

5th Mar. 11, 1979 P.M. WKRT

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"PROMOTING PRAYER"

James 5:13-18

If any among you be afflicted, let him keep on praying.

I read the story of Frank Campbell, who one day a man came into his office selling pencils. As every business man knows, the pencil selling racket is more a begging activity than a business one. Those that engage in it, expect that the business man sorry for an elderly, down and out will give him a quarter or 50¢ for a 5¢ pencil to cheer him up and promptly forget it.

Campbell said to the man, if you are going to put in the time and work necessary to go around selling pencils, why don't you get a line of articles which people need and want - and make some real money. I told him about a man I knew, who had done just that. This man had selected about a half a dozen time and labor saving little gadgets. The people to whom he sold, soon came to look forward to his visits. He always had some new and interesting article which had not yet reached the stores. He did not have to sell his wares - his customers bought them like hot cakes. In emphasizing to my listener, he said - that he could accomplish much more than he was accomplishing by faith in himself. The conversation drifted to the power of prayer In solving economic problems. As well as spiritual and physical ones.

The man said - you do not have to argue to convince me that prayer is answered. I was born and raised on a farm in Southern Illinois. When I was quite young, I decided that I wanted to leave the farm and go to Chicago to live. My father, with the distress of a country-bred man for a big city - urged me to stay on the farm. But I persisted in my determination to go. Finally he said, very well--go if you will, but you are going against my advice. So if you will, go - we will remember you. But if you go up

to the city, and you go broke - don't look to me. He said, I went. It was in the midst of the depression. Hundreds of men were out of work. I tramped the streets looking for a job. I earned a little money here and there in odd jobs. But could find nothing permanent or worthwhile. Finally, I was down to rock bottom. I shelled out my last 50¢ for a night's lodging. The next morning, I knelt down and prayed as I have never prayed before. For help in my need. I started out without breakfast, not knowing where I would sleep that night. I walked aimlessly down the street trying to think of some way of getting something to eat. It was a typical Chicago day with the wind blowing in great gusts. Down the street, between the rows of tall buildings, suddenly, there came an unusual strong gust of wind. And I saw some papers come flying down from one of the buildings. They were blowing directly toward me. One piece was green. As it reached me, I grabbed for it. Plucked it out of the air and almost fainted. When I saw that it was \$10 bill. I went to the nearest restaurant to get some breakfast. From there to the barber shop - got a shave and a general cleaning up. Strengthened, I went after a job. And before night, I had one. And my troubles were over.

This, and many other illustrations could be used for promoting prayer. I want in this sermon to think about some of the things that we have available to us that will promote prayer, in our lives. I want first bad promotion. Second, Bible promotion. Third, boundless promotion.

I. BAD PROMOTION

Now the little girl who prayed for the (torn page) of her geography book to be made new but (found it still torn) needed some counsel concerning prayer. Now she was not to blame. But it was the fault of the one who had taught her. Who told her

that God can do anything. That a good God intent on a man's growth and goodness could just do anything. (Suppose) a man should say I wish I was on the other side of the world. And there upon find himself instantly transported from America to England. Suppose a man could say on a day that the world would ^{sun} not give light today. The mountains and everything would be victimized by prayer.

There is all sorts of bad promotion for prayer. And a majority of prayers remain unanswered.

Huckleberry Finn conducted several amusing experiments in his connection with prayer and finally gave up the whole thing as a useless venture. Miss Watson, she took me in the closet and prayed, he said. But nothing come of it. She told me to pray everyday and whatever I ask for - I would get it. But it weren't so. I tried it. Once I got a (fish line) but (no hooks) It wasn't any good to me without the hooks. I tried for the hooks three or four times, but somehow I couldn't make it work. By and by one day, I asked Mrs. Watson to try for me. But she said I was a fool. She never told me how and I couldn't make it out no way. I sat down, one time back in (the woods) and have a long think about it. I says to myself, (if) a body can get anything they pray for, why don't deacon Winn get back the money he lost on pork. Why can't the widow get back her silver snuff box that was stolen. Why can't Miss Watson fat up. No, says I to myself, there ain't nothing to it.

This is what I call bad promotion for prayer. It is something like a serious but a sad situation which (Phillip Carey) for example writes about. Here was an individual in bondage that prayed for the healing of the club foot That made his life

so miserable. Somewhere he had run across the text - whatsoever ye ask in faith, ye shall receive. He therefore prayed in absolute faith, that his club foot would be healed by Easter. When it was not cured, he became very bitter. He said that this was another one of those texts which says one thing and means another. He soon gave up his praying altogether.

Rufus Jones, the Quaker, prayed once during the final illness of his mother. He arose from his prayer confident that she was going to recover. And confidence increased when the minister prayed for her. (She died.) And he went through a period of rebellion and doubt. That shook the foundations of his faith.

There are others who have been described as - oh God, I tried today, but thou didst not answer me.

You have to remember that Jesus prayed the cup of suffering might be removed. And God responded by letting him die in agony on the cross.

But trying to promote prayer by cold, hard logic is a bad way to promote prayer. There are those who say, I get what I want from God, or I might as well give up praying. Meaning that if God refuses, to answer, it is like a football team losing a game. So we give up our magic wand.

But there are others who seek to promote prayer for its deeper meaning and purpose. They are like Mr. Eckhart's who says - love God as they love their cow. They love their cow for the milk. And the cheese, and the profit that it makes them.

But there must be a deeper meaning than this in the promises of God - and the deeper purpose in prayer.

We misunderstand the way in which God actually responds to our prayers. And we do not practice prayer as we ought.

Thomas Merton in a satire talked about the lives of people sometimes in prayer. They are great promoters of useless work. They love to organize meetings and banquets and conferences and lectures. They print circulars and letters. Talk for hours on the telephone in order that they might gather a hundred people together in a large room where they will all fill the air with smoke and make a great deal of noise and roar at one another. And clap their hands. And stagger home at last, patting one another on the back with the assurance that they have all done great things to spread the Kingdom of God.

He concludes, from such men and their programs, may the patient Lord deliver us.

*like teaching a ^{man} 40 year old Christian how to pray with
"Now I lay me down to sleep"*

There are many things that we could say that are bad when it comes to promoting prayer. And some of these illustrations that I have given I hope will take roots.

II. BIBLE PROMOTION

It is stated that someone once asked Luther Burbank, the great plant wizard,

"whether he believed in a life hereafter. To which Burbank responded. I have no reason real/ to believe in a life hereafter."

Arthur Brisbane, a great writer of his age, answered Burbank and said - the grasshopper sitting by the railroad track, seeing an express train flash by on its way to Chicago had no reason to believe that the train will ever get to Chicago. The fact that the grasshopper does not know if the train will ever get to Chicago does not mean that it isn't going to get there,

Now the fact is, that we have had promotion - and that man is unable to grasp the majesty of God. And the over-all plan of his wonderful beauty does not mean that he cannot and does not answer prayer. Thus we look at the Bible - there are so many parts of the Bible that promote prayer. And as you think of the Scripture as promoting prayer, it will promoted through the Bible in various places.

I- From prison we find it was promoted.

Acts 12:1-5 - Now when Herod, the king, stretched forth his hand to vex the church, he killed James, the brother of John with the sword. Further, he took Peter also. And Peter was kept in prison. But prayer was made without ceasing unto God for him.

Here is Peter. He was in prison and prayer.

Peter became the hero of Pentecost. The spokesman of the early chapters of Acts. Sleeping between two soldiers bound with two chains. Prayer can get into any prison.

Paul and Silas Acts 16:24. With their feet fast in the stocks - and at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God and the prisoners heard them. They had been whipped with many stripes. And their feet were fastened.

But there was prayer in the prison at midnight and they sang praises. I wonder what hymns they were singing at that hour. And then the answer to prayer came and the earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, and the doors of the jail opened. All the bands on all the prisoners loosened. The sleeping jailer aroused. He called for a light and he came. And there was the preaching to the jailer. And then the preacher's stripes were washed.

Joseph, Gen. 41:38 - sold into slavery. Put into prison in Egypt. But Joseph was on good terms with God. And Pharaoh testified - "he said unto his servants, can we find such a one as this is. A man in whom the Spirit of God is."

The Lord was with Joseph and that which he did. The Lord made it prosper. Gen. 39:21. He had the Spirit of God and (he prayed). And here is something that promotes prayer. For we see that he was set over all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph and (without Thee, shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.) Gen. 41:41.

Jeremiah in his prophecy was put in prison. I prayed unto the Lord saying, our Lord God behold, thou hast made the Heavens and the earth. By thy great power and stretched out thine arm. There is nothing too hard for thee. Thou showest loving kindness unto thousands. And recompense the iniquity of the fathers. Unto the bosom of their children. "

Then came the word of the Lord, saying - behold I am the Lord Thy God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for me.) Jer. 32:17-27.

Another time he was put into prison. In the (dungeon) and made to remain there for several days. And he was then put in the court of the prison and given one (piece) of bread daily. Jer. 37.

Jer. 38:6 - But during these days in the dungeon and in the prison - he was praying. Jer. 40:4-5.

These are Bible portions that promote prayer.

Prophets.

The prophet Elijah. In James 5:13, 18. He says if any among you are

afflicted, let him pray. And he illustrates the matter of prayer by the man Elias, who was a man of like subject. Who prayed earnestly that it might not rain. And it rained not on the earth for the space of 3 years and 6 months. And he prayed again, and the rains gave way.

Here is the personal prayer that is spoken about. Let him pray. If any among you are afflicted, let him pray.

v. 14 - There is (united) prayer that is urged here. Let (them) pray. If any is sick, let him call for the elders of the church. V. (14). And pray over him.

v. 15 Here we are told, to believe in prayer. V. (15). The prayer of faith.

v. 16 - And here is mutual prayer that is emphasized in V. (16). Confess your faults one to another. Pray for one another that you may be healed.

The effectual fervent prayer - V. (16) Avails much. Here is earnest prayer that is stated in V. 17. Here he continued in prayer. And is urged in V. 18. Elijah was a religious man who lived in the time when his nation was rapidly failing, into heathenism. Ahab, who was a king but was subject to Queen Jezebel. And the worship of Baal was being set up. And the events of Elijah's life are focused in over the priests of Baal at Carmel. (450) prophets had gathered on that great mountain. And Elijah said how long halt ye between two opinions. If the Lord be God, follow Him.

If Baal, then follow him. I Kings 18:21.

We know the answer - that God sent fire in answer to his prayer. I Kings. 18:31-35. He rebuilt the altar of God. And it came to pass, the time of the evening sacrifice, V. 36. Elijah the prophet came near and offered a prayer unto God. What words these are to promote prayer.

When we read about such men praying. Nehemiah, in leading the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Neh. 4:2-3. Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto God. One prayer was, hear, oh our God, for we are despised. And turn their reproach upon their own head and give them for a prey in the land of captivity. Neh. 4:4.

Daniel, in his experience. But Daniel purposed in his heart, that he would not defile himself with a portion of the King's meat. Nor would the wine which he drank. Daniel 1:8. And we find that Daniel altered. And he went into his house, and his windows being opened toward Jerusalem, he kneeled down on his knees (three times) and day, and he prayed and gave thanks to God as he did aforetime. Daniel 6:10-11.

Daniel with his faith in God said, I set my face unto thy Lord God to seek thy prayer and supplication with fasting and sack clothes and ashes. Daniel 9:3.

The prophet Elisha. 2 Kings 4:32-33. He came to the woman of Shunam. Her

son had died, and therefore he went in and he prayed.

2 Kings 6:15 - and when he and his servants were surrounded by the Syrians Elisha prayed. And he ask his servant to go and behold, and see what he could see. And the servant saw God's hosts, of horses and chariots (protecting) them.

Samuel - I Sam. 12:23 - God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.

These words of Samuel teach us that prayerlessness is really robbery, of our fellows. When we do not pray for our brethren, we sin against them.

III Parables. Luke 18. Jesus gives the Disciples the parable about the widow. To teach men that they should pray and (not faint.) He knew that they needed this. That they would pray always in prayer. It is interesting to note that these men were not to faint. Not to give up. Not to be lazy.

✓ " I read about a man once. " It was said of him, that he was so lazy, that he would not shake if he had a chill. "

Jesus used these parable to promote prayer. He said that a widow came once to a judge. And she kept coming back, and coming back until she got her answer.

God is not idol. When he does not answer quickly. I think even the feeble cry of the sick child or the poor widow, was heard.

The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Luke 18:9-14. You have three contrasts. You have the contrast of men and the contrast of prayer. And you certainly have the contrast of results. In that situation.

The Pharisee prayed with himself. As the picture is held up. But here was the Publican who stood a far off. He thought of himself being in that holy place, but he had not right even to approach God because of the sins in his life.

Blind men. Matt. 20:30-34. They were helpless. Dependent upon those who passed by. They were hopeless. How could blind men expect to see. And yet they prayed and they were persistent. And God answered.

So we have looked here at some of those who were in prison. We have looked at some of the prophets. And we touched on some of the parables.

IV And we could talk about some of the Psalms. The study of the 107th Psalm. Would help you to discover something about what a man needs. Twenty-two different troubles in that Psalm and distresses are mentioned. But four times is the expression found -- "then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble. And he delivered them out of their distresses."

Beyond these Scriptures, to promote prayer - there is always an immediate need that promotes prayer. An urgent need. And perhaps you are thinking now of some need that you have.

III. BOUNDLESS PROMOTION

The more I consider this subject of promoting prayer, there is bad promotion, but there is Bible promotion. And there is also a boundless promotion that we find in the (lives of men and women) that have proclaimed the (promises) of God. And have prayed. I would like now to use some of these men and some of their lives, to encourage you in prayer.

Let us look first at John Wesley. In 1789 he wrote in his journal, this day I entered my 86th year. And I now find that I am going to grow old. My sight is decaying. So I cannot read small print without a strong light. My strength is decaying - I have to walk much slower. My memory of names, whether persons or places is decaying. Until I have to stop and think a little to recollect. What I should be afraid of is - if I took thought of tomorrow, that my body should weight down. But thou shalt answer for me oh Lord, thy God.

Two years later, he confessed this. Above (86) years of age. I found none of the infirmities of old age. My eyes did not wax dim. Neither did my natural strength abate. But last August, I found almost a sudden change. My eyes were so dim that no glasses would help. My strength, likewise, quite forsook me. And probably will not return in this world. But I feel no pain from head to foot. Only, it seems that nature is exhausted.

They ministered to him in his (last hours). And when he got into his chair, they

saw that the change of death, had taken ahold of him. He said, Lord thou biddest strength to those that can speak and to those that cannot. Speak Lord to all of our hearts. And let them thou that loosest tongues - and he sang, now Father, Son, and Holy Ghost who sweetly all agree.

He said now we have done - let us all go. They were obligated to lay him down on the bed, to which he rose no more. He called for them to pray and to praise. Near the end, there was a little pause. And with the remaining strength he said, the best of all - God is with us. And then, he felt that God had kept his promises and was faithful - that God would comfort the hearts of his weeping friends. He sort of lifted up his dying arms in a token of victory. And repeated, the heart reviving words - the best of all is, God is with us.

To me this is a boundless portion to promote prayer.

2 The next man we think about is Thomas Chalmers. He is a Scotch man. A wonderful man. Born in 1780. But his mind was keen and he was always searching and seeking. And one of the great characteristics of this man was his ability in power and prayer. This is shown by one of his public prayers. Oh give us some steady object for our mind to rest upon.

At the age of 30, during his ministry at Kilmany, he was layed up for many weeks by illness. For four months he never left his room. For almost a half a year, he never entered his pulpit. But it was a beginning of a great spiritual revolution. That was accomplished in him. For he wrote in 1810 something of his private prayers. Some examples - "Heaven Father, compasses with thy error, I implore Thy forgiveness

for the past. And thy direction for the future. Keep me in the way everlasting. And being but a pilgrim, may I be neither too much devoted to its pleasures, or too much oppressed by its anxieties."

Father, in Heaven, teach me what is right. And enable me to adhere to it. In all of my undertakings, enable me to sacrifice myself. Give justice to my conceptions of priority. And may I give birth to all thy purposes. Father, in Heaven, teach me thyself. May the gentleness of thy religion shed itself and its influence over me. '1

He wrote in 1810, May 6th - I preached this Sunday. After being away from public duty for 31 weeks. But he says, I felt myself empowered by the gracious God. One of the last sentences that his family over heard from him was this -- oh Father, my Heavenly Father.

Thomas Carlisle said, I believe there is not in all of Scotland or in Europe, such a Christian priest left.

ds - Next we think of Mr. William E. Gladstone. A wonderful man of God. Who always made his way in the church. And was not only a great statesman. But he was a great man of prayer. Mr. Gladstone, it is said, blesses everyone who comes near him. Even as he lay dying, people came to his sick room for his blessing. His faith, has never failed. The hope that he has is bright.

And one came in and took him by the hand, and said - (God bless you.) He said, will you give me your prayers. And the person said, well, I have always prayed for you.

But he said nobody needs your prayers more than the poor sinner that lies here before you. This is something that took root. That even with his great height and power, he still felt the great need and necessity for prayer. And was always blessing people.

John Patton who set out for Glasglow to prepare for the ministry had to walk 40 miles. To Kilmarnock and travel by train. His dear father walked with him the first six miles of the way. He counselled him with tears and Heavenly conversation. And when he had walked the last half mile or so - they walked together in unbroken silence. He said, his father had a habit of carrying his hat in his hand. And he said his lips kept moving in silent prayer for me. Tears fell fast when our eyes met each other in looks which all speech was vain. We halted as we approached the parting place, and he grasp my hand firmly, and said, "God bless you my son. Your Father's God prosper you. And keep you from all evil." Unable to say more, his lips kept moving in silent prayer. In tears we embraced and parted. And I went off. When I turned the corner in the road, where he would lose sight of me, I looked back. And saw him standing there, with his head uncovered, gazing after me. Waving my hat, I was around the corner and out of sight in an instant. My heart was too full he said, to carry me further. Then rising up cautiously, I climbed the dyke to see if he yet stood where I had left him. And just as that moment, I caught a glimpse of him climbing the dyke and looking out for me. He did not see me - but he eagerly gazed in my direction.

And I felt sure that (rising in prayers) he continued to watch through blinded eyes.

Patton went off, and he worked. And he had many experiences of prayer. And he risk much. And he said this, had I been a stranger to Jesus, and to prayer - my

reason would verily given way. But my comfort and joy sprang out of these words. "Never leave thee, nor forsake thee, lo, I am with you always." Pleading these promises, I followed my guide.

br Let us look at one more Christian hero soldier of the South. Stonewall Jackson. And those who wrote about him, wrote about his custom in silent prayer. His life at home, says his wife, was perfectly reverent and systematic. He arose about 6 o'clock and knelt for secret prayer. He took a bath and then he took a brisk walk, and he would call the family together for an hour of family prayers. He prayed without ceasing unto fire and to camp. He never missed his own impulse for his revelation of divine will. This is what we need.

Many times we follow the impulses of our own feelings instead of the divine will of God. He prayed for help to do his duty, And he prayed for success. But he knew that prayer was not always answered the way that man would have it.

During the Civil War he gathered his staff together for evening devotions. And conversations about the power of faith. And the mysteries of redemption. There were many stories about him as he walked in the woods (absorbed) in prayer. And lifting his left hand as a gesture which men believe was his appeal to Heaven. His devout habits, says Henderson who wrote of him, were no secret in the camp. His faithful servants knew about this.

He made no secret of his absolute dependency upon a higher power. Every action was prayer. For every action began and named in the Almighty. He was the happiest man,

said one of his friends, that he ever knew. And he expressed his surprise when others were less happy than himself. When he lay wounded on May 1863, he asked, who is preaching at the headquarters today. He says, he was told that the Army was praying for him. Thank God, he said. They are very kind to me. And of course, as his energy was parting, and things were getting low with him - he said this, "let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees." And the soul of the great captain passed into the peace of God.

With these testimonies of the boundless promotion that we have for prayer, there should come inspiration for you to pray. Remember there is bad promotion, Bible promotion, and boundless promotion. I trust that this will be enough to promote prayer in your life. If do you not pray, that this will be the beginning. This will be the moment when you will determine that prayer will become a part of your life. There are so many promises of God that we could recollect - but let us recollect these things that we have talked about.

Victor Hugo's "The man who laughs" illustrates this sermon - The scene is aboard a ship, tossed about in the Eng. Channel by a fierce storm.

The ship is about to sink. The entire crew and passengers are convinced that all is hopeless, it is at this point that the Doctor aboard takes over & cries out, "To your knees!"

Repentance is the bark that never sinks.
You have lost your compass?

You are wrong! you still have prayer!

No man is hopeless who continues to pray.