

KEPT FOR THE MASTER'S USE

by

Frances Ridley Havergal

Moody Colportage Library #96

Copyright © 1895

CHAPTER THREE

OUR HANDS KEPT FOR JESUS

“Keep my hands, that they may move
At the impulse of Thy love.”

WHEN the Lord has said to us, “**Is thine heart right, as My heart is with thy heart?**” the next word seems to be, “**If it be, give Me thine hand.**”

What a call to confidence, and love, and free, loyal, happy service is this! and how different will the result of its acceptance be from the old lamentation: “**We labor and have no rest; we have given the hand to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians.**”

In the service of these other lords, under whatever shape they have presented themselves, we shall have known something of the meaning of having both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit. How many a thing have we taken in hand (as we say) which we expected to find an agreeable task, an interest in life, a something towards filling up that unconfessed aching void, which is often most real when least acknowledged; and after a while we have found it change under our hands into irksome travail, involving perpetual vexation of spirit!

The thing may have been of the earth and for the world, and then no wonder it failed to satisfy even the instinct of work, which comes natural to many of us. Or it may have been right enough in itself, something for the good of others so that as we understood their good, and unselfish in all but unraveled motive; and yet we found it full of tangled vexations, because the hands that held it were not simply consecrated to God. Well, if so, let us bring these soiled and tangle-making hands to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands to Him, asking Him to clear and cleanse them.

If He says, “**What is that in thine hand?**” let us examine honestly whether it is something which He can use for His glory or not. If not, do not let us hesitate an instant about dropping it. It may be something we do not like to part with; but the Lord is able to give us much more than this, and the first glimpse of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord will enable us to count those things loss which were gain to us.

But if it is something which He can use, He will make us do ever so much more with it than before. Moses little thought what the Lord was going to make him do with that rod in his hand! The first thing he had to do with it was to cast it on the ground, and see it pass through a startling change. After this he was commanded to take it up again, hard and terrifying as it was to do so. But when it became again a rod in his hand, it was no longer what it was before, the simple rod of a wandering desert shepherd. Henceforth it was the rod of God in his hand (Exodus 4:20) wherewith he should do signs, and by which God Himself would do marvelous things (Psalm 78:12).

If we look at any Old Testament text about consecration, we shall see that the marginal reading of the word is, “*fill the hand*” (e. g. Exodus 28:41; I Chronicles 29:5). Now, if our hands are full of other things, they cannot be filled with the things that are Jesus Christ’s; there must be emptying before there can be any true filling. So if we are sorrowfully seeing that our hands have not been kept for Jesus, let us humbly begin at the beginning, and ask Him to empty them thoroughly, that He may fill them completely, for they must be emptied.

Either we come to our Lord willingly about it, letting Him unclasp their hold, and gladly dropping the glittering weights they have been carrying, or, in very love, He will have to force them open, and wrench from the reluctant grasp the earthly things which are so occupying them that He cannot have His rightful use of them. There is only one other alternative, a terrible one,—to be let alone till the day comes when not a gentle master, but the relentless king of terrors, shall empty the trembling hands as our feet follow Him out of the busy world into the dark valley, for “**it is certain we can carry nothing out.**”

All that has been said about consecration applies to our literal members. Stay a minute, and look at your hand, the hand that holds this book as you read it. See how wonderfully it is made; how perfectly fitted for what it has to do; how ingeniously connected with the brain, so as to yield that instantaneous and instinctive obedience without which its beautiful mechanism would be very little good to us! Your hand, do you say? Whether it is soft and fair with an easy life, or rough and strong with a working one, or white and weak with illness, it is the Lord Jesus Christ’s. It is not your own at all; it belongs to Him. He made it, for without Him was not anything made that was made, not even your hand. And He has added the right of purchase—He has bought it that it might be one of His own instruments. We know this very well, but have we realized it? Have we really let Him have the use of these hands of ours? Have we ever simply find sincerely asked Him to keep them for His own use?

Does this mean that we are always to be doing some definitely “religious” work, as it is called? No, but that all that we do is to be always definitely done for Him. There is a great difference. If the hands are indeed moving at the impulse of His love, the simplest little duties and acts are transfigured into holy service to the Lord.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws.
Makes that and the action fine.”

A Christian schoolgirl loves Jesus; she wants to please Him all day long, and so she practices her scales carefully and conscientiously. It is at the impulse of His love that her fingers move so steadily through the otherwise tiresome exercises. Some day her Master will find a use for her music; but meanwhile it may be just as really done unto Him as if it were Mr. Sankey at his organ, swaying the hearts of thousands. The hand of a Christian lad traces his Latin verses, or his figures, or his copying. If He is doing his best, because a banner has been given him that it may be displayed, not so much by talk as by continuance in well-doing. And so, for Jesus' sake, his hand moves accurately and perseveringly.

A busy wife, or daughter, or servant has a number of little manual duties to perform. If these are done slowly and leisurely, they may be got through, but there will not be time left for some little service to the poor, or some little kindness to a suffering or troubled neighbor, or for a quiet little time alone with God and His Word, and so the hands move quickly, impelled by the loving desire for service or communion, kept in busy motion for Jesus' sake.

Or it may be that the special aim is to give no occasion of reproach to some who are watching, but so to adorn the doctrine that those may be won by the life who will not be won by the word. Then the hands will have their share to do. They will move carefully, neatly, perhaps even elegantly, making everything around as nice as possible, letting their intelligent touch be seen in the details of the home, and even of the dress, doing or arranging all the little things decently and in order for Jesus' sake. And so on with every duty in every position.

It may seem an odd idea, but a simple glance at one's hand, with the recollection, "This hand is not mine; it has been given to Jesus and it must be kept for Jesus," may sometimes turn the scale in a doubtful matter, and be a safeguard from certain temptations. With that thought fresh in your mind as you look at your hand, can you let it take up things which, to say the very least, are not "for Jesus"? things which evidently cannot be used, as they most certainly are not used, either for Him or by Him? Cards, for instance!

Can you deliberately hold in your hand books of a kind which you know perfectly well, by sadly repeated experience, lead you farther from instead of nearer to Him? Books which must and do fill your mind with those other things which, entering in, choke the Word? Books which you would not care to read at all, if your heart were burning within you at the coming of His feet to bless you? Next time any temptation of this sort approaches, *just look at your hand!*

It was of a literal hand that our Lord Jesus spoke when He said, "**Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table**"; and, "**He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me.**" A hand so near to Jesus, with Him on the table, touching His own hand in the dish at that hour of sweetest and closest and most solemn intercourse, and yet betraying Him! That same hand taking the thirty pieces of silver! What a tremendous lesson of the need of keeping for our hands! Oh, that every hand that is with Him at His sacramental table, and that takes the memorial bread, may be kept from any faithless and loveless motion!

And again, it was by literal wicked hands that our Lord Jesus was crucified and slain.

Does not the thought that human hands have been so treacherous and cruel to our beloved Lord, make us wish the more fervently that our hands may be totally faithful and devoted to Him? Danger and temptation to let the hands move at other impulses is every bit as great to those who have nothing else to do but to render direct service, and who think they are doing nothing else.

Take one practical instance—our letter-writing. Have we not been tempted, (and fallen before the temptation), according to our various dispositions, to let the hand that holds the pen move at the impulse to write an unkind thought of another; or to say a clever and sarcastic thing, or a slightly colored and exaggerated thing, which will make our point more telling; or to let out a grumble or a suspicion; or to let the pen run away with us into flippant and trifling words, unworthy of our high and holy calling? Have we not drifted away from the golden reminder, **“Should he reason with unprofitable talk, and with speeches wherewith he can do no good”?**

Why has this been, perhaps again and again? Is it not for want of putting our hands into our dear Master’s hand, and asking and trusting Him to keep them? He *could* have kept; He *would* have kept! Whatever our work or our special temptations May be, the principle remains the same, only let us apply it for ourselves.

Perhaps one hardly needs to say that the kept hands will be very gentle hands. Quick, angry motions of the heart will sometimes force themselves into expression by the hand, though the tongue may be restrained. The very way in which we close a door or lay down a book may be a victory or a defeat, a witness to Christ’s keeping or a witness that we are not truly being kept.

How can we expect that God will use this member as an instrument of righteousness unto Him, if we yield it thus as an instrument of unrighteousness unto sin? Therefore let us see to it that it is at once yielded to Him whose right it is; and let our sorrow that it should have been even for an instant desecrated to Satan’s use, lead us to entrust it henceforth to our Lord, to be kept by the power of God through faith for the Master’s use.

For when the gentleness of Christ dwells in us, He can use the merest touch of a finger. Have we not heard of one gentle touch on a wayward shoulder being the turning-point of a life? I have known a case in which the Master made use of less than that—only the quiver of a little finger being made the means of touching a wayward heart.

What must the touch of the Master’s own hand have been? One imagines it very gentle, though so full of power. Can He not communicate both the power and the gentleness? When He touched the hand of Peter’s wife’s mother, she arose and ministered unto them. Do you think the hand which Jesus had just touched must have ministered very excellently? As we ask Him to touch our lips with living fire, so that they may speak effectively for Him, may we not ask Him to touch our hands, that they may minister effectively, and excel in all that they find to do for Him? Then our hands shall be made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob.

It is very pleasant to feel that if our hands are indeed our Lord’s, we may ask Him to guide them, and strengthen them, and teach them. I do not mean figuratively, but quite literally.

In everything they do for Him, (and that should be everything we ever undertake), we want to do it well—better and better. Seek that ye may excel. We are too apt to think that He has given us certain natural gifts, but has nothing practically to do with the improvement of them, and leaves us to ourselves for that. Why not ask Him to make these hands of ours more handy for His service, more skilful in what is indicated as the next thing they are to do?

The “kept” hands need not be clumsy hands. If the Lord taught David’s hands to war and his fingers to fight, will He not teach our hands, and fingers too, to do what He would have them do? The Spirit of God must have taught Bezaleel’s hands as well as his head, for he was filled with it not only that he might devise cunning works, but also in cutting of stones and carving of timber. And when all the women that were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, the hands must have been made skilful as well at the hearts made wise to prepare the beautiful garments and curtains.

There is a very remarkable instance of the hand of the Lord, which I suppose signifies in that case the power of His Spirit, being upon the hand of a man. In I Chronicles 28:19, we read: “**All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.**” This cannot well mean that the Lord gave David a miraculously-written scroll, because a few verses before, it says that he had it all by the Spirit. So what else can it mean but that as David wrote, the hand of the Lord was upon his hand, impelling him to trace, letter by letter, the right words of description for all the details of the temple that Solomon should build, with its courts and chambers, its treasuries and vessels? Have we not sometimes sat down to write, feeling perplexed and ignorant, and wishing someone were there to tell us what to say? At such a moment, whether it were a mere note for post, or a sheet for press, it is a great comfort to recollect this mighty laying of a Divine hand upon a human one, and ask for the same help from the same Lord. It is sure to be given!

And now, dear friend, what about your own hands? Are they consecrated to the Lord who loves you? And if they are, are you trusting Him to keep them, and enjoying all that is involved in that keeping? Do let this be settled with you Master before you go on to the next chapter.

After all, this question will hinge on another. Do you love Him? If you really do, there can surely be neither hesitation about yielding them to Him, nor about entrusting them to Him to be kept. *Does He love you?* That is the truer way of putting it; for it is not our love to Christ, but the love of Christ to us, which constraineth us. And this is the impulse of the motion and the mode of the keeping. The steam-engine does not move when the fire is not kindled, nor when it is gone out; no matter how complete the machinery and abundant the fuel, cold coals will neither set it going nor keep it working. Let us ask Him so to shed abroad His love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, that it may be the perpetual and only impulse of every action of our daily life.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
