

Our Father's Care (Isa. Xlix: 16)

by Seth Rees

The sermon emphasizes God's unwavering love and care for His people, assuring them of His personal knowledge and intercession in their lives.

Scripture: Psalm 37:23, Psalm 139:1, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 49:16, Romans 8:31, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25, Hebrews 13:5, 1 John 2:1, Revelation 21:2

Topics: "Gods Love", "Divine Providence"

Description

Seth Rees preaches about God's unwavering love and care for His people, using Isaiah 49:16 as a response to Israel's cry of feeling forsaken. He emphasizes God's personal knowledge of each individual, His everlasting love, and His constant intercession for His children. Rees encourages believers to trust in God's faithfulness, reminding them that their names are graven on the palms of His hands, symbolizing His eternal remembrance and care. He assures that God's plan for each life is meticulously mapped out and guided by His wisdom, even in times of distress or when it seems like everything is falling apart.

Transcript

"Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me." Isa. 49: 16.

This was an answer to the cry of Israel, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me." It was an hour of distress, an hour of discouragement, but God lifted up His voice and made the announcement of my text. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." God has always had infinite care of His own. Christ gave His life for the Church, as well as for the world, " that He might sanctify it and present it unto Himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." When Israel has been discouraged, and cried, "The Lord hath forgotten me, my God hath forsaken me," there always came back something helpful, something cheering -- as we find it in my text this morning, "Behold I have graven thereupon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me."

In the previous verse He has called attention to the most constant, relentless affection that this world ever knows, the love of a mother, and then He undertakes to teach Israel and all the world that His love for you is infinitely greater than the affection of the fondest mother that ever lived. How I wish that we might believe it this morning! How it breaks our hearts as we come more and more to know that it is so. I notice in this text first, the announcement of His personal knowledge of each one of His children. That word "thee" suggest to me that He knows everyone of us by name, that we are not lost in the masses, or loved in the aggregate; we are not dashed in the billows of humanity upon the distant shores of destiny but

singly and alone, God knows and loves everyone of us. It is a great comfort to remember that He knows us by name, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. As the oriental shepherd knows everyone of his flock of perhaps a thousand sheep by name, so that he only has to speak the name and it will lift its head and come, so we are known personally, individually, every one of us singly and alone, known of the Lord. Sometimes we forget each other and fail to recognize each other when we meet, though we may have had sweet communion in other days, but God knows us and He never fails to recognize us, and if you meet somebody whom you think ought to know you and they do not seem to recognize you, remember that the Lord always knows you and knows where you are and never fails to recognize you or the cry of your voice, no difference how dark the hour or how strange and aggravating the circumstances. Glory to His precious name forever! He knows what you are doing and what you are suffering; He knows what you are capable of enduring and will see to it that there is never too much for you to bear.

Satan has great power but he is limited; he is not always able to bring into active use all his power and then he is limited in the use of what power he has. He is under certain restraints; there are certain barriers which he dare not cross. Our strength is measured so that Satan comes out against us with carefully measured power, so that with every temptation there shall be a way of escape that we shall be able to bear it.

God not only has personal knowledge of us, but a personal love for us. What greater proof can He give of His never failing affection and fidelity? He has employed the strongest figure possible for the forceful presentation of His truth, and yet how many there are who question His love, His faithfulness and care. The Lord help us to see that Satan can never confront us with difficulties or surround us with sorrow so deep but that there will be poured out upon us the warm tender affection of the compassionate Christ.

I have read recently where a mother followed her worthless, profligate son until he was incarcerated for life, then at the door of the prison she insisted upon having a little hut where she lived and spent her days as near to him as she was permitted, and when he was dead and buried in that prison yard she insisted upon her dead body being laid in the same place of shame, hoping that in death her bones might touch his unworthy dust. She followed him and followed him until everybody said, "Let him go," but, no, her mother heart never released itself from him until it was still in death.

Now, in this text the comparison is drawn and the teaching is clear that there never has been any human affection approximating the tender, compassionate affection of God for His people. You may picture to yourself the deepest, most tender, most noble type of human affection and then dare to step out and believe that God loves you infinitely more than that. It occurs to me sometimes that if we believed more in His love we would bear ourselves more noble, if we had more confidence in His faithfulness we would be ashamed to ever intimate that it was possible for Him to fail. If we would study more carefully God's faithfulness to His people, in all generations, there would rise up in our souls a courage that would dare to believe in the face of every opposing element that God is with us and will see us through.

Sister, no difference how dark it may be, God loves you; no difference how the people turn against you, He is your friend; no difference how things may pile up around you and how the tempest may rage, God will not forsake you, the God of Israel is moved with compassion at every sight of suffering. There is never a tear that hangs on your cheek, never a sigh, never a heave of your breast or a heartache but that the compassionate Christ sees and understands it all and is moved with great tenderness toward you, and as He wept over Jerusalem who rejected His love, if you are true to Him, His great heart yearns over and

sorrows for you, and He wants to take away all your anxious care, discouraging sorrow and cause you to rejoice in His presence. He never failed Israel; it was Israel who failed Him. He says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Again, He not only knows and loves us but I notice that His care of us is everlasting. He says, you are "graven upon the palms of my hands." Praise God for something that will stand during all the roll of the centuries. Not printed, not written, not stamped -- graven, cut in. Thank God for the privilege of having our names in the palm of the hand of the Everlasting Father. This figure is doubtless taken from the Jewish custom. When in bondage and the city in ruins they used to put on their arms and on their hands pictures of Jerusalem, of its walls, and often look at them with tearful eyes. So He says, you are always before my eyes and held in everlasting remembrance. Just as an architect traces the details of a building and keeps it always before him while the building is in construction, so all the plans of your life are made out and held before Him in constant love and unforgetfulness. A mother may be true, her affection may be as pure and as strong as earth can furnish but she may forget. But here is somebody who always has us in everlasting remembrance. We are kept right before His eyes all the time -- graven upon the palms of His hands.

Brother, did you ever think that the plan of your life is mapped out before God, just as the plans of a building are mapped out before the chief mechanic? Did you know that the things that come to you if you are a child of God, come not by accident, not by misfortune, but as a part of the Divine plan, and God will permit nothing to come but that He will work out for your good if you trust Him? Sometimes these things come in rough wrappings, but they should be accepted as a part of God's great plan for you and He will make them a blessing. He has the map, and if He is allowed, will guide you according to the Divine counsel of Heaven. He will send you to the places He wants you to go, and give you just the work He wants you to do, and though there will be difficulties and hindrances and trials, He will see to it that nothing comes that will not serve to develop your spiritual strength and help you best to glorify Him. How this takes away all fretting, unrest, and planning! For once it puts us where we have nothing to say. Our plans are made and our lines are in His hands, they fall unto us in pleasant places; they are made out in the counsel chamber of the skies where they are able to do everything and know all that lies in the future and they know how to guide us for our greatest good and His highest glory. We have nothing to fear.

The lesson is made the more striking when I remember, that at the very time He spoke these words, the walls of Jerusalem were down and the Temple in ruins, and yet He says; "Thy walls are continually before me." There will be times in your experience when it will seem like everything is down, when it will seem as though the Temple of God is in ruins, even in the Holiness movement as it stands today I see so many schisms, failures and splits, and splits of the splits, and failures in failures, that it makes me want to turn to a text like this, and throw my arm around it and hear the Lord say, "Thy walls are continually before me." How glad I am that He knows the walls are down; He knows the Temple is in ruins, He knows the people who once preached a full salvation have gone astray, some into skepticism, some into fanaticism, some into formalism, all sorts of isms are making inroads on every hand, but He says this morning, "Thy walls are continually before me." When all is down and there is no hope, Israel is discouraged, everything as black as night, He says, "I have graven you upon the palms of my hands." "I know the walls are down but I love you, I will not forsake you, and the time will come when the walls will be built again." The time will come when the temple will be in good repair, and when the city --the New Jerusalem -- will come down out of Heaven, and then we, arrayed as a bride adorned for her husband, will go up, enter in and be with the Lord forever. "The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His." God is good and I am going to trust Him. If the walls are down and the temple is filled with birds and

beasts and bats and every unclean thing, God is all right and He has a people; He has folks who are written upon the palms of His hands. He is true to them and they are true to Him. Glory to God forever! Brother, the next time everything seems to be going to pieces and everybody seems to be failing, spread yourself out over this text and shout.

Yesterday was one of the most tearful days, from morning till night, that I have ever spent. I wept among strangers, I wept on the road; I do not know what people thought, and it does not give me much concern, but as God was manifesting Himself and giving me such visions of His glory and of His faithfulness and undying love, I was lifted to realms where earth can not hinder and people are unable to obstruct the splendor of the vision. Glory to God!

The next thing suggested in the text is intercession. If our names are in the palms of His hands, these are the very hands He holds up in the presence of the Father when He prays for us. Remember that there is not an hour that Jesus is not there. He is there for you and for me; He prays for us. If I were passing through some strange, inexpressible sorrow, some heart rendering trial or test and I was in this room and could hear Brother Pennington and Brother Godbey in an adjoining room praying for me it would greatly strengthen me. If I could hear Brother Godbey, the dear old saint who has been a conqueror for so many years, say, "Lord bless Brother Rees," I should certainly feel blessed and would rise up with new strength to fight the battle of the Lord. But do you know that just in the adjoining room, Jesus is praying for us? Though we are on earth, since we have been saved and sanctified it is the very vestibule of Heaven, just in the adjoining room, and Jesus is praying for us. In the hardest trial, in the longest strain ever permitted to come, Jesus with both hands uplifted is praying to the Father for you. If you could only hear Him it would help you out of the fog, you would put on strength in His name; and this suggests the thought of the atonement. When I see the names engraved in the palms of His hand, I know they must be closely identified with the nail prints -- the Blood -- for it was these very same hands that were pierced. The Father looks at your name, at the very same instant He sees the Blood. The atonement stands between you and difficulty, trial and the devil; between you and the coming judgment; between you and an offended God. There stands Jesus Christ with your name graven in the palm of His right hand, in the prints of the nails.

A poor soldier was court-martialed for desertion. The judge was about to pass sentence when he stopped for a moment and said, "Is there anybody present who has anything to say for Jack." An old veteran stepped up, lifting his empty sleeve and stood there in silence for a moment, the tears rolling down his face, then only said, "He is my brother." The appeal was sufficient. The soldier had lost his arm in his country's service and he had a right to appeal for his brother's life. The sentence was canceled and he was pardoned.

The howling wolves of earth and hell may be all around you but there is One who stands in the court of Heaven, who has a right to appeal for you. He has a right to throw back His sleeve and throw up His arm and show the prints of the nail, and your name graven in His hand and say, "Spare him for my sake." Thank God He is always heard. The Heavens may seem to be brass when you pray, but they never are when Jesus prays. It may seem that you can not get anything through, but there is somebody at work at the instrument at the other end of the line and He can make it plain to the Father. Christ is there; He knows how.

A little girl with her heart running over with affection for her sick father went through the garden and gathered a bouquet, but she was so small that she gathered not only flowers but red clover, white clover, some weeds and a mixture of things you could hardly call flowers. But her mother took it first, straightened

it up, took out the weeds, made it presentable and returned it to the little girl. With childish glee she carried it to her father and he was delighted. We pray sometimes and get in some weeds. We mumble and mutter and stammer and ask for many things and if we should get all we ask for we would have a strange looking bouquet, but our prayers pass first through the hands of the Son of God and He takes out the weeds and grass and fixes them up so that the Father is delighted to see them. Glory to God for the intercession of Jesus Christ, for uplifted hands or a lost world and a saved Church!

Again, the thought of confession is suggested here. If you are on the palm of His hands and His hands are lifted up before the unveiled world and before the galleries of the skies He confesses you in Heaven and on earth, to angels and to men. The Scriptures declare that when we confess Him in the presence of a wicked world, He confesses us in the presence of the angels of Heaven. When we honor Him here, He honors us there.

Sister, you may be small and unknown, your surroundings strange, and your sphere limited, the people may despise you. Some probably will, if you are true to God, but you may be well known in the galleries of the skies, you may pose in the metropolis of the universe. The Son of God has already told the angels of Heaven about you. Many a time you have confessed Him with trembling and with tears, and He has gladly confessed you up there amidst the shouting of angels and the music of Heaven. If you never have much honor down here you may have it up there where honor is the most desirable. We are not asking for honor here. If there is anybody here who wants people to put flowers on your casket after you are dead, anybody who thinks of giving money or doing anything to perpetuate your name, I beg you to come to this altar and get sanctified. After you get the blessing you will get such a view of eternal things, you will care for nothing that this world can bestow. You will want nothing but the recognition of God and the angels. It will be enough to stand with a company of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and shout victory forever through the Blood. Glory be to God! O there is a great day coming!

I wish we could get through trying to get something and wondering whether we have it or not, fearing to go to sleep for fear we will lose it. There is a place we may come to where our names are graven on the palms of His hands. We may come to a place where it is easier to go on than to go back. Let us not fear to backslide. Let us go on forever.

Centuries ago a certain Mohammedan mosque was erected and had the name "Mohammed" placed in great letters over the door. A Christian architect had the construction of the building and before the plastering was put on, he had the name of "God" placed over the door, carved in the stone with this text: "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom," and then the plaster covered it over. The building stood for centuries, the plastering finally fell off, the name of Mohammed was gone. The mosque stands today, and if you will visit it you will see the name of "God," and "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." Everything that really comes from God is going to last forever. Everything that comes from man will perish and go into oblivion. I am delighted to announce to you this morning that there is a place of security from our own experience and our own interests where we will have both hands with which to pull men out of the fire. We do not have to be lean and hungry and needy; there is a place of plenty, a place of such absolute forgetfulness of your own concern and interests that you will be wholly absorbed in the salvation of souls, and your whole time and all your energy and every God given power will be poured out in seeking the lost.

A friend wrote me recently to drag my heart with a drag net and see if I had not let in selfishness, an unholy ambition, a desire to lead, and so forth. I said, "It has been dragged; He has dragged it." If I should undertake it I would not know how. I have turned it all over to Him long ago and promised to keep my

hands off. He must look after all the searching, and must do all the keeping. I know very well I have put no pig in the well and I have no use for a drag net. It has been years since I have thumped myself to see if I was sanctified. My eyes are upon Him, and I purpose in my heart to follow the cloudy pillar by day and the fiery cloud by night. If you will keep your eyes upon Him, you will be able to follow Him with great ease and pleasure, and He will see you safely through.

One more thought. As sure as Jesus went up, He is coming back again, and He will come with outspread hands, as He went up, so that He will not only announce the Holiness crowd to the angels but to the nations of the earth and they will know them who are true blue, who are the faithful ones who went through with Jesus. When He comes again His hands will be stretched out in blessing to the saints, and with judgment to the sinners. The nations of the earth will then know who are faithful, and if you are sanctified wholly you can go into the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Beloved, we can afford to wait for this announcement and for our vindication; we can afford to wait for recognition; the people do not have to believe now that we are sanctified. You can have the blessing when they think you have not got it and when they announce that you are backslidden. O the tender faithful love of a compassionate Christ can never break down! But, brother, you will have to get sanctified wholly to live with this crowd. You can hang on to the movement, you can have your name on the list and be covered with buttons, badges and ribbons and still folks will not know you, but if you will get the real thing you will have to put on no outward sign that people may know who you belong to. If God gives you the blessing and people refuse to believe it, it will only increase your joy that you know about it, and you will be so glad that you know you have it and that your name is written in the palm of His hands that you will not care to answer those who doubt. The God who took me when I was between the plow handles, the God who took me when nobody else wanted me, when I was down and could not get up; He who took me when He knew I was nothing, is not going to drop me now. O glory to His name!

Beloved, is your name graven, is it cut in? There is a sort of a bearing, there is a sort of a polish that comes in court life; there is a sort of holy independence of the world that comes when you are fully surrendered to God and sanctified wholly so that people will generally understand that you have gotten through with the world and are going with God forever.

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