

The Servant's Hands

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon emphasizes the importance of making everything an opportunity for spiritual purposes, and recognizes the dignity in menial tasks.

Scripture: Leviticus 8:24, Ecclesiastes 9:10, Matthew 5:30, Acts 20:34, Romans 6:19, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 4:12, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Ephesians 4:28, Colossians 3:17, Colossians 3:23

Topics: "Consecration", "Service"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of the hands in spiritual service, illustrating how they symbolize our inner disposition and commitment to God. He draws parallels between the literal and symbolic meanings of hands, highlighting that true spirituality encompasses manual work and daily tasks, as demonstrated by Paul and Jesus. The act of consecrating our hands to the Lord signifies dedicating all our activities to His service, transforming mundane tasks into opportunities for spiritual ministry. Sparks encourages believers to recognize that their hands reflect their inner willingness and spirit of service, urging them to engage in all work as an act of worship. Ultimately, he calls for a life where every action is done for the glory of God.

Transcript

"Moses put of the blood... upon the thumb of their right hand" (Lev. 8:24).

"If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off" (Matt. 5:30).

"Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities" (Acts 20:34).

"We toil, working with our own hands" (1 Cor. 4:12).

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands..." (Eph. 4:28).

Manual Work Not Inconsistent with Spirituality

There is a literal and there is a symbolic application of this word. We can clearly see the literal side from the words of Paul as to himself and in what he said to the Corinthians and the Ephesians; and he said that in this matter he gave them an example. It is something to note that this one who was so very thorough-going in his adverse handling of believers before his conversion, who persecuted the Church and cast the believers into prison, is now seen to be the one who has got his hands converted as well as

his heart, and is using his hands so thoroughly for the good of the Church, on behalf of the Lord's people. It is impressive that this servant of God who, after the Lord Jesus, was surely the greatest of the dispensation, did not cloister himself with his knowledge, his revelation, and cut himself off from the practical things of daily life, but went forth, and even laboured with his hands in the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

That must convey its own message to our hearts, showing quite clearly for one thing that, if such a man will do that kind of thing, there is a dignity about the menial tasks of the daily round with which the hands are occupied. All can be lifted on to the very high level of a true spiritual ministry. That is very simple.

Consecrated Hands Full for the Lord

Now it represents of course a definite act of consecration. Just as with Aaron and his sons the right hand was definitely and precisely touched with the blood, implying that what the hand represented was now consecrated to the Lord; that is, all the activities of life were for the Lord by a definite and precise act of consecration; so Paul says "Present your members...", "Present your bodies..." (Romans 6:19; 12:1). It is something deliberately done - the whole of our bodies, represented by the right hand, are placed on that physical, active, practical basis of service to the Lord. It is to be remembered that the very word 'consecrate' means to fill the hands and there is no doubt about it that Paul's hands were full; they were consecrated hands in that sense; they were full for the Lord.

Hands Express Inner Disposition

Now that leads to the symbolic significance of hands in the Word of God. They are the symbols of the person. How often we can discern and recognize the hidden personality by a gesture! Very often the whole of the inner life is betrayed thereby. You know what is going on inside, what is being felt and thought, by a gesture of the hands. We need not follow that very closely, but it is quite true. The hand is a symbol of the inner person. And in the Scriptures, it is always taken as signifying whether a person is diligent or otherwise. We speak of willing hands, but what we really mean is that the hands are the exhibition of an inner willingness. Unwilling hands reveal that there is lacking inwardly a diligence, a willingness. The kind of hands reveals the state inside; it is the spirit of the person. So when the Lord says, "If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off," He is not speaking literally at all: it is symbolic language. You do not do any moral good to yourself by cutting off a hand literally. You do not change your disposition. The cause of stumbling is what prompts your hand to act, what lies behind the hand. To cut off the hand really means to get behind the hand to what was the cause of the act, and to deal with that. You can run through the Scriptures and see how much there is everywhere about the using of hands as indicating the state of the life within.

Now look at the Lord Jesus. Just run your eye over the Gospel by Mark, having in mind the hands of Jesus, and see His hands actually at work. You know 'Mark' is the Gospel of the Servant, and here He is, everywhere and continuously using His hands in His ministry, signifying that here is the true servant spirit; eager, consecrated hands full, showing something of the Spirit that is in Him.

In His case, and in the case of Paul, you find that the hands are the symbols of the spirit of service, and, indeed, of an overflow of that spirit, for there is never any need to point out to them that something should be done, that something is called for; they are at it day and night. Such is the spirit that is in them.

Everything to be Done as Unto the Lord

Well, the Lord says, Let the Blood be upon your hand - that is, separating it from all work that is unworthy of the Lord, all that belongs to self-interest, and separating it, consecrating it to God that it shall be a hand full for HIM. Remember that Paul used his hands in making tents for the support of himself and of those who were with him, and to spare the saints embarrassment. My point is this, that Paul would never have said, 'Oh, to serve the Lord you must, of course, regard all that sort of thing as belonging to another realm; making tents, washing dishes, cleaning floors, digging gardens, that is not the spiritual realm; if you are going to serve the Lord, you must have your Bible in your hand all the time and be talking.' No, Paul would not allow that division. He recognized the tremendous importance of making everything the opportunity for spiritual purposes, and he saw that ordinary, daily work could be a channel, a vehicle, of serving the Lord. So may the Lord have our hands in this sense - that He has in us a spirit of unreserved abandonment to His interests along any line in which He can be served.

"WHATSOEVER thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccles. 9:10).

"WHATSOEVER YE DO, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

"WHATSOEVER YE DO, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17).

"WHATSOEVER YE DO, work heartily, as unto the Lord" (Col. 3:23).

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