

OUR LOT IN GOD'S GRIP

“Be then in a lowly position under the grip of God’s hand, in order that He may exalt you when the time is right, casting upon Him all your anxieties, because the things concerning you are a care to Him” (I Peter 5:6,7).

The universe is in the grip of God; the world is in His grip; and so is the lot and destiny of each believer. It is not difficult to assume God’s mastery of the universe; it is often difficult to accept the idea that He has a grip on the world; it is very difficult to really believe that our individual lives are in His grip. We are, after all, infinitesimal dots in the incomprehensible magnitude of space. It seems irrational to assume such care from God. Were it not for the persistent declarations of Scripture regarding this truth, it would seem a severe case of megalomania. But, if we believe the Bible to be the Word of God, we can hardly reject the idea. The Old Testament presentations, such as Psalm 55:22, are more readily understandable, in view of the primitive perceptions of the ancient world, where tribal and animistic deities abounded. However, in the more sophisticated Greco-Roman world of the New Testament, it seems more unrealistic. Of course, as Paul pointed out, there were “gods many and lords many,” but the idea of the highly personal interaction between the God of the Universe and the individual, which characterized the Christian message, seemed far less realistic. Nevertheless, the New Testament Scriptures are most emphatic about the existence of such a relationship. Jesus brought the individualism into sharp focus, both by deeds and words that were not obscured by philosophical symbolism. From Jesus’ discussion of the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, to His personal invitation—*“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”*—to His personal encounter with the disciples on the beach after His resurrection, His revelation of God to mankind is clearly on the familial basis of father and children, as well as in the close, simple ties of shepherd and sheep. There can be no mistake whatsoever that the Bible teaches such individualism. If we accept the Bible, we must accept this truth. Nor have we any scarcity of supporting passages.

Peter’s discussion of this point in 5:6,7 is relevant to his subsequent promises of divine grace and assistance freely given to His creatures. That God would be interested in the development and destiny of individual humans, is remarkable enough, but Peter wants us to know that he does it, not in the impersonal context of a sustainer and guardian of His creation, but in the context of caring. The Greek word used—*melei*—is akin to human sensitivities, which in turn are a part of our original nature created in the “image of God.” It is not that God is caught in the vacillating tide of human emotions that ebb and flow with changing moods, but rather that the author of the human psyche is the inerrant discernor and master of it.

It is in this vein that Peter urges the believers to “cast all their care upon Christ.” The Greek word translated “cares” is *merimna*—“anxieties” or “distractions.” It is from a root word which has to do with “part” or “partition” of the mind. Our English word “distraction” has the same force. It has to do with things that literally pull us in different directions. In another vein, the word can be applied to the processes of life where struggles and perplexities and

anxieties are the common constant of the daily struggles. Life on the earth—the realm of Satan’s power—is neither easy nor comprehensible nor fair. Life is commonly perceived as shifting sand and the only real constant seems to be change. In such a convoluted society, it is inevitable that life should be filled with anxieties and distractions. Not only is the offer from God a great boon, running the gauntlet of earth, but an essential for ultimate survival.

In the Old Testament, where God was persistently, if not so intimately, involved with His people, David was the chief exponent of this personal care. *“Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved”* (Psalm 55:22). In this passage, the Hebrew word translated “burden” is *yahav*, which really means one’s “lot in life.” In Psalm 16 David says, “thou maintainest my lot.” As in Psalm 55, the word “lot” pertains to one’s particular set of circumstances. It is what God has allowed or directed in one’s life. Apparently God is aware of each individual’s set of circumstances. If that seems unreasonable for such a large number of people, remember that the brain is in constant touch with literally billions or trillions of nerve cells at one time.

One often looks at the circumstances of others and falls prey to the proverbial “greener pastures” syndrome. The truth of the matter is that our own set of circumstances fits our own particular psyche. If we had the lot of anyone else, we might not be able to handle it. So the idea of God’s handling each individual’s situation is a “given” of Scripture. However we may wish things were different, we are probably better off with what we have, given our own personalities and God’s purposes for us.

Both David and Peter indicate that our ability to handle life on the earth depends upon turning the circumstances over to Christ and letting Him orchestrate them as He will. It is not that He will necessarily make life easier for us or that we will not, in the nature of the case, go through our struggles and distresses, He will rather enable us to survive. In any other set of circumstances we might not. It is absolutely essential, however, that we do take the lot that God has given us and put it in His hands. It matters not how great or small the circumstances, outside of God’s care they can become disastrous.

One may look at another and think, “How wonderful if my life could be like that,” but things change and down the road somewhere one may be content to have one’s own lot. In God’s hands, our circumstances will suit us as individuals.

It has been said that, “The thing to do with life is to live it.” We might paraphrase that and say the thing to do with life is to give it—over to the hands of God. He will hold us steadfast for all time and eternity.

Cast upon the Lord, then, your earthly circumstances with its anxieties and distractions. He will never allow the storms of life to move you off of your foundation in Christ.

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