

## “These Hands”

by John Isaac Edwards

There are more than 1,000 references to man’s hands in the Bible. Lots of different hands are mentioned: heavy, stayed up hands (Ex. 17:12), weak and strong hands (2 Chr. 15:7), clean hands (Ps. 24:4), hands folded in sleep (Prov. 6:10), hands that shed innocent blood (Prov. 6:17), building and wrecking hands (Prov. 14:1), working hands (Prov. 31:13), idle hands (Eccl. 10:18), wicked hands (Acts 2:23), and the list goes on. Paul reminded the Ephesian elders, “Yea, ye yourselves know, that *these hands* have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me” (Acts 20:34). The apostle Paul had extraordinary hands. This brief writing calls attention to “*these hands*.”

1) **Ministering Hands.** In his meeting with the elders of the Ephesus church, Paul made reference to his hands having “...ministered...” (Acts 20:34). Paul was a crafty preacher, in that he was of the tentmaking craft (Acts 18:3). Paul wrote the Corinthians, “And labour, working with our hands...” (1 Cor. 4:12). He taught the Ephesians, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he

may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). To the Thessalonians he said, “...and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (1 Th. 4:11). Again, “Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 Th. 3:8-10). Paul worked with his hands so as to provide things necessary in his gospel work.

2) **Relief-Sending Hands.** Acts 11 finds the prophet Agabus signifying a “...great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar” (Acts 11:28). “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea...” Now notice how relief was sent in the first-century: “...Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:29-30). Men involved in the handling of church funds need blame-

avoiding, honest-providing hands. “Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:20-21).

3) **Beckoning Hands.** In the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, “...Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said...” (Acts 13:16). Acts 21:40 records, “...Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people...” When permitted by Agrippa to speak for himself, “...Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered...” (Acts 26:1). To beckon is to make a gesture with the hand. A good preacher will make good use of hand-gestures as he preaches. Remember Ezekiel? God told him, “...prophecy, and smite thine hands together...” (Ezek. 21:14).

4) **Miracle-Working Hands.** Acts 14:3 reports concerning Paul and Barnabas, “Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.” In Acts

19:11 we read, “And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul.” An example is on Melita island where Paul shook a venomous viper off his hand without harm or hurt and “...laid his hands on..., and healed...” Publius’ father (Acts 28:3-4, 8). Through these miracle-working hands the word of God was confirmed (Mk. 16:16-20; Heb. 2:3-4). Since the word of God has been fully revealed and confirmed, there is no need for these miracle-working hands today.

#### 5) *Spirit-Giving Hands.*

The Holy Spirit was given “..through laying on of the apostles’ hands...” (Acts 8:17-19). Acts 19:6 tells of Paul’s work in Ephesus: “And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.” There were nine such supernatural gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12-14). Since these were imparted through laying on of the apostles’ hands, and there are no apostles living on earth today: no one alive today is in possession of them, for there is no one living to give them!

6) *Bound Hands.* Agabus appears on the scene in Acts 21, “...took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles” (Acts 21:11). This came to pass as “...the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains...” (Acts 21:33). Thus Paul wrote the Colossians, “...Remember my bonds...” (Col. 4:18). Hebrews 13:3 teaches, “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them...” Timothy was instructed, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (2 Tim. 1:8).

7) *Fellowshipping Hands.* Galatians 2:9 says, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship...” These hands only

reached so far. Galatians 2:4-5 reveals, “And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” 2 John 9-11 sets the perimeters of where these hands reach. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not...” (v. 10).

#### 8) *Letter-Writing Hands.*

Many references are made to Paul’s letter-writing hands (1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Th. 3:17; Philem. 19). Are you aware most of the New Testament was written by these hands? They were bold and reminding writing hands (Rom. 15:15), warning writing hands (1 Cor. 4:14), commandment writing hands (1 Cor. 14:37), truth writing hands (Gal. 1:20), and brief, understandable writing hands (Eph. 3:3-4). From these letter-writing hands we learn what to do to be saved and stay saved!

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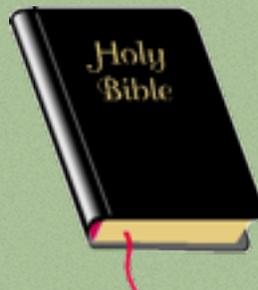
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