

POWER  
THROUGH  
Prayer

E. M. BOUNDS



WHITAKER  
HOUSE

*Publisher's note:*

This new edition from Whitaker House has been updated for the modern reader. Words, expressions, and sentence structure have been revised for clarity and readability.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

## **POWER THROUGH PRAYER**

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CHAPTER 1

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THE DIVINE CHANNEL OF POWER





## THE DIVINE CHANNEL OF POWER

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Study universal holiness of life. Your whole usefulness depends on this, for your sermons last only an hour or two; your life preaches all week. If Satan can make you 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

**W**e are continually striving to create new methods, plans, and organizations to advance the church. We are ever working to provide and stimulate growth and efficiency for the gospel.

This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man. Or else he is lost in the workings of 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*" (John 1:6). The dispensation 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*" (Isaiah 9:6). The world's salvation comes out of that cradled Son.

THE CHURCH IS LOOKING FOR BETTER METHODS;  
GOD IS LOOKING FOR BETTER MEN.

When Paul appealed to the personal character of the men who rooted the gospel in the world, he solved the mystery of their success. The glory and efficiency of the gospel depend on the men who proclaim it. When God declares that "*the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him*" (2 Chronicles 16:9), He declares the necessity of men. He acknowledges His dependence on them as a channel through which He can exert His power on the world.

This vital, urgent truth is one that this age of machinery is apt to forget. The forgetting of it is as detrimental to the Word

of God as removing the sun from its sphere would be. Darkness, confusion, and death would ensue.

What the church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organizations or more novel methods. She needs men whom the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit 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!

THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN USE MEN MIGHTY  
IN 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 fully applies to the gospel of Christ and the character and conduct of the followers of Christ—Christianize the world, and you transfigure nations and individuals. It is eminently true of the preachers of the gospel.

The character as well as the fortunes of the gospel are committed to the preacher. He either makes or mars the message from God to man. The preacher is the golden pipe through which the divine oil flows. The pipe must not only be golden, but open and flawless. This way the oil may have a full, unhindered, and 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 life-giving milk from the mother's bosom is no more than the mother's life, so all the preacher *says* is tintured, impregnated, by what the preacher *is*. The treasure is in earthen vessels, and the taste of the vessel may permeate and discolor the treasure.

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 anointing because the man is full of the divine anointing.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST MOVES  
AS MEN OF GOD LIVE IT.

Paul termed it "*my gospel*" (Romans 2:16). It was not that he had slanted it with his personal eccentricities or selfish understanding, but the gospel was laid up in the heart and lifeblood of 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 were 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 preacher is only a voice. The voice in silence dies; the text is forgotten; the sermon fades from memory, but the preacher lives.

In its life-giving forces, the sermon cannot rise above the man. Dead men preach dead sermons, and dead sermons kill. Everything depends on the spiritual character of the preacher. Under the Jewish dispensation, the high priest had “Holiness to the Lord” inscribed in jeweled letters on a golden frontlet. So, too, every preacher in Christ’s ministry must be molded into and mastered by this same holy motto. It is a shame that the Christian ministry has less holiness of character and aim than the Jewish priesthood. Jonathan Edwards, the famous missionary, said, “I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness and conformity to Christ. The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness.”\*

**GOD DOES NOT NEED GREAT TALENTS BUT MEN WHO ARE GREAT IN  
HOLINESS AND LOVE.**

The gospel of Christ does not move by popular waves. It has no self-propagating power. It moves as the men who have charge of it move. The preacher must live the gospel. Its divine, most distinctive features must be embodied in him. The constraining

\* Jonathan Edwards, “Personal Narrative,” c. 1740, in *The Life and Character of the Late Rev. Mr. Jonathan Edwards*, comp. Samuel Hopkins, 1765

power of love must be in the preacher as a projecting, extraordinary, all-commanding, and self-oblivious force. The energy of self-denial must be his being—his heart, blood, and bones. He must go forth as a man among men, clothed with humility, abiding in meekness, wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove. He must wear the bonds of a servant with the spirit of a king and the simplicity and sweetness of a child.

The preacher must throw himself—with all the abandon of a perfect, self-emptying faith and a self-consuming zeal—into his work for the salvation of men. The men who take hold of and shape a generation for God must be hearty, heroic, compassionate, and fearless martyrs. If they are timid timeservers, place seekers, men pleasers, men fearers; if their faith in God or His Word is weak; and if their denial may be broken by any phrase of self or the world, they cannot take hold of the church or 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. Only he who has made himself a man and a saint is well trained for this business. God does not need great talents, great learning, or great preachers, but men great in holiness, great in faith, great in love, great in fidelity, great for God. He needs men who are always preaching holy sermons in the pulpit and living holy lives out of it. These can mold a great generation for God.

After this order, the early Christians were formed. They were men of solid mold, preachers after the heavenly type—heroic, stalwart, soldierly, saintly. To them, preaching meant self-denying, self-crucifying, serious, toilsome, martyr business. They applied themselves to it in a way that influenced 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 prayer closet. The man—God's man—is made in the closet. His life and his most profound convictions are born in his secret communion with God. The burdened and tearful agony of his spirit, his weightiest and sweetest messages, are received 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 in opposition to the dependent humility of prayer. In the pulpit, prayer is all too often only official—a performance for the routine of service. In the modern pulpit, prayer is not the mighty force it was in Paul's life or 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 advance God's cause in this world.