

AND JESUS STOPPED AND CALLED THEM, AND SAID, "WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO FOR YOU?" THEY SAID TO HIM, "LORD, WE WANT OUR EYES TO BE OPENED." MOVED WITH COMPASSION, JESUS TOUCHED THEIR EYES; AND IMMEDIATELY THEY REGAINED THEIR SIGHT AND FOLLOWED HIM.

(MATTHEW 20:32-34)



thousands of years ago, Aryan-speaking nomadic groups migrated from the north to the subcontinent of India. Later, the priest-lawmakers of this new Aryan power subdivided Indian society into four castes: At the top they placed their own caste, the Brahmins; then, in descending order were the Kshatriyas, or warriors, and the Vaisyas, or farmers and merchants. The bottom caste, the laborers, were called the Sudras. On a social level so low that it wasn't even included in the caste system were the "Untouchables"—alienated people restricted to performing only those tasks so disgusting, so unthinkable, that they wouldn't be performed even by those in the lowest caste, the Sudras.

Today the Indian constitution forbids caste discrimination, and has abolished, by law, Untouchability. But old ways die hard in India. Still today the man who strips down to almost naked and immerses himself in human excrement to manually unclog a sewer drain, will not

receive proper medical care for the infections and diseases that wrack his body as a result. He may not even find a well where he is permitted to wash the filth from his body. Still today, this man's child will be deemed, by societal custom and ancient tradition, to be an Untouchable from its first breath—predestined for a life of sub-human work, ridicule, estrangement from the rest of society, even physical persecution.

A Great Chasm Fixed

Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short
That it cannot save;
Nor is His ear so dull
That it cannot hear.
But your iniquities have made a
separation between you and your God,
And your sins have hidden His face from
you so that He does not hear.
(Isaiah 59:1-2)

In the cosmic scheme of the universe, there is no "caste" higher than God's. In fact, it is so lofty, so exclusive, that only He alone is worthy of membership. At the other end of His scale is a "caste" so low that even Indian Untouchables would not go near its members: sinners.

Sin is so distasteful, so repugnant to God, that when even His own spotless Son was covered by it upon the cross, the Father,

in His unblemished holiness, could not bear to look upon it. In that moment, even the spotless Lamb became Untouchable.

Yet God *did* send that unblemished Lamb to die upon that cross to atone for the very sins of humanity with which He could not associate. This is love indeed, that

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

(John 3:16-17)

God's Hands

We touch with our hands, and since no man has ever described the physical appearance of God, we can assume that He—who is Spirit—does not have literal, physical hands. References in Scripture to holy appendages are anthropomorphisms. Though on this side of heaven we cannot say with certainty, God does not have literal eyes and ears and nose and mouth—at least in any form we might recognize. Nor does he have feet and hands. These are all used metaphorically in God's word to help humans understand His personality and ways.

If God does not have hands, how then does He touch?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

(John 1:1-2,14)

God touches man through His Son. Unlike God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus became flesh—actual flesh and bones and blood—that He might be, for all to see and touch, the outreaching condescension and compassion of God. Through Him, God would inaugurate a way through which He could reach out and touch untouchable man.

Beyond that, Jesus became the tangible implementation of God's daily, persistent care of those He calls His own. No believer is ever alone; no believer need ever question the nearness of God's hand in his life. Christ's dying on the cross is the proof that God touches us in ways both marvelous and supernatural—and in ways profound in their simplicity. ■

*O what a wonderful, wonderful day—
Day I will never forget;
After I'd wandered in darkness away,
Jesus my Savior I met.
O what a tender, compassionate friend—
He met the need of my heart;
Shadows dispelling,
With joy I am telling,
He made all the darkness depart!*

*Born of the Spirit with life from above
Into God's family divine,
Justified fully thro' Calvary's love,
O what a standing is mine!
And the transaction so quickly was made
When as a sinner I came,
Took of the offer
Of grace He did proffer—
He saved me, O praise His dear name!*

*Now I've a hope that will surely endure
After the passing of time;
I have a future in heaven for sure,
There in those mansions sublime.
And it's because of that wonderful day
When at the cross I believed;
Riches eternal
And blessings supernal
From His precious hand I received.*

*Jesus came down and glory filled my soul,
When at the cross the Savior made me whole;
My sins were washed away
And my night was turned to day—
Heaven came down and glory filled my soul!*
(John W. Peterson)