**Handle Me and See**

**By Alan Oggs**

Luke 24:37-39

They were terrified and frightened and supposed they had seen a spirit. Then He said unto them, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see." One of the most straight forward and dynamic challenges ever issued in the New Testament.

Jesus looked into the faces of a troubled bunch of guys and presented to them a fantastic challenge. It had all the elements of being fair; it was a reasonable challenge, but yet it was not a demanding challenge. Jesus looked at them and said to them, "Handle Me and see." He didn't say, "Handle Me or else." He didn't say, "Handle Me and believe or I will give you a karate chop." But He said, "For yourself, decide and get a hold of Me and see what you think."

This Scripture is at the end of the great story of Golgotha, the borrowed tomb and the resurrection. So much has happened. In fact, I have always been amazed at how many people disappeared so fast. It was just a short while before this passage that multitudes gathered and sang hosanna to Him. They took off the jackets, their cloaks, and laid them in the road bed, because they were so honored to have Jesus in their midst that they did not even want to allow His donkey to dusty his feet. The hosannas were all gone. Some folk promise so much and produce so little.

By now, a man that had pledged to defend Him had denied Him openly. Feeling the burden of his denial, he underscored it with a curse. By now, the earth had shaken with a violent earthquake so deep that it shook the dead back to life; at noon time it had turned pitch black and people roamed around downtown, folk who had been dead for years. If you had been there and bumped into some guy downtown who was hoarse when he spoke, it may have been because he had not used his voice in quite a while. Much had happened. Jesus not only died, but He died a hard death. It was a horrible way to die. He hurt and the last sounds that He uttered were not the sounds of poetic utterance, but the last sounds that He uttered were a moaning and the cry of a man that was hurting.

They buried Him in a tomb that did not belong to Him or His family, sealed it with a stone, and then gathered a little political clout to make sure that the disciples would not steal the body away. They sealed the tomb with the mere seal of man's authority and were so very careful that the body would stay in the tomb. The disciples sneaked out of town; left Him to die alone. He had to pause in His dying to find somebody in the crowd that would show some kindness to His mother. Everyone left so quickly and ran so far that even while He hurt, He had to scout around to find somebody to take care of His mom.

The disciples sneaked out of town and rendezvoused in a predetermined "safe house." They had it all planned that if something like this should ever happen, this is where we will gather. So frightened men gathered in a safe house; it must have been something to see. They all arrived with the same luggage and were hysterical. They got to the hideaway shak- en to their toes. Evidently, what they heard, they never really grasped. But they reasoned that "not only did He die, but did you hear the way He died. And if they did that to Him, then what are they going to do us?"

They gathered in the hiding place hoping that together they could strengthen each other. They locked the doors; they were not locking themselves in, they were locking danger out because they had no desire to be out there. They feared what was out there! When they came inside they locked the doors and tried to keep all of the threatening situations at tow. What a bunch! Their eyes got big as saucers and they were breathing with irregular rhythms. This guy tried to encourage that guy, and he is worse off than the other guy. I could almost hear one fellow say to his friend, "Do . . . , do . . . don't be scared! Everything is going to be all right." They gathered together trying to find strength in numbers. They locked windows, bolted doors, set securities, and finally they began to feel like, we are inside and the danger is outside. It cannot come in unless it knocks on our door and we let it come in. Just the psychology of preparation made them feel like safe.

Just when they felt safe, sure enough they were locked up tight, a Man appeared in their midst. He did not knock on the door, didn't crash the window. One moment He wasn't there and the next moment He was! Jesus appeared inside! When He did, you talk about consternation, you talk about scared. Those boys backed up and kept on backing up until they were pressed against the wall so hard that they looked like wallpaper. They kept on backing up and Jesus said "Hi, boys! It's Me." They kept on backing away. In fact, Jesus had to debate with them, trying to convince them that it was all right. He said, "I am bone, I am flesh. You have not seen a spirit, because a spirit doesn't have what you see Me have. It is I Myself, it is Me!" Nobody moved. I can almost see one guy way in the back on the wallpaper with one hand over his head waving as he said, "Hi! Sure is nice to have You here, if You are here. I would like to know how You got in here." All the while, Jesus is saying, "Hey, boys, it is Me! Don't you understand that they could not lock Me in and you can't lock Me out. It's Me." Nobody moved.

Finally, Jesus looked at them and said, "Listen, fellows, we do not have time to stand here forever trying to figure out whether I am and or ain't. You need to find out for yourselves if, in fact, I am living or dead. Am I here or am I not here. You owe that to yourself, not to your neighbor, not to your relative, but for yourself and to yourself, you need to decide now if I am and if I am not. You can't hang on the wall all of your life." So then comes the challenge! "I want you to walk on over here and get a hold of Me, handle Me and see!"

What He was- saying was before you crawl along the wall and hit that back door about 88 miles an hour, before you decide in your reasoning that I am not what I appear to be, before you make up your mind about Me, you owe it to yourself to handle Me. You need to feel Me at least one more time. You need to get close enough to Me that you can decide if I really am. Handle Me! What a challenge. It was so fair of Him; He didn't demand a conversion; He didn't require absolute capitulation. He just said "You need to make up your own mind, but include in the decision-making process feeling Me one more time."

Here we are in 1997. This is not the time to be stuck on the wall with questions dangling. This is the time that you and I both need to find out again and again how powerful He really is. Get off the wall and find out how lively He really is. He is not dead; He is very much alive. If you do not believe that, just walk over here and get a hold of Him for yourself. It is "Handle Me time," 1997. It is time to decide where to from here.

When that old man went walking, his magnetism would draw people. As he walked by, a young farm boy decided that he was going with him, and Elisha left home and attached himself to the ministry of Elijah. He left Mom and Dad, the farm, business, and became a part of the ministry of the great old prophet Elijah. He carried the wood and made the fire. At night when the old prophet was weary from a busy day, it was the young man Elisha that did the cooking and washed the feet of the old prophet. This took place for more than just a few days. The young man, the apprentice prophet, was involved in assisting this great old fire-eater, Elijah, until finally faithful, supportive, always there, right hand man Elisha, listened carefully as the old prophet spoke to the young preacher. "Son, I feel like I am about to check out. When I go, if you like, I would enjoy giving you something. What would you want me to give to you?"

The young man did not hesitate, "Oh, great prophet, I am not real sure who wound your clock. I don't really understand what makes you tick, where you got the audacity in your chin and the fire in your eyes, but whatever you got inside you that has made you become what you are, all I want from you is your spirit times two. I want a double portion of that spice, a double portion of that pizzazz that has caused you to be so dynamically involved for God."

The old man said, "You got it; all you have to do is see me when I go."

You talk about a peeping Tom. Elijah put his eyes on the back of the old man's neck until the old man had to ask for mercy. Everywhere he went, he was right there on his neck. The old preacher said to him, "Let's make a deal. I am going over the river; you stay on this side, but don't worry, I promise you before I leave I will come back to you." What he was saying was, "Give me a little space. Enough is enough! I have been tailgated long enough. You wait here, but don't worry about it, I will be back." What do you think? Elisha said, "When do we cross the river?" and stayed right on his heels. Sure enough, the time came and zip zoom it is all over. A chariot of fire, a whirlwind, and zing, the old prophet is gone. You talk about the dynamics of a quick transition. Here was a young man who had only been a water boy and a fire builder for years. Here was a guy that did what nobody else would do. Here was a young man that used to be in charge of turning the lights off.

He was a young man who served in apprenticeship for years and suddenly, he was the man of the hour, so quickly! If being human then was anything like human nature is today, I have no doubt in my mind, he suffered a quick sour taste in his mouth when it dawned on him, 'All of these years I wanted to be one, and now 'I are one."

Maybe when the weight of the quick transition settled on him and his shoulders became rounded a little, with his chin on his chest, he began to wonder, What do I do and where do I go and how do I start? What position do I take first? What do I address first? Maybe standing there so preoccupied with worrying he didn't see the mantle, that piece of animal skin that the old prophet always had, floating back down to the earth. It landed over on the side, but maybe the young man was so busy and so preoccupied with the what, where, how, when, who, and how come, he didn't notice it.

Some folk worry because they like to worry. Some people really enjoy butterflies; they like them in the pit of their stomach. They get a big bang out of that. My mother told me one time, "Son, pray for me. I am trying to get the flu." My answer, "Uh, uh, I am not going to pray for that." But some folk like to worry.

I don't know, maybe while Elisha wondered when and how and what do I do, the mantle, in its own way, was trying to get the young man's attention, flirting with him. "Hello, I am over here." He was so busy, he didn't see it.

Everything has a way of communicating; at least it does to me. Everything talks to me. I use to go to the church on Sunday afternoon when I pastored, I felt like I owed it to the pews. I would go to the church to talk to the pews. Believe it or not, they would talk back. I use to go by and I would tell the pews, "Hey, I am going to the house and take a nap. If I were you, I would take one too. That same bunch that was here last Sunday night, they are coming back tonight. They are going to knock you around and stick their gum in your eye and scrape their names on your back." I felt like I owed that much to them. We had a pianist that did not tickle the ivories, she beat them up when she played the piano. I use to tell the piano, "Hey, hey, stay with me tonight." Everything has a way of communicating.

I don't know how that mantle did but in its own way, it tried to get the attention of a spooked young man. When all of my kids were home, my signal to them if I needed to get their attention in church, was to cough a little bit. All would look at me and I would flash the message, "If you don't behave, I'll break your neck." But, my last communique when they were acting up, was to hold up one finger, just one finger. They were pretty good sized kids then and they knew that meant they had used up their last chance.

We all communicate in our way. I don't know if it was a cough or wink at him, but some way that mantle tried to attract the attention of that concerned young preacher. One time, the breeze blew and lifted up the end of the skin and it caught the eye of Elisha. When it caught Elisha's eye, maybe it flashed a quick wink at him, I really don't know what it did. But in its own way, it talked to Elisha. It said, "Get your chin off your chest, square your shoulders, and walk on over here and get a hold of me and see what we can do together!" He finally got the message, walked over and yanked the thing up. You talk about having fun! A double portion of the great ministry of the old man attached itself to and became a part of the young man.

Now, today is "handle Me" time. We Pentecostals sing a lot, proclaim often, brag a lot about all the promises in the Book. You know, "Every promise in the Book is mine." Too often we relegate the promises to some out-of-the way place and require them to spend all of their days waving at us trying to get our attention while we endeavor to make our happiness our way. The promises in the Book are saying, "Hey, you can't do it by yourself. You can't pull that off without me." The promises in the Book are saying, "Walk on over here and include me in your process."

Prayer is a fantastic miracle. Somebody in California asked me a few days ago about how to build a prayer life. I encouraged them to realize that prayer is communication, and we are people who are blessed with the opportunity of talking to the One who put the whole thing together. But the problem is, we too often talk more about praying than we pray. We know all of the clichés, and we recommend it to everyone. We endorse it; we are forever espousing prayer for somebody else when too often our egos take us on strange little trips. We find ourselves out there all by ourselves trying to prove to ourselves, and maybe two or three more, what "I" can do by myself. Prayer is saying it won't work like that. All the time prayer is saying, "You need to come on over here and get a hold of me and include me with your problem."

A man walked into the office, a nice-looking fellow. I had the happy occasion twice to go to his attorney and a second time to his wife's attorney to call off divorce proceedings. Two times, they almost went the whole way and we got together and talked and prayed and backed it off. Once again he showed up in the office, reduced to a bunch of mush. He was a weakling and crying like you can't believe.

I said, "Oscar, come in, what's wrong."

"Pastor, I need you more now than I ever needed you before," he said. "It's over. She left this morning. What a war we were involved in and she left the house, and it's all over now. If you don't do something quick, it's final. I came just as soon as I could get here because I knew you could save the whole thing again." He kept on saying you, you, you.

Finally, I said, "Hey, wait a minute. I don't want to be blunt, but you are not going to put me on that kind of a guilt trip. Because if that is what you think, you have made a big mistake. Oscar, you are talking to the wrong guy; All this stuff of how I would do it, how I would take care of it, how I would solve it . . . I would solve it now if I could! You are talking to the wrong guy; I can't do that! You have been in here about an hour weeping and crying." He told his story so eloquently that I sat there and cried with him. I said, "Let me ask you this. For a solid hour I have listened to you, you have me so emotional that I am about to eat worms with you. Let me ask you this, have you ever knelt on your knees and prayed to Jesus for a solid hour, talking to Him for an hour about you and her. Just you and Susie, not the boys, just you and your wife Susie for one hour."

He said, "No, I don't guess I have."

"How about forty-five minutes?" I backed him down to a half hour, twenty-five minutes, and down to five minutes. "Have you ever dedicated five minutes of prayer to nothing but your domestic challenge?"

He said, "Well, maybe five minutes."

"You should be ashamed of yourself. You talk to me for an hour and I can't do anything. The One that could do something, you talk to Him five minutes."

If you would look, you too would see prayer doing its thing. Prayer may be saying, "Come over here, walk on over here, get a hold of me, handle me and see, give me a chance."

Fasting is the same way. The doctrine of fasting is so fantastic that it is hard to believe. When you are fasting, you are saying, "No food." And when you say food, you are talking pizza and peanut butter. The preacher gets up and says, "If you want revival, then no pizza or peanut butter will help us have revival." That doesn't take a whole lot of smarts. If you take fasting out of the Bible and look at it away from its biblical context, it really doesn't appear so smart. We would all be better off if we didn't eat so much, gave our digestive engineers a day off for a change, looked down at our kitchen helpers, and said, "Hey boys, take the day off." Even on holidays, they work overtime. They are of some value, but when you say, "Revival, no pizza, no peanut butter?" If you don't think that will work, fasting says, "Walk on over here and get a hold of me and see."

I had a lady come by the house one day. My wife and I had noticed that she had been moving in slow motion. She was usually jolly and lively, but lately, she acted listless. She came by the house and visited. Right before she left, I said, "Susie, if you don't mind my asking, my wife and I are really concerned for you. Are you feeling OK?"

She said, "Yes," kind of slowly.

"You are not acting with the old bounce. There is something bothering you, something wrong."

She filled up with tears and said, "You are the pastor; you asked me so I will tell you. I have been fasting now for several days." When she said that I felt immediately that I had moved on to some holy ground that I shouldn't be on. She said, "I promised God several days ago that I would not eat again until my husband received the Holy Ghost."

When she said that, I almost passed out. I said, "No, you didn't say that." I knew her husband and he wasn't coming to church. I don't think he had ever been to church. I said, "You did not say that!" She scared me, because I thought, 0, my Lord, she will starve to death. I said, "You did not say that."

"Well."

I said, "No, you didn't! I am going to tell you not what you said, I want to tell you what you meant! Do you hear me?"

"Well, OK." She was so confused.

"This is what you meant," I explained. "You meant that you would not eat again until your husband began to show some signs of being aware of God. That is what you meant. You understand?"

She broke down and cried, "I am so sorry. I was only doing what I thought you told me to do."

I said, "Beg your pardon?"

"Several weeks ago you preached a message on how fasting can bring about difficult answers, how that fasting could produce some unique and great victories. I was only doing what you told me to do. I am sorry."

"Susie, did you think that I was telling you to do what you are doing."

"Well, I thought you meant what you said."

You talk about a preacher changing horses in midstream. I said, "You thought I meant that?"

"Well, pastor, didn't you mean what you preached?"

I jumped up and said, "That is right, hallelujah, it will work" as I eased her to her feet and moved her to the door, patting her back. I was saying, "Hallelujah, it will work, thank you Jesus" and closed the door. I told my wife, "If we don't get a hold of God, she is gone. She will starve to death. I am worried!"

Sunday morning, she came to church and looked like walking death. She walked in and sat in the adult Bible class and closed her eyes. I was trying to teach the lesson and watching her. I thought, "She has not opened her eyes one time. She is in a coma!" She sat there and weaved back and forth. The Bible class ended, and we went into morning worship. She had never opened her eyes. In fact, if she had, she would have noticed that in morning worship hour, her husband had come in and was sitting next to her. She didn't even know he was there. She sat there still weaving back and forth. That great big old guy had one eye on her and the other eye on me. In fact, when she finally opened her eyes, she became aware that everybody was at the altar praying except her. She got up and went down to lend herself to some praying at the altar and got there in time to see a thick chested, big biceps guy with his hands lifted high, saying, "God, have mercy on me."

Sunday afternoon, he called me and said, "Hello Pastor!" I thought to myself, Who do you think you are kidding, buddy? He said, "I called to ask you to baptize me."

Testing him a little bit, I said, "We are in a store-front building and don't have a baptistery. You come tonight and we will talk about it. Sometime in the next few weeks, we will get together and I will baptize you."

He said, "Oh, no, Pastor, it will not be like that. You are baptizing me, today!" The way he said that all I could think of was that big old chest and big arms.

"We don't even have a baptistery."

He said, "We have the river." "Yes, we do," I replied, "but it is November, and it is cold."

That same Sunday afternoon, we walked out into the river on a big old boat landing that was slick as glass. As we walked down into the water, I said, "Be careful now, this is slick. I want to be the one to baptize you. Watch your footing." About that time I slipped and he had to reach under the water and find me. I baptized him and Sunday night after church, he didn't know how to handle his new experience. He didn't quite know how to express himself. He had received the Holy Ghost and I asked him, "Brother, how do you feel?"

He looked at me and shook his head and said, "Whoopee!" like a cowboy would.

I said, "No, we don't say that in here. How do you feel?"

He said, "Whooo, whoopee!" I went back and preached there recently and over twenty years later, he and his wife, children, and grandchildren are still there.

There is a brand new dimension in your walk with God and you can find it through prayer and fasting. Fasting says, "Just walk on over here and get a hold of me and give me a chance to show you what we can do together." It is "handle me" time.

The above article, “Handle Me and See,” is the ninth chapter from the book, *Closing Out Sale*, by Alan Oggs.

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