

Prayer and the Word of God

The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer, Book One: The Necessity of Prayer (Originally published in 1929.), Peabody, Massachusetts: Prince Press, 1990.

“In many of its aspects, prayer is dependent upon the Word of God. Jesus says: *‘If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’*”

“The Word of God is the fulcrum upon which the lever of prayer is placed, and by which things are mightily moved. God has committed Himself, His purpose and His promise to prayer. His Word becomes the basis, the inspiration of our praying, and there are circumstances under which, by importunate prayer, we may obtain an addition, or an enlargement of His promises. It is said of the old saints that they, “through faith obtained promises.” There would seem to be in prayer the capacity for going even beyond the Word, of getting even beyond His promise, into the very presence of God, Himself.”

“By Scriptural warrant, prayer may be divided into the petition of faith and that of submission. The prayer of faith is based on the written Word, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” It receives its answer, inevitably — the very thing for which it prays.

The prayer of submission is without a definite word of promise, so to speak, but takes hold of God with a lowly and contrite spirit, and asks and pleads with Him, for that which the soul desires. Abraham had no definite promise that God would spare Sodom. Moses had no definite promise that God would spare Israel; on the contrary, there was the declaration of His wrath, and of His purpose to destroy. But the devoted leader gained his plea with God, when he interceded for the Israelites with incessant prayers and many tears. Daniel had no definite promise that God would reveal to him the meaning of the king’s dream, but he prayed specifically, and God answered definitely.”

“Promises, stored in the heart, are to be the fuel from which prayer receives life and warmth, just as the coal, stored in the earth, ministers to our comfort on stormy days and wintry nights. The Word of God is the food, by which prayer is nourished and made strong. Prayer, like man, cannot live by bread alone, ‘but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.’”

“When we consult God’s Word, we find that no duty is more binding, more exacting, than that of prayer. On the other hand, we discover that no privilege is more exalted, no habit more richly owned of God. No promises are more radiant, more abounding, more explicit, more often reiterated, than those which are attached to prayer. ‘All things, whatsoever’ are received by prayer, because ‘all things whatsoever’ are promised. There is no limit to the provisions, included in the promises to prayer, and no exclusion from its promises. ‘Every one that asketh, receiveth.’ The word of our Lord is to this all-embracing effect: ‘If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it.’”

“By prayer, we bring these promises of God’s holy will into the realm of the actual and the real. If it be asked, what is to be done in order to render God’s promises real, the answer is, that we must pray, until the words of the promise are clothed upon with the rich raiment of fulfillment.”

“Praying people and Bible-reading people are the same sort of folk. The God of the Bible and the God of prayer are one. God speaks to man in the Bible; man speaks to God in prayer. One reads the Bible to discover God’s will; he prays in order that he may receive power to do that will. Bible-reading and praying are the distinguishing traits of those who strive to know and please God. And just as prayer begets a love for the Scriptures, and sets people to reading the Bible, so, also, does prayer cause men and women to visit the house of God, to hear the Scriptures expounded.”

“Prayer begets a church-going conscience, a church-loving heart, a church-supporting spirit. It is the praying people, who make it a matter of conscience, to attend the preaching of the Word; who delight in its reading; exposition; who support it with their influence and their means. Prayer exalts the Word of God and gives it preeminence in the estimation of those who faithfully and wholeheartedly call upon the Name of the Lord.”

“Prayer draws its very life from the Bible, and has no standing ground outside of the warrant of the Scriptures. Its very existence and character is dependent on revelation made by God to man in His holy Word. Prayer, in turn, exalts this same revelation, and turns men toward that Word. The nature, necessity and all-comprehending character of prayer, is based on the Word of God.”

“Here the Psalmist found his protection against sinning. By having God’s Word hidden in his heart; in having his whole being thoroughly impregnated with that Word; in being brought completely under its benign and gracious influence, he was enabled to walk to and fro in the earth, safe from the attack of the Evil One, and fortified against a proneness to wander out of the way.”

“We find, furthermore, the power of prayer to create a real love for the Scriptures, and to put within men a nature which will take pleasure in the Word. In holy ecstasy he cries, “O, how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.” And again: “How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my taste.”

“The man of whom it can be said, “His delight is in the law of the Lord,” is the man who can truly say, ‘I delight to visit the place of prayer.’ No man loves the Bible, who does not love to pray. No man loves to pray, who does not delight in the law of the Lord.”

“Here, let it be said, that no two things are more essential to a spirit-filled life than Bible-reading and secret prayer; no two things more helpful to growth in grace; to getting the largest joy out of a Christian life; toward establishing one in the ways of eternal peace. The neglect of these all-important duties, presages leanness of soul, loss of joy, absence of peace, dryness of spirit, decay in all that pertains to spiritual life. Neglecting these things paves the way for apostasy, and gives the Evil One an advantage such as he is not likely to ignore. Reading God’s Word regularly, and praying habitually in the secret place of the Most High puts one where he is absolutely safe from the attacks of the enemy of souls, and guarantees him salvation and final victory, through the overcoming power of the Lamb.”

Prayer and the Promises of God

The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer, Book Three: The Possibilities of Prayer (Originally published in 1923.), Peabody, Massachusetts: Prince Press, 1990.

“Without the promise prayer is eccentric and baseless. Without prayer, the promise is dim, voiceless, shadowy, and impersonal.”

“The promise makes prayer dauntless and irresistible...It is prayer which makes the promises weighty, precious and practical.”

“Promises are God’s golden fruit to be plucked by the hand of prayer. Promises are God’s incorruptible seed, to be sown and tilled by prayer.”

“Prayer and the promises are interdependent. The promise inspires and energizes prayer, but prayer locates the promise, and gives it realization and location.”

“Prayer takes hold of the promise and conducts it to its marvellous ends, removes the obstacles, and makes a highway for the promise to its glorious fulfillment.”

“How great, how sublime, and how exalted are the promises God makes to His people! How eternal are the purposes of God! Why are we so impoverished in experience and so low in life when God’s promises are so ‘exceeding great and precious’? Why do the eternal purposes of God move so tardily? Why are they so poorly executed? Our failure to appropriate the Divine promises and rest our faith on them, and to pray believingly is the solution. ‘We have not because we ask not. We ask and receive not because we ask amiss.’”

“Prayer is based on the purpose and promise of God. Prayer is submission to God. Prayer has no sigh of disloyalty against God’s will. It may cry out against the bitterness and the dread weight of an hour of unutterable anguish: ‘If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.’ But it is surcharged with the sweetest and promptest submission. ‘Yet not my will, but Thine be done.’”

“Prayer is based directly and specifically upon God’s revealed promises in Christ Jesus. It has no other ground upon which to base its plea. All else is shadowy, sandy, fickle. Not our feelings, not our merits, not our works, but God’s promise is the basis of faith and the solid ground of prayer.”

“God’s promises are dependent and conditioned upon prayer to appropriate them and make them a conscious realization.”

“Prayer goes by faith into the great fruit orchard of God’s exceeding great and precious promises, and with hand and heart picks the ripest and richest fruit.”

“Every promise of Scripture is a writing of God, which may be pleaded before Him with this reasonable request: “Do as Thou hast said.” The Creator will not cheat His creature who depends upon His truth; and, far more, the Heavenly Father will not break His word to His own child. “Remember the word unto Thy servant, on which Thou hast caused me to hope,” is most prevalent pleading. It is a double argument: It is Thy Word, wilt Thou not keep it? Why hast Thou spoken of it if Thou wilt not make it good? Thou hast caused me to hope in it; wilt Thou disappoint the hope which Thou hast Thyself begotten in me? — C. H. Spurgeon

“The great promises find their fulfillment along the lines of prayer. They inspire prayer, and through prayer the promises flow out to their full realization and bear their ripest fruit.”

“God never has put His Spirit into the realm of a human heart which had never invoked by ardent praying the coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. A prayerless spirit has no affinity for a clean heart. Prayer and a pure heart go hand in hand. Purity of heart follows praying, while prayer is the natural, spontaneous outflowing of a heart made clean by the blood of Jesus Christ.”

“It is the Divine promise of mercy, of forgiveness and of adoption which gives the poor sinner hope. This encourages him to pray. This moves him in distress to cry out, ‘Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.’”

“How large are the promises made to the saint! How great the promises given to poor, hungry-hearted, lost sinners, ruined by the fall! And prayer has arms sufficient to encompass them all, and prove them. How great the encouragement to all souls, these promises of God! How firm the ground on which to rest our faith! How stimulating to prayer! What firm ground on which to base our pleas in praying!”

The Lord hath promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.”



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E. M. Bounds (1835-1913) was trained to be a lawyer before he entered the ministry during his twenties. Throughout his life he was a man deeply devoted to prayer who has inspired many through his books on prayer. His writings have motivated many to deepen their dependence on God and increase their usefulness to God through prayer.