

## PORTIONS TO PROMOTE PRAYER

### I. Prison Portions.

Herod the king killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

Peter was shut up by man but not shut out from God. Prayer can get into any prison.

Paul and Silas in Philippi were maltreated by the multitudes and whipped by command of the magistrates. Sore with many stripes laid upon them, they were thrust into the inner prison and their feet fastened in the stocks.

But there was prayer in the prison. There was their preaching in the jail. Salvation came to the jailer and "to all that were in his house." The stripes of the preachers were washed. The ordinance of baptism was administered.

Joseph, sold into slavery, was put in prison in Egypt. But Joseph was on good terms with God.

And we read that "the Lord was with Joseph ... and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper." Genesis 39:21, 23. Of course, Joseph, having the Spirit of God, prayed. And so we read of the great promotion and power given Joseph by Pharaoh.

Jeremiah was put in the dungeon where he "sunk in the mire." Jeremiah 38:6. But during all these prison-dungeon experiences, the breath which Jeremiah drew was the breath of prayer. And the result, after many days and after trying experiences, was that he was loosed from the chains that were upon his hands.

God answers prayer. Therefore, let us pray!

### II. Portions Pertaining to Prophets.

What a portion to promote prayer is James 5:13-18.

There personal prayer is spoken of. "Let him pray."

There united prayer is urged. "Let them pray."

Here believers are exhorted to believing prayer. "The prayer of faith."

Here mutual prayer is emphasized. "Pray one for another." "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." James 5:16.

Here is operative prayer testified to. "Effectual, fervent prayer."

Here earnest prayer is stated. "He prayed earnestly."

Here continued prayer is urged. "He prayed again."

The experience of Daniel, the daring, in prayer. He turned his face from the king to God in pagan Babylon. He could not adjust his devotion to his God to the law of man. He could not bring his love to his Lord down to a legal standard. He was in Babylon, but Babylon was not in him.

He spoke of how God showed mercy to them who love God.

He spoke of how the people had, with rebellious wills, done wickedly by departing from God's commandments.

He closed this great prayer wherein sins are confessed with these words: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." Daniel 9:19.

What a promotion to prayer is the portion we find pertaining to Elisha. When the son of the woman of Shunam died, Elisha prayed.

Samuel's prayer life promotes prayer. "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." I Samuel 12:23.

Prayerlessness is robbery of our fellows. When we do not pray for our brethren, we sin against them. Prayerlessness is sin against the Lord. With Samuel prayer was vital and purposeful. A family without prayer is like a house without a roof -- exposed to every wind that blows and every storm that rages.

### III. Parable Portions That Promote Prayer.

In Luke 18 Jesus gives to his disciples the parable of the importunate widow, to teach men always to pray and not to faint. Jesus wants his disciples to know that they, of all men, are to be in need of the practice of prayer. "Always" does not imply incessant prayer, but prayer under all varieties of circumstances, prayer under the pressure of every need and in the stress of every desire. There must be faith-filled and persistent prayer.

God's dealings are always in love. We need to remember that God's delay does not mean God's inactivity. The feeble cry of a sick child or a poor widow shouts to God as loudly as the mighty appeal of a strong man.

Jesus gave the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Luke 18:9-14.

George Hubbard says this parable has three contrasts -- contrasted men, contrasted prayers, contrasted results. This was addressed to the self-righteous -- warning all men of all ages against self-righteousness when they pray.

In this parable, a Pharisee prays. The Pharisees, strictest of sects, most unbending in their bigotry, were fierce patriots and popular leaders.

In this parable, a publican prays. The publicans, collecting taxes for hated Romans, were extortioners, greedy, cruel, dishonest.

The Pharisee "prayed with himself" -- drew a flattering portrait of himself and held the portrait up for God to admire. He put all men in a different category from himself. His notion of righteousness was primarily negative, as consisting in abstinence from flagrant sins. He classified himself with the two classes of people whom Jesus especially disapproved: those who trust in themselves that they are righteous and those who regard others as mere ciphers, showing sinful contentment with self and wicked contempt for others. The publican stood afar off from the holy place, which he thought he had no right to approach. In humility he would not lift up his eyes to heaven. He was doubtless a bad man, but a bad man sorry for his badness is not far from goodness. To the publican he himself was the only sinner in the world. God's forgiveness, such as the publican won, is an urge to us to pray -- with genuine confession of our sins.

An acted parable of prayer is the healing of the two blind men. Matthew 20:30-34.

Observe their helplessness. They were dependent on passers-by to tell them that Jesus was near. By their ears, not their eyes, they found this out. Yet they prayed.

Observe the seeming hopelessness of their condition. How could blind men expect to see?

Observe the vigorous persistence of their prayerful plea in the face of the shocked opposition and callous rebuke of the multitude.

They two had faith -- shown in that they asked for the seemingly impossible. Jesus stopped and asked, "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" They could have asked a little thing, but they asked a great thing. They asked for that which only God could do.

And they got what they asked for -- at once.

What was the result in their lives of their successful prayer? They followed Jesus -- the light of gratitude burning brightly in their eyes. They praised God openly.

Let this acted parable prompt us to persistent prayer that tests the resources of God.

#### IV. A Psalm That Promotes Prayer.

Psalm 107.

Twenty-two different troubles and distresses are mentioned. But four times is this expression found in the psalm: "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." Psalm 107:6. Four times did he exclaim with joy: "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" Psalm 107:8.

Let us pray with more frequency, more persistence, more gratitude, more love, more faith.