

## Introduction

E.M. Bounds was a man of prayer. Prayer to Bounds was said to be such “a physical reality” that the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “pray without ceasing,” was taken as literally as humanly possible. Prayer was said to be as important to Bounds as breathing, and he lived his life accordingly.<sup>1</sup> Bounds had much to pray for as a “Civil War Chaplain and then POW” in Saint Louis, MO before the Civil War ended.<sup>2</sup> As a result of his lifetime of work, *The Necessity of Prayer* survives to the present day providing spiritual guidance in prayer “for a lifetime of water-drawing.”<sup>3</sup>

## Critique and Interaction

*The Necessity of Prayer* was compiled from Bounds’ manuscripts after his death and is broken up into fourteen short chapters. Within the fourteen chapters are ten discourses about prayer, and how it pertains to faith, trust, desire, fervency, importunity, character, obedience, vigilance, the Word of God, and the House of God. Each chapter has a short introduction quote given by a leader in prayer or from an anonymous, but relevant, source.

Bounds does not start out with spiritual milk, gradually introducing the subject (1 Corinthians 3:2), but rather the author starts immediately with meat, and an in-depth look at prayer and faith. Within the opening chapters on faith Bounds relies heavily on Scripture showing how God’s word is the foundation of prayer. Example after example is given, showing how he drew conclusions, even when it came to those with a lack of faith and prayer such as Asa.<sup>4</sup> Bounds then moves into examples from Elijah, Daniel, and Christ himself, all of who prayed repeatedly, trusting that the Father had heard their requests.<sup>5</sup> As Bounds moves through the different sections he weaves a pattern, which fuses prayer, God’s Word, and each of his ten points until he proves that “prayer should enter into and underlie everything that is undertaken.”<sup>6</sup> For Bounds this is not just a concept to be studied, this was played out in practical instruction. He admonishes those in ministry who want to be successful to spend twice as long in prayer as they do in the study of Scripture.<sup>7</sup>

## Conclusion

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<sup>1</sup> E.M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer* (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008), ii.

<sup>2</sup> David Smithers, "The Life of E. M. Bounds, What Others Say About E.M. Bounds: Prayer Makes History," *Jehova.net*, <http://jehova.net/bounds/bounds-biography.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Bounds, ii.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 78-79.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 80.

E.M. Bounds' *The Necessity of Prayer* is a foundation for prayer, and one that should be a priority for any Christian wishing to understand the practicalities of prayer. This publication is written in such a way that any lay-person can read, understand, and glean its wisdom, and any scholar can continue to gain insight for years to come. Bounds relies so heavily on Scripture that his conclusions are less about a personal opinion on prayer and more about understanding the will of God for His people through prayer. There are few modern pastors who seemed to have been more focused on understanding prayer, and as a result, Bounds has given God's people a call to 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."<sup>8</sup> Bounds uses Jesus in Luke 4:16 to prove this, and then concludes "no two things are more essential to a spirit-filled life than Bible-reading and secret prayer," and neglecting these two things gives the "Evil One" a great advantage.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 75.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.