

121.1 A Prison Prayer

In the Bible, God's people often wound up in captivity. Joseph went to an Egyptian prison and the Jewish nation to Babylon. Paul and Silas found themselves in the Philippian jail for no genuine reason and held a prayer meeting.

²⁵ But at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.¹

Paul and Silas did more than call out to God for rescue from prison. They knew and followed scripture in holding this prayer meeting. As a result, God acted in a supernatural manner, which led to the conversions of the Philippian jailer and his household.

⁶⁰ I made haste, and did not delay To keep Your commandments.

⁶¹ The cords of the wicked have bound me, *But* I have not forgotten Your law.

⁶² At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, Because of Your righteous judgments.²

You may have heard of the notorious Confederate prisoner of war camp, Andersonville, about twenty-five miles from Americus, GA. It was the worst of all of the horrific Civil War prisons on both sides. Andersonville was overpopulated, food was scarce, with filthy living conditions. A small stream ran through the camp's center, providing water for the Union POWs. However, due to the men washing in the creek and their nearby waste products, they polluted the water. As a result, many of the malnourished men died of disease.

The South was suffering deprivation and could not supply their own army, let alone their prisoners. The CSA leadership knew of the issues in the prison and tried to negotiate prisoner exchanges, but the North would have none of it. They did not want to release CSA prisoners who would reengage in the conflict as the South was running out of military replacements. Andersonville's mistreatment of prisoners was widely known and fueled the emotions of northerners against the Confederacy.

You can imagine the distress and depression of the Union POWs in the camp. Some were so desperate that they chose to die instead of dealing with their unbearable surroundings. These depressed soldiers walked across a line in the dirt near the stockade walls called the "Dead Line." The Confederate guards shot to kill. [This is the origin of our "deadline," meaning: "A time limit, as for payment of a debt or the completion of an assignment."]

Pvt. William Tannahill of the Seventh Iowa Regiment watched his comrades unravel to prefer death to the despairing conditions. He decided to gather fellow Christian prisoners and hold prayer meetings in the "The Tabernacle" area where they held church services. They began praying for a source of pure water.

After about an hour, the sky darkened, the winds howled, and clouds rolled in. Torrential rain began falling and the prisoners set out pots and pans to catch the clean water from above. The putrid Stockade Creek flooded and washed out the camp.

Suddenly the whole camp heard a deafening crack of thunder that struck the ground near a "dead line" by a stockade wall. The prisoners and guards witnessed a miracle. An underground spring began bubbling up through the ground flowing into the camp.

¹ Acts 16:25-26 (NKJV)

² Psalm 119:60-62 (NKJV)

The Blue and the Gray saw a miracle on that August day so long ago. That stream is still flowing. They named the water source “Providence Spring.” How apropos!

No wonder our forefathers and mothers devoted so much time to prayer. Our colonial leaders called for prayer throughout the War for Independence. Our Continental Congress prayed as it opened for business in Philadelphia. Our Constitutional Convention prayed to God when they hit impasses. George Washington prayed daily for the cause of Liberty and the success of his troops as in the snows of Valley Forge. Our ancestors experienced the divine presence in unique ways.

If you want to encourage people to pray, you must tell them answered prayers. This is a story of God answering the prayers of desperate men. Providence Spring did not solve all the issues in Andersonville, but it provided pure water and a reminder that God knew those forlorn soldiers.

The wise King Solomon wrote:

¹⁹ **The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; By understanding He established the heavens;**

²⁰ **By His knowledge the depths were broken up, And clouds drop down the dew.**³

Let us pray faithfully and fervently for God’s will and kingdom to come to earth as in heaven. Let us advance His cause because when we do, He blesses our efforts with life and liberty. For “**where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**”⁴ We just might see some miracles in the process.

Keep The Light of *Prayer and Providence* Burning!

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³ Proverbs 3:20-21 (NKJV)

⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:17b (NKJV)