

Prayer and the Promises (Continued)

by E.M. Bounds

God's promises find their fulfillment along the lines of prayer, and prayer is essential in realizing God's plans and purposes.

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:25

Topics: "Prayer", "Fulfillment of God's Promises"

Description

E.M. Bounds emphasizes the vital connection between prayer and the fulfillment of God's promises, illustrating that the richest fruits of divine promises are realized through earnest prayer. He cites examples from Scripture, such as Ezekiel's promise of a new heart and the prayers of Daniel and Zachariah, to demonstrate that God's promises are personal and specific, requiring individual prayer to be activated. Bounds asserts that a prayerless heart cannot receive the Holy Spirit or experience the fullness of God's promises, and he encourages believers to engage in united, fervent prayer to unlock the power of these promises. He concludes by affirming that both believers and sinners can claim God's promises through sincere prayer, which leads to mercy, forgiveness, and transformation.

Transcript

THE great promises find their fulfillment along the lines of prayer. They inspire prayer, and through prayer the promises flow out to their full realization and bear their ripest fruit.

The magnificent and sanctifying promise in Ezekiel, thirty-sixth chapter, a promise finding its full, ripe, and richest fruit in the New Testament, is an illustration of how the promise waits on prayer:

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

And concerning this promise, and this work, God definitely says:

"I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

The more truly men have prayed for these rich things, the more fully have they entered into this exceeding great and precious promise, for in its initial, and final results as well as in all of its processes, realized, it is

entirely dependent on prayer.

Give me a new, a perfect heart,

From doubt, and fear, and sorrow free;

The mind which was in Christ impart,

And let my spirit cleave to thee.

"O take this heart of stone away!

Thy sway it doth not, cannot own;

In me no longer let it stay;

O take away this heart of stone!"

No new heart ever throbbed with its pulsations of divine life in one whose lips have never sought in prayer with contrite spirit, that precious boon of a perfect heart of love and cleanness. God never has put his Spirit into the realm of a human heart which had never invoked by ardent praying the coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. A prayerless spirit has no affinity for a clean heart. Prayer and a pure heart go hand in hand. Purity of heart follows praying, while prayer is the natural, spontaneous outflowing of a heart made clean by the blood of Jesus Christ.

In this connection let it be noted that God's promises are always personal and specific. They are not general, indefinite, vague. They do not have to do with multitudes and classes of people in a mass, but are directed to individuals. They deal with persons. Each believer can claim the promise as his own. God deals with each one personally. So that every saint can put the promises to the test. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord." No need of generalizing, nor of being lost in vagueness. The praying saint has the right to put his hand upon the promise and claim it as his own, one made especially to him, and one intended to embrace all his needs, present and future.

Though troubles assail,

And dangers affright,

Though friends should all fail,

And foes all unite,

Yet one thing secures us,

Whatever betide,

The promise assures us,

The Lord will provide.

Jeremiah once said, speaking of the captivity of Israel and of its ending, speaking for Almighty God: "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and will perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."

But this strong and definite promise of God was accompanied by these words, coupling the promise with prayer: "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." This seems to indicate very clearly that the promise was dependent for its fulfillment on prayer.

In Daniel we have this record,

"I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications with fastings and sackcloth and ashes."

So Daniel, as the time of the captivity was expiring, set himself in mighty prayer in order that the promise should be fulfilled and the captivity be brought to an end. It was God's promise by Jeremiah and Daniel's praying which broke the chains of Babylonian captivity, set Israel free and brought God's ancient people back to their native land. The promise and prayer went together to carry out God's purpose and to execute his plans.

God had promised through his prophets that the coming Messiah should have a forerunner. How many homes and wombs in Israel had longed for the coming to them of this great honor! Perchance Zachariah and Elizabeth were the only ones who were trying to realize by prayer this great dignity and blessing. At least we do know that the angel said to Zachariah, as he announced to him the coming of this great personage, "Thy prayer is heard." It was then that the word of the Lord as spoken by the prophets and the prayer of the old priest and his wife brought John the Baptist into the withered womb, and into the childless home of Zachariah and Elizabeth.

The promise given to Paul, engraven on his apostolic commission, as related by him after his arrest in Jerusalem, when he was making his defense before King Agrippa, was on this wise: "Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee." How did Paul make this promise efficient? How did he make the promise real? Here is the answer. In trouble by men, Jew and Gentile, pressed by them sorely, he writes to his brethren at Rome, with a pressing request for prayer:

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea.

Their prayers, united with his prayer, were to secure his deliverance and secure his safety, and were also to make the apostolic promise vital and cause it to be fully realized.

All is to be sanctified and realized by the Word of God and prayer. God's deep and wide river of promise will turn into a deadly influence or be lost in the abyss, if we do not utilize these promises by prayer, and receive their full and life-giving waters into our hearts.

The promise of the Holy Spirit to the disciples was in a very marked way the "promise of the Father," but it was realized only after many days of continued and importunate praying. The promise was clear and definite that the disciples should be endued with power from on high, but as a condition of receiving that power of the Holy Spirit, they were instructed to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem till ye be endued with power from on high." The fulfillment of the promise depended upon the "tarrying." The promise of this "endowment of power" was made sure by prayer. Prayer sealed it to glorious results. So we find it written,

"These continued with one accord, in prayer and supplication, with the women." And it is significant that it was while they were praying, resting their expectations on the surety of the promise, that the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they were all "filled with the Holy Spirit." The promise and the prayer went hand in hand.

After Jesus Christ made this large and definite promise to his disciples, he ascended on high, and was seated at his Father's right hand of exaltation and power. Yet the promise given by him of sending the Holy Spirit was not fulfilled by his enthronement merely, nor by the promise only, nor by the fact that the prophet Joel had foretold with transported raptures of the bright day of the Spirit's coming. Neither was it that the Spirit's coming was the only hope of God's cause in this world. All these all-powerful and all-engaging reasons were not the immediate operative cause of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The solution is found in the attitude of the disciples. The answer is found in the fact that the disciples, with the women, spent several days in that upper room, in earnest, specific, continued prayer. It was prayer that brought to pass the famous day of Pentecost. And as it was then, so it can be now. Prayer can bring a Pentecost in this day if there be the same kind of praying, for the promise has not exhausted its power and vitality. The "promise of the Father" still holds good for the present-day disciples.

Prayer, mighty prayer, united, continued, earnest prayer, for nearly two weeks, brought the Holy Spirit to the church and to the world in pentecostal glory and power. And mighty continued and united prayer will do the same now

Lord God, the Holy Ghost,

In this accepted hour;

As on the day of Pentecost,

Descend in all thy power.

We meet with one accord,

In our appointed place,

And wait the promise of our Lord,

The Spirit of all grace.

Nor must it be passed by that the promises of God to sinners of every kind and degree are equally sure and steadfast, and are made real and true by the earnest cries of all true penitents. It is just as true with the divine promises made to the unsaved when they repent and seek God, that they are realized in answer to the prayers of brokenhearted sinners, as it is true that the promises to believers are realized in answer to their prayers. The promise of pardon and peace was the basis of the prayers of Saul of Tarsus during those days of darkness and distress in the house of Judas, when the Lord told Ananias in order to allay his fears, "Behold he prayeth."

The promise of mercy and an abundant pardon is tied up with seeking God and calling upon him by Isaiah:

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

The praying sinner receives mercy because his prayer is grounded on the promise of pardon made by him whose right it is to pardon guilty sinners. The penitent seeker after God obtains mercy because there is a definite promise of mercy to all who seek the Lord in repentance and faith. Prayer always brings forgiveness to the seeking soul. The abundant pardon is dependent upon the promise made real by the promise of God to the sinner.

While salvation is promised to him who believes, the believing sinner is always a praying sinner. God has no promise of pardon for a prayerless sinner just as he has no promise for the prayerless professor of religion. "Behold he prayeth" is not only the unfailing sign of sincerity and the evidence that the sinner is proceeding in the right way to find God, but it is also the unfailing prophecy of an abundant pardon. Get the sinner to praying according to the divine promise, and he then is near the kingdom of God. The very best sign of the returning prodigal is that he confesses his sins and begins to ask for the lowliest place in his father's house.

It is the divine promise of mercy, of forgiveness and of adoption which gives the poor sinner hope. This encourages him to pray. This moves him in distress to cry out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me."

Thy promise is my only plea,

With this I venture nigh;

Thou call'st the burdened soul to thee,

And such, O Lord, am I.

How large are the promises made to the saint! How great the promises given to poor, hungry-hearted, lost sinners, ruined by the fall! And prayer has arms sufficient to encompass them all, and prove them. How great the encouragement to all souls, these promises of God! How firm the ground on which to rest our faith! How stimulating to prayer! What firm ground on which to base our pleas in praying!

The Lord hath promised good to me,

His word my hope secures;

He will my shield and portion be

As long as life endures.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/em-bounds/prayer-and-the-promises-continued/>

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