

PRAYING MEN ARE GOD'S MIGHTIEST LEADERS

by, E.M.BOUNDS

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E. M. Bounds

Prayer is the mightiest agent to advance God's work. Only praying hearts and hands can do God's work. Prayer succeeds when all else fails. Prayer has won great victories and rescued, with notable triumph, God's saints when every other hope was gone. Men who know how to pray are the greatest boon God can give to earth. They are the richest gift earth can offer heaven. Men who know how to use this weapon of prayer are God's best soldiers, His mightiest leaders.

Praying men are God's chosen leaders. The distinction between the leaders that God brings to the front to lead and bless His people and those leaders who owe their position of leadership to a worldly, selfish, unsanctified selection is this: God's leaders are preeminently men of prayer. Prayer distinguishes them and is the simple, divine attestation of their call, the seal of their separation by God. Whatever other graces or gifts they may have, the gift and grace of prayer towers above them all. In whatever else they may share or differ, in the gift of prayer they are one.

What would God's leaders be without prayer? Strip Moses of his power in prayer, a gift that made him eminent in pagan estimate, and the crown is taken from his head, the food and fire of his faith are gone. Elijah, without his praying, would have neither record nor place in the divine legation. His life would be insipid, cowardly; its energy, defiance, and fire gone. Without Elijah's praying, the Jordan would never have yielded to the stroke of his mantle, nor would the stern angel of death have honored him with the chariot and horses of fire.

The argument that God used to quiet Ananias's fears and convince him of Paul's condition and sincerity was, "*Behold, he prayeth*" (Acts 9:11). This was the epitome of Paul's history, the basis for his life and work. Paul, Luther, Wesley, what would these chosen ones of God be without the distinguishing and controlling element of prayer? They were leaders for God because they were mighty in prayer. They were not leaders because of their brilliance, their inexhaustible resources, their magnificent cultured or native endowment. They were leaders because they could command the power of God by the power of prayer. Praying men are not just men who say prayers or men who pray by habit. Praying men are men with whom prayer is a mighty force, an energy that moves heaven and pours untold treasures of good on earth.

Much Alone with God

Praying men are the men who spend much time with God. Praying men always feel a great need and desire to be alone with God. Though very busy men, they always stop at some appointed time for communion with God. They have spent much time alone with Him and have found that the secret of wise and powerful leadership for God is in these seasons of special access and grace.

Praying men are men of the single eye. They have been so much alone with God, have seen so much of His glory, have learned so much of His will, have been fashioned so strongly

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after His image that He fixes and fills their gaze. All else is too insignificant to engage their attention, too little to catch their eye. A double vision – one for self, and the other for God – mightily hinders prayer. Praying men are men of one book; they feed on God's Word; it lives in them in vitalizing force and abides in them in full authority and faith. They are Bible men. The Bible inspires their prayers and quickens their faith. They rest on its promises as on a globe of granite.

Praying men are the only productive workers for God. True prayer is a working force, a divine energy that must come out, that is too strong to be still. The work of praying men achieves the best results because it is done by God's energy. Praying men have His direction and do His work for His glory, under the full and cheering beam of His presence, His Word, and His Spirit.

Praying men serve to protect the Church from the materialism that affects all its plans and polity and hardens its lifeblood. A secret, deadly poison circulates, convincing the Church that it need not be so dependent on purely spiritual forces as it used to be. Changed times and changed conditions have brought it out of its spiritual straits and dependencies and put it where other forces can bear it to its climax. A fatal snare of this kind has lured the Church into worldly embraces, dazzled her leaders, weakened her foundations, and deprived her of much of her beauty and strength.

Praying men save the Church from this material tendency. They pour into it the original spiritual forces. They lift it from the sandbars of materialism and press it out into the ocean depths of spiritual power. Praying men keep God in the Church in full force. They keep His hand on the helm as He trains the Church in strength and trust.

The number and efficiency of the laborers in God's vineyard in all lands is dependent on the men of prayer. By the divinely arranged process, the number and success of the consecrated laborers depend on the power of prayer. Prayer opens wide the doors of access, prepares the laborer to enter, and gives holy boldness, firmness, and fruit. Praying men are needed in all fields of spiritual labor.

There is no position, high or low, in the Church of God that can be well filled without prayer. There is no position where Christians are found that does not demand a faith that always prays and never faints. Praying men are needed in the house of business as well as in the house of God that they may order and direct trade, not according to the maxims of this world, but according to Bible precepts and the maxims of the heavenly life.

Men of prayer are needed especially in the positions of church influence, honor, and power. The leaders of church thought, church work, and church life should be men of signal power in prayer. It is the praying heart that sanctifies the toil and skill of the hands and the toil and wisdom of the head. Prayer keeps work aligned with God's will and keeps thought aligned with God's Word. The solemn responsibilities of leadership in God's Church, in a large or limited sphere, should be so hedged about with prayer that between it and the world there would be an impassable gulf. Leaders should be so elevated and purified by prayer that neither cloud nor night would stain the radiance or dim the sight of a constant meridian view of God.

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Many church leaders seem to think that if they can be prominent as men of thought, of plans, of scholarly attainments, of eloquent gifts, and conspicuous activities, that these are enough and will atone for the absence of the higher spiritual power that comes from much prayer. But these are vain and paltry in the serious work of bringing glory to God, controlling the Church for Him, and bringing it into full accord with its divine mission.

Praying men are the men who have done so much for God in the past. They are the ones who have won the victories for God and spoiled His foes. They are the ones who have set up His kingdom in the very camps of His enemies. There are no other conditions for success today. This century has not suspended the necessity or force of prayer. There is no substitute by which its gracious ends can be secured.

Only praying hands can build for God. Men of prayer are God's mighty ones on earth, His master builders. They may be destitute of all else, but with the wrestlings and prevailings of a simple-hearted faith they are mighty – the mightiest for God. Church leaders may be gifted in all else, but without this greatest of gifts they are as Samson shorn of his locks, or as the altars of the temple where heavenly flame has died without the divine presence.

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