

The Prayers of Slaves Still Echo 150 Years After the Civil War

The American Civil War finally came to an end 150 years ago today, on April 9, 1865. Reflecting on this moves my heart in a profound way, partly because of the sacrifice of prayer in my family—who were formerly slaves.

I believe their prayers led personally to my freedom, and nationally delivered a nation from God's judgment. It's a testimony of great spiritual inheritance, a story so large it's difficult to share.

Prayer Bowls Over America

It begins with a 200-year-old black kettle pot, used by my Christian slave forbearers in Lake Providence, Louisiana. While used for cooking and washing clothes during the day, this kettle was secretly used for prayer. Forbidden to pray by their slave master, my ancestors were beaten unmercifully if found doing so.

However, in spite of their master's cruelty, and because of their love for Jesus, they prayed anyway. At night, sneaking into a barn, they carried this cast iron cooking pot into their secret prayer meeting. As others looked out, those inside prayed.

Turning this pot upside-down on the barn floor, they propped it up with rocks—suspending the pot a few inches above the ground. Then, while lying prostrate or kneeling on the ground, they prayed in a whisper underneath the kettle to muffle their voices. The story passed down with the kettle is that they were risking their lives to pray for ensuing generations. One day, freedom did come.

An unknown teenage girl decided to keep this pot, and pass it down along with the story of how others prayed for our freedom. She passed the story and the kettle down to Harriet Lockett; who then passed it on to Nora Lockett, who then passed it on to William Ford Sr., then to William Ford Jr.—who then gave it to me, William Ford III.

Whispered Prayers on Earth, Loud Cries in Heaven

It is important to understand the dynamics of what happened in the spirit realm. Revelation 5:8 speaks of “bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” before the throne of God. Zechariah 14:20 says, “And the cooking pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar.”

This “prayer bowl” caught muffled prayers on earth, just as bowls in heaven caught their prayers as incense. Though my forefathers only used this kettle as an acoustic means to keep them from being heard, symbolically—probably without their knowing it—this pot became their bowl of intercession.

Another interesting dynamic to note: in Revelation 8 when these bowls are released, one of the manifestations upon earth is voices.

White Christian abolitionists/revivalists like Francis Asbury and Charles Finney became voices for the voiceless. Their sermons in public became answers to whispered, private prayers. Along with black revivalists and abolitionists, like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, they awakened the conscience of America to the value of human life, equality and justice.

Revelation 8 also says that at some future point, God adds His incense and fire to these prayers, which manifest His judgment or justice on earth. And that is just what He did.

The Supreme Court of Heaven Rules Courts on Earth

In 1857, many felt a Supreme Court decision sealed the fate of enslaved African Americans. In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, Supreme Court justices ruled by a 7-2 decision that slaves were the property of their masters—with no human rights and no representation in court. However, because of prayer and acts of obedience, hearts changed and eventually this demonic decree was broken over America.

Revival was released and justice came, setting slaves free in America; God's heart was comforted through prayer and action. Now, our generation is being called into prayer and action today to be voices for the voiceless, releasing revival and justice in our day.

During the Civil Rights Movement, just as it was during slavery, there was a remnant of white and black that labored together. Of this, Dr. King said in his "I Have a Dream" speech: "... for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny."

"And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom," Dr. King continued. "We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back."

In the same way God raised up a unified remnant of black and white during slavery and the Civil Rights Movement, He is doing the same today—connecting the past with the future, in more ways than one.

A Most Amazing Divine Connection

As God would have it, as my Lockett forefathers prayed for years for the ending of slavery in Lake Providence, Louisiana, God ended slavery through the Civil War—on April 6, 1865, the last shot was fired on a property called Lockett's Farm on Sailor's Creek.

You may be aware that my friend Matt Lockett, Director of Bound4LIFE and JHOP DC, is a direct descendant of this family of Locketts. In other words, the Civil War ended in Matt's forefathers' front yard! History records this farm was the site of the last battle before Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered three days later—on April 9, at Appomattox Court House.

Just think: Secret prayers for freedom, under a kettle pot in Louisiana from my ancestors named Lockett, were in part answered at the farmhouse of slave owners in Matt's family named Lockett, where the Civil War ended! While God was answering prayers for freedom on my family side of Locketts, he was also answering the prayers on Matt's side of Locketts as well.

Matt noted recently that an earlier Lockett in his family line was one of Francis Asbury's circuit riding preachers—an abolitionist who stood for freedom. Matt also has Lockett ancestors who taught former slaves to read and write during the Reconstruction period. In light of what his ministry and impact is today, it is no coincidence that all this is part of Matt's family heritage.

Nor do I think it is a coincidence that for 10 years, I've been in a friendship with a descendant of those same Locketts—contending together for revival as a new breed of abolitionist today. By His Providence God connected two people from Lockett families—from what we've discovered, most likely the *same* Lockett family line—uniting us to war against injustice in our day, and to cry out for awakening in our generation.

You read that correctly. After over a year of research, we're 90 percent certain that Matt's family of Locketts in Virginia once *owned* my Locketts in Louisiana—who originally came from Virginia. (The details of how we met, and the uncanny way our stories come together, can be heard in our sessions from

Hilltop Conference.)

Though we've been friends and in ministry together nationally—I was one of the first Bound4LIFE board members 10 years ago—none of this was revealed to us until Matt's discovery of Lockett's Farm two years ago. In the words of Dr. King: we are inextricably bound for life, realizing that our destinies are tied together.

Many common bonds connect us. When God gets this detailed in revelation, you can't help but notice His signs and begin to wonder ... and ponder.

One question we've been pondering is: Why was this hidden from us until *now*? Perhaps it is because God knew racial tension and unrest would be where it is now in our nation. Ferguson, Missouri, and other national hotspots are only manifestations of wounds that God wants to heal—and *will heal*—through a unified godly remnant.

Another question is: "What is God saying to us all in this?" I believe He is saying He is serious about us connecting with the past: to empower us with an awakening today, that will shape our nation's future. He also wants to go deeper with the issue of the shedding of innocent blood, which is the injustice that connected Matt and I together 10 years ago.

God's Heart Over Injustice

In 2001, I had an encounter while in prayer where I agonizingly wept for more than two hours in travail for our nation. While praying and seeking to find out what was happening to me, I inwardly heard the Lord say He was sharing with me His heart for America.

With intensity I'd never known before, I wept over the pain and racial division in our nation. I then inwardly heard the Lord speak to me: ***"If I heard the whispered prayers of slaves underneath cooking pots, how much more do I hear the silent***

screams of babies being aborted in America."

Up to that point, I didn't understand the racist underpinnings of eugenics that influenced slavery and abortion. After years of study and research, I've learned these issues are connected more than we know.

Another unjust decree is upon the nation—the 1973 Supreme Court case *Roe v. Wade*. In similar form as *Dred Scott*, the Court said that unborn babies are the property of their mothers—with no human rights, and no representation in court. Just as *Dred Scott*, this decision was passed 7-2. The similarities are eerie.

In 1857, when people were outraged about the decision, Chief Justice Taney basically said that if people didn't like slavery, they didn't have to participate in it; they had no right to force morality on anyone else.

In 1973, when people were outraged over *Roe v. Wade*, Justice Blackmun basically said Americans didn't have to participate in abortion; we have no right to impose morality on someone else.

Same arguments, different day. Both are unjust and we have not learned our lessons from history.

A United Church: The Answer

Will ending abortion in America fix the ills in the black community (crime, murder, drug addiction, economic disparity, etc)? Not entirely, but can we truly solve *any* problem in our community while abortion still exists as it is? The answers, of course, lie in the church of Jesus Christ. The church was the answer during slavery and the civil rights movement.

And a new remnant of Christians of all races, working together on this issue, must pray and be voices for the voiceless in our day: the unborn. In 2005, Matt heard me speak for the

first time about a new revival and justice movement which included the unborn, and we've been praying for a revival that will end abortion ever since.

Matt and I represent two men with Lockett names; and, like a "locket," we hold memories. It's interesting how lockets hold memories, yet nothing is revealed until its heart-shaped frame is opened up to reveal the precious pictures and memories inside. Most of the time, they open easily; but the older they get, it takes a little effort to pry them open.

Truly, the commitment of our fathers has become the calling of our time. This generation has been called for such a time as this, to shift the courts in America.

On April 9, 150 years from now, should the Lord tarry, may the Supreme Court be an "Appomattox Court House" the next generation can point to. Perhaps they will tell the story: "This is the place where the shedding of innocent blood ended, because there was a Justice House of Prayer and others that stood in the gap. As a result of their prayers, God sent another historic revival through the land."

"You see, there was a prayer meeting in front of this courthouse, and one day, this became the place where America surrendered to God"

Pockets of true revival are breaking out across America. Want to know more about the next great move of God? Click here to see Jennifer LeClaire's new book, featuring Dutch Sheets, Reinhard Bonnke, Jonathan Cahn, Billy Graham and others.

Will Ford is co-author of *History Makers: Your Prayers Have Power to Heal the Past and Shape the Future with Dutch Sheets*. Reprinted with permission of Bound4LIFE International.