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“THE ARMS OF GOD”

Job 40:9

“Do you have an arm like God's?”

We continue to study the anthropomorphisms in the Bible. That is, the “man forms” that God uses to communicate Himself to us and which the Bible writers use to describe God. J. I. Packer in his classic volume, *Knowing God*, says: “The reasons why God uses anthropomorphisms to speak to us about himself is that language drawn from our own personal life is the most accurate medium for communicating thoughts about him that we have. He is personal, and so are we, in a way that nothing else in the physical creation is. Only man, of all physical creatures, was made in God's image. Since we are more like God than is any other being known to us, it is more illuminating, and less misleading, for God to picture himself to us in human terms than it would be if he used any other.”

We come now to the phrase “*the arm of God.*” In Job 40:9 is the question: “*Do you have an arm like God's?*” The arm, when used in reference to God in scripture, is equivalent to God's presence and power. If His arm is present, He is present. And His arm is the arm of omnipotence.

You do not want to get into an arm wrestling contest with God! Our arms have neither the length nor the strength of His mighty arms. We poor weaklings of earth do not have arms comparable to those which uphold the earth. Of course, no one has arms like God, but what does scripture tell us about God's arms? There are about 40 references to the “*arm of God*” in scripture. Let's look at some of them.

With His Arm God Reveals Himself.

a. God's arm is great.

“By the greatness of Your arm they will be as still as a stone, till Your people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over whom You have purchased.” (Exodus 15:16 This is from Moses' song of deliverance after the Red Sea crossing. This is the first song recorded in Scripture.)

b. God's arm is mighty.

“You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand.” (Psalm 89:13)

c. God's arm is holy.

“Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.” (Psalm 98:1)

What personal and practical lessons do these verses teach us about God? That God is great, mighty and holy. That He is greater than us and all of our problems; that His might and power can deal with any and all of our enemies; that He deals with all on the basis of His mercy and

justice because He is holy. Therefore, a person is a fool who chooses to rely upon the arms of flesh when he can lean upon the arms of the Almighty.

“What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
What blessedness, what a peace is mine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.”

With His Arm God Delivered His People.

In the following scriptures the term “*stretched our arm*” is used to communicate to God’s suffering people that He hears their cries, sees their predicament and has come to their aid as He did for His people in Egyptian slavery:

Exodus 6:6 – *“I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.”*

Deut. 5:15 – *“And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm...”*

Deut. 7:18,19 – *“But you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out.”*

Deut. 26:8 – *“So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders.”*

With His arm God redeemed Israel.

“You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.” Ps. 77:15. Also see Deut. 4:34 & 9:29; 1 Kings 8:42; 2 Chron. 6:32; Psalm 136:12; Jeremiah 32:21) Psalm 77:15 is the testimony of all of God’s people.

C. H. Spurgeon, commenting on this verse says, “All Israel were brought out of Egypt by a display of divine power, which is here described not to the hand but to the arm of the Lord, because it was the fullness of his might.” (The Treasury of David, Psalm 77:15)

By the extension and exertion of His mighty arm, His power is displayed in intervention and deliverance of His people. By His outstretched arms on the cross, Jesus purchased our redemption.

“Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.”

With His Arm God Fashioned The Universe.

“I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm....” (Jeremiah 27:5)

“Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.” (Jeremiah 32:17)

“O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.”

With His Arm God Will Regather Israel.

“As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.” (Ezekiel 20:33,34)

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With His Arms God Upholds Us.

“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” (Deut. 33:27)

The parting words of Moses to the children of Israel are full of promise for. We too have the assurance of God's undergirding support for our lives. We cannot sink beneath the arms everlasting!

A young couple and their two-year-old daughter were traveling by train. The youngster was standing up looking out the window. Mom and dad wanted to support her to keep her from tumbling off the seat, however she refused all efforts of help. She was exclaiming gleefully at the objects she saw outside the train window. Suddenly, the train entered a tunnel. Everything became pitch black. The father was surprised when two tiny arms clasped his neck tightly.

When life is going smoothly we tend to be independent and self-sufficient. We think we can manage affairs ourselves. But sooner or later we enter tunnels. They may be the dark tunnels of disappointment, financial disaster, grief or loss of health. It is then that we reach out for help. Fortunately, the Christian has help present and available at all times. Our heavenly Father has been there all the time, although we may not have been conscious of his nearness. His arms are ever beneath us.

“He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young. (Isaiah 40:11)

What a beautiful image these words forms in our minds; what wonderful words and what comforting thoughts! How could be we safer anywhere else than in the arms of the Almighty?

There are times in life when we are in danger, or in difficulty or in over our heads. Sometimes life seems to be more than we can handle; problems seem to come one on top of another and we are at wit's end; we find ourselves facing issues at home with our families, or at work

and we wonder how much more we can take; we suddenly find ourselves diagnosed with a terrible, even life threatening illness or disease.

Life can be hard, challenging and seem unfair. However, no matter how desperate the situation, God is always there with us. No matter how great the storm, how deep the waters or how dark the night we are always safe in His arms.

*“Jesus said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” **And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.**”*

(Mark 10:15-16)

We are all little children - children of God, no matter how old we are. And, no matter how difficult our life becomes; no matter what dangers we face, all of us need to be reminded that we are held safely and securely in the arms of a loving and caring Savior. He never forgets us, never leaves us alone, never abandons us. They are arms that caress and arms that bless.

When Saladin, the Moslem sultan and hero, looked at the battle sword of Richard the Lion-Hearted, he was astonished that a blade so ordinary could have done such wonders on the battlefield. In response, Richard bared his muscular arm and said, “It was not the sword, Saladin; it was this arm that did the great things!”

We must remember that *“The LORD has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations.”* (Isaiah 52:10) His arms are arms of salvation, strength and safety and security.

“What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.”

Application

We can become an extension of God’s arms when we surrender to Him for salvation and service. We can be God’s feet walking with the lonely; God’s hands helping the helpless; God’s voice encouraging the discouraged; God arms lifting the downcast.

Leslie Weatherhead was a pastor of London’s City Temple. He told about a difficult pastoral call he once made to a grieving family:

“In one corner an old white-haired woman sitting in a low chair, her face half hidden by her hand. . . . Her other hand is on the shoulder of a younger woman, little more than a girl, who is sitting at her feet. There is a fire in the grate. . . . The younger had only been married three months, and then death stalked her. . . husband through pneumonia, and brought him down at last. It was the day after the funeral. Suddenly the younger

woman turns almost ferociously on me. . . . "Where is God?" she demands. "I've prayed to Him. . . .Where is He? . . . You preached once on the 'Everlasting Arms.' Where are they?" . . . I drew my fingertips lightly down the older woman's arm. "They are here," I said. "They are round you even now. These are the arms of God."

We are extensions of God's arms. When we suffer together, God becomes present to us in the arms of others resting upon our shoulders as we comfort one another.

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Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms."

- Elisha Hoffman