

# Prayer--Its Possibilities (Continued) 2

by E.M. Bounds

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*Prayer can accomplish all things, covering all aspects of life, including body, mind, and soul, as well as business, finances, and relationships.*

**Scripture:** Philippians 4:6

**Topics:** "The Power of Prayer", "Faith and Dependence on God"

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## Description

E.M. Bounds emphasizes the vast possibilities of prayer, illustrating how it encompasses every aspect of human life, from the smallest needs to the most significant spiritual concerns. He argues that neglecting to pray about temporal matters limits our understanding of prayer's true nature and worth, as both body and soul are dependent on God. Bounds cites numerous biblical examples, such as Abraham, Hannah, and the early church, to demonstrate that prayer is essential for both earthly and eternal needs. He warns that unbelief in prayer leads to anxiety and unhappiness, while faith and prayer together unlock the potential for divine intervention in all areas of life. Ultimately, Bounds encourages believers to bring every care to God in prayer, assuring them that all things are possible through faith.

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## Transcript

THE possibilities of prayer are seen in its results in temporal matters. Prayer reaches to everything which concerns man, whether it be his body, his mind, or his soul. Prayer embraces the very smallest things of life. Prayer takes in the wants of the body, food, raiment, business, finances, in fact everything which belongs to this life, as well as those things which have to do with the eternal interests of the soul. Its achievements are seen not only in the large things of earth, but more especially in what might be called the little things of life. It brings to pass not only large things, speaking after the manner of men, but also the small things.

Temporal matters are of a lower order than the spiritual, but they concern us greatly. Our temporal interests make up a great part of our lives. They are the main source of our cares and worries. They have much to do with our religion. We have bodies, with wants, pains, disabilities, and limitations. That which concerns our bodies necessarily engages our minds. These are subjects of prayer, and prayer takes in all of them, and large are the accomplishments of prayer in this realm of our being.

Our temporal matters have much to do with our health and happiness. They form our relations. They are tests of honesty and belong to the sphere of justice and righteousness. Not to pray about temporal matters is to leave God out of the largest sphere of our being. He who cannot pray in everything, as we are

charged to do by Paul in Philippians, fourth chapter, has never learned in any true sense the nature and worth of prayer. To leave business and time out of prayer is to leave religion and eternity out of it. He who does not pray about temporal matters cannot pray with confidence about spiritual matters. He who does not put God by prayer in his struggling toil for daily bread will never put him in his struggle for heaven. He who does not cover and supply the wants of the body by prayer will never cover and supply the wants of his soul. Both body and soul are dependent on God, and prayer is but the crying expression of that dependence.

The Syrophenician woman prayed for the health things. In fact the Old Testament is but the record of God in dealing with his people through the divine appointment of prayer. Abraham prayed that Sodom might be saved from destruction. Abraham's servant prayed and received God's direction in choosing a wife for Isaac. Hannah prayed, and Samuel was given to her. Elijah prayed, and no rain came for three years. And he prayed again, and the clouds gave rain. Hezekiah was saved from a mortal sickness by his praying. Jacob's praying saved him from Esau's revenge. The old Bible is the history of prayer for temporal blessings as well as for spiritual blessings.

In the New Testament we have the same principles illustrated and enforced. Prayer in this section of God's Word covers the whole realm of good, both temporal and spiritual. Our Lord, in his universal prayer, the prayer for humanity, in every clime, in every age and for every condition, puts in it the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." This embraces all necessary earthly good.

In the Sermon on the Mount, a whole paragraph is taken up by our Lord about food and raiment, where he is cautioning against undue care or anxiety for these things, and at the same time encouraging a faith which takes in and claims all these necessary bodily comforts and necessities. And this teaching stands in close connection with his teachings about prayer. Food and raiment are taught as subjects of prayer. Not for one moment is it even hinted that they are things beneath the notice of a great God, nor too material and earthly for such a spiritual exercise as prayer.

The Syrophenician woman prayed for the health of her daughter. Peter prayed for Dorcas to be brought back to life. Paul prayed for the father of Publius on his way to Rome, when cast on the island by a shipwreck, and God healed the man who was sick with a fever. He urged the Christians at Rome to strive with him together in prayer that he might be delivered from bad men.

When Peter was put in prison by Herod, the church was instant in prayer that Peter might be delivered from the prison, and God honored the praying of these early Christians. John prayed that Gaius might "prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered."

The divine directory in James, fifth chapter, says: "Is any among you afflicted, let him pray Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him."

Paul, in writing to the Philippians, fourth chapter, says: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." This provides for all kinds of cares-business cares, home cares, body cares, and soul cares. All are to be brought to God by prayer, and at the mercy seat our minds and souls are to be unburdened of all that affects us or causes anxiety or uneasiness. These words of Paul stand in close connection with what he says about temporal matters specially: "But now I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me bath flourished-again: wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect to want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

And Paul closes his epistle to these Christians with the words, which embrace all temporal needs as well as spiritual wants:

But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

Unbelief in the doctrine that prayer covers all things which have to do with the body and business affairs, breeds undue anxiety about earth's affairs, causes unnecessary worry, and creates very unhappy states of mind. How much needless care we would save ourselves if we but believed in prayer as the means of relieving those cares, and would learn the happy art of casting all our cares in prayer upon God, "who careth for us!" Unbelief in God as one who is concerned about even the smallest affairs which affect our happiness and comfort limits the holy one of Israel, and makes our lives altogether devoid of real happiness and sweet contentment.

We have in the instance of the failure of the disciples to cast the devil out of the lunatic son, brought to them by his father, while Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, a suggestive lesson of the union of faith, prayer, and fasting, and the failure to reach the possibilities and obligations of an occasion. The disciples ought to have cast the devil out of the boy. They had been sent out to do this very work, and had been empowered by their Lord and master to do it. And yet they signally failed. Christ reproved them with sharp upbraidings for not doing it. They had been sent out on this very specific mission. This one thing was specified by our Lord when he sent them out. Their failure brought shame and confusion on them, and discounted their Lord and master and his cause. They brought him into disrepute, and reflected very seriously upon the cause which they represented. Their faith to cast out the devil had signally failed, simply because it had not been nurtured by prayer and fasting. Failure to pray broke the ability of faith, and failure came because they had not the energy of a strong authoritative faith.

The promise reads, and we cannot too often refer to it, for it is the very basis of our faith and the ground on which we stand when we pray: "All things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." What enumeration table can tabulate, itemize, and aggregate "all things whatsoever"? The possibilities of prayer and faith go to the length of the endless chain, and cover the unmeasurable area.

In Hebrews eleven, the sacred penman, wearied with trying to specify the examples of faith, and to recite the wonderful exploits of faith, pauses a moment, and then cries out, giving us almost unheard of achievements of prayer and faith as exemplified by the saints of the olden times. Here is what he says:

And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthah, of David also; and Samuel, and the prophets; Who through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions; Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens; Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.

What an illustrious record is this! What marvelous accomplishments, wrought not by armies, or by man's superhuman strength, nor by magic, but all accomplished simply by men and women noted alone for their faith and prayer! Hand in hand with these records of faith's illimitable range are the illustrious records of prayer, for they are all one. Faith has never won a victory nor gained a crown where prayer was not the weapon of the victory, and where prayer did not jewel the crown. If "all things are possible to him that believeth," then all things are possible to him that prays.

Depend on him; thou canst not fail;

Make all thy wants and wishes known:

Fear not; his merits must prevail;

Ask but in faith, it shall be done.

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