

Prayer-Its Wide Range

by E.M. Bounds

E.M. Bounds emphasizes the critical role of faith in prayer and God's limitless ability to respond to it.

Scripture: Isaiah 43:18-19, Jeremiah 32:17, Matthew 7:7, Mark 9:23, Luke 18:1, Romans 8:32, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 4:6-7, James 5:16, 1 John 5:14-15

Topics: "Faith", "Power Of Prayer"

Description

E.M. Bounds emphasizes the vast potential of prayer, asserting that it is fundamentally linked to the strength of one's faith in God's ability to act. He illustrates that vigorous faith leads to powerful prayers, while weak faith results in feeble requests. Bounds recounts biblical examples, such as the healing of the lunatic child and God's promises to Abraham and Moses, to demonstrate that nothing is too hard for the Lord. He urges believers to pray with confidence, reminding them that God's capacity to respond exceeds human understanding and limitations. Ultimately, Bounds calls for a revival of earnest and bold prayer among Christians to unleash God's transformative power in the world.

Transcript

THE possibilities of prayer are gauged by faith in God's ability to do. Faith is the one prime condition by which God works. Faith is the one prime condition by which man prays. Faith draws on God to its full extent. Faith gives character to prayer. A feeble faith has always brought forth feeble praying. Vigorous faith creates vigorous praying. At the close of a parable, "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men always ought to pray, and not to faint," in which he stressed the necessity of vigorous praying, Christ asks this pointed question, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

In the case of the lunatic child which the father brought first to the disciples, who could not cure him, and then to the Lord Jesus Christ, the father cried out with all the pathos of a declining faith and of a great sorrow, "If thou canst do anything for us, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The healing turned on the faith in the ability of Christ to heal the boy. The ability to do was in Christ essentially and eternally, but the doing of the thing turned on the ability of the faith. Great faith enables Christ to do great things.

We need a quickening faith in God's power. We have hedged God in till we have little faith in his power. We have conditioned the exercise of his power till we have a little God, and a little faith in a little God.

The only condition which restrains God's power, and which disables him to act, is unfaith. He is not limited in action nor restrained by the conditions which limit men.

The conditions of time, place, nearness, ability, and all others which could possibly be named, upon which the actions of men hinge, have no bearing on God. If men will look to God and cry to him with true prayer, he will hear and can deliver, no matter how dire may be their state, how remediless their conditions may be.

Strange how God has to school his people in his ability to do! He made a promise to Abraham and Sarah that Isaac would be born. Abraham was then nearly one hundred years old, and Sarah was barren by natural defect, and had passed into a barren age. She laughed at the preposterous thought of having a child. God asked, "Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord?" And God fulfilled his promise to these old people to the letter.

Moses hesitated to undertake God's purpose to liberate Israel from Egyptian bondage, because of his inability to talk well. God checks him at once by an inquiry:

And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord? Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

When God said he would feed the children of Israel a whole month with meat, Moses questioned his ability to do it. The Lord said unto Moses, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

Nothing is too hard for the Lord to do. As Paul declared, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." Prayer has to do with God, with his ability to do. The possibility of prayer is the measure of God's ability to do.

The "all things," the "all things whatsoever," and the "anything," are all covered by the ability of God. The urgent entreaty reads, "Ask whatsoever ye will," because God is able to do anything and all things that my desires may crave, and that he has promised. In God's ability to do, he goes far beyond man's ability to ask. Human thoughts, human words, human imaginations, human desires, and human needs cannot in any way measure God's ability to do.

Prayer in its legitimate possibilities goes out on God himself. Prayer goes out with faith not only in the promise of God, but also faith in God himself, and in God's ability to do. Prayer goes out not on the promise merely, but "obtains promises," and creates promises.

Elijah had the promise that God would send the rain, but no promise that he would send the fire. But by faith and prayer he obtained the fire, as well as the rain, but the fire came first.

Daniel had no specific promise that God would make known to him the dream of the king, but he and his associates joined in united prayer, and God revealed to Daniel the king's dream and the interpretation, and their lives were spared thereby.

Hezekiah had no promise that God would cure him of his desperate sickness which threatened his life. On the contrary, the word of the Lord came to him by the mouth of the prophet, that he should die. However,

he prayed against this decree of Almighty God, with faith, and he succeeded in obtaining a reversal of God's word and lived.

God makes it marvelous when he says by the mouth of his prophet: "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel and his Maker: Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me." And in this strong promise in which he commits himself into the hands of his praying people, he appeals in it to his great creative power: "I have created the earth and made man upon it. I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded."

The majesty and power of God in making man and man's world, and constantly upholding all things, are ever kept before us as the basis of our faith in God, and as an assurance and urgency to prayer. Then God calls us away from what he himself has done, and turns our minds to himself personally. The infinite glory and power of his person are set before our contemplation: "Remember ye not the former things neither consider the things of old?" He declares that he will do a "new thing," that he does not have to repeat himself, that all he has done neither limits his doing nor the manner of his doing, and that if we have prayer and faith, he will so answer our prayers and so work for us, that his former work shall not be remembered nor come into mind. If men would pray as they ought to pray, the marvels of the past would be more than reproduced. The gospel would advance with a facility and power it has never known. Doors would be thrown open to the gospel, and the Word of God would have a conquering force rarely, if ever, known before.

If Christians prayed as Christians ought, with strong commanding faith, with earnestness and sincerity, men, God-called men, God-empowered men everywhere, would be all burning to go and spread the gospel worldwide. The Word of the Lord would run and be glorified as never known heretofore. The God-influenced men, the God-inspired men, the God-commissioned men, would go and kindle the flame of sacred fire for Christ, salvation and heaven, everywhere in all nations, and soon all people would hear the glad tidings of salvation and have an opportunity to receive Jesus Christ as their personal savior. Let us read another one of those large illimitable statements in God's Word, which are a direct challenge to prayer and faith:

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?

What a basis have we here for prayer and faith, illimitable, measureless in breadth, in depth, and in height! The promise to give us all things is backed up by the calling to our remembrance of the fact that God freely gave his only begotten Son for our redemption. God giving his Son is the assurance and guarantee that he will freely give all things to him who believes and prays.

What confidence have we in this divine statement for inspired asking! What holy boldness we have here for the largest asking! No commonplace tameness should restrain our largest asking. Large, larger, and largest asking magnifies grace and adds to God's glory. Feeble asking impoverishes the asker, and restrains God's purposes for the greatest good and obscures his glory.

How enthroned, magnificent, and royal the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ at his Father's right hand in heaven! The benefits of his intercession flow to us through our intercessions. Our intercession ought to catch by contagion, and by necessity the inspiration and largeness of Christ's great work at his Father's right hand. His business and his life are to pray. Our business and our lives ought to be to pray, and to pray without ceasing.

Failure in our intercession affects the fruits of his intercession. Lazy, heartless, feeble, and indifferent praying by us mars and hinders the effects of Christ's praying.

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