



SUNDAY READING

SERMON.

THE WITHERED HAND.

BY REV. C. H. HARRISON.

"And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. . . . Then said he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole, like as the other."—Mat. 9:1-13.

Note well the expression. Jesus "went into the synagogue; and, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered." A mark is set, as it were, in the margin, as if it were a notable fact. That word "behold" is a sort of note of exclamation to draw attention to it. "Behold, there was a man which had his hand withered." There were persons well learned, according to the learning of the day, who came to listen to Christ, but there were no "beholds" put about their having been present. Yet in the synagogue there was a poor man whose hand had been withered, and we are called upon to note the fact.

Patients Welcome.

And to-night, dear friends, it matters very little to the preacher or the congregation that you are here, if you are some person of note or consequence; for we make no note of dignitaries here, and attach no special consequence to any one in this place, where the rich and the poor meet together. But if you happen to be here as a needy soul wanting a Saviour, if you happen to be here with a spiritually withered hand so that you cannot do the things that you would, and you are wanting to have that hand restored to you, there shall be a "behold" put to that, and especially shall it be doubly emphatic if tonight the Master shall say to you, "Stretch out thy withered hand," and if the divine power shall restore that hand and a deed of grace shall be accomplished. If you are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, my Master does not want you. He is a physician, and those who practice the healing art look out for sickness as their sphere of operation.

The Crippled Man.

I, first, will say a little about the person to whom the command in our text is addressed. "Then said Jesus to the man, stretch forth thine hand." This command was addressed to a man who was hopelessly incapable of obeying. "Stretch forth thine hand." It was not a sham disease. He had not made a pretence of being paralyzed, but he was really incapable. The hand had lost the moisture of life. The spirit which gave it strength had been dried out of it, and there it was, withered, wilted, useless, thing which he could do nothing; and yet it was to such a man that Jesus said, "Stretch forth thine hand." This is very important for us to notice, because some of you under a burden of sin think that Christ does not save real sinners—that those people whom he does save are, in some respects, not so bad as you—that there is not such an intensity of sin about them as about your case, or it an intensity of sin, yet not such an utter hopelessness and helplessness as there is about you. You feel quite dried up, and utterly without strength. Dear heaven, it is exactly to such as you that the Lord Jesus Christ directs the command.

But, mark you, it came to one who was perfectly willing, for this man was quite prepared to do whatever Jesus bade him do. If you had questioned him you would have found no desire to retain that withered hand—no wish that his fingers should remain lifeless and useless. If you had said to him, "Poor man, would you like to have your hand restored?" he would have replied, "Ay, that I would. I wish above all things that I could have my hand restored." But the worst of many unconverted people is that they

Do Not Want to be Healed.

do not want to be restored. As soon as a man truly longs for salvation, then his salvation already comes to him; but the most of you do not wish to be saved. "Oh," say you, "we truly wish to be saved." I do not think so, for what do you mean by being saved? Do you mean being saved from going down to hell? Everybody, of course, wishes that. Did you ever meet a thief that would not like to be saved from going to prison or being locked up by the policeman? But when we talk about salvation, we mean being saved from the habit of wrong doing; being saved from the power of evil, the love of sin, the practice of folly, and the very power to find pleasure in transgression.

Do you wish to be saved from pleasurable and gainful sins? Find me the drunkard who sincerely prays to be delivered from drunkenness. Bring me to an unchaste man who pines to be pure. Find me one who is an habitual liar and yet longs to speak the truth. Bring me one who has been selfish and who in his very heart hates himself, and who longs to be full of love and to be made Christlike. Why, half the battle is won.

The Initial Step is Taken.

The parallel holds in the spiritual world. The character I have in my mind's eye is the case of a soul desiring to be what it cannot be, and to do what it cannot do, and yet desiring it. I mean the man who cries in agony, "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." "I would, but cannot, repent. My heart feels like a stone. I would love Christ, but, alas, I feel that I am fettered to the world. I would be holy, but, alas, sin comes violently upon me, and carries me away." It is to such people that Jesus Christ's gospel comes with a force of command. "Will thou be made whole, my friend? Then thou mayest be. Dost thou desire to be saved from sin? Thou mayest be. Dost thou wish to be emancipated from the bondage of corruption? Thou mayest be. And this is the way in which thou mayest be saved—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou

shall be saved;" his name is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.

Who Spoke to Him.

II. Secondly I want to speak a little upon the person who gave the command. It was Jesus who gave it. He said, "Stretch forth thine hand." Did our Lord speak this in ignorance, supposing that the man could do so? By no means, for in him is abundant knowledge. He knew that the man's hand was withered, and yet he said, "Stretch forth thine hand." When I read in Scripture the command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," I am sure that Jesus Christ knows what he is saying. "Go ye," said he, "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Yes, to every creature. I have heard some of Christ's professed servants say that to bid dead sinners live is of no more use than to shake a handkerchief over the graves in which the dead are buried; and my reply to them has been, "You are quite right. Do not do it, for it is evident you are not called to do it. Go home, and go to bed. The Lord never sent you to do anything of the kind, for you own you have no faith in it." But if my Master sent me as the herald of resurrection, and bade me shake a handkerchief over the graves of the dead, I would do it, and I should expect that this poor handkerchief, if he commanded it to be shaken, would raise the dead, for Jesus Christ knows what he is doing when he sends his servants. If he does not send us, it is a fool's errand indeed to go and say, "Ye dead men, live;" but his commission makes all the difference.

Did you never notice, dear souls,

Christ's Way of Doing His Work?

His way is this,—first, to give the command, then to help the heart to turn to the command into a prayer, and then to answer that prayer by a promise. Take these specimens. The Lord says, "Make you a new heart." That is clearly a command. But, by-and-by, you find the psalmist David, in the fifty-first psalm, saying, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." And then, if you turn to Ezekiel, you get the promise, "A new heart also will I give you." First, he commands you; next He sets you praying for the blessing; and then He gives it to you.

"But He is not here," says one; "He is not here." Verily I say unto you, in His name, He is here. His word is, "Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the world;" till this dispensation shall be ended Christ will be where the gospel is preached. Where His message is honestly and truthfully delivered with the Spirit of God, there Jesus Christ Himself is virtually present, speaking through the lips of His servants. Therefore, dear friends, get the promise, "A new heart also will I give you," "Stretch forth thine hand."

III. It is time for a few words upon another point, and that is upon

The Command

itself. The command itself was, "Stretch forth thine hand." That was the very thing he could not do, and thus the command went to the very root of the mischief. As soon as the hand was stretched out it was healed; and the command went directly to the desired mark. Now, my Lord and Master does not say to any of you sinners tonight, "Go home and pray." I hope you will pray, but that is not the great gospel command. The gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Paul stood at the dead of night, with the trembling jailer, who hardly understood his own question when he cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and Paul according to the practice of some should have said, "We must have a little prayer," or, "You must go home and read the Bible, and I must further instruct you until you are in a better state." He did nothing of the sort, but there and then Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is no gospel preached unless you come to this; for salvation comes by faith; but nothing short of it.

That stretching forth of the hand was entirely an act of faith. It was not an act of sense. As a matter of sense and nature the man was powerless for it. He only did it because his faith brought the ability. I say it was

A Pure Act of Faith.

that stretching out of the hand. "I do not understand as yet," says one, "how a man can do what he cannot do?" But you will understand a great many wonderful things when the Lord teaches you; for the Christian life is a series of paradoxes; and for my own part I doubt an experience unless there is something paradoxical about it. At any rate I am sure that it is so—that I who can do nothing of myself can do everything through Christ which strengtheneth me. The man who is seeking Christ can do nothing, and yet, if he believeth on Christ, he can do everything, and his withered hand is stretched out.

This Man's Obedience.

We are told that he stretched forth his hand. Christ said, "Stretch forth thine hand." Mark says, "And he did so." That is to say, he stretched forth his hand. Now, observe that this man did not do something else in preference to what Jesus commanded, through many awakened sinners are foolish enough to try experiments. Alas, there are many, many souls that say, "We are bidden to trust in Jesus,

but instead of that we will attend the means of grace regularly." Do that by all means, but as a substitute for faith, or it will become a vain confidence. The command is, "Believe and live;" attend to that, whatever else you do. "Well, I shall take to reading good books; perhaps I shall get good that way." Read the good books by all means, but that is not the gospel; the gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "But you do not mean to say that you speak against praying, and reading good books, and so on?" not one single word do I speak against any of those things. Let the man search the Scriptures; but, remember, that if these things are put in the place of simple faith in Christ, the soul will be ruined. Let me give you a text; did you ever hear it quoted properly?—"To search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; but ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." That is

Where the Life Is—

in Christ; not in searching scripture, good as the searching of scripture is. "Stretch forth thine hand," says he; that was the way by which the healing was to come; the man did nothing else, and he received a gracious reward.

Notice, that I do not raise any questions. Now this man had a fair opportunity of raising questions. I think he might very fairly have stood up in his place and said, "This is inconsistent, good Master. Thou sayest to me, 'Stretch forth thine hand.' Now, thou knowest that if I can stretch forth my hand there will be nothing, and therefore there is no room for thy miracle. And if I cannot stretch forth my hand, how canst thou tell me so to do?" Have you not heard some of our friends, who like to make jests of holy things, and to scoff at our doctrines of grace, declare that we teach, "You can and you can't; you shall and you shall not?" Their description is right enough, though meant to ridicule us. We do not object to their putting it thus, if it pleases them. We teach paradoxes and contradictions to the eye, if you only consider the letter; but if you get down into the innermost spirit, it is within these contradictions that the eternal truth is found. We know that the man is dead in trespasses and sins—steeped in a spiritual and moral torpor, out of which he cannot raise himself; yet do we by the Master's own command say, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life;" or, in other words, we say to the withered hand, "Be thou stretched out," and it is done. The blessed result justifies that very teaching which in itself seems so worthy of sarcastic remark.

I look around me, wondering where is the man with the withered hand to-night, or where is the man with the withered hand. To such I would say, in my Master's name, "Stretch out that hand of thine." It is

An Auspicious Moment

A great thing shall surely be done unto thee. Believe thou now. Thou hast said aforetime, "I never can believe." Now trust Jesus. Sink or swim, trust Him.

Our Lord Jesus never casts away a sinner who trusts in Him. Though you be the most unworthy creature that ever trusted Him, trust Him now, that it may be told in heaven that there is a bigger sinner saved today than ever was saved before. Such a salvation will make Christ more glorious than He ever was; and if yours with His healing hand this day, well then, when He has touched and healed you, as He will, there will be more praise to Him in heaven than He ever had before. O soul, I would I could persuade thee to draw nigh to Him, but my Master can do it.

V. The last thing to consider is

The Result of this stretching out of the man's hand in obedience to the command. He was healed. I have already tried to set before you the fact that the healing was manifest; it was also immediate. The man had not to stand there a long time but his hand was straightway healed; and yet the cure was perfect, for his hand was whole like unto the other, just as useful as his left hand had been, with all the extra dexterity which naturally belongs to the right. It was perfectly healed, though healed in a moment. You may depend upon it, that it was permanently healed; for, though I have heard it said that saved souls fall from grace and perish, I never believed it, for I have never read of any of the cases which our Lord cured that they became bad again. My Master's cures last forever. I remember seeing in the shop windows some years ago, that there was to be had within a "momentary cure" for the toothache. I noticed as one of my friends, the proprietor of that valuable medicine, whatever it was, had discovered that nobody wanted

A Momentary Cure. and so the word "momentary" was changed for the word "instantaneous," which was a great improvement. I am afraid that some people's salvation is a momentary salvation. They get a sort of grace, and they lose it again. They get peace, and by-and-by it is gone. What is wanted is permanence, and there is always permanence in the work of Christ.

O soul, dost thou see, then, what is to be had at this moment of Jesus? Healing for life; deliverance from the withering power of sin through life and through eternity. This is to be had by cheerful obedience to the matchless command: "Stretch forth thine hand," or in other words, "Trust, trust, trust." There can be no difficulty in that; to trust and rest upon one whom you cannot doubt must follow as a matter of course upon your good opinion of him. Your belief that he is true is a sort of faith. Throw yourself upon him now. If thou dost this thou shalt be saved. And I do not mean merely that thou shalt be saved from hell; for the power of faith, working in you by God the Holy Spirit, shall save you from loving sin any more; being forgiven, and you will henceforth love him who forgives you, and you will receive a new principle of action which shall be strong enough to break the bands of your old habits, and you shall rise into a pure and holy life. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed; and free you shall be at once if you trust in the Lord, grant his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Rheumatism is like sand in the bearings of machinery. Hood's Sarsaparilla is the great lubricator which cures the disease.

CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN.

Significance of the Fact That There Are Thirteen Converts in Parliament.

Since the Mikado, whose authorities have continued in Japan for the past 1,000 years (according to Japanese annals) chose to concede a part of this authority to the people, granting them a constitutional government and the privilege of electing their own representatives in the newly composed parliament, the rise of the Christian element among the Japanese has been very marked, and the selection of members of this faith to fill many of the important offices under the government, has been quite as noticeable.

In the present Parliament there are thirteen baptized Christians and several others who profess the faith, and have not yet received the rite of baptism. This number, out of a total of 300 composing the Parliament, is a very good showing for the Christians. If this average is preserved throughout Japan it would show that Christianity now numbers over 1,500,000 converts among a people who, twenty years since, had hardly a Christian within their country.

Looking at this in another light it becomes even more interesting, for it has always been claimed that though Christianity made some progress among the lower orders of Japanese yet it made none among the higher. The inference suggested by the number of Christians in this, the second elected house of representatives, directly contradicts this theory, for it shows that whereas the percentage of converts in Japan does not exceed 27 in every 10,000, yet the corresponding percentage in the class from which members of the house of representatives are drawn is 433. In this calculation the total number of Christians of all denominations in Japan is assumed to be 100,000, the number heretofore conceded as belonging to that faith.

Notice of Dissolution

THE undersigned hereby give notice and certify that a certain limited Partnership under the laws of the Province of New Brunswick, conducted under the firm name of "W. C. PITFIELD & Co.," for the buying and selling at wholesale of dry goods and other merchandise, and generally a commission business, which by the certificate of the Limited Partnership, registered in the office of the Registrar of Deeds of the City and County of Saint John in the said Province, was to commence the Twenty-eighth day of December, A. D. 1889, and terminate the First day of January, A. D. 1892, did terminate and is and was dissolved the said First day of January, A. D. 1892.

(Signed) WARD C. PITFIELD.

S. HAYWARD.

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAINT JOHN, to wit: Be it remembered that WARD C. PITFIELD and SAMUEL HAYWARD, parties to and the signers of the annexed notice and certificate, personally came and appeared at the City of Saint John, in the City and County of Saint John and Province of New Brunswick, before me, J. E. BARNES, one of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace and for the said City and County of Saint John, and acknowledged the said WARD C. PITFIELD that he signed the said notice and certificate, and the said SAMUEL HAYWARD that he signed the same.

Given under my hand at the said City of Saint John this Twenty-first day of December, A. D. 1891.

(Signed) J. E. BARNES.

J. P. City and County of Saint John.

Partnership Notice.

THE undersigned, desirous of forming a Limited Partnership under the Laws of the Province of New Brunswick, hereby certify:

1. That the name of the firm under which such partnership is to be conducted is "W. C. PITFIELD & Co."

2. That the general nature of the business intended to be transacted by such partnership is the buying and selling at wholesale of dry goods and other merchandise, and generally a commission business.

3. That the names of all the general and special partners interested in said partnership are as follows:

WARD C. PITFIELD, who resides at the City of Saint John in the City and County of Saint John and Province of New Brunswick, is the general partner, and SAMUEL HAYWARD, who resides at the Parish of Hampton in the County of Kings and Province of Nova Scotia, is the special partner.

4. That the said SAMUEL HAYWARD has contributed the sum of forty thousand dollars as capital to common stock.

5. That the period at which the said partnership is to commence is the Second day of January, A. D. 1892, and the period at which the said partnership is to terminate is the Second day of January, A. D. 1892.

Dated this Thirtieth day of December, A. D. 1891.

(Signed) WARD C. PITFIELD.

S. HAYWARD.

PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK.

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAINT JOHN, N. S.

Be it remembered that on this Thirtieth day of December, A. D. 1891, at the City of Saint John and Province of New Brunswick, before me, JAMES A. BELYEA, a Notary Public in and for the said Province, by lawful authority duly commissioned and sworn, reading and practicing in the said City of Saint John, personally came and appeared, WARD C. PITFIELD and SAMUEL HAYWARD, parties to and the signers of the annexed certificate, and in the said certificate mentioned and severally acknowledged, the said WARD C. PITFIELD that he signed the said certificate, and the said SAMUEL HAYWARD that he signed the said certificate.

In witness whereof, I the said Notary have hereunto set my hand and Notarial Seal at the said City and County of Saint John, the said Thirtieth day of December, A. D. 1891.

(Signed) JAMES A. BELYEA,

Notary Public.

Notice.

DANIEL & BOYD (LIMITED) having purchased the Stock and good will of the business of DANIEL & BOYD, the future business will be conducted at the old stand, Market Square, under the name and style of DANIEL & BOYD (LIMITED).

THOS. W. DANIEL, President.

JOHN BOYD, Vice-President.

FREDK. W. DANIEL, Managing Director.

THOS. H. SOMMERVILLE, Secretary.

St. John, N. B., Dec. 21, 1891. Jan. 16.

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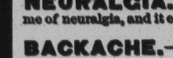


RHEUMATISM.—Col. DAVID WYLLIE, Brockville, Ont., says:

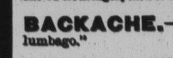
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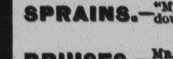
NEURALGIA.—Mr. JAMES DONNER, 158 Yonge St., Toronto, Ont., writes: "St. Jacobs Oil is the only remedy that relieved me of neuralgia, and it effectually cured me."



BACKACHE.—"I can highly recommend St. Jacobs Oil as being the best medicine in existence; it promptly cured me of severe backache." G. N. BOYER, Cadillac, Quebec.



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