

THE MAN ... whose right hand was withered
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(LUKE 6: 6)

"And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered." This is a typical Doctor Luke text, and the beloved physician carefully points out that it was the man's right hand and not his left which was useless. The fellow was very much alive ; and as far as we can judge from the Scriptures, his eyesight was not impaired. All his trouble centred in that right hand, which would not respond to his will. The right hand is the hand of service, and for most people the loss of this valuable member would be inestimable. A man might endeavor to work with his left hand, but he would never accomplish all he wished to do unless he could also use the other member which dangled helplessly at his side. He reminds us of Christians whose service is not up to standard. They have received eternal life and are no longer dead in sin ; they see clearly and discern between true and false teaching ; yet in actual service, spiritual paralysis has withered the right hand. The Bible has several illustrations of this type, and from the sacred record we may now learn the causes of this infirmity.

Sinfulness - Luke 5: 18-20

"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy . . . and when Jesus saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." This statement seemed out of place, for the unfortunate sufferer had not come seeking the forgiveness of sins. Paralysis had deprived him of much of the joy of living. His problem was not spiritual, but something practical and physical. The Lord Jesus realized that the cause of the man's helplessness was his secret sin. It would appear that somewhere in his past life the sinner had allowed evil to predominate, and physical infirmity had resulted, The Great Physician dealt with the secret sins before He finally removed the irksome malady. Here was a man who could not walk, who could not work, because sin had paralyzed him. We are reminded of the outstanding facts of Christian experience. " If a man regard sin in his heart, the Lord will not hear him."

Prayerlessness - Matthew 17:19-21

"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could we not cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you . . . this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." The Lord Jesus revealed eternal truth in that one great statement. While His disciples had slept, He had prayed. Their impotence and failure to cast out the demon provided a strange contrast to the amazing power of their Lord. Omnipotence and impotence were never so near as on that day. Prayer is a great mystery, and we shall never understand all its secrets until life's journey has been completed. Yet the facts of history and the teachings of the Bible agree that prayer-real, believing prayer-is the greatest weapon given by God to man. Prayer changes the man who prays. It makes him more usable for the purposes of God. Eloquence may be the machinery, but prayer is the power which drives it. A church without a prayer meeting-is not a church!

Nervousness - John 9:20-22

"The parents of the blind man answered them and said,

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We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind:
But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath
opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age ; ask him: he
shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, be-
cause they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already,
that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should
be put out of the synagogue." Thus two cowardly people
failed their boy and dishonored their Lord. We shall never know
what great things might have been accomplished that
day if those parents had courageously given their testimony.
Supposing they had said, " Oh, priest, our hearts have been
aching for years. Our boy was blind, and we brought him
regularly to the synagogue. Yet you could do nothing for
us. As long as we live we shall love the Lord, and thank Him
for this miracle." Such a testimony, given in the power of
the Holy Spirit, might have performed an even greater miracle
than the one already accomplished. Alas, they were too
nervous to do their duty. Their right hands were useless, and
thus they lost their greatest opportunity.

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