5. Where do I struggle to set my mind on things above where Christ is exalted at the right hand of God? Where do I get consumed by the daily, the ordinary, myself, work, family and earthly struggles, fears or temptations?

Psalm 16

⁸ I keep my eyes always on the LORD.
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken....

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

1. What does verse 8 promise for us if we have the Lord “at our right hand”?
2. How does verse 11 describe life at the right hand of God?
3. How do these images of being with the Lord, of a steady heart, being lead in God’s life, of joy in his presence and eternal pleasures, encourage you today?
4. What are my expectations of living “at the right hand of the Lord” and how do these verses lead me to believe him for something more?

Psalm 18:35

³⁵ You make your saving help my shield,
and your right hand sustains me;
your help has made me great.

1. What does this verse promise about the Lord’s right hand for us?
2. Where do I to receive this truth?
3. How would it change my relationship with God and my prayers, if I did trust the Lord and accept that I need him to sustain, shield, and help me constantly by his right hand?
4. How could I pray this for others?
5. Is there any place where I am trying to do for others what only God can do by his right hand?
6. How could I point them to him rather than me?

Isaiah 43:13

¹³ Yes, and from ancient days I am he.
No one can deliver out of my hand.
When I act, who can reverse it?"

John 10

²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

1. What do Isaiah 43 and John 10 both say about the Lord's hand?
2. How does John 10:27 speak about this promise for eternity?
3. How do these verses challenge us to believe God's power and the authority of his hand?
4. How do they encourage us to trust his love and his desire to keep us as his own?
5. Are there any fears or doubts that I need to bring to Jesus in response to these verses?
6. Is there any way that I need to submit to the authority of his hand eternally, over every spiritual power, circumstance or person in my life.
7. How could I praise him and pray these verses from John and Isaiah for others?

Isaiah 8:11-12

¹¹ This is what the LORD says to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people:

¹² "Do not call conspiracy
everything this people calls a conspiracy;
do not fear what they fear,
and do not dread it.

¹³ The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy,
he is the one you are to fear,
he is the one you are to dread.

1. Look at verse 11. What does this verse say about something else the Lord will do by his hand is on us?
2. Read verse 12 again. How does fearing what everyone around us fears mean we are walking in their way not God's way or not living in his hand?
3. Are there any specific fears that drive my thoughts, reactions and plans more than my reverent fear of the Lord himself?
4. Look verse 13. How does this verse promise us it is possible to fear God instead of dreading everything else?
5. Are there any specific fears that drive my thoughts, reactions and plans more than my reverent fear of the Lord himself? (Give them to him.)
6. Where in my life would following the Lord's ways, with his strong hand teaching me, lead me deeper into worship and peace?

Acts 11

²⁰ Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

1. What does verse 21 say about the Lord's hand when the believers shared Jesus? What was the outcome?
2. Where do I need to pray more expectantly for the Lord's hand to be "with me" for daily witnessing or ministry?