

IN THE GRIP OF GOD

“On the basis of the energy of the grip of His strength with which He energized Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and made him sit at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above every ruler, and authority, and power, and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in the coming one. And He has made all things subject under His feet, and given Him as a head over the church, which is His body, the fulness of the one who fulfills all things in all” (Ephesians 1:19-23) (Author’s translation).

The world seems today to be in the grip of the enemy. He seems to be able to ravage God’s creation at will and hold His creatures hostage to His own nefarious designs on the world. Apparently Satan assumes that he still has some chance of foiling the purposes of God as he sought to do in the Garden of Eden. He has certainly wreaked havoc on the earth, and captivated the minds of a very large number of people. What this satanic interlude has to do with God’s ultimate design and purpose is not really clear. The more we speculate, the more we confuse the issue. The extent of God’s final recovery is known only to Himself. It would be logical to assume the extent of the recovery would have to outweigh the extent of satanic devastation enough to avoid the conclusion that, in a certain sense, Satan had been victorious.

We must first establish the point that the capacity of the human mind to fully comprehend God or His purposes is exceedingly limited. Any attempt to articulate these matters tends, as always, to beggar the reality. We are “called unto His glory,” but the word “glory” as applied to human concepts has been trivialized and is certainly a far cry from the meaning of the glory of God. We apply the word to flags and entertainment and hamburgers, but we have little understanding of what the word means as far as God is concerned. Whatever it is, it is overwhelming to the human mind. As God spoke to Isaiah in ancient days, he declared, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55-8,9). In the early beginnings of God’s dealings with mankind, Abraham, faced with similar perplexities, expressed his confidence in leaving these matters in the hands of God. *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (Genesis 18:25). Ultimately, the meaning and execution of God’s purposes on the earth must be left to Him. Satan has a good deal of power and is allowed extensive latitude, but his final defeat is clearly expressed in many passages of Scripture. In the Apocalypse (Revelation) his end is said to be that he will be cast into the “bottomless pit,” whatever that really means.

But what about the effects of Satan’s “reign of terror” on the earth? We must remember that whatsoever is spiritual is eternal and whatsoever is material is transient and temporal. Satan is the ruler of this world, but he reigns over decadence. *“The world passes away and the desires of it, but he who does the will of God remains forever”* (I John 2:17) (Author’s translation). Jesus’ kingdom was, according to Him, “not of this world.” Christ reigns over the eternity of the Spirit realm. Perhaps Satan may be likened to the mayor of a ghost town. From His entire universe, God extracts the priceless and the real,

and leaves Satan to preside over the empty shells and hollow facades of illusion. Despite all appearances to the contrary in this world, the Bible is very explicit and clear about the omnipotent sovereignty of God over His universe. After the resurrection of Christ, His throne was said to be **“far above every authority and ruler and power and lordship, and every name that is named not only in this age, but in the coming one, and He has subjected all things under His feet.”** Whatever may be the ultimate purposes of God for His universe, we may be sure that they will be inexorably executed.

And we are in His “grip.” To the Ephesians, Paul says that **“We are energized on the basis of the energy of the grip of His strength . . .”** and further, **“We are in the grip of His power through His Spirit in the inner man”** (Ephesians 3:16).

There are a number of words in the Greek language that denote “strength,” but they are not all exact equivalents. One must look for the distinctive nuance or “flavor” of a given word. The Greek word used here, often translated “strength” has more of the sense of “dominion” or “control” or “grip.” It is the word from which the categories of power are derived—“autocracy,” “aristocracy,” “democracy.” Autocracy usually means control in the hands of one person, usually referred to as “autocrat.” Aristocracy means control in the hands of a few, and democracy means control in the hands of the people. Theocracy refers to control by God—the governing process of the children of Israel in the Old Testament prior to the establishing of the monarchy under King Saul. God ruled through the use of mediators in the person of prophets and judges. All of these categories of power are derived from the word we are considering—*kratos*. Our security with God lies in the grip or control that He has over our spirits, and not in the unreliable religious exercises or behavior patterns of our own human flesh.

There are countless expressions of this truth throughout the Scriptures. There are some that are particularly explicit. **“I will never leave you nor forsake you”** (Hebrews 13:5). **“Unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy”** (Jude 24). **“Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”** (Philippians 1:6). In Old Testament times, David (who ought to know) expressed this truth in Psalm 37—**“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth Him with His hand”** (23,24). And Paul, in his soliloquy of his own human weakness and God’s power (Romans 7,8) makes it very clear that in spite of his own weakness, **“God works all things together for good to those who love Him [agape—care about Him] and to those who are the called according to His purpose”** (Romans 8:38,39). (All who come to Him and care about Him are “the called according to His purpose”). And he concludes by saying that **“Nothing shall separate us from the love of God—neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things coming, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Romans 8:38,39).

I Peter 5:10, which we have been reviewing for several months, shows us unequivocally that we are carried along in the river of God's grace and benevolence (good will); that we are destined to be partakers of His glory; that we are restored and stabilized by His power; and that we are held forever in the grip of His Mighty Hand. David, the quintessential symbol of human weakness and divine grace, expressed this truth in Psalm 27—***"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"*** (Psalm 27:1). And again, in Psalm 73:26, he says, ***"My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."***

David Morsey

June 1988

www.harvestermission.org