

# PRAYING WITH POWER AND PURPOSE

A Special Edition of Power Through Prayer and Purpose in Prayer

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Scripture quotations within the main text are presented according to how they were originally published. Revised Version (RV) 1885.

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**CHURCHLEADERS** 

PRESS

Colorado Springs



# A Special Edition of POWER THROUGH PRAYER and PURPOSE IN PRAYER

E.M. BOUNDS

#### ENDURING FAITH FOUNDATIONS

∽ PRAYER ~

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# CONTENTS

Introduction	7
A Word About E. M. Bounds and Power Through Prayer	
and Purpose in Prayer	9
POWER THROUGH PRAYER	
Chapter 1	12
Chapter 2	18
Chapter 3	22
Chapter 4	26
Chapter 5	30
Chapter 6	34
Chapter 7	38
Chapter 8	42
Chapter 9	46
Chapter 10	49
Chapter 11	53
Chapter 12	58
Chapter 13	62
Chapter 14	65
Chapter 15	68
Chapter 16	73
Chapter 17	77
Chapter 18	82
Chapter 19	87
Chapter 20	92

### **PURPOSE IN PRAYER**

Chapter 1	97
Chapter 2	101
Chapter 3	109
Chapter 4	118
Chapter 5	130
Chapter 6	136
Chapter 7	145
Chapter 8	155
Chapter 9	171
Chapter 10	180
Chapter 11	194
Chapter 12	213
Chapter 13	223
Reading Plan and Discussion Questions	228

### INTRODUCTION

# to the Enduring Faith Foundations Series

ooks in the *Enduring Faith Foundations Series* cover a multitude of discipleship topics including non-fiction works on effective prayer, fruitful Christian living and more, and include important literary fiction as well—great books that have enthralled and challenged people for generations. In this series you will find works by best-selling authors like Andrew Murray, a South African writer, teacher, and pastor; E. M. Bounds, an American author, attorney, and prominent Methodist; and Charles Sheldon, pastor of a Congregational Church in Topeka, Kansas, and best known for challenging millions with the question: "What would Jesus do?"

Whether you are new to the books and authors in this series, or are turning to them again as so many have over the years for their wisdom and encouragement, here are some of the features you will find in the SPECIAL EDITION versions of the books in this series that help make these fresh and accessible for a new generation of readers:

While diligent to faithfully preserve the original voice and style of the central text of each book, the addition of **light annotations** easily found next to the referenced text as **side notes in the margin** make these books accessible and understandable. This feature is especially helpful for younger readers who may be less familiar with some of the more obscure references.

Remember, you aren't meant to tread the walk of faith alone! Each volume in the series includes a suggested **reading plan and discussion questions**. "As iron sharpens iron" (Proverbs 27:17a), you are encouraged to read them with others. Whether reading

PRAYING WITH POWER

8

in concert with a friend, parent/child, mentor/mentee, or in conjunction with a small group or book club, to get the most out of these books, read and discuss together with at least one other person.

In addition to the features just noted, enjoy the **comfortably wide margins** to jot down your own notes or doodles. You'll also find **space to write** under the discussion questions included in the back of the book.

I hope that along with spending time in the Bible and in personal prayer, you are also in discipleship with others and that these books help to encourage you and grow your faith in Christ.

-Matthew Lockhart,

Project Manager

# A WORD ABOUT E. M. BOUNDS AND *POWER THROUGH PRAYER* AND *PURPOSE IN PRAYER*

dward McKendree Bounds was a failed miner in California's 1849 Gold Rush who returned home to Missouri to became the state's youngest practicing attorney—at age 19. He soon was deeply impacted by the revivals of the Third Great Awakening that swept America and was ordained for ministry. He later pastored churches, was a chaplain in the Civil War, edited a Christian magazine, and discovered the power that sincere, heartfelt prayer played in his life and the world around him. Bounds prayed daily between 4:00 and 7:00 am, as well as often throughout his days. His insights regarding the power and practice of prayer fill nine of his dozen books published before and after his death in 1913.

Those who knew Edward McKendree Bounds well knew not to call on him early in the day. No matter how urgent their business, he had a meeting he considered far more important.

He was in his bedroom, on his knees, deep in prayer.

Bounds made it a habit to rise early, at 4:00 am and spend three hours praying. He paused often through the day to pray, too, and didn't go to bed without a lengthy conversation with God.

For Bounds, prayer was a natural rhythm in life—and the key to unlocking not just deep spiritual growth but also unleashing the power of God in the world.

PRAYING WITH POWER

10

These two brief volumes are written primarily to an audience of pastors, but the truths shared apply to all Christians—including you. Bounds is reaching out to you through the years with encouragement to develop a prayer life that's personal, transparent, and powerful. And he provides practical insights about how to unleash the power of prayer in your life.

Bounds' call to personal holiness and a passion for prayer have never been more relevant than today. The world needs more prayer warriors, more transformed hearts. It needs more believers who are hungry to know their God well.

It needs you.

-Mikal Keefer,

Special Edition features writer

# POWER THROUGH PRAYER

E. M. Bounds

#### CHAPTER 1

Study universal holiness of life. Your whole usefulness depends on this, for your sermons last but an hour or two; your life preaches all the week. If Satan can only make a covetous minister a lover of praise, of pleasure, of good eating, he has ruined your ministry. Give yourself to prayer, and get your texts, your thoughts, your words from God. Luther spent his best three hours in prayer.

-ROBERT MURRAY MCCHEYNE<sup>1</sup>

E are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." The dispensation<sup>2</sup> that heralded and prepared the way for Christ was bound up in that man John. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." The world's salvation comes out of that cradled Son. When Paul appeals to the personal character of the men who rooted the gospel in the world, he solves the mystery of their success. The glory and efficiency of

1 Robert Murray McCheyne
(1813-1843) was a
minister in the Church
of Scotland and wellknown for valuing both
evangelism and prayer.

2 Dispensation: In this context, the divine ordering of events.

CHAPTER 1 13

the gospel is staked on the men who proclaim it. When God declares that "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him,"<sup>3</sup> he declares the necessity of men and his dependence on them as a channel through which to exert his power upon the world. This vital, urgent truth is one that this age of machinery is apt to forget. The forgetting of it is as baneful<sup>5</sup> on the work of God as would be the striking of the sun from his sphere. Darkness, confusion, and death would ensue.

What the Church needs to-day is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer.

An eminent historian has said that the accidents of personal character have more to do with the revolutions of nations than either philosophic historians or democratic politicians will allow. This truth has its application in full to the gospel of Christ, the character and conduct of the followers of Christ—Christianize the world, transfigure nations and individuals. Of the preachers of the gospel it is eminently true.

The character as well as the fortunes of the gospel is committed to the preacher. He makes or mars the message from God to man. The preacher is the golden pipe through which the divine oil flows. The pipe must

3 Bounds Bible translation of choice when writing in the early twentieth century was the Revised Version of 1885 (also known as the English Revised Version).

- 4 2 Chronicles 16:9.
- 5 Baneful: Destructive.

- 6 Tinctured: Flavored by a slight amount.
- 7 Earthen vessels: A reference to Paul's description in 2 Corinthians 4:7 of how humans are imperfect yet can be used by God.
- 8 Divine unction: An anointing, in this case an anointing by God.

not only be golden, but open and flawless, that the oil may have a full, unhindered, unwasted flow.

The man makes the preacher. God must make the man. The messenger is, if possible, more than the message. The preacher is more than the sermon. The preacher makes the sermon. As the life-giving milk from the mother's bosom is but the mother's life, so all the preacher says is tinctured, 6 impregnated by what the preacher is. The treasure is in earthen vessels, 7 and the taste of the vessel impregnates and may discolor. The man, the whole man, lies behind the sermon. Preaching is not the performance of an hour. It is the outflow of a life. It takes twenty years to make a sermon, because it takes twenty years to make the man. The true sermon is a thing of life. The sermon grows because the man grows. The sermon is forceful because the man is forceful. The sermon is holy because the man is holy. The sermon is full of the divine unction<sup>8</sup> because the man is full of the divine unction.

Paul termed it "My gospel;" not that he had degraded it by his personal eccentricities or diverted it by selfish appropriation, but the gospel was put into the heart and lifeblood of the man Paul, as a personal trust to be executed by his Pauline traits, to be set aflame and empowered by the fiery energy of his fiery soul. Paul's sermons—what were they? Where are they? Skeletons, scattered fragments, afloat on the sea of inspiration! But the man Paul, greater than his sermons, lives forever, in full form, feature and stature, with his molding hand on the Church. The preaching is but a voice. The voice in

CHAPTER 1 15

silence dies, the text is forgotten, the sermon fades from memory; the preacher lives.

The sermon cannot rise in its life-giving forces above the man. Dead men give out dead sermons, and dead sermons kill. Everything depends on the spiritual character of the preacher. Under the Jewish dispensation the high priest had inscribed in jeweled letters on a golden frontlet:9 "Holiness to the Lord." So every preacher in Christ's ministry must be molded into and mastered by this same holy motto. It is a crying shame for the Christian ministry to fall lower in holiness of character and holiness of aim than the Jewish priesthood. Jonathan Edwards<sup>10</sup> said: "I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness and conformity to Christ. The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness." The gospel of Christ does not move by popular waves. It has no selfpropagating power. It moves as the men who have charge of it move. The preacher must impersonate the gospel. Its divine, most distinctive features must be embodied in him. The constraining power of love must be in the preacher as a projecting, eccentric, an all-commanding, self-oblivious force. The energy of self-denial must be his being, his heart and blood and bones. He must go forth as a man among men, clothed with humility, abiding in meekness, wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove; the bonds of a servant with the spirit of a king, a king in high, royal, in dependent bearing, with the simplicity and sweetness of a child. The preacher must throw himself, with all the abandon of a perfect, self-emptying faith and a selfconsuming zeal, into his work for the salvation of men.

# 9 Golden frontlet: Described in Exodus 28:36-38, a headpiece worn by the High Priest as he performed his duties.

# 10 Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was raised in an atmosphere of Puritan piety and preached the need for personal holiness and dedication to God.

Hearty, heroic, compassionate, fearless martyrs must the men be who take hold of and shape a generation for God. If they be timid time servers, place seekers, if they be men pleasers or men fearers, if their faith has a weak hold on God or his Word, if their denial be broken by any phase of self or the world, they cannot take hold of the Church nor the world for God.

The preacher's sharpest and strongest preaching should be to himself. His most difficult, delicate, laborious, and thorough work must be with himself. The training of the twelve was the great, difficult, and enduring work of Christ. Preachers are not sermon makers, but men makers and saint makers, and he only is well-trained for this business who has made himself a man and a saint. It is not great talents nor great learning nor great preachers that God needs, but men great in holiness, great in faith, great in love, great in fidelity, <sup>11</sup> great for God—men always preaching by holy sermons in the pulpit, by holy lives out of it. These can mold a generation for God.

After this order, the early Christians were formed. Men they were of solid mold, preachers after the heavenly type—heroic, stalwart, soldierly, saintly. Preaching with them meant self-denying, self-crucifying, serious, toilsome, martyr business. They applied themselves to it in a way that told on their generation, and formed in its womb a generation yet unborn for God. The preaching man is to be the praying man. Prayer is the preacher's mightiest weapon. An almighty force in itself, it gives life and force to all.

The real sermon is made in the closet.<sup>12</sup> The man—God's man—is made in the closet. His life and

11 Fidelity: A deep and unwavering loyalty.

## 12 Made in the closet:

A reference to Jesus' remarks (Matthew 6:5-8) in which he recommends private and sincere prayer rather than a public performance of prayer.

CHAPTER 1 17

his profoundest convictions were born in his secret communion with God. The burdened and tearful agony of his spirit, his weightiest and sweetest messages were got when alone with God. Prayer makes the man; prayer makes the preacher; prayer makes the pastor.

The pulpit of this day is weak in praying. The pride of learning is against the dependent humility of prayer. Prayer is with the pulpit too often only official—a performance for the routine of service. Prayer is not to the modern pulpit the mighty force it was in Paul's life or Paul's ministry. Every preacher who does not make prayer a mighty factor in his own life and ministry is weak as a factor in God's work and is powerless to project God's cause in this world.

## CHAPTER 2

But above all he excelled in prayer. The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behavior, and the fewness and fullness of his words have often struck even strangers with admiration as they used to reach others with consolation. The most awful, living, reverend frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say, was his prayer. And truly it was a testimony. He knew and lived nearer to the Lord than other men, for they that know him most will see most reason to approach him with reverence and fear.

-WILLIAM PENN OF GEORGE FOX $^{13}$ 

the bitterest fruit. The sun gives life, but sunstrokes are death. Preaching is to give life; it may kill. The preacher holds the keys; he may lock as well as unlock. Preaching is God's great institution for the planting and maturing of spiritual life. When properly executed, its benefits are untold; when wrongly executed, no evil can exceed its damaging results. It is an easy matter to destroy the flock if the shepherd be unwary or the pasture be destroyed, easy to capture the citadel if the watchmen be asleep or the food and water be poisoned. Invested with such gracious prerogatives, 15 exposed to so great evils, involving

so many grave responsibilities, it would be a parody on

HE sweetest graces by a slight perversion 14 may bear

- 13 William Penn
  (1644-1718), founder
  of Pennsylvania and a
  student of George Fox
  (1624-1691). Fox was
  an English preacher
  and missionary, best
  remembered as the
  founder of the Society of
- 14 **Slight perversion:** In this context, something that is just slightly "off," but that impurity ruins the whole.

Friends (Quakers).

15 Gracious prerogatives: attractive rights or privileges. CHAPTER 2 19

the shrewdness of the devil and a libel on his character and reputation if he did not bring his master influences to adulterate<sup>16</sup> the preacher and the preaching. In face of all this, the exclamatory interrogatory of Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?"<sup>17</sup> is never out of order.

Paul says: "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." 18 The true ministry is God-touched, God-enabled, and God-made. The Spirit of God is on the preacher in anointing power, the fruit of the Spirit is in his heart, the Spirit of God has vitalized the man and the word; his preaching gives life, gives life as the spring gives life; gives life as the resurrection gives life; gives ardent life as the summer gives ardent life; gives fruitful life as the autumn gives fruitful life. The life-giving preacher is a man of God, whose heart is ever athirst<sup>19</sup> for God, whose soul is ever following hard after God, whose eye is single to God, and in whom by the power of God's Spirit the flesh and the world have been crucified and his ministry is like the generous flood of a life-giving river.

The preaching that kills is non-spiritual preaching. The ability of the preaching is not from God. Lower sources than God have given to it energy and stimulant. The Spirit is not evident in the preacher nor his preaching. Many kinds of forces may be projected and stimulated by preaching that kills, but they are not spiritual forces. They may resemble spiritual forces, but are only the shadow, the counterfeit; life they may seem to have, but the life is magnetized. The preaching that kills is the letter; shapely

- 16 Adulterate: to cheapen or make impure.
- 17 2 Corinthians 2:16.
- 18 2 Corinthians 3:5-6.

19 Athirst: Thirsty for.

- 20 Unquickened: Failing to be infused with energy, life, or passion.
- 21 Admixture: The fact or act of mixing.
- 22 **Unctionless:** Lacking an anointing.

- 23 Exegesis: An explanation or exposition.
- 24 Usurp: to take by force or without right.

and orderly it may be, but it is the letter still, the dry, husky letter, the empty, bald shell. The letter may have the germ of life in it, but it has no breath of spring to evoke it; winter seeds they are, as hard as the winter's soil, as icy as the winter's air, no thawing nor germinating by them. This letter-preaching has the truth. But even divine truth has no life-giving energy alone; it must be energized by the Spirit, with all God's forces at its back. Truth unquickened<sup>20</sup> by God's Spirit deadens as much as, or more than, error. It may be the truth without admixture;<sup>21</sup> but without the Spirit its shade and touch are deadly, its truth error, its light darkness. The letter-preaching is unctionless,<sup>22</sup> neither mellowed nor oiled by the Spirit. There may be tears, but tears cannot run God's machinery; tears may be but summer's breath on a snow-covered iceberg, nothing but surface slush. Feelings and earnestness there may be, but it is the emotion of the actor and the earnestness of the attorney. The preacher may feel from the kindling of his own sparks, be eloquent over his own exegesis, <sup>23</sup> earnest in delivering the product of his own brain; the professor may usurp<sup>24</sup> the place and imitate the fire of the apostle; brains and nerves may serve the place and feign the work of God's Spirit, and by these forces the letter may glow and sparkle like an illumined text, but the glow and sparkle will be as barren of life as the field sown with pearls. The death-dealing element lies back of the words, back of the sermon, back of the occasion, back of the manner, back of the action. The great hindrance is in the preacher himself. He has not in himself the mighty life-creating forces. There may be no discount on his orthodoxy, honesty,