

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SERVICE

A. B. Simpson

The healing of the waters brings fruitfulness

The first miracle in the ministry of Elisha after he began his public ministry was a "sign," and gave evidence that his prayer for a double portion of the Spirit had not been denied. This miracle is recorded in Second Kings, chapter 2: "And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land" (vs. 21). This miracle pointed forward to a life of blessing and fruitfulness. It speaks to us likewise, giving us the true conditions for successful service.

The Source

Jericho had been rebuilt in defiance of God's direct command (I Kings 16:34). The builder had suffered the penalty of his presumption. When Elisha reached Jericho, he was told that the situation there was most pleasant and attractive, but the water was bad. Consequently, vegetation was stunted, and the trees prematurely cast their fruit. When appealed to for assistance, Elisha proved that he knew how to trace the source of the trouble. One less acquainted with Divine methods and secrets might have advised a different course. Perhaps they would have suggested a new fertilizer, or a different kind of plowing, or the spraying and pruning of the sickly trees. Such temporizing might have helped a little; the better way was to go to "the spring." Unless the fountain was healed, the stream would carry the deadly poison wherever it went.

The miracle is a parable of human life. Human nature finds it very convenient to put on a cloak of self-righteousness in a vain effort to hide corruption. When Jesus faced the Pharisees, He fearlessly denounced them for giving so much attention to display of religious devotion without a corresponding purity of life. He exposed their hypocrisy and tore off their mask of professed holiness, at the same time charging that inwardly they had the disposition of "ravening wolves" and the putrefaction of "whited sepulchres." Since He knew that the heart is the source of every conceivable form of wickedness, and that the issues of life can be improved only by a mighty revolution in the innermost being, He says to all men, "Ye must be born again."

The miracle was, or at least should have been, recognized as a message to Israel. Set to be a witness to the nations, they had lost their distinctive testimony. Their former isolation among a world of idolators had been given up. Their national strength had decayed, and their very life was threatened. In such an emergency, it was no time to dally or experiment with half-way palliative methods that at the best could only bring a little relief here and there in some of the sore spots. The Prophet bade them go with him to the spring and locate their trouble at its very beginning. A people that had so clearly heard the threatenings of the Law should not have been slow to admit that the poison in the waters had been inserted by their departure from God. The barrenness of their land and the fruitlessness of their lives could be traced to this cause. Their calamities caused the warnings of Jehovah to re-echo in their ears: "If thou wilt not harken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments

and His statutes which I command thee this day * * * Cursed shall be * * * thy store."

The Message to the Church

The message of the miracle should not be missed by the professing Church. We are accustomed to distinguish between the true Church, the "little flock," and the great ecclesiastical system of these last days, whose photograph we easily recognize in the Church of the Laodiceans. It is not easy to persuade an apostate church that there is a lack of fruitfulness or evidence of poison in the ecclesiastical system. Temporal prosperity is also taken for spiritual grace. Political power and worldly popularity are carnal weapons which seem in these late days to make unnecessary the ministry of prayer in the power of the Holy Ghost. But that there is a barrenness, anointed eyes can easily see. There is little sorrow for sin; power in prayer has all but vanished. Souls are not being brought to Christ as we might expect as the result of so much effort and expenditure of time and money. When God goes to the spring, He points out the real trouble—a departure from the faith and this prevents blessing.

It would be easy to apply the lesson to a local assembly of whatever place or name. Is there barrenness, little fruit of the Spirit in the lives of the members? Are few souls being brought to a knowledge of Jesus Christ? Has "first love" for the Lord been lost? Has missionary fervor disappeared? If any or all of these symptoms are seen, how shall the situation be dealt with? May we not learn from the method of Paul with the Church at Corinth? Tracing their troubles to the spring, he found factions and sin that had been allowed and excused; he found spiritual gifts that had been used to foster pride; he found lack of love among the brethren; he found them degrading the Lord's Supper almost to the level of a heathen feast, and much more that must have been humiliating reading for the Corinthians. With severity, but with tenderness, the Apostle went to the very bottom, sparing none; and by the blessing of God, he was enabled to bring the church to a Godly sorrow which meant healing of the poisoned waters at their very source.

Many a troubled heart is asking today what is wrong with the disturbed, restless world. The answer is simple—the spring has been polluted. So long as the source of life is defiled, just so long will the current of the world be filled with a poison that brings a never-ending curse upon the race. Material conditions may be improved which will cause simple people to believe that the world is getting better when it is only getting "better off." Reform movements, legislation, and many other contrivances may be ordered to remedy the fatal disease. But they do not go to the secret source of the world's troubles. The Son of God sits on the Father's throne, appealing to the nations to make terms with Him. This they will not do; they will rather increase their rebellion, intensify their resistance until they bring this world to the horrors of the great Tribulation.

The Prophet's remedy was simple. From a new cruse he took salt, which he cast into the spring. A Christian is likened to salt, but his savor is not inherent; he obtains it from Jesus Christ. The practical conclusion then is that Christ is the ultimate remedy. It is Christ in the heart that makes us new creatures. It is Christ pre-eminent in the Church that keeps

it holy and fruitful. It will be Christ who will bring back blessing to barren Israel. It will be Christ who at length will rule the nations with a rod of iron and afterward remove the curse, bringing the long-sought millennial rest. Successful service comes through a union with Christ.—The Alliance Weekly.

WEDDINGS

On March 4th at the home of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Jewett, of Lower Hainesville, N. B., Miss Marie Jewett became the bride of Mr. Robert Crouse, of Fredericton. Rev. J. A. Owens performed the ceremony.

On the evening of April 8th Miss Mary Forbes, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Forbes, of Mapleton, N. B., was united in marriage to Mr. Eugene Bradley, of Hartland. The ceremony was performed by Rev. J. A. Owens.

At the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ingraham, Temperance Vale, N. B., their daughter, Bessie Marie, became the bride of Mr. Ivan Bradley, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Bradley, of Maple Ridge. Rev. J. A. Owens united the young couple in marriage.

OBITUARY

Mrs. Clara L. Hon, 78, of 314 Eliot Lane, a resident of Long Beach 25 years, died yesterday in a local hospital. She was born in Woodstock, Canada, and came here from Denver, Colo. Surviving are sons, J. McLeod Hon, Tampa, Fla., and Leonard W. Hon, Denver; sisters, Dr. Katherine M. Scott, Columbus, Ohio, and Miss Anna O. McLeod, Long Beach; six grandsons, and three great-grandchildren. Service will be directed by Mottell's Mortuary.

Mrs. Guy Hall, of Bedell Settlement, formerly Annie Rogers, sister of the late Rev. G. A. Rogers, passed away on Wednesday, March 29th, at the home of Mrs. Eber Ingraham, Woodstock, after several months illness. She was 49 years of age, and was a member of the Reformed Baptist Church.

The funeral services were conducted in the Reformed Baptist Church at Woodstock, on April 1st by Rev. H. E. Mullen, of Fredericton, assisted by Rev. Mr. Butler, of Mackenzie Corner, Rev. B. M. Hicks, Rev. A. H. Owens and Rev. H. Anderson. Several hymns were beautifully rendered by the Mullen trio. Interment was at Mackenzie Corner, Rev. Mr. Butler officiating.

The deceased was formerly a well-known school teacher, and the many beautiful floral tributes attested to the high esteem in which she was held by her many friends. Her kindly and generous disposition endeared her to all, and she will be greatly missed by relatives, freinds and neighbours.

She is survived by her husband, Guy Hall, of Bedell Settlement; her father, Alexander Rogers, of Benton; one sister, Mrs. William Crandlemire, of Canterbury; and one brother, Harold Rogers, of Benton.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and bow not unto thine own understanding"

"Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."