

The Importance of God's Right Hand in Coming Out of Sin

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As human beings and Christians, we often have difficulty relating to our Creator. After all, it is still a difficult thing to comprehend God, and His incredible nature, character and power. Yet we are told, in the very first chapter of the book of Genesis that man is made in the image of God.

There is a physical resemblance between the created and the Creator. While this is encouraging, further biblical evidence makes plain that man has the proclivity to create images of God that are false, and can lead one into idolatry. God clearly commands all men not to create any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath (including a man), or under the earth as a means of worshipping Him.

I believe that God took this into account, knowing that we would have difficulty relating to Him, especially since His image is not visible to the human eye. While we can see His hand in the intricacies of His creation; this is a bit of a quandary. God wants us to relate to Him, but we must make sure we do not make Him into a man, which is far less than who and what He really is.

Still, God desires to communicate to us in ways that we can appreciate, and better understand, who He is and frankly, He personifies Himself to accomplish this task.

In His word, God describes Himself through human body parts, to convey knowledge about Himself, His nature and about His plan of salvation for mankind.

As we begin the keeping of the Days of Unleavened Bread, I would like to take a closer look at two foundational principles that are keys to getting the most out of this festival, and for our Christian lives. The principles are "choice" and "remembrance." We are going to look at these, as they are depicted through the imagery of the right hand in the Bible—both God's and man's.

We are going to start off, in a somewhat strange place. Before we get into the right hand, let us cover the left hand, in order to show the clear delineation between the two.

Now, when we think of the left hand, or being left-handed, it will trigger, in most people, thoughts of the tribe of Benjamin, as described in the book of Judges. I get the impression, from Judges 20: 16, that while not all descendants of the tribe of Benjamin were left-handed, all left-handed people came from the tribe of Benjamin. Ironically, the name Benjamin means 'son of my right hand'.

While this unique physical trait set Benjamin apart from the rest of the tribes of Israel, the left hand is depicted in scripture as subservient to the right hand.

Let us look at one example, in the book of Leviticus. Chapter 14 discusses the laws for cleansing lepers.

lev 14:15-16 And the priest shall take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. "Then the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD.

Note that the oil is poured into the left hand of the priest, and the right hand is used in the sprinkling of the oil before the LORD, and the anointing of the leper. In fact, if we were to read on, we would see that the right side of the body is consecrated over the left.

So, while the left hand is one of skill, and a unique attribute that sets apart the tribe of Benjamin, the left hand is subordinate to the right hand—in the duties of a priest.

Let us look at an example involving our Boss. In the case above, we see an example pertaining to man. I want you to see, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the importance of the right hand, in scripture.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

There are a number of scriptures I could have read, but I chose this one, because the principle of remembrance is its foundation. Jesus Christ did not sit down at the left hand of the Father, but at the right hand. The right hand signifies a number of things, a few of which are honor, power, and victory.

The first point that I would like to discuss, involves both remembrance, and choice. A choice by God to call us, and we are admonished to remember God's choice, every day of our lives, and never take it for granted.

The calling of the Israelites was an act of choice, on God's part. God called the Israelites, not because they were great in number, or deed, but because He loved them, and He was keeping His promise to Abraham. So, it can be said, that God's choosing of the Israelites began with Abraham.

Exodus 19:4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

Note who is performing the actions here—it is God. We can see that the calling of Israel was His choice.

We can apply what God did for Israel, personally, in two ways:

God forcefully drives his hand down between the person whom He has

chosen to call, and the world, effectively cutting them free of the bondage.

God reaches down, and with His right hand, grabs us by the scruff of the neck, and removes us from bondage.

Without a doubt, coming out of sin is an act of God! This is a choice by God, which is depicted in scripture, as being personal.

John 6:44, 65 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father

In modern theological terms, this is referred to, as justification. This is an act that no person can do for himself.

How does this relate to the right hand of God?

This is where remembrance comes into the picture for us. Regardless of being called six months ago, ten, twenty, or thirty plus years, we are to never forget what God did for us. We are indebted to God for calling us out of the world.

Exodus 13:3-5 And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. "On this day you are going out, in the month Abib." And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month.

This was not going to be a one-time thing—they were going to remember this day when they were in the Promised Land.

Exodus 13:6-9 "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD." Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. "And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.' " It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt.

Exodus 13:10-16 "You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year." And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, "that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the LORD's. " But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. "So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' "It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt."

God, through Moses, commanded the Israelites to remember this day—the First Day of Unleavened Bread. We are here today, to do the very same thing. We are here to remember that it was God who called us, and justified us by the most powerful right hand in the universe. We are to remember that no one, absolutely no one, can come out of sin without the right hand of God.

Why is this so important for us?

Is this old hat? Maybe it is. For those of us baptized in the church for many years, even decades, do we still focus, correctly, on God's choice, on His act of mercy?

Do we still understand that coming out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage—Babylon, sin, and the world is attributed to "*by the strength of hand—God's right hand?*"

The second point is: "To be, or not to be, called by God."

This point is about choice. It is our choice, as to whether or not we will answer the calling.

We will begin in Exodus 15: 6, which in my Bible is entitled "*the Song of Moses.*" This song recalls what God did for the nation of Israel, by bringing them out of hard bondage and servitude to the Egyptians. These verses conclusively show that it was by God's right hand.

Exodus 15:6 "Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power;
Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces.

Exodus 15:12 You stretched out Your right hand; the earth swallowed them.

Here, God demonstrates His awesome power, to the children of Israel, by closing the Red Sea

on the Egyptian army, using His right hand. When Pharaoh decided to pursue Israel, he brought all his military might to bear down on the Israelites.

The Israelites witnessed some of the most awesome displays of power that anyone has ever seen. Yet, were the miracles of the ten plagues, and the parting of the Red Sea, enough to build a relationship with the God of the Old Testament?

I stated that even though God's calling is His choice, the Israelites, also, still had the opportunity to make a choice.

By comparing Numbers 33, with Exodus 14, the Israelites were camped at the third location—near Migdol. They had set out for the next part of the journey, when the Egyptian army came upon them, as they were nearing the Red Sea. They were crying to Moses that it would have been better for them to serve the Egyptians, than to die in the wilderness.

The Israelites still had the chance to turn back, and away, from the right hand that freed them from bondage. It was not until they physically walked through the Red Sea, to the other side, that they had completely left Egypt.

As we keep these Days of Unleavened Bread, our chief goal is to become more unleavened, or remain unleavened, by growing closer to God; recognizing that He is the only way we will become less sinful. While God will reveal our sin to us, He cannot keep us out of sin, without any effort on our part.

How does this occur?

From the perspective of God's right hand, I will show you that there is a power sharing that begins to occur. In order for the conversion process to be one of choice, on our part, there is a requirement for God to empower us, to assist in overcoming sin, a requirement that Jesus Christ died to make.

My third point is entitled: "Power sharing—from God's right hand to ours."

This power sharing is designed to give birth to choice, a choice on our part, to cooperate with God in the salvation process. Our cooperation is critical, but our effort pales in comparison to God's.

If you were to look up the phrase "*right hand*" in the dictionary you would come up with the following usages:

The right hand is defined as a noun:

- 1 an indispensable person
- 2 a place of honor, chiefly relied on

We have all heard the phrase that so and so is "*my right hand man*." That designation is high praise, an honor, by which the person saying it, credits a person as one who can be relied on in clutch situations. This person will always deliver, they will always come through. I believe that this *isa* goal of our conversion process. God the Father, and Jesus Christ, will be able to rely on us—we will be their right hand children.

Psalm 16:8-11 I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forever more. A Prayer of David. Hear a just cause, O LORD, Attend to my cry; Give ear to my prayer which is not from deceitful lips.

David made the choice to set God always before him. A choice that he understood, by doing so, would guarantee him that God would be with him, through every step of his life.

In the December 2006 Forerunner Personal, John Ritenbaugh stated the following:

A critical issue for the children of God—one that can potentially destroy our cooperation with God through making wrong choices—is our innate fear that, at times, He will not provide for us. Human beings can always fall prey to a nagging fear that, somehow, sometime, He will not respond to our prayerful appeals. In essence, we fear the consequences of a right choice.

The last sentence I find very intriguing. Let me explain, by way of an analogy.

Imagine yourself getting a new job, one that you have only been at for a couple of months, and the top boss (maybe a CEO) comes up to you, and wants to meet with you privately.

During your meeting, the boss says that they have been watching and observing you, and they feel that you have great potential. So much so, that they want to fast track you on a leadership program. They want to personally groom you, to become a top leader in the company. They are going to pull out all the stops, and do everything in their power, to give you the necessary opportunities to achieve this goal. With the full understanding that this is not an overnight process, in fact it will be very demanding and grueling; the effort put forth will pale in comparison to the reward.

Would you allow the doldrums of some of your everyday training, and possibly mundane tasks, to take away from this once in a lifetime opportunity? Would you allow it to drain your enthusiasm, motivation and excitement? We would all go ahead with the challenge, would we not? Does this not parallel our calling? I think it does.

A primary job of a good employer/manager is to set their employees up for success. Brethren, this is exactly what God the Father and Jesus Christ have done for us, and will do, for our entire lives.

In the life of one of God's called out ones, He resides at their right hand. We have been given the gift of hope, courage, and assurance, to overcome any sin. For baptized members in the church, we have the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit provides the power that we

need, to overcome sin. In effect, we could say that the power of God resides at our right hand, through the Holy Spirit. Or, we may even take it as far as saying, that God is our right hand, as David did, in Psalm 16: 8.

Do you believe that you have been set up for success? Do we go through our day-to-day activities, with the clear picture, or understanding, that the most powerful Being in the universe accompanies us, at the extension of our right hand?

I think that, too often, we forget the commitment that God has given us, to enable us to grow, overcome, and most of all, have access to Him, when we need it most.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your
might; for there is no
work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are
going.

Let us apply this scripture to the putting out of sin from our lives. This life is the only time that we have to put out sin, with all of our might. When we are dead, our opportunity to do this has come and gone.

Do we put out sin with all our might, with the determination emphasized in this verse?

Often, when we come under a difficult trial, our faith is tested, to see what it is made of. These intense trials can sometimes distract us, or make us have the wrong focus. We tend to focus on ourselves, and not on God.

The fourth point: "Remembrance on our part. Remember the right hand of God, during the difficult periods of our life."

There are people who have been on this journey for many years. And, some that have been struggling with sins for their entire converted lives.

Sometimes, we can become discouraged, and overwhelmed, with the difficulty and the struggle, to put a particular sin out of our lives. Putting sin out of our lives is not something that is heavily emphasized by the world's churches.

Most of you have heard of Rick Warren. I went on *YouTube*, and watched a couple of videos, where he discusses his philosophy of Christianity. I picked up two quotes in which he was discussing what he thinks is the church's mission:

"We are teaching for information, not teaching for transformation."

"We are teaching for belief, not for behavior."

The purpose of the Days of Unleavened Bread is so distant from the minds of the leaders of this world's Christianity.

Not surprisingly, the world's churches teach that once you accept Jesus Christ, your part is

done, and all that you have to do is sit back, and let Christ work it out. This is called the "once saved, always saved" doctrine. This is a teaching that is born out of the idea, that we cannot earn our salvation through works. We understand that while we cannot earn our salvation through works, we do have a role to play in the salvation process.

Many of you may be familiar with the poem, "Footprints in the Sand." I would like to read it to you.

Footprints in the Sand

By Mary Stevenson

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord. When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life. This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me." the Lord replied, "My son, my precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

While this poem is encouraging, it is actually incorrect. If you look at the example in the Bible, during the conversion process God never actually carried Israel, so that there was only one set of footprints. They had to *walk* in the wilderness, just as we have to walk in our journey. God cannot force us to make a decision. He can bring us to the point to hedge us in, to limit our options, and maybe allow a trial to help us see what the right way to go is. But He cannot, and will not, make the decision for us.

The saying goes, "It is God who decides what is right and wrong, and the only decision that He gives man, is whether or not we choose to obey Him."

So, when we find ourselves struggling to put out a specific sin, or we are under sore trial, maybe due to another person's sin, do we fear that God will not respond to our prayers?

I came across something, in God's Word, that really brought this point home.

Psalm 77, is a psalm of Asaph. By the language of the first six verses, it appears that Asaph was going through a difficult trial. The degree of difficulty is great enough that he longs for "*the years of ancient times*", longing for the good old days when life was probably simpler.

In his despair, he remarks, "*will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Has his mercy ceased forever?*"

No one knows what his anguish, or infirmity was, but this passage reminds me a lot of the apostle Paul. In II Corinthians 12: 7, Paul comments that he was given a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted.

So, here in Psalm 77: 10, Asaph looks back, over the many years, of the providential care, that God provided to him, via His right hand.

Psalm 77:10 And I said, "This is my anguish; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."

It is the difficult times when it is the easiest to forget God, and what He has done for us. This is something that we need to focus on daily. As time progresses, we do not know what difficulties and trials will befall us. Will we be able to look back, and remember what God has done for us in our lives? Hopefully!

I would like to turn back to the song of Moses again, and pick up on something that ties up the principle of remembrance. The last verse, of the song of Moses, is one that is usually read over very quickly.

Exodus 15:18 "The LORD shall reign forever and ever."

Then we jump right to the next verse, and keep on going. However, this is a vitally important summation to the song of Moses. In fact, this is probably the most important line in the song. This line ties everything in the preceding verses of the song together. What the Israelites should have grabbed onto, was that this protection, (in this case leaving Egypt and crossing the Red Sea) was not a one-time act. Moses was inspired to write, "*The LORD shall reign forever and ever.*" There is a strong message of permanence in this new relationship.

God was not going to abandon them. He was going to be with them, protecting and guiding them by the power and majesty of His right hand. What an incredible boost this should have been to their confidence and their new relationship with their Creator. God was essentially telling the Israelites to stick with Him, and trust Him, and He would set them up for success. Not that the success would not be met with trials and difficulties, but over the long haul, God would always be there, with the power of His right hand, to see them through.

The fifth, and final point, is that "Salvation is given by the right hand of God."

This point comes full circle back to God. Our calling started with a choice on God's part. Our salvation is also dependent on another choice by God. It is His choice alone, as to whether or not we have been good and faithful servants. It is His choice, as to whether or not He will grant us eternal life in the Kingdom of God, to administer the government of God, along side our elder

brother, Jesus Christ. Can you hope for anything greater?

To me, the most impressive example in the entire Bible of God demonstrating the incredible and awesome power of His right hand occurs within the book of Job. This next set of verses we are going to read are electrifying... they make the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

Brethren, our God cannot be defined as just powerful, He is power. As we heard at the Feast of Tabernacles last year, God is the source of power.

That same power is carefully and thoughtfully guiding our lives. Sometimes, it may not seem like it, but God is definitely there.

Starting in Job chapter 38, God lays the cards out on the table, and questions Job. He tells Job, to *"dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me."*

Put yourself in Job's shoes here and think about what this would have been like to be grilled by your very Creator.

To me, there is nowhere in the Bible, that captures the vastness and the greatness of our God, better than chapters thirty-eight, thirty-nine and forty. I do not have the time to read them, although I would love to. During these days of Unleavened Bread, I strongly urge you to read Job 38-40, as I am sure that you will find them encouraging. We will, however read a portion.

Job 40:1-14 Moreover the LORD answered Job, and said: "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct Him? He who rebukes God, let him answer it." Then Job answered the LORD and said: "Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further." Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: "Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: "Would you indeed annul My judgment? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His? Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, and array yourself with glory and beauty. Disperse the rage of your wrath; Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him. Look on everyone who is proud, and bring him low; Tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together, Bind their faces in hidden darkness. Then I will also confess to you that your own right hand can save you.

At the conclusion of this long discourse, we see that God reveals just how impressive His right hand is, by the intimation that He makes in reference to Job's. God questions Job, and asks him if he has the ability and wisdom to match the judgment of God. God asks of Job, *"Have you an arm like God?"* God has the ability to dispense His judgment with love, wisdom, and with no partiality. God concludes that if Job could do all of that, then he would have the ability and wisdom to be able to grant himself salvation or eternal life.

Indirectly, this remark is profound, as God is declaring that by His right hand comes eternal life. He and He alone, reserves the right to grant eternal life to those whom conform to His way. This is a statement of and by itself, which demands reverence and fear. There is no other more powerful than God, and if you like He can prove it to you.

God effectively says to Job, 'If you could do all of this, you would, in fact, be just like Me; you would have the power to grant eternal life'.

In conclusion, the Passover and the spring holy days are such a wonderful time of year. A time that we are admonished to remember what God did for the Israelites, and what God has done, does, and will do, for us individually.

Let us recap the five points:

The first point showed that our calling was completely and only, God's choice. We, in turn, have to remember His choice, His act of love and mercy every day of our lives. Brethren, never forget that our coming out of sin is an act of God!!!

The second point involved choice, on our part, as to whether or not we will answer the calling. Many are called, but few are chosen.

The third point involved power sharing—from God's right hand to ours. This power sharing is designed to give birth to choice, a choice on our part, to cooperate with God, in the salvation process.

The fourth point discussed, remembering the right hand of God during the difficult periods of our life. Our journey will be marred with many difficulties and trials, which intellectually we know are designed to perfect us. However, these are some of the most difficult times to remember God's loving care. God assures us, as He did the Israelites, that by the power of His right hand He will see us through.

The last point clearly showed that salvation is given by the most powerful hand in the universe—the right hand of God.

As another cycle of spring holy days has begun, we are one year closer to the Kingdom of God. As you keep these days of Unleavened Bread, as we continue putting sin out of our lives, please remember the principles of choice and remembrance, as depicted through the imagery of God's right hand.

I hope you have a wonderful and spiritually profitable Days of Unleavened Bread.