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EDWARD MCKENDREE BOUNDS ON THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN PROVIDENCE AND MAN'S WILL IN PRAYER

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APPROVAL SHEET

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BETWEEN PROVIDENCE AND MAN'S WILL IN PRAYER

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To my pastor, Al Jackson, who encouraged me to pursue my seminary education and gave me the time to do so; to the people of Lakeview Baptist Church, our wonderful church family, who have been so supportive of us during these years as I pursued both ministry and doctoral studies; to my parents, who have always encouraged me to keep learning and who have particularly encouraged us and helped us in many ways during this long educational journey; to our boys, Grady Jeremiah and Richard Josiah, whose desire to be with Daddy reminds me that my first and foremost ministry is always at home; and most importantly, to my best friend and remarkable wife, Julia, who brings such joy into my life each day and provides support and strength so that I can pursue our calling to help shepherd the people of Lakeview and to make God famous among the world in Auburn.

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PREFACE

This undertaking could not have been completed were it not for the help, encouragement, support, and prayers of so many others. Dr. Tim Beougher, my supervising professor, introduced me to E. M. Bounds during my doctoral studies, and through a seminar assignment challenged me to think more deeply about how Bounds' theology impacted his radical prayer life. Dr. Beougher is the one who encouraged me to pursue this particular topic for further study beyond that seminar, something that eventually led to this project. Dr. Bruce Ware and Dr. Adam Greenway have further provided valuable guidance to the direction of this project. In addition, I am thankful for Dr. Thom Rainer and Dr. Chuck Lawless, who joined Dr. Beougher in encouraging me to pursue this doctoral program.

Sufficient space is not available to recount how each professor under whom I studied at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was used by the Lord to deepen my understanding of the things of God. I am grateful for the godly influence of each of those men, and the many who went before them to ensure that what is taught in our seminaries is faithful to the Word of God. Their teaching helped equip me to look at everything, including Bounds' underlying theology, in light of what the Word of God teaches.

I would be remiss not to mention here how Dr. Darrel King, the foremost expert on Bounds today, has spent countless hours sharing with me stories about Bounds' life and beliefs and letting me ask incessant questions. His insights were of tremendous importance in this project, his prayers were much appreciated, and his making himself

available for whatever was needed has been a resource far more useful than any biography or printed resource could ever provide.

My parents especially have encouraged me to further my education and have given sacrificially of their time to regularly travel to Auburn to help my wife with our children so that I could be free to research and write. Their investment in me throughout the years, and their encouragement to think deeply about things, laid the foundation on which this work is built.

Most importantly, no number of words could express my appreciation to my wife, Julia, for loving me and helping me through this journey. Her sacrifice and willingness to release me to study and write while she took care of two little boys under age three provided the time without which this project could not have been completed. More than that, her love for me and support for both my school and ministry endeavors provided me the encouragement to press on.

I am amazed at the mercy and grace that God has poured into my life. I realize that it is only by His mercy and grace that I have life, salvation, ministry opportunities, an amazing family, and everything else I experience in life. I pray that the efforts of this project will be useful to His people for the sake of His Kingdom advancing and His fame being known among all the peoples.

Grady DeVon Smith, Jr.

Auburn, Alabama

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Christianity today, there is no shortage of books in which the author calls believers back to the necessity of prayer and the need to give it greater importance in their lives both individually and corporately as the body of Christ. For example, books on spiritual disciplines place a strong emphasis on the importance of prayer as a foundational discipline. In *Celebration of Discipline* Richard Foster reminds his readers that of all disciplines, “Prayer is the most central.”¹ Donald Whitney also reminds readers that the lack of godliness is a result of prayerlessness since “to be like Jesus we must pray.”² In addition, contemporary theology books, such as J. I. Packer’s *Knowing God*, stress that “people who know their God are before anything else people who pray.”³ Similarly, popular author and speaker John Piper asserts the necessity of prayer in enjoying God since “prayer is the nerve center of our vital fellowship with Jesus.”⁴ Detailed books are available on a theology of prayer such as Packer’s *Praying*⁵ and Eric J. Alexander’s *Prayer: A Biblical Perspective*.⁶ Books are available chronicling how prayer changes churches, perhaps the most well-known of which is Jim Cymbala’s *Fresh*

¹Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 32.

²Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 66.

³J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 28.

⁴John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996), 150.

⁵J. I. Packer, *Praying* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

⁶Eric J. Alexander, *Prayer: A Biblical Perspective* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012).

Wind, Fresh Fire, the story of how prayer changed the Brooklyn Tabernacle.⁷ Specialty books, such as Gregory Frizzell's *How to Develop a Powerful Prayer Life*, are also available to guide believers in specific steps to improve prayer.⁸

Perhaps such modern books fill bookshelves today because, as John MacArthur describes in one of his own books on prayer, "Communion with God is so vital and prayer so effective in the fulfillment of God's plan, the enemy attempts constantly to introduce errors into our understanding of and commitment to prayer."⁹ As E. M. Bounds himself describes, "There is the decay of prayer in the Church."¹⁰ Perhaps books on prayer continue to be written and bought in large numbers because believers sense that struggle to give priority to prayer in their lives, and its resulting decay individually and corporately due to the enemy's attacks on this vital area of their lives.

Influence of Bounds on the Evangelical Understanding of Prayer

As one peruses those many books on prayer, one man from a past generation frequently appears quoted within them. That man is Edward McKendree Bounds, the Methodist pastor and evangelist from the late 1800's and early 1900's. His quotes, primarily on prayer, are cited by authors such as Cymbala,¹¹ Foster,¹² MacArthur,¹³

⁷Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997).

⁸Gregory R. Frizzell, *How to Develop a Powerful Prayer Life* (Memphis, TN: The Master Design, 1999).

⁹John MacArthur, *Alone With God: Rediscovering the Power & Passion of Prayer* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2006), 10.

¹⁰Edward M. Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), 102.

¹¹Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, 145.

¹²Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 45.

¹³MacArthur, *Alone with God*, 51.

Packer,¹⁴ and Piper,¹⁵ along with D. A. Carson,¹⁶ Neil Cole,¹⁷ Robert Coleman,¹⁸ John Eldredge,¹⁹ Jerry Falwell,²⁰ Cheri Fuller,²¹ James Goll,²² Stanley Grenz,²³ Kent Hughes,²⁴ Chip Ingram,²⁵ Cindy Jacobs,²⁶ David Jeremiah,²⁷ Greg Laurie,²⁸ Erwin Lutzer,²⁹ Joyce Meyer,³⁰ Robert Morgan,³¹ Oswald Sanders,³² Charles Stanley,³³ John Stott,³⁴ Chuck

¹⁴Packer, *Praying*, 190.

¹⁵John Piper, *Brothers We Are Not Professionals* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 1.

¹⁶D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992), 221.

¹⁷Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 96.

¹⁸Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 1993), 109.

¹⁹John Eldredge, *Desire: The Journey We Must Take to Find the Life God Offers* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 60.

²⁰Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 246.

²¹Cheri Fuller, *When Children Pray: How God Uses the Prayers of a Child* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 1998), 41.

²²James Goll, *The Prophetic Intercessor: Releasing God's Purposes to Change Lives and Influence Nations* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2007), 50.

²³Stanley J. Grenz, *Prayer: The Cry for the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 5.

²⁴R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 181.

²⁵Chip Ingram, *Good to Great in God's Eyes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 44.

²⁶Cindy Jacobs, *The Power of Persistent Prayer: Praying with Greater Purpose and Passion* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2010), 114.

²⁷David Jeremiah, *Searching for Heaven on Earth: How to Find What Really Matters in Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 60.

²⁸Greg Laurie, *Wrestling With God: Prayer That Never Gives Up* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2003), 13.

²⁹Erwin Lutzer, *Pastor to Pastor: Tackling the Problems of Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998), 103.

³⁰Joyce Meyer, *The Power of Simple Prayer* (New York: Faith Words, 2007), 100.

³¹Robert J. Morgan, *The Promise: God Works All Things Together for Your Good* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 163.

Swindoll,³⁵ Warren Wiersbe,³⁶ and Phillip Yancey,³⁷ just to name a few. Individuals covering a wide range of perspectives on theological issues look to Bounds for insights on prayer, and then share those insights with their readers. Furthermore, there are now hundreds of thousands of Internet sites that quote or reference him in some way. Thus, the ideas of Bounds about prayer continue to impact believers today, leading Packer to conclude that Bounds is “best known for his writings on prayer.”³⁸

Such contemporary writers not only quote Bounds, but also endorse his teachings on prayer. For example, Cymbala labels him the “great prophet of prayer”³⁹ while Southern Baptist evangelism professor Alvin Reid calls him “the great man of prayer.”⁴⁰ In addition, Carson commends Bounds to his own readers by writing, “We do well to remember the frequently quoted words of E. M. Bounds.”⁴¹ Similarly, Paul Billheimer, who was an author and a regular guest on the Trinity Broadcasting Network, commends the reading of Bounds:

³²J. Oswald Sanders, *Prayer Power Unlimited: Achieving Intimacy with God through Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1997), 129.

³³Charles Stanley, *Landmines in the Path of the Believer* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 14.

³⁴John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 77.

³⁵Charles R. Swindoll, *The Owner's Manual for Christians* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 87.

³⁶Warren W. Wiersbe, *History, The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2003), 106.

³⁷Phillip Yancey, *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 100.

³⁸Packer, *Praying*, 190.

³⁹Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, 145.

⁴⁰Alvin Reid, *Introduction to Evangelism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 145.

⁴¹Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, 221.

Every church should build a prayer library consisting of the best prayer classics. There are many good books on prayer but only a few classics. Those by E. M. Bounds are among the best These and others should be circulated so that the entire group will become faithful readers of these works.⁴²

Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix also encourage preachers to read Bounds' *Power through Prayer* once a year.⁴³

Furthermore, there is a group of Christian writers and speakers today who advocate a theology of God's providence as it relates to prayer that not only resembles Bounds, but that ultimately is an extension of his theology as they have adapted it for their own teaching. Those include Billheimer, along with Brother Andrew, who is best known for his biographical account of smuggling Bibles into communist areas, Watchman Nee, who was an author and leader in the Chinese church, and Dutch Sheets, who is a prolific author, especially on the topic of prayer, and a regular speaker at gatherings among the charismatic Christian community. These individuals' understanding of the relationship between providence and prayer is almost identical to that of Bounds, as will be shown in detail in chapter 4.

Bounds' renown is partly due to the impact that reading his books continues to have on people today. For example, Ingram writes, "When I read E. M. Bounds' powerful little book, it helped me grow deeper in my prayer life. I'll never forget some of its very convicting explanations of God's purposes for prayer."⁴⁴ James Bryant of Criswell College describes the impact of reading Bounds' *Power through Prayer*: "As this young pastor read those words, he walked, and read, and wept, and determined to

⁴²Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne: How Spiritual Warfare Prepares the Bride of Christ for her Eternal Destiny* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996), 133.

⁴³Jerry Vines and Jim Shaddix, *Power in the Pulpit: How to Prepare and Deliver Expository Sermons* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999), 62.

⁴⁴Ingram, *Good to Great in God's Eyes*, 44.

begin—for the first time, really—a life of prayer.”⁴⁵ Similarly, Darrel King, the director of the E. M. Bounds School of Prayer and author of one of two published biographies about Bounds, shares how after receiving a copy of a Bounds book from Billy Graham, he spent three days alone in a hotel room with only that book and his Bible, after which he emerged a transformed man.⁴⁶ In addition, author and pastor Britt Merrick writes in the magazine for Charles Stanley’s *In Touch* ministry how Bounds shaped him: “E. M. Bounds, whose many classics on prayer were published mostly after his death, helped me realize how intercession flows naturally and powerfully from compassion.”⁴⁷ Such impact is not limited only to believers in the United States of America. King asserts that Bounds’ writings are translated into more languages than even Billy Graham’s works.⁴⁸ King also recounts travelling to churches in India and house churches in China where he discovered that believers there could quote entire chapters of Bounds’ books from memory.⁴⁹

Such a wide-spread impact, especially through his quotes that continue to be heavily utilized to this day, is remarkable considering that he died relatively unknown in 1913. That impact comes almost exclusively from his eleven published books, only two of which were printed during his own lifetime: *Preacher and Prayer* (1907)⁵⁰ and *The*

⁴⁵James W. Bryant and Mac Brunson, *The New Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 44.

⁴⁶Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 2 June 2011.

⁴⁷Britt Merrick, “E. M. Bounds: Compassion and Power,” http://www.intouch.org/magazine/content/topic/e_m_bounds (accessed March 21, 2013).

⁴⁸Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 2 June 2011. I have been able to locate copies of Bounds’ works translated into Chinese, French, German, Korean, Spanish, and Turkish. However, King has spent the later decades of his life studying Bounds and teaching others about Bounds. Though I am unable to substantiate that claim, I am convinced that King knows better than anyone else today the actual scope of the influence of Bounds.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰E. M. Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., 1907).

Resurrection (1907).⁵¹ His other writings would have been lost after his death had it not been for Homer Hodge, a man that Bounds mentored. In the two decades following Bounds' death, Hodge published nine additional books written by Bounds: *Purpose in Prayer* (1920),⁵² *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home* (1921),⁵³ *Prayer and Praying Men* (1921),⁵⁴ *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow* (1922),⁵⁵ *The Possibilities of Prayer* (1923),⁵⁶ *The Reality of Prayer* (1924),⁵⁷ *The Essentials of Prayer* (1925),⁵⁸ *The Necessity of Prayer* (1929),⁵⁹ and *The Weapon of Prayer* (1931).⁶⁰ Since those initial printings, these books have been revised, reprinted, and published repeatedly, sometimes under different names.⁶¹ While Bounds also wrote numerous editorials from his time

⁵¹E. M. Bounds, *The Resurrection* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South., 1907).

⁵²E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920).

⁵³Edward M. Bounds, *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921).

⁵⁴Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*.

⁵⁵Edward M. Bounds, *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922).

⁵⁶Edward M. Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1923).

⁵⁷Edward M. Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924).

⁵⁸Edward M. Bounds, *The Essentials of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925).

⁵⁹Edward M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929).

⁶⁰Edward M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer: A Study in Christian Warfare*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931).

⁶¹For example, *Power Through Prayer* is an edited reprint of *Preacher and Prayer* and contains some wording differences as will be noted later. In addition, *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow* was later published as *Winning the Invisible War* and more recently as *Guide to Spiritual Warfare*. Later printings, especially the editions after the 1970's, have additional editing according to Darrel King (Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 16 July 2011). For this project, only the original printings will be utilized. The appendix provides a summary of Bounds' books.

working at Christian newspapers, and even though some of those writings have been preserved, those sources are relatively unknown and not frequently quoted, apart from several recent books from King that compile and make a portion of that material available to a wider audience.⁶² Yet, it is the material from Bounds' books that continues to be quoted again and again by contemporary authors and speakers.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of Bounds' remarkable influence even to this day, very little research has been done on Bounds himself or on his beliefs. While often quoted, Bounds' life and beliefs are relatively unknown to most Christians who look to him as a model of prayer and who quote him accordingly. Only three biographies were written about him, and only two of those were published and are now readily accessible.⁶³ In addition, I can locate only one thesis or dissertation ever written about Bounds. That thesis was completed by Howard Perry in 1952 at Western Evangelical Seminary; however, it was only a simple comparison of the views of prayer of Bounds, Andrew Murray, and George Arthur Buttrick.⁶⁴ It provides little insight into Bounds' beliefs as Perry only used four of Bounds' eleven books for his sources and did not draw any conclusions about Bounds' underlying theology.

Similarly, my searches of the theological databases reveal that virtually nothing is written on Bounds apart from the extensive popular quoting that was previously noted. In seeking to make sure sources were not overlooked, I contacted

⁶²A listing of these books from King is provided in the appendix.

⁶³The two widely available biographies are Lyle Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds: Man of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), and Darrel D. King, *E. M. Bounds* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998). In addition, a privately published biography with limited availability is Willis Irvin, Jr., *The Prayer Warrior: A Mini-biography of Dr. E. M. Bounds* (Augusta, GA: self-published, 1983).

⁶⁴Howard W. Perry, "A Comparative Study of Views on Prayer as Held by E.M. Bounds, Andrew Murray, and George Arthur Buttrick" (B.Div. thesis, Western Evangelical Seminary, 1952).

King, the biographer of Bounds who spent decades studying Bounds and who has built his own life and ministry philosophy around the teachings of Bounds.⁶⁵ King responded that I found everything and that there are no other works about Bounds that have been missed in those searches.⁶⁶ As such, he eagerly affirmed the need for further research as has been undertaken in this project.⁶⁷

Correspondence with other Christian scholars provided further confirmation concerning the surprising lack of material on Bounds and the need for the research presented here. For example, Lyle Dorsett, who authored the other published biography of Bounds, noted that research into “Bounds’ theology of prayer and the effects of that theology can be a significant contribution.”⁶⁸ Similarly, Richard Foster, the author of a best-selling book on spiritual disciplines, responded that Bounds “is a good person for you to focus on.”⁶⁹ In addition, Terrance Tiessen, who wrote a book on the topic of providence and prayer that is influential throughout this project, encouraged this pursuit and noted that it is a worthwhile endeavor.⁷⁰ Finally, after first proposing the idea of the research for this project to King, he exclaimed that it is “absolutely fantastic.”⁷¹

However, not only is material which provides an analysis and critique of

⁶⁵Darrel D. King has previously served with Change the World Schools of Prayer and in the Office of Prayer and Spiritual Awakening of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. After leaving those roles, he founded the E. M. Bounds School of Prayer as a ministry to equip churches and believers in prayer. He models his life around the philosophy of E. M. Bounds and has extensively researched Bounds. In addition to writing the most comprehensive biography of Bounds, he has compiled previously unpublished materials of Bounds and published that material in several new books. In my estimation, King is the scholar who best understands the life, ministry, and writings of Bounds today.

⁶⁶King, telephone interview by author, 16 July 2011.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Lyle Dorsett, email interview by author, 12 April 2011.

⁶⁹Richard Foster, email interview by author, 8 June 2011.

⁷⁰Terrance Tiessen, email interview by author, 22 July 2011.

⁷¹King, telephone interview by author, 16 July 2011.

Bounds' life, beliefs, and writings lacking, but so is material on the broader topic of the relationship between providence and man's will as expressed in petitionary prayer.⁷²

While there are many books on providence, and even more on the topic of prayer, there are few that seek to bridge the issues and bring them together. Bruce Ware responded to a question I raised to him by saying, "There is not much on providence and prayer, per se."⁷³ Contact with two additional seminary professors resulted in the same response as that provided by Ware, namely that there are not many resources available.

While not much is available on the particular topic of the relationship between providence and petitionary prayer, there are four contemporary books that do seek to focus on this subject. The most significant one, and the one that proves to be the most academic in nature as well as the most balanced, is Terrance Tiessen's *Providence & Prayer*.⁷⁴ Tiessen's work is unique in that while he does present his own view at the end, the majority of the book is a categorization of the prominent viewpoints about the relationship between providence and prayer. It is an attempt to provide a fair representation of each view by providing numerous quotes from the advocates of each. That book will be discussed in more detail in chapter 4. It also is very influential in providing both the terminology and framework that is used throughout this project for categorizing and describing Bounds' theological views.

Beyond Tiessen's book, I can locate only three other books that are focused on dealing directly with the topic of providence and prayer. Those include Peter Baelz's *Prayer and Providence*,⁷⁵ Brother Andrew's *And God Changed His Mind*,⁷⁶ and the more

⁷²Since Bounds uses the gender specific notation for people in the words "men" and "man," those terms will be utilized throughout this project for the sake of clarity in representing his views.

⁷³Bruce A. Ware, email interview by author, 13 August 2011.

⁷⁴Terrance Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

⁷⁵Peter R. Baelz, *Prayer and Providence: A Background Study* (New York: The Seabury Press,

recent work from Douglas Kelly titled *If God Already Knows Why Pray?*⁷⁷ The viewpoints of the books from Andrew and Kelly will be discussed in chapter 4. Unfortunately, despite the title of Baelz's book which makes one think that it could make a significant contribution to this discussion, it has significant limitations that prevent it from being helpful. First, Baelz questions evangelical convictions including the legitimacy of miracles, God's divine judgment, and the spiritual battle between God and Satan.⁷⁸ Second, he does not interact with the various perspectives on the issue apart from acknowledging that "there have been many proposals at different times to speak of a limited God, whose limitations arise from the manner of his involvement in the world."⁷⁹ Thus, he does not engage different perspectives or provide a response to objections raised by those with other perspectives. Third, he appeals to mystery, noting that he wonders whether he has been "seeking the irreconcilable."⁸⁰ Ultimately, he concludes the following about the relationship between providence and prayer:

It is time to bring these tentative remarks to a conclusion. Perhaps it is a mistake to think of God's doing something in response to our prayer, as if our prayer had persuaded God to do what he could have done but refused to do without our praying for it. Perhaps we ought rather to think that our asking in faith may make it possible for God to do something which he could not have done without our asking. We may give the divine Love a *point d'appui*, so that through our prayer it may realize possibilities which only in this way it can actualize. Perhaps we must

1968).

⁷⁶(Brother) Andrew and Susan DeVore Williams, *And God Changed His Mind* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1999).

⁷⁷Douglas F. Kelly, *If God Already Knows Why Pray?* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2007).

⁷⁸Baelz questions the legitimacy of miracles by asking "where to draw the line between the factual and the symbolic (Baelz, *Prayer and Providence*, 117), divine judgment by stating it is from God's dark side whereas God is essentially light, leading to question whether we should "retain the concept" (ibid., 65), and spiritual warfare by asking, "What are we to make of the form of this mythology?" (ibid., 81).

⁷⁹Ibid., 121.

⁸⁰Ibid., 8.

go on praying in the faith and hope that this is so, even though we cannot yet explain how it is so. In prayer we refuse to accept as ultimate what appear to be fixed conditions of the world, because we believe that these conditions are not ultimate. They have a temporary validity within the purpose of God, but they are in the end subordinate to his love. We do not yet know what love can or cannot achieve. Our faith prompts us to pray, in Kierkegaard's phrase, even "for the impossible". Prayer "is a form of expectation". It is the growing point in the divine-human encounter. It is participation in new creation.⁸¹

Due to the limitation of that book, it will not be referenced again in this project.

Furthermore, the limitations of that book reinforce my belief that there is an overall lack of material available on the topic of the relationship between providence and man's will as expressed in petitionary prayer.

My hope is that this dissertation will begin to help fill that void in Christian academic work. Specifically, it will seek to discover and respond to Bounds' view of God's "character and His manner of governing this world, and its inhabitants,"⁸² particularly in how He does so in relation to the petitionary prayers of His people. Furthermore, in so doing, it will seek to demonstrate that Bounds' underlying theology about God's providence was something known as church dominion theology, a theological model that explains his radical prayer life.

Background of the Study

Like many believers, my first exposure to Bounds came through seeing him quoted in the writings of other authors. The first of those encounters came early in my seminary studies as I read Cymbala's account of the amazing work of God at the Brooklyn Tabernacle in his book *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*. As already noted, Cymbala both quotes Bounds and commends him in that book. Since that initial exposure, I have seen Bounds cited in numerous books and articles. However, my first direct exposure to Bounds' writings came from an assignment in one of my early seminary classes to read

⁸¹Ibid., 118.

⁸²Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 157.

his book, *Power through Prayer*, which is a revision of his first book that was originally titled *Preacher and Prayer*.

I distinctly remember those initial exposures to Bounds and the feeling that many have of marveling at his radical prayer life, while also feeling as though my own prayer life was inadequate. Unfortunately, I did not read any more of Bounds until my doctoral studies in the Billy Graham School of Missions and Evangelism at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. In particular, a seminar on “The Methods and Influence of American Evangelists,” led by professor Timothy Beougher, greatly expanded my knowledge of and curiosity about Bounds. In that seminar, each student researched and wrote about an American evangelist. I chose Bounds primarily because of my curiosity as to why I had heard him only cited in relation to prayer, not in relation to his work as an evangelist. I wanted to learn more about his relatively unknown role as a Methodist evangelist.

That research topic quickly became one of my favorite projects during all of my doctoral studies. As I studied Bounds for it, I came across strong statements from him that rarely, if ever, are quoted in other works. The discovery of those comments troubled me and led me to want to learn more. In addition, when I learned that the editorials from his time as the Assistant Editor⁸³ of the *Christian Advocate* newspaper were preserved at Emory University, I made a trip there and spent a day in the Pitts Theological Library. I will never forget browsing the brittle pages of the *Christian Advocate* for hours as I read things that Bounds wrote that few people living today have ever seen.

⁸³As will be seen in chap. 2, Bounds always capitalizes the title of his position. For consistency with the way he referred to himself, the same capitalization will be utilized throughout this project.

As I began to bring my ideas together for that seminar's project, I primarily focused on Bounds' writings on evangelism, particularly what is required to be effective in it. His calls to personal holiness and prayer are compelling and noteworthy. His belief in the sinfulness of man and the need to preach the Gospel are also commendable. However, I concluded that Bounds had a problematic underlying theology, which, at that time, I labeled for simplicity as "the need of God." There I began to speculate that Bounds' radical prayer life resulted from a sense of burden rather than a sense of delighting in God's presence. I concluded that the explanation had to lie somewhere in his views about God's sovereignty and providential rule. I speculated that Bounds likely believed that God's redemptive plans were dependent upon man's work in prayer, and that such a belief could easily be a heavy burden to Bounds that would explain his almost monastic-like withdrawal into his prayer closet for the later years of his life.

Yet, despite my concerns at that time about his beliefs concerning God's providence, I could not just dismiss his writings as theologically problematic. Though something seemed misplaced to me in his views on providence, I found myself still thinking about his works. Personally, Bounds would come to mind as I experienced the struggle of giving proper priority to prayer in the midst of both full-time ministry and family responsibilities, all while pursuing doctoral studies. Corporately, I saw the church where I serve struggling to equip and motivate believers, whom for the most part have sound theology, to pray both individually and corporately. There continued to be something appealing about Bounds' remarkable life of prayer. However, without further research, all I could hope was that perhaps there was some way to couple the example and writings of Bounds with a different view of the sovereignty of God. I speculated that doing so might provide believers with a sense of freedom, joy, and boldness in their prayers.

In light of that ongoing interest, and out of a simple statement in that seminar paper years ago that said, “Further research is needed,” I have undertaken this research and dissertation. I am hopeful that it will accomplish two things. First, I hope it will reveal why Bounds prayed as long and with as much fervor as he did each day. With how much he is used as a model for how we are to pray, we need to ask the question, Why did he pray as much as he did? Second, I want to learn what role his view of God’s providence had on influencing that remarkable practice of prayer. Such is the basic question of how a person’s theology affects what they do. While I agree with Tiessen that a conflict often exists between the truth people profess regarding providence and their beliefs regarding salvation and how they pray for the lost,⁸⁴ it appears that Bounds had coherence between his beliefs and his practice. Therefore, a study of his views of providence will be very helpful in explaining his prayer life. In addition, with so little written about a man whose quotes fill books on prayer, and with so little written about the broader topic of the relationship between one’s view of providence and one’s prayer life, I believe this research will begin to help fill a void in Christian theology today, as well as have much applicability to our lives.

Methodology of the Research

The research undertaken here began with a thorough examination of the primary resources authored by Bounds. As previously noted, Bounds authored what became eleven books published between 1907 and 1931. It is imperative for such research that the original printings be used. To see that need, a person only needs to compare the first page of the 1907 original edition of *Preacher and Prayer* with the 1979 Moody edition of it, which in addition to being edited in its wording also was published

⁸⁴Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer*, 14.

under the name *Power Through Prayer*.⁸⁵ King warns that there has been significant editing of Bounds' original writings in the contemporary printings of his books. He also notes that such editing originated with the 1970's editions, which not only were heavily edited, but which also were edited improperly.⁸⁶ Thus, a reading of the contemporary printings of books attributed to Bounds does not expose the reader fully to Bounds' ideas as they include additions, omissions, rewordings, and other revisions from the editors. After countless hours searching used book store inventories, I was able to locate and purchase the original editions of each of Bounds' eleven books. Thus, unless otherwise noted, every quote attributed to Bounds in this project comes from those original, first-edition printings.

In addition to those eleven books, a thorough examination was also made of Bounds' editorials from his time at the *Christian Advocate* from 1890 to 1894. A detailed reading and study was made of each of his editorials from that weekly newspaper to look for hints of his theological beliefs on providence. In addition, those newspaper editorials are helpful in looking for consistency between the books published after his death by Hodge and the writings that are known to be unedited comments from Bounds from during his lifetime. Thus, they prove to be a very helpful tool in assessing a potential limitation that will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

This research, then, began with a careful reading and notation from those books and articles, looking for any insight into Bounds' beliefs about God's providence

⁸⁵Though the changes on that page do not alter the meaning, it is indicative of the type editing done. For example, the original 1907 edition (Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 6) did not have chapter titles or the references for Scripture phrases included, both of which are later editorial additions as seen in the 1979 Moody edition (E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1979], 8). An example of the wording difference can be seen as Bounds originally began the book with the phrase, "We are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods," whereas the 1979 Moody edition begins with the reworded phrase, "We are constantly straining to devise new methods."

⁸⁶King, telephone interview by author, 16 July 2011.

and how his views on such relate to his teachings on petitionary prayer. Several themes quickly emerged from that study. Those themes are described in detail in chapter 3. It should also be noted here that this research was done with significant consultation with King who graciously answered many questions as well as carefully reviewed chapters 2 and 3 to ensure that I faithfully represented Bounds both historically and theologically.⁸⁷

After completing that study of all of Bounds' original writings that are still available today,⁸⁸ the focus turned to researching a model for understanding the relationship between providence and prayer that best represents Bounds. That model is something Tiessen terms "the church dominion model."⁸⁹ Consultation with Tiessen and King helped me not only connect Bounds with this model, but also identify the other proponents of this view in addition to Bounds. A study was then made of their writings looking for indications of their view of God's providence. As with Bounds, a number of consistent themes emerged, themes indicating that Bounds' view is consistent with this model. Those findings are presented in chapter 4.

Finally, I returned to all of Bounds' writings again, this time looking for the scriptural basis that undergirds his views on the themes about providence that were discovered. Though Bounds mentions many phrases from Scripture, he quotes and cites very few. Therefore, those phrases were matched to their corresponding Scriptures. After grouping them into categories related to the various aspects of his beliefs regarding providence, six stood out as being the most foundational in his understanding. I then spent several days at the Samford University Library studying academic commentaries in order to respond to Bounds' use of each of those texts that form the basis of his views on

⁸⁷A listing of my communications with King is included in the bibliography.

⁸⁸Details of what is lost or unavailable is provided in the next section of this chapter on limitations of the study.

⁸⁹Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer*, 119.

providence and how it relates to prayer. The findings from that study are presented in chapter 5. From seeing how Bounds utilized those texts to form his views, I then was able to provide a critique on his views of God's providence and how it relates to petitionary prayer. That critique is presented in the final chapter. Bounds' understanding of those texts explains from where he developed the themes that are discussed here, as well as helps explain his radical prayer life that is described in the biographical discussion in chapter 2.

Limitations of the Study

It should be noted that there are two limitations in this research project. First, apart from the published materials already noted, some of what Bounds wrote has been lost. According to King, Bounds had other writings, and perhaps even other books on which he was working when he died, but those documents were destroyed when a fire burned the shed behind his house where he kept them.⁹⁰ In addition, King said there are additional writings of Bounds in two locations today, neither of which are making them accessible.⁹¹ Thus, the full scope of Bounds' thoughts that he penned are not available anymore. However, as will be shown, there are prominent themes that appear again and again throughout his eleven books and hundreds of newspaper editorials, enabling readers today to have a good understanding of Bounds' beliefs, even if the totality of his writings is no longer available.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Darrel King has located two places where previously unpublished material of Bounds is located but inaccessible. According to King, the first location is a man in Florida who has additional unpublished documents of Bounds in his private collection but who refuses to release it or share it with others. The other is a library in Missouri that has boxes of Bounds' additional writings, but in which the paper is too brittle to handle without the library funding a project of glass-plating and digitizing each page, which they are not able to do at this time (King, telephone interview by author, 16 July 2011).

A second limitation is that only two of Bounds' eleven books were published during his lifetime. The additional nine books were published by Hodge after his death. As will be seen in more detail in chapter 2, Bounds asked Hodge to compile his manuscripts and publish the books, a process that Hodge admits required editing and significant work, and likely resulted in errors in the process of "rewriting."⁹² Thus, there is the potential that Hodge edited Bounds' writings to reflect his own theological leanings.⁹³ In fact, Hodge lists himself as the editor in the last five books that he published. With the original manuscripts not preserved, the only recourse is to compare what is available in the books published by Hodge with what is known with certainty to be directly from Bounds, specifically his first two books and his editorials from the *Christian Advocate*. As will be seen in chapter 3, that comparison of materials reveals remarkable consistency between all of the materials published both before and after his death.

Yet, in spite of those limiting factors, the research undertaken here can be profitable in three ways. First, it will help us understand what motivated Bounds to have such a remarkable practice of personal prayer. In a day when churches are looking for resources on equipping believers to pray, and when believers have so many options on prayer books to help them, understanding more about Bounds' own life will be beneficial. Second, such research will help in understanding how a person's theology affects that person's own practice of prayer. Since what one believes affects what one does, further study will prove beneficial in helping Christians understand how their beliefs about God's providence shape the way they pray. Third, such research will begin to help fill the void in the lack of resources available on seeking coherence in models that

⁹²Homer W. Hodge, Foreword, in *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922), 7.

⁹³King, telephone interview by author, 16 July 2011.

explain the relationship between providence and prayer. It is my hope that this research will provide the impetus for other such research to follow.

Definitions

Before continuing any further into this project, it is important to clarify some terminology that is utilized here. First, regarding providence, while Bounds writes little about the topic, he does devote two chapters of *The Possibilities of Prayer* to the subject. It is there that he provides his only definition of the concept:

What is termed providence is the Divine superintendence over earth and its affairs. It implies gracious provisions which Almighty God makes for all His creatures, animate and inanimate, intelligent or otherwise. Once admit that God is the Creator and Preserver of all men, and concede that He is wise and intelligent, and logically we are driven to the conclusion that Almighty God has a direct superintendence of those whom He has created and whom He preserves in being. In fact creation and preservation suppose a superintending providence. What is called Divine providence is simply Almighty God governing the world for its best interests, and overseeing everything for the good of mankind.⁹⁴

He continues, noting his belief that God's providence is specific, not general, when he writes,

Men talk about a "general providence" as separate from a "special providence." There is no general providence but what is made up of special providences. A general supervision on the part of God supposes a special and individual supervision of each person, yea, even every creature, animal and all alike.⁹⁵

He then concludes that "to dispute the doctrine of providence is to discredit the entire revelation of God's Word. Everywhere this Word discovers God's hand in man's affairs."⁹⁶

For this project, then, providence will be understood to be God's specific actions in history as He sovereignly rules over all aspects of His creation. In attempting

⁹⁴Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 140.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid., 157.

to provide a broad description of the term, Tiessen uses this type of understanding, describing providence as “God’s activity of preserving and governing the whole of creation.”⁹⁷ Similarly, Paul Helm describes providence by saying,

God has created and sustains the whole of the universe. Not only are individual Christians and the Christian church the object of his attention, but so is the whole of nature, together with those forces and people who are indifferent to God and even defiant of him. For God is the creator and sustainer of all that is.⁹⁸

Helm goes on to clarify that providence includes God preserving and sustaining His creation in a “directed, or purposive” way.⁹⁹ Such direct involvement by God as He rules over all aspects of His creation, including animate and inanimate, and believers and non-believers alike, is what will be meant here by the term “providence.”

Second, regarding prayer, for the most part Bounds does not seek to define it. In one place he explicitly rejects the need to define it when he says, “Prayer is too simple, too evident a duty, to need definition. Necessity gives being and shape to prayer.”¹⁰⁰ However, elsewhere in his writings he does define it as “a Divine arrangement in the moral government of God, designed for the benefit of men and intended as a means for furthering the interests of His cause on earth, and carrying out His gracious purposes in redemption and providence.”¹⁰¹ Specifically, though, Bounds does explain from a human standpoint what he believes prayer involves when he says, “In Bible terminology prayer means calling upon God for things we desire, asking things of God.”¹⁰² Yet, it is in *The Reality of Prayer* where he finally elaborates on what he means by that idea of prayer as asking of God:

⁹⁷Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer*, 15.

⁹⁸Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 20.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 22-23.

¹⁰⁰Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, 118.

¹⁰¹Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 35.

¹⁰²Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 26.

The word “Prayer” expresses the largest and most comprehensive approach unto God. It gives prominence to the element of devotion. It is communion and intercourse with God. It is enjoyment of God. It is access to God. “Supplication” is a more restricted and more intense form of prayer, accompanied by a sense of personal need, limited to the seeking in an urgent manner of a supply for pressing need.

“Supplication” is the very soul of prayer in the way of pleading for some one thing, greatly needed, and the need intensely felt.

“Intercession” is an enlargement in prayer, a going out in broadness and fullness from self to others. Primarily, it does not centre in praying for others, but refers to the freeness, boldness and childlike confidence of the praying. It is the fullness of confiding influence in the soul’s approach to God, unlimited and unhesitating in its access and its demands. This influence and confident trust is to be used for others.

Prayer always, and everywhere is an immediate and confiding approach to, and a request of, God the Father “Asking of God” and “receiving” from the Lord—direct application to God, immediate connection with God—that is prayer.¹⁰³

It is this idea of petition, or asking of God, that will be the aspect of prayer focused on in this project. Granted, there is much more to prayer than asking. It also includes praise and adoration of God, thankfulness for what He has done, and confession of sins. However, the focus here will be on what Bounds focused on, namely petitionary prayer, or asking God for things for oneself or others. As Tiessen notes, “Petition occupies a large part of the average person’s prayer time, and when people wonder how prayer ‘works,’ it is petition that they are generally contemplating.”¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Helm notes that petitionary prayers are the type that “raise questions about providence.”¹⁰⁵ Though the general term of “prayer” will appear throughout these pages, what is in view is the specific aspect of petitionary prayer.

In light of those definitions, the question then becomes how the two doctrines of providence and petitionary prayer relate. As Paul Helm notes, “How are we to understand the efficacy of prayer, the way in which it contributes to the unfolding of

¹⁰³Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, 9-11.

¹⁰⁴Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer*, 18.

¹⁰⁵Helm, *The Providence of God*, 145.

God's providential purposes? This is a crucial question."¹⁰⁶ Such a crucial question does not appear to be one on which Bounds focused. Yet, there are indications in his writing that he is at least aware of the issue. For example, Bounds simply states, "Praying men and God's providence go together."¹⁰⁷ More specifically, he states,

The Old Testament especially, but also the New Testament, is the story of prayer and providence. It is the tale of God's dealings with men of prayer, men of faith in His direct interference in earth's affairs, and with God's manner of superintending the world in the interest of His people and in carrying forward His work in His plans and purposes in creation and redemption.¹⁰⁸

This project now seeks to undertake an examination of Bounds' writings to learn how he understood that relationship between God's providence and petitionary prayer.

Before continuing any further, it should be noted that Bounds held to a high view of Scripture. He describes the Bible in a way consistent with other evangelicals when he says,

The Bible is pre-eminently a Divine revelation. It reveals things. It discovers, uncovers, brings to light things concerning God, His character and His manner of governing this world, and its inhabitants, not discoverable by human reason, by science or by philosophy. The Bible is a book in which God reveals Himself to men.¹⁰⁹

More specifically he says, "We hold definitely without compromise in the least to the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures."¹¹⁰ In addition, in describing Paul's writings he says, "Let it be noted before we go any further that Paul wrote directly under the superintendency of the Holy Spirit, who guarded Paul against error, and who suggested the truths which Paul taught."¹¹¹ It should also be noted here that I also hold to a strong

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 153.

¹⁰⁷Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 158.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 157.

¹¹⁰Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 112.

¹¹¹Ibid.

belief in the verbal plenary inspiration view of Scripture. That shared perspective that I have with Bounds makes a scriptural critique of his ideas both possible and more profitable.

In order to discover Bounds' understanding of God's providential rule, a biographical account of his life will be provided in the next chapter in order to better understand his life experiences shaped his theological views that appear in his writings. From there, chapter 3 will make an analysis of all of his available writings in order to discover his views about providence and how he believes it relates to petitionary prayer. Chapter 4 will then connect Bounds' beliefs to those of contemporary advocates in order not only to see how Bounds shaped contemporary theology but also to make the critique that follows applicable to theological thought today as well as to provide a resource to help fill the void in Christian scholarly work on the relationship between providence and petitionary prayer. Finally, chapters 5 and 6 will provide that critique.

CHAPTER 2

A BIOGRAPHY OF EDWARD MCKENDREE BOUNDS

Edward McKendree Bounds, who lived between 1835 and 1913, was “a son, a husband and father, a gold miner, a lawyer, a pastor, a Confederate Army chaplain, a writer, a community leader, and a friend and neighbor.”¹ Yet, he is known primarily as a man of prayer who, through his writings, influenced countless numbers of believers in improving their own prayer lives. One person in particular who Bounds influenced was Homer Hodge, a Methodist pastor. Hodge describes his first encounter with Bounds:

While pastor in Atlanta, in 1905, the writer was informed that there was an apostolic man of prayer in Georgia that would aid the church in attaining a high altitude in spiritual things Naturally we expected to see a man of imposing physique, but when he came we discovered that he was only about five and a half feet tall, but in him we met one of the greatest saints that, in our humble opinion, has appeared on the spiritual horizon in the last hundred years.²

Who was this unassuming man who would have such an influence not only on Hodge, but on countless people even today?

Despite the impact Bounds made on Hodge and continues to make on those who read his books, he is not well known outside the portion of the Christian community who reads his books. Yet, my own conversations with the many who read his books has led me to conclude that even they know little about his life. Willis Irvin, one of three men who undertook to write a biography of Bounds’ life, notes, “Like most true prophets of the Lord, he was never seriously recognized in his own home land and even today,

¹Darrel D. King, “Biography of Edward McKendree (E. M.) Bounds,” in *Jewels from E. M. Bounds*, by E. M. Bounds (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2010), 2.

²Homer W. Hodge, Introduction, in *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921), 6.

after selling millions of copies of his little book (*Preacher and Prayer*), few people know very much about Dr. E. M. Bounds.”³ Even Hodge, who not only was the one man in whom Bounds most personally invested, but who also is the one responsible for publishing the last nine of Bounds’ books, mentions that Bounds was relatively unknown. He notes that when Bounds was the Assistant Editor of a Christian newspaper, he “was little known out of his church.”⁴ Yet, Hodge is optimistic that even though “Bounds was comparatively unknown for fifty years,” this relatively unknown man will “recover the lost and forgotten secret of the church in the next fifty years.”⁵ Recently, Darrel King has said that Bounds’ life is “so unrecorded and has so limited avenues to know the man and to get real good information on him.”⁶

For a man with such influence among contemporary Christians, yet whose life details remain unknown to many who read his writings, a brief biographical discussion warrants attention before an analysis is made of his writings. Irvin suggests that if you want to know about Bounds simply “read his books.”⁷ Unfortunately, doing so will reveal little about Bounds’ life. While one can learn about Bounds’ beliefs and some about his practice of prayer from his writings, those writings contain very few references to his personal life. Thus, those who desire to learn about Bounds’ life in order to understand more fully his own prayer practice and teaching need to first look at the historical and biographical details about his life. This particular undertaking utilizes the two published biographies of Bounds from King and Lyle Dorsett, as well as the

³Willis Irvin, Jr., *The Prayer Warrior: A Mini-biography of Dr. E. M. Bounds* (Augusta, GA: self-published, 1983), 1.

⁴Homer W. Hodge, Introduction, in *Prayer and Praying Men*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), vi.

⁵*Ibid.*, vii.

⁶Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 4 January 2013.

⁷Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, foreword.

privately published, and difficult to locate, additional biography from Irvin. In addition, the introductions by Hodge in each of Bounds' books, and Bounds' own comments about his life that appear in the *Christian Advocate* editorials that he penned, are used for further historical insights into his life. Finally, numerous insights and clarifications come from personal interviews conducted with King.⁸

Childhood, Education, and Law Career

Edward McKendree Bounds was born on August 15, 1835, the fifth of six children of Thomas Jefferson and Hester Bounds.⁹ Bounds came from a well-respected family. Prior to his birth, his parents moved from Maryland to Kentucky, then westward to be involved in the development of the new county of Shelby, Missouri, and its county seat of Shelbyville.¹⁰ Bounds was born in a cabin alongside the Salt River, less than a mile from that town that his father would help officially organize in December of that same year.¹¹ Bounds' father not only helped survey the county and the town, but he also became a "leading figure in the social, economic, and religious fiber of the town."¹²

In addition, speculation as to the origin of Bounds' middle name, McKendree, is related to this westward move of his parents. One biographer suggests that the name was given to him by his parents in honor of the Methodist bishop, William McKendree, who was the one primarily responsible for planting Methodism in Missouri and who died

⁸After completing the draft of this chapter, I sent it to Darrel King for verification of historical accuracy. King replied with a letter providing additional points of clarification and additional insights not found in any of the other sources. Those additions are included in this chapter and noted as such (Darrel D. King, letter to author, 27 December 2012).

⁹Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 13.

¹⁰King, letter to author, 27 December 2012.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Darrel D. King, "A Biography of E. M. Bounds," in *Powerful and Prayerful Pulpits*, ed. Darrel D. King (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), 9.

the same year Bounds was born.¹³ Another one of his biographers shared that there was a McKendree Chapel near his parents' farm when they lived in Kentucky, and that the chapel records have the Bounds' family names on it. He, thus, suspects the middle name came from their love for that chapel.¹⁴ Though no written proof exists of such intentional naming, either of those reasons appears plausible and, regardless of which is true, they provide an additional glimpse into the importance of faith to Bounds' parents and the influence it had in his early life.

Not much is known about Bounds' childhood, except for the fact that he "received a common school education at Shelbyville,"¹⁵ something that Dorsett later describes as the town's one-room school.¹⁶ King believes that Bounds' childhood years were very secure for him because of his family.¹⁷ Likewise, Dorsett notes that the family was well off financially,¹⁸ something that becomes a large contrast to Bounds' later years in life.

In addition to what was a fairly routine and secure childhood, there is nothing extraordinary about Bounds' early spiritual life. He was baptized as an infant in the Methodist Episcopal Church and was confirmed at age twelve. Dorsett reports that Bounds had "been a Christian as long as he could remember,"¹⁹ yet also notes that he showed no sign of interest in Christian ministry through those years.²⁰ The stability and

¹³Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 13.

¹⁴King, telephone interview by author, 4 January 2013.

¹⁵Homer W. Hodge, Introduction, in *Purpose in Prayer*, by E. M. Bounds (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1901), 5.

¹⁶Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 14.

¹⁷King, "A Biography of E. M. Bounds," 10.

¹⁸Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 14.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 16.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 14.

routine nature of Bounds' childhood began to change when his father passed away when he was either fourteen or fifteen.²¹ Though his father left the family financially stable and in a prosperous town, King suspects that the death of his father marked the turning point when Bounds began his "spiritual search."²²

Soon after his father's death, Bounds and his brother, Charles, decided to go west because of reports they heard about gold and the gold rush. They travelled to the mining area of Mesquite Canyon in Eldorado, California.²³ Unlike many of the other young men there, Bounds felt appalled by the immorality and love of money, and after four years decided to return home.²⁴ King notes, "It was said of the Bounds brothers that they were perhaps the only people to ever return from the gold mines with their faith greater than it was before they left."²⁵ Similarly, Irvin notes that the two Bounds brothers "returned home, not richer, but wiser, to face the world of their day."²⁶

Back home in Missouri, Bounds began to study law in the town of Hannibal. The knowledge he gained from his father during his childhood enabled him to progress rapidly in his studies, and he was installed as a lawyer at the age of either eighteen or nineteen,²⁷ making him "the youngest man ever admitted to the bar in Missouri."²⁸ For

²¹Dorsett reports the age to be fourteen years old (Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 14), while King reports it in one book to be fourteen (Darrel D. King, *E. M. Bounds* [Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1998], 14) while in another book to be fifteen (King, "A Biography of E. M. Bounds," 9).

²²King, *E. M. Bounds*, 14.

²³King, letter to author, 27 December 2012.

²⁴King, *E. M. Bounds*, 17.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 3.

²⁷Dorsett reports Bounds' age at this point in his life to be eighteen (Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 15), while King reports it to be nineteen (King, *E. M. Bounds*, 17). The sequence of dates of his life makes nineteen the more likely age.

²⁸King, "Biography of Edward McKendree (E. M.) Bounds," 2.

five years he had a very successful legal practice, gaining the respect of judges, lawyers, and other citizens alike, as he was an “unusually effective communicator.”²⁹

However, in 1859 he suddenly closed his law practice, which stunned the people of the community.³⁰ There is no agreement among his biographers as to why he closed the practice. Hodge simply reports that Bounds was “called to preach the Gospel at the age of twenty-four.”³¹ Dorsett notes that while “the details are lost to history,” he believes the closing had to do with the tenth anniversary of the death of Bounds’ father.³² Dorsett also believes at that time Bounds encountered God’s grace in a new way, and in light of that “second blessing,” he experienced power to tell others about Jesus and sensed a call to full-time ministry.³³ King provides a different perspective as he attributes the closing of the law practice to the broader context of the Great Spiritual Awakening of the previous two years. He states, “As Edward sat in his Hannibal law office pondering the condition of his city and his own soul, he read letters from friends and family concerning a stirring among God’s people in the East,” soon after which he learned of the Methodist revival just north of Hannibal where six-thousand people were converted in two months.³⁴ King believes those stirrings of revival are what led Bounds to leave the law practice for ministry. In King’s most recent writings about Bounds, he now provides more explanation as to his understanding of Bounds’ calling:

The Great Spiritual Awakening of 1854-58 reached northern Missouri. The Methodist Episcopal Church South in La Grange, Missouri, sponsored a brush arbor meeting with Evangelist Smith Thomas. Edward was there. That night, enfolded in

²⁹Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 15.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

³¹Hodge, Introduction, in *Purpose in Prayer*, 5.

³²Dorsett., 16.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴King, *E. M. Bounds*, 19.

the preaching and praying, his spirit was ignited and more: His heart was moved to answer God's call for full-time Christian ministry.³⁵

While the biographers are not agreed on the cause, they are agreed that a drastic change happened in Bounds' life at that point as he began a new chapter in his life, one focused on vocational ministry.

Early Years of Ministry: Preacher and Chaplain During Civil War

With his law office closed, Bounds began to study Scripture and theology. He especially was influenced by John Wesley's sermons as well as Jonathan Edwards' writings on David Brainerd and John Fletcher.³⁶ He moved to Palmyra, Missouri, to attend classes at the Centenary Seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Church South for two years.³⁷ King says that the seminary provided training in practical theology, and should be understood to be more of a Bible school than a seminary as understood today.³⁸

After preaching to the Methodist pastors attending the Hannibal Quarterly Conference in February of 1860, Bounds was unanimously recommended, or licensed, to preach by the Methodist Episcopal Church South.³⁹ His first assignment was to the Monticello Circuit, specifically to a church a few miles west of LaGrange.⁴⁰ Since Methodism was still being established in a developing area and since Bounds did not have family responsibilities as a single man, he was also assigned to go from town to town leading prayer groups and Bible studies as well as preaching.⁴¹ King describes his

³⁵King, "Biography of Edward McKendree (E. M.) Bounds," 2.

³⁶Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 16.

³⁷King, *E. M. Bounds*, 19.

³⁸Darrel D. King, interview by author, Covington, GA, 21 June 2011.

³⁹King, *E. M. Bounds*, 20.

⁴⁰King, letter to author, 27 December 2012.

⁴¹King, telephone interview by author, 4 January 2013.

preaching, even early in his ministry during these years, as being “stern, powerful, and compelling.”⁴² One year later, in February of 1861, Bounds became the pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church South congregation in Brunswick, Missouri,⁴³ which was one of the leading churches in the Conference.⁴⁴

However, Bounds’ time with the congregation in Brunswick was short. At that time, the nation was close to civil war. Missouri, where Bounds lived and ministered, was a divided state. Within a few months of Bounds assuming the pastorate of that congregation, troops arrived in the area to keep Missouri from seceding. Those troops began to confiscate church buildings, schools, and parsonages from the Methodist Episcopal Church South denomination out of suspicion that they were “disloyal to the Union because of denominational affiliation,” simply because the church had the word “south” in it.⁴⁵ The realities of what was taking place led Bounds to publish an editorial for the paper of a nearby Methodist college where he wrote, “I pledge allegiance to the United States of America, not to a union that divides a nation.”⁴⁶

While Bounds did not set out to align with the Confederacy, he eventually did so.⁴⁷ While one cannot know with certainty why he made that choice, there appears to be a significant contributing factor in Bounds’ witness of the brutality of the Union soldiers. As already noted, he saw them confiscate church property because it had the word

⁴²King, *E. M. Bounds*, 21.

⁴³Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 18.

⁴⁴King, Letter to author, 27 December 2012.

⁴⁵Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 19.

⁴⁶King, Letter to author, 27 December 2012.

⁴⁷It should be noted that Dorsett reports that while Bounds’ joined the Confederacy, his family divided and his two older brothers joined the Union Army (Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 18). Darrel King said that is a factual error on Dorsett’s part as the brothers were never in the Union army (Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 21 November 2012).

“south” in it, a title that was held by those churches long before the Civil War began. In addition, Bounds saw ten men unjustly hanged, as well as had to preach the funeral of a teenage boy brutally killed by Union soldiers.⁴⁸ It is very likely that witnessing such brutality and confiscation of church property softened his heart toward the Confederacy. However, his alignment with the South ultimately would not come by his own actions. On November 14, 1862, Union soldiers stormed Bounds’ church in order to arrest him as he worked quietly there.⁴⁹ They arrested him for suspicion of sympathy toward the Confederacy because of the title of his congregation. In order to gain release, he was required to post bail and pledge loyalty to the Union, something he refused to do.⁵⁰

Dorsett provides a succinct summary of what led to this imprisonment:

Bounds . . . found himself thoroughly enmeshed in the Confederacy simply because he had protested the Union occupation of a church building that was constructed three years after the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was formed. Inasmuch as the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, people donated the land and built the forty-by-fifty-foot structure with their own rather than confiscated funds, the young pastor refused to hand it over to the representatives of the rival denomination. For this stand he was declared disloyal to the United States.⁵¹

As a result, Bounds spent one and a half years in the prison in Saint Louis, and began assuming the unofficial work of being a chaplain to the “criminals, rebel soldiers, and Confederate sympathizers.”⁵² As Dorsett describes, “He was a de facto Confederate chaplain even though he had neither volunteered nor signed a loyalty oath in support of the Confederate States of America.”⁵³ He was transferred to a prison in Arkansas where

⁴⁸King, *E. M. Bounds*, 28-29.

⁴⁹King, “Biography of Edward McKendree (E. M.) Bounds,” 3.

⁵⁰King, *E. M. Bounds*, 31.

⁵¹Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 20.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 19.

⁵³*Ibid.*

he was released in a prisoner exchange on the condition that he not return to Missouri as long as there was conflict.⁵⁴

Once released from the prison, Bounds immediately “traveled on foot nearly one hundred miles” to join the Confederate troops in Mississippi where he “was soon after made chaplain.”⁵⁵ King provides insight as to why Bounds went to Holly Springs, Mississippi, after his release. He notes that General Sterling Price, whose command was in that region at the time, was a personal friend of Bounds from their time in Brunswick, Missouri, and, thus, Bounds sought him.⁵⁶

Bounds officially joined the Confederate army on February 7, 1863, at the age of twenty-eight⁵⁷ and was made a chaplain for the Third Missouri Volunteer Infantry Regiment.⁵⁸ He quickly gained the respect of the soldiers as he was different from the other chaplains who were quick to desert when things became difficult. As Dorsett describes, Bounds “may have been little in stature, but he was not short on courage.”⁵⁹ Following the example of Father John Bannon, a well-known Catholic chaplain who also was from Missouri,⁶⁰ Bounds chose to stay with the soldiers at the front lines of the battle instead of at the rear like the other chaplains.⁶¹ In fact, he requested to be assigned to a unit on the front lines in order to help point to God the men who were in the greatest

⁵⁴King, Letter to author, 27 December 2012.

⁵⁵Hodge, Introduction, in *Purpose in Prayer*, 5.

⁵⁶King, Letter to author, 27 December 2012.

⁵⁷King, *E. M. Bounds*, 35.

⁵⁸Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 20.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁰King, Letter to author, 27 December 2012.

⁶¹King, *E. M. Bounds*, 37.

need.⁶² Even in the very bloody battle of Franklin, Bounds never left the front lines.⁶³ In addition, Bounds refused to ride a horse, as he wanted to be close to and among the men.⁶⁴

That ministry among the men, even during the worst battles, had a significant impact on the soldiers. He also gained their respect as he ministered in the hospitals, led prayer meetings, and led worship in the camp.⁶⁵ King notes how “reports spread of his effectiveness in bringing spiritual influence to the camps,” as well as to the churches in the surrounding communities.⁶⁶

However, Bounds himself was significantly impacted by his experience with the soldiers in the battles. King recounts how Bounds reflected on Ezekiel 22:30 as he saw the General holding the fighting men in reserve to push forward whenever a breach occurred. From that experience, Bounds concluded that the same was true in the spiritual realm: “Bounds knew it was the intercessors, those willing to pay with their life and give their life to intercede for others, who played a part of ‘standing in the hedge’ for God’s glory.”⁶⁷ Similarly, Dorsett believes that Bounds learned lessons from these battles, specifically that nothing on earth is lasting.⁶⁸ He says, “As he stood there surrounded by mass graves, devastated farmhouses and land, and a throng of wounded and weakened fellow warriors, Bounds realized more than ever before that this world is not home.”⁶⁹ In

⁶²King, “Biography of Edward McKendree (E. M.) Bounds,” 4.

⁶³Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 22.

⁶⁴King, interview by author, 21 June 2011.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁶King, “A Biography of E. M. Bounds,” 11.

⁶⁷King, *E. M. Bounds*, 45.

⁶⁸Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 26.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 24.

addition, King believes these scenes of devastation led him to feel a strong burden for the souls of the soldiers:

As Bounds struggled over the battlefield day after day, the earth covered with splintered pines and the mangled bodies of men, his heart was heavily burdened. Where were the souls of the men whose bodies lay waiting to be returned to the earth from which they'd come? Were they with the Savior, now in perfect peace? Or were they in everlasting judgment, forever separated from God almighty in eternal torment? The sight drove him to his knees and to the continued labor of God in the sharing of the Gospel with as many men as he could.⁷⁰

Consequently, his preaching and pleading to the men took on great earnestness. As King describes,

Bounds would go straight to the Cross of Calvary. He often preached regarding hell, sin, and eternal death; issues that were critical to the men who heard them. With his uniform buttoned to the neck, his light brown hair neatly combed, and his beard trimmed, Bounds implored the men to turn to Jesus. His concern for souls was so real that tears streamed down his face as he spoke.⁷¹

Bounds remained in Franklin, Tennessee. Even after the bloody battle there, he remained to help the wounded soldiers, even though he knew it could lead to his capture.⁷² His decision to stay did lead to his capture and incarceration,⁷³ and he spent six months in prison, during which “he could not get Franklin off his mind and heart.”⁷⁴ After those six months, he was given the option of more prison time or taking an oath of allegiance to the United States along with making a promise that he would not bear arms against the government in the future, terms to which Bounds agreed.⁷⁵

Upon his release, he quickly returned to Franklin. King describes what he found there and what he did as a result:

⁷⁰King, *E. M. Bounds*, 59.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 62.

⁷²King, letter to author, 27 December 2012.

⁷³King, “A Biography of E. M. Bounds,” 11.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁵Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 24.

He returned to the ravaged town where the populace had been decimated by the war. They had given the last of their food, clothing, and hospitality to the soldiers in that tragic battle. Bounds returned to a little church whose members had been scattered. He began to pray and sing praises to God and, as a hen with her chicks, drew the people back together. Before long, they began to grow into a vibrant church.⁷⁶

Bounds was not only burdened for that one congregation; he also led prayer groups and Bible studies in the community since “the war had put an end to most regular church meetings.”⁷⁷ In addition, he felt a strong burden for the proper burial of the soldiers killed in battle. He personally oversaw the exhumation from mass graves, identification, and proper reburial of more than 130 soldiers who had served in the Missouri units there.⁷⁸ In so doing, Bounds created what became the only exclusively Confederate cemetery after the war.⁷⁹ Bounds’ compassion and love for these soldiers is noted by his biographers. King describes Bounds’ burial efforts in these terms: “Bounds felt this effort was truly directed by God. Often he would stand on the hallowed ground that entombed his fellow soldiers, and tears would stream down his face as his lips moved with prayers for their grieving families.”⁸⁰ Similarly, Dorsett notes that when Bounds died a half-century later, his wallet still had a list of all of the names of the soldiers he buried in Franklin. He concludes, “These were not just dead soldiers. After all, they were part of his congregation.”⁸¹

Out of this ongoing ministry in Franklin, in 1866 Bounds was ordained an elder in the Tennessee Conference and officially made pastor of the Methodist Episcopal

⁷⁶King, “A Biography of E. M. Bounds,” 12.

⁷⁷King, *E. M. Bounds*, 69.

⁷⁸Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 25.

⁷⁹King, *E. M. Bounds*, 73.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 26.

Church at Franklin.⁸² During the two years of his pastorate, revival came to that church; approximately 150 people were converted during the several weeks of that revival.⁸³ Dorsett attributes the revival to one of the first things Bounds did when he began his work at that church, namely getting a group of six men together to pray every Tuesday night for revival for themselves, the church, and the city. After a year of those prayer meetings, revival came.⁸⁴ One person converted during this time was B. F. Haynes, who later became the president of Asbury College. In his own biography, Haynes describes his experience and conversion at that revival under Bounds:

At a meeting held during his pastorate in Franklin, I went to the altar as a little boy as an act of public confession of committal to Christ, was accepted, and on the following Sunday assumed the vows of church membership The revival at which this transpired was a wonderful work of grace. When Bro. Bounds came to Franklin he found the church in a wretched state. It was near the close of the four years of war. Much of the time we had been without a pastor, our ranks had become depleted, and the world had come into the church through the extreme excitement, acrimony and hatred incident to war. He cast about to find the devout souls in the little church and got some five or six whom he felt to be real praying men and these met him every Tuesday night at the church and prayed for a revival. For twelve or fifteen long months this little band faithfully prayed until God finally answered by fire. The revival just came down without any previous announcement or plan, and without the pastor sending for an evangelist to help him. It continued for weeks, and my recollection is, something like one hundred and fifty souls were gloriously converted.⁸⁵

Hodge also includes an excerpt from something Haynes wrote, and it provides an excellent summary of Bounds' ministry not only during these years at Franklin, but during this phase of his ministry:

Our first sight of this great saint was at the close of the Civil War, when he was dropped into our village in Tennessee, with his uniform on. We remember how our childish minds were particularly taken with the gray jeans jacket, closely buttoned with its brilliant brass buttons. He took charge of our little Methodist church. We

⁸²Ibid., 27.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid., 28.

⁸⁵B. F. Haynes, *Tempest-tossed on Methodist Seas; Or, A Sketch of My Life* (Louisville, KY: Pentecostal Publishing Company, 1921), 23.

remember with what soul-stirring pathos and fervor he read those old classic hymns, such as “Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned,” “How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds,” “In Evil Long I Took Delight,” and many others. Often where our childish feet would near the church door the hope would involuntarily arise in our minds that he would read one of those wonderful hymns we had heard him read before. Always he broke our young hearts by the inimitably seraphic way of his reading of the opening hymn before he preached the sermon. And the sermon! Who can describe it? Simple, direct, soulful, it went where it was invariably aimed—to the heart of the hearer.⁸⁶

Middle Years of Ministry: Preacher and Newspaper Editor

The end of 1868 marks the beginning of a new period of Bounds’ ministry as he moved beyond the Civil War years and focused on pastoral ministry in a number of locations. In December of 1868, Bounds transferred to Selma, Alabama, to pastor the Church Street Methodist Episcopal Church South. King describes his ministry there when he writes,

In a community where he had preached as a chaplain, he now came as the pastor. Here again God poured out his blessings, not only on the Word of God but also on the man of God. Church Street Methodist Episcopal Church, South, where Bounds was pastor, took on a vibrancy tinged with great expectancy.⁸⁷

Not much is known about his three years there. Dorsett describes them as tranquil years where Bounds “conducted his pastoral work with sensitivity and faithfulness.”⁸⁸ In addition, he conducted numerous revivals and camp meetings during these years.⁸⁹

In the fall of 1871, Bounds transferred to Eufaula, Alabama, to pastor the First Methodist Episcopal Church South there. When he arrived, it was a struggling church.⁹⁰ Yet, during his approximately four years there, the church grew from seventy-two adult

⁸⁶Homer W. Hodge, Introduction, in *The Possibilities of Prayer*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), 5-6.

⁸⁷King, “A Biography of E. M. Bounds,” 12.

⁸⁸Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 30.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰King, “A Biography of E. M. Bounds,” 12.

members to 247 adult members.⁹¹ In fact, it grew so much that they had to relocate the building. King describes that relocation, saying, “A relocation of the church was required and Bounds led that great church to build a building with a steeple so high that it became the testimony of God’s faithfulness to southeast Alabama and the southwest region of Georgia.”⁹² In addition, during these years Bounds also intervened in a race riot as he placed himself in the middle of the fighting to end it.⁹³ Irvin describes the incident in more detail, writing,

Once Bounds jumped into the middle of a race riot in Alabama and silenced the disturbance with the only authority that he had being the words of the Lord and his trusted black servant constantly advising him that he was in serious trouble. Yet, he survived, and the race riot between former slaves and poorer whites ended without further bloodshed.⁹⁴

During these four years in Eufaula,⁹⁵ two other significant developments occurred in Bounds’ ministry and personal life. Ministry related, he began to write editorials for the local newspaper that grew in popularity and eventually were printed in other papers throughout the region.⁹⁶ That editorial writing began what would become a focus of the next phase of his ministry. Personally, he met Emma Barnett while there. Both were almost forty years old and neither had married.⁹⁷ Interestingly, he first noticed

⁹¹King, *E. M. Bounds*, 83.

⁹²King, “A Biography of E. M. Bounds,” 12.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Irvin, *The Prayer-Warrior*, 4.

⁹⁵Further evidence for these dates beyond what is recorded in the biographies is found in an editorial Bounds wrote during his time at the *Christian Advocate*. In his report on the events of “The Alabama Conference,” he not only signs his name to the article, but he also specifically references his time in Eufaula from 1871 to 1875 (E. M. Bounds, “The Alabama Conference,” *Christian Advocate*, 22 December 1892, 8).

⁹⁶King, *E. M. Bounds*, 79.

⁹⁷Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 31.

her while preaching a funeral message.⁹⁸ They began to get to know each other during his years there, but did not get married until he moved away for his next assignment.

In 1875, Bounds transferred again, this time to Saint Louis, Missouri. The reason for this move is unknown. However, King notes that during the years in Eufaula, Bounds made several trips to Missouri, including one for the funeral of his sister who died in 1872.⁹⁹ With the war over and the conflict in Missouri settled, he finally was free to travel back to his home state.¹⁰⁰ During one of these trips, Bounds stayed with E. M. Marvin, a Methodist bishop in the Missouri Conference. King believes that it was probably during that trip that Marvin made the challenge to Bounds to move to Saint Louis to help Saint Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church South,¹⁰¹ a church that was "beginning to turn its back on God and become a social club."¹⁰² While the reason cannot be known, that explanation seems very plausible. Interestingly, seventeen years later when Bounds was writing for the *Christian Advocate*, he wrote about a return trip to Eufaula to participate in the Alabama Conference. His words indicate a depth of love for the people there and for the town, as well as a sadness that he left, yet still with no explanation as to the reason for his departure:

There are no ties more deathless than those I have formed in my pastorate. Friendships were then formed which have made my life richer than all earth's gold and silver. I was stationed in Eufaula, Ala., from 1871 to 1875, and few pastorates were ever more fruitful in these treasures of the heart. I left it with a broken heart. The sixtieth session of the Alabama Conference was held here. The waste of seventeen years is great. The city is the same in its beauty of land and sky. Its streets have the same wideness and are shaded by the same live oaks. The graveyard is larger, and many faces that I used to see and love are beneath its sod, and some of the beautiful homes are under the cypress shade. I am happy to be with

⁹⁸King, *E. M. Bounds*, 80.

⁹⁹King, telephone interview by author, 4 January 2013.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²King, *E. M. Bounds*, 83.

them again, with love for the living, tears for the dead, and sympathy with the sorrowing.¹⁰³

Regardless of the reason, Bounds moved to Saint Louis in September of 1875 and became the pastor of Saint Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church South. As with his previous pastorates, the church grew significantly under his leadership.¹⁰⁴

It was also during his time there that he married Emma Barnett. He returned to Eufaula for the wedding, and they were married on September 19, 1876, at the First Methodist Church of Eufaula, a church that he had been involved in building.¹⁰⁵ Emma's father officiated the wedding.¹⁰⁶ Several days later they went together to Saint Louis.¹⁰⁷

Within a few months of marriage, Emma became pregnant. She returned to Eufaula during the pregnancy, with Bounds joining her when it was time to deliver the child.¹⁰⁸ Their first child was a girl named Celeste, and approximately two years later they had another girl, Corneille.¹⁰⁹ At the age of forty-five, Bounds was the father of two young girls.

After serving at Saint Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church South for several years, Bounds transferred to become the pastor of the First Methodist Episcopal Church South, also in Saint Louis. It was one of the most prestigious churches in all of Missouri and was where many of the social elites in the town attended.¹¹⁰ However, the church was not growing, which led the bishop over the area to send Bounds there since he was

¹⁰³E. M. Bounds, "The Alabama Conference," 8.

¹⁰⁴Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 32.

¹⁰⁵King, *E. M. Bounds*, 85.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰⁹Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 32.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*

“gifted in building and reviving the church.”¹¹¹ During his two years as pastor there, he did what he had done in other churches, namely “underscoring the devotional life, urging more time in prayer, and advocating outreach to the poor and sick.”¹¹² Interestingly, when he arrived the church had a pew rental system that he hated. He did away with that system, and even sent out advertisements to the poor that read, “SEATS FREE. ALL ARE WELCOME IN GOD’S HOUSE.”¹¹³ After two years, he was transferred back to his previous congregation, Saint Paul’s. The reason for that move is unknown today.¹¹⁴

In 1883, Bounds’ ministry focus took a change of direction as the Saint Louis Conference called him to become the associate editor of their official newspaper, *The St. Louis Christian Advocate*. Bounds appears to have accepted the position because he enjoyed writing, had a burden for revival that he hoped to share with others, and desired time to do evangelistic preaching.¹¹⁵ During his first few months in this new position, he visited many churches in the conference to get to know the people and to report on what they were doing. As King describes, “This gained him a quick acceptance by the people and the pastors as they got to know this upstanding man of faith.”¹¹⁶ Bounds spent seven years in this role,¹¹⁷ during which, according to King, he “became a leader in calling the

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid., 33.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴King, *E. M. Bounds*, 89.

¹¹⁵Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 34.

¹¹⁶King, *E. M. Bounds*, 90.

¹¹⁷Hodge records that Bounds spent eight years in that role (Hodge, Introduction, in *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home*, 5). However, it more likely was for a duration of seven years. Bounds began his work there in 1883, and was called to serve at the *Christian Advocate* in Nashville beginning in June of 1890.

people of God back to God, not only among the Methodists but among others who read his editorials.”¹¹⁸

During these years in Saint Louis, Bounds’ own family went through many changes. His first son, Edward, was born in 1884.¹¹⁹ However, the joy of that birth quickly was overshadowed by sorrow as his wife’s health began to decline. Her health became so poor that she had to return to Eufaula to receive medical care from her father, who was both a minister and a doctor.¹²⁰ Despite that care, she died in February of 1886, and left behind not only her husband, but three children who were ages eight, six, and two.¹²¹ Her dying wish to her husband was for him to marry her cousin Harriet, who was her closest friend¹²² and someone she believed would be a faithful wife and a good mother.¹²³ Irvin describes more detail on that request:

Before her death, and after ten years of marriage to Bounds, Emmie realized that she had not long to live, and wrote a letter to her cousin, Harriett [*sic*] Alexander Barnett of Washington, stating that after her death, she wanted her to marry her husband, Edward. Emmie was seeking a mother for her children, a future wife for her husband, but most of all, a good husband for her friend and cousin, who, up to this point, had never married. This was a ver[y] great compliment as to the character of Bounds as a husband and father. He was fortunate to have loved, not only one, but two great women in his life. Both were equally fond of him as their husband and father of the children.¹²⁴

Bounds honored that request, marrying Harriet Barnett on October 25, 1887, with Dr. Barnett once again officiating the wedding.¹²⁵ There was a significant age difference

¹¹⁸King, “A Biography of E. M. Bounds,” 13.

¹¹⁹Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 34.

¹²⁰King, *E. M. Bounds*, 92.

¹²¹Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 34.

¹²²King, *E. M. Bounds*, 101.

¹²³Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 34.

¹²⁴Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 5.

¹²⁵King, *E. M. Bounds*, 103.

between the two as Bounds was fifty-two and Harriet was only thirty-one.¹²⁶ However, the marriage appears to have been very strong. Dorsett records that “despite their age differences, family members maintain that this was an idyllic match.”¹²⁷ Similarly, Irvin notes that “Hattie, as she was called, was as popular a person, as was Emmie. She now became a mother to children and was highly respected by her friends as well as Methodist sisters in the faith.”¹²⁸

Bounds and Hattie returned to his home in Saint Louis. Nine months later, they had their first child together, Samuel Barnett Bounds.¹²⁹ Within a year, they had their second son, Charles Rees.¹³⁰ However, the joy of that birth very quickly was overshadowed by the unexpected death of Bounds’ six-year-old son, Edward, only two weeks later.¹³¹ The tremendous grief that Bounds felt was compounded when almost exactly one year later, Charles also died unexpectedly.¹³² Dorsett believes that it is out of the grief of those losses that Bounds began to think and write on what would become his books about heaven and the resurrection.¹³³ Despite the losses, Bounds and Harriet had two more children: Osborne Stone, born in 1892, and Elizabeth born in 1893.¹³⁴

It should also be noted that during the period between the death of Emma and his marriage to Harriet, Bounds was given an opportunity to preach for a week at

¹²⁶King records her age to be 31 (ibid.), while Dorsett records her age to be 30 at the time of the wedding (Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 35).

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 5.

¹²⁹Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 36.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Ibid., 37.

¹³²Ibid., 38.

¹³³Ibid., 39.

¹³⁴King, *E. M. Bounds*, 114-15.

Southern University, which is known today as Birmingham Southern College. King recalls what happened during that week in the spring of 1886:

It was as though the community was ready to explode, such was its expectation of the Holy Spirit's movement. However, the meeting started rather slowly. It seemed the people expected the movement of God to come from Bounds rather than from God himself. Bounds continued to pray.

Soon a holy awareness began to fall on the community, and the people became afraid of coming to the meeting with unconfessed sin in their life. The drawing of the Holy Spirit was so strong that businesses began to close early to allow everyone to attend.¹³⁵

Eventually more than one-hundred conversions came from those meetings.¹³⁶ It was also during these meetings that the school conferred on Bounds an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.¹³⁷

With Bounds' influence spreading through his preaching and through his work at the *Saint Louis Christian Advocate*, he was offered the position of Assistant Editor of the *Christian Advocate*, the official newspaper for the entire Methodist Episcopal Church South denomination. He and his family moved to Nashville for this new responsibility, and his writings for that paper began on June 7, 1890, as he penned the following words:

“The Church has called me to the position of Assistant Editor of the CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE. My labors will begin in full next issue. My happiness and duty are involved in giving myself to this work as much as in me is; this I will endeavor to do.”¹³⁸

During the four years between that first note and May 31, 1894, Bounds provided an editorial column in the newspaper most weeks. As King describes, these editorials “called this great missionary pioneering church to a spirit of prayer, piety, and revival” as Bounds “diligently sought to obey God, urging the church to walk in the righteousness of

¹³⁵Ibid., 99.

¹³⁶Ibid., 100.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸E. M. Bounds, “Editorial on 7 June 1890,” *Christian Advocate*, 7 June 1890, 8.

God.”¹³⁹ Chapter 3 will provide a detailed summary of key themes and topics found within these writings.

The exposure to a wider audience through this newspaper meant that Bounds had more speaking opportunities during his years in Nashville. As King describes, “Requests for him to speak came pouring in,”¹⁴⁰ including many invitations to camp meetings.¹⁴¹ In addition to those camp meetings, his editorials provide additional records of speaking at a commencement¹⁴² as well as at a dedication of a new church.¹⁴³

Despite his apparent love for writing the editorials and the frequent speaking opportunities afforded to him through the exposure of his writings, in 1894 he suddenly left his role at the *Christian Advocate*. He makes no announcement or mention of his resignation, nor does the editor. Rather, his final editorial on May 10, 1894, speaks of issues about which he regularly writes and gives no hint of his leaving.¹⁴⁴ The following three issues on May 17, 24, and 31, do not contain editorials as they report “general conference proceedings” as is done in that newspaper whenever there was a national conference gathering. The May 31, 1894, issue is the final one in which his name appears on the paper as the Assistant Editor.¹⁴⁵ The following issues simply have his name removed without any mention of his departure. In addition, the section where Bounds’ writings appeared began to have editorials signed E. E. H., the initials of the

¹³⁹Darrel D. King, *E. M. Bounds Speaks to the Modern Church* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2009), ix.

¹⁴⁰King, *E. M. Bounds*, 114.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁴²E. M. Bounds, “Editorial Quotes,” *Christian Advocate*, 15 June 1893, 8.

¹⁴³E. M. Bounds, “Editorial Quotes,” *Christian Advocate*, 19 October 1893, 8.

¹⁴⁴See E. M. Bounds, “An Evil, Its Remedy,” *Christian Advocate*, 10 May 1894, 8, and E. M. Bounds, “Loss of Conscience,” *Christian Advocate*, 10 May 1894, 8.

¹⁴⁵E. M. Bounds, “General Conference Proceedings,” *Christian Advocate*, 31 May 1894, 8.

Editor, E. E. Hoss.¹⁴⁶ That pattern continued until July 12, 1894, when the name of the new Assistant Editor appeared.¹⁴⁷ There is no mention of Bounds ever again in the writings of that paper, except for a brief mention about his death in 1913.

There are multiple theories and opinions about why Bounds abruptly and quietly left his role at the *Christian Advocate*. Since Bounds himself never said, one can only speculate as to the real reason. King's research has led him to conclude that Bounds quit over two theological issues within his denomination. First, at the gathering of the General Conference in Memphis in 1893, a rule was passed that prohibited evangelists from travelling out of their region without written approval.¹⁴⁸ There appears to be a hint of Bounds' frustration with the denomination over their changing views of evangelists in his 1893 editorial on "Waiting for the Evangelist." There he writes of needing discrimination in finding evangelists who are doing a good work, instead of those who are doing evil, as well as challenges the church not to have religious grudges against evangelists.¹⁴⁹ Second, a bishop proposed that everyone involved in the holiness movement, of which Bounds was part, should be excluded, as well as that the church should control all of the newspapers that had Methodist in the title, both of which directly would impact Bounds.¹⁵⁰ King states, "Bounds knew a decision to remain at the *Advocate* would mean the ideals he stood for and the words he used would utilize the very organization he opposed."¹⁵¹ He goes on to say that Bounds "now felt his pietistic

¹⁴⁶See E. E. Hoss, "Editorial on 7 June 1894," *Christian Advocate*, 7 June 1894, 8, and E. E. Hoss, "Editorial on 14 June 1894," *Christian Advocate*, 14 June 1894, 8.

¹⁴⁷See E. E. Hoss, "Editorial on 12 July 1894," *Christian Advocate*, 12 July 1894, 8,

¹⁴⁸King, *E. M. Bounds*, 116.

¹⁴⁹E. M. Bounds, "Waiting for the Evangelist," *Christian Advocate*, 21 December 1893, 8.

¹⁵⁰King, *E. M. Bounds*, 116.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 118.

convictions and life-style were infringed upon by the church in which he had so lovingly worked. If he remained an employee, he felt he would be part of the infraction.”¹⁵²

Hence, he left.

Dorsett provides a similar explanation, citing the dispute at the same 1893 conference over whether evangelists were legitimate ministers.¹⁵³ However, Dorsett adds that Bounds found himself directly opposed to Hoss, the editor of the newspaper, on this very issue.¹⁵⁴ Dorsett concludes, “In his heart he believed evangelism to be a divinely ordained ministry To demonstrate how far he believed the church to be drifting from biblical guidelines, Bounds gave up his salary, benefits, and future pension.”¹⁵⁵

However, Bounds’ family holds different opinions. Irvin recounts asking Bounds’ granddaughter about the issue of the departure:

Bounds’ grand-daughter, Mary Ficklin Barnett, one of Washington’s truly great personalities and who has helped so much in my preparation of a Biography of E. M. Bounds, felt that the thing that made Bounds leave the Advocate was not just inter-church politics, but the fact that at this time in his life, the Federal Government was settling up with the Methodist Church for the war damage caused to the churches in the battles around Franklin, Chattanooga, Nashville, and Knoxville. Churches have always been aim points for artillery during war and some of the Methodist property suffered considerable damage. Bounds did not want to accept governmental reparations. The main stream of the church did. He felt it necessary to keep the government out of the church business. Others felt that the money was their just due for the damage caused. After fighting for this point and losing, Rev. Bounds felt that his counsel had fallen on rocky ground, therefore, he resigned.¹⁵⁶

In addition, Bounds’ own son, Osborne, was uncertain as to why his father left the position, except for believing that he did it in simple faith. Irvin notes,

What had made Bounds leave the Christian Advocate, which was steady income, for a position of uncertainty fed by the ravens? Before his death, I asked

¹⁵²Ibid., 120.

¹⁵³Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 43.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 45.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 46.

¹⁵⁶Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 7.

Osborne Bounds, Sr. this question. He was not really sure, nor was it as perplexing to him as it was to me. Being a preacher's son, he was not as strong a believer as was his father, but he understood that sound reasons were not necessary for a prophet.¹⁵⁷

We cannot know with certainty why Bounds left the *Christian Advocate*, though all of the perspectives appear to have merit and, perhaps, all were contributing factors in Bounds' decision. Yet, as Irvin concludes,

Whatever did happen, the reason is hidden somewhere in the publications of hundreds of Advocates and Conference records However, for we simple believers of Calvin tradition, it was by the providence of the Almighty, that E. M. Bounds left his position as Assistant Editor of the Advocate to become the writer of books.¹⁵⁸

Regardless of the reason, we do know several things. First, Bounds left silently. As already noted, he and his denomination never mentioned it. Second, he left without pay. He voluntarily gave up his salary and any future retirement pay.¹⁵⁹ As Irvin describes, his life from this point forward was characterized by “poverty, obscurity, loss of prestige.”¹⁶⁰ Third, his denomination never reached out to him again and never sought reconciliation or restoration.¹⁶¹

Later Years of Ministry: Personal Prayer and Writing

With his resignation from the *Christian Advocate* in 1894, Bounds moved his family to Washington, Georgia, to live with his wife's parents. Hodge provides a succinct summary of these years, saying, “He spent the last seventeen years of his life with his family in Washington, Ga. Most of the time he was reading, writing, and

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 6.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 9.

¹⁵⁹King, *E. M. Bounds*, 120.

¹⁶⁰Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 12.

¹⁶¹King, *E. M. Bounds*, 120.

praying. He rose at 4 a.m. each day for many years and was indefatigable in his study of the Bible.”¹⁶²

During these years, he had two more children. Mary Willis Bounds was born in 1895 when Bounds was sixty years old.¹⁶³ The following year, his last child, Emma, was born.¹⁶⁴ Five years later, his two older daughters, Celeste and Corneille, both were married. Bounds officiated their weddings in a double ceremony.¹⁶⁵ Yet, the stories of his children are not all happy stories. As already noted, two of his boys died unexpectedly at a young age. In addition, two of children denied the faith of their father and lived as agnostics.¹⁶⁶ Thankfully, one of those, Osborne, did eventually trust Christ as an elderly man in his eighties.¹⁶⁷

The family was poor during this time. As Irvin describes, “At this point in his life, Rev. Bounds was as poor as when he finished his duty as a Confederate soldier.”¹⁶⁸ Yet, his confidence in God’s provision was strong. His son, Osborne, recounted to Irvin one example of his confidence in God:

Osborne who became a later symbol of wealth as well as Christian charity in Washington, told me this story. “My father lived by his faith,” he said. “Once when I was a small boy, we were traveling on a train. My father did not have enough money for the fare, and I was worried as to how we were going to travel. When the conductor came by, my father reached into his pocket and pulled out a few coins and told the conductor to take us as far as the coins would allow. The conductor looked at my father in amazement and told him that he would have to put him out in a field. My father stated that he would have to do as he must, and proceeded to enjoy his train ride. After a while, however, a total stranger came up

¹⁶²Hodge, Introduction, in *Purpose in Prayer*, 6.

¹⁶³King, *E. M. Bounds*, 125.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 133.

¹⁶⁶Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 53.

¹⁶⁷Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 17 January 2012.

¹⁶⁸Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 4.

to my father, introduced himself, and offered to pay his train fare.” I know that faith of this type is hard to express in today’s jet world but it made a distinct impression on a young mind in this day that was never forgotten.¹⁶⁹

However, Hattie’s parents are the ones who sacrificed and provided much to sustain Bounds and his family. Among his biographers, Irvin alone has a unique observation of Bounds’ poverty and the support of the family when he says,

His second wife’s parents helped to provide food and clothing for the Bounds family. Bounds had stated in his unique prophetic belief and understanding that “the ‘ravens’ would provide for him.” However, as one of the family members had coily [*sic*] gossiped, “the ‘ravens’ are Popa and Moma Barnett.”¹⁷⁰

Ministry related, this period of his life was very quiet. Without circuit obligations and without the exposure that came from his newspaper writings, the requests and invitations to preach mostly stopped as his notoriety ceased.¹⁷¹ As King describes, “One day he was one of the great speakers of faith in his denomination, and the next it was as though no one had ever heard of him.”¹⁷² However, he did preach some camp meetings, especially in the summers, at holiness camps in Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama.¹⁷³ He also preached a revival at Asbury College during this time.¹⁷⁴ In addition to those occasional opportunities, he also used the time to mentor Homer Hodge, the only person known to have sought Bounds as a spiritual mentor,¹⁷⁵ and the only person of whom there is evidence that Bounds intentionally mentored.

The lack of invitations and ministry opportunities during these years of his life did not appear to bother Bounds. When he did receive one of these few invitations to

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 6.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 5.

¹⁷¹King, *E. M. Bounds*, 123.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 53.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 57.

preach, he only accepted it after “ardent prayerful consideration” since he believed “God was calling him to a daily life of prayer.”¹⁷⁶ Such a daily life of prayer was what Bounds did during these years. His normal routine involved waking up at 4 a.m. every morning for prayer until breakfast around 7 a.m., after which he spent the day in more prayer, Scripture reading, and writing.¹⁷⁷ He often spent the afternoon doing prayer walks in Washington, Georgia, where he would pray for the people in each home he passed.¹⁷⁸ While not recorded in his biographies, King says that Bounds had a police record as people called the police when they found him standing in the street outside their house praying late into the evening, upon which the police would come and escort him back home.¹⁷⁹

Not only was Bounds’ prayer life extensive in time during these years, it was also intense. Dorsett describes it as follows:

Requiring daily intercession for the sanctification of preachers, revival of the church in North America, and the spread of holiness among professing Christians, this “work” of prayer consumed a minimum of three to four hours a day. Sometimes the venerable mystic would lie flat on his back and talk to God; but many hours were spent on his knees, or lying face down in a prone posture where he could be heard weeping for the conversion of sinners and sanctification of preachers.¹⁸⁰

Hodge describes it by saying, “Bounds talked with God, as a man talketh to his friend.”¹⁸¹

Hodge recalls a specific time in Atlanta when he and the others in their room awoke at 4 a.m. to the sound of Bounds praying: “No man could have made more melting appeals

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 54.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 50.

¹⁷⁸King, *E. M. Bounds*, 125.

¹⁷⁹King, interview by author, 21 June 2011. In addition, King has recorded this same story in a brief biographical sketch of Bounds’ life in his most recently published book that contains excerpts of Bounds’ writings (King, “Biography of Edward McKendree (E. M.) Bounds,” 10).

¹⁸⁰Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 54.

¹⁸¹Homer W. Hodge, Foreword, in *The Reality of Prayer*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924), 6.

for lost souls and back-slidden ministers than did Bounds.”¹⁸² Hodge continues by saying that Bounds was so intent on this work of prayer that morning that he “cared nothing for the protests of the other occupants of his room at being awakened at that unheard-of-hour.”¹⁸³ Irvin also reports on this intense prayer life, and notes that Bounds would pray so hard at times that he would forget to eat.¹⁸⁴

Bounds’ radical prayer life gave him the reputation in his town of being “a bit strange.”¹⁸⁵ Those close to him acknowledged that he was a mystic. One of his own daughters described him as an old pietistic mystic.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, Hodge called him a “practical mystic.”¹⁸⁷ Yet, there were those who did want to learn from his radical prayer life. Hence, during these years Bounds began “The Great While Before Day Prayer Bands,” an idea inspired by Bounds’ reading of a book by Thomas Hogben from London, and Bounds’ subsequent meeting with him.¹⁸⁸ These prayer bands were designed by Bounds to provide accountability for people to grow in their own practice of prayer.¹⁸⁹

From the intense prayer times and extensive times of Scripture study, Bounds’ writings emerge. As King describes, “At the conclusion of many hours in prayer, he would jot down a few notes on paper.”¹⁹⁰ More specifically, King notes that Bounds

¹⁸²Homer W. Hodge, Introduction, in *Heaven: A Place - A City - A Home*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921), 6.

¹⁸³Ibid.

¹⁸⁴Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 8.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 1.

¹⁸⁶King, interview by author, 21 June 2011.

¹⁸⁷Homer W. Hodge, Foreword, in *The Possibility of Prayer*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1923), 4.

¹⁸⁸King, “Biography of Edward McKendree (E. M.) Bounds,” 11.

¹⁸⁹King, *E. M. Bounds*, 146.

¹⁹⁰King, “A Biography of E. M. Bounds,” 13.

would pray for four hours then write for fifteen to twenty minutes on the subject.¹⁹¹ Similarly, one of his admirers, Claude Chilton, noted that “Prayer-books—real text-books, not forms of prayer—were the fruit of this daily spiritual exercise.”¹⁹² Bounds’ writings were simply loose manuscripts and notes at first. Hodge recounts Bounds’ desire to get them into book form:

In our mind’s eye we can see Dr. Bounds, in the early years of the twentieth century, walking the streets of his own little village, with his manuscripts tied up with a twine string, and written upon the backs of old circulars, used envelopes, looking for some one who would undertake to prepare the manuscripts for publication and asking of his friends to pray that God would raise him up a man that would bring out his writings.¹⁹³

King believes that this strong desire to get his writings into print came from Hogben, who also inspired Bounds to begin the prayer bands. King notes that Bounds met Hogben in Atlanta and expressed to him frustration at being ostracized from the Methodist church and his subsequent lack of influence, to which Hogben encouraged him to put his writings into print in order to reach the multitudes.¹⁹⁴

Hence, Bounds compiled his writings, notes, and manuscripts into two books that were published during his lifetime: *Preacher and Prayer*¹⁹⁵ and *The Resurrection*.¹⁹⁶ Yet, he did not want money from the books. In fact, he did not copyright them, instead offering the copyright free to anyone who would share the books.¹⁹⁷ When he did find

¹⁹¹King, *E. M. Bounds Speaks to the Modern Church*, 5.

¹⁹²Claude Chilton, Foreword, in *The Necessity of Prayer*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), 6.

¹⁹³Homer W. Hodge, Foreword, in *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922), 5.

¹⁹⁴King, telephone interview by author, 4 January 2013.

¹⁹⁵E. M. Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., 1907).

¹⁹⁶E. M. Bounds, *The Resurrection* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South., 1907).

¹⁹⁷Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 55.

people to print his material, he had the stipulation that each book had to cost less than one dollar¹⁹⁸ and that it had to be small enough to fit in a man's pocket or a woman's purse.¹⁹⁹ However, his books were not eagerly received at first. He initially had to pay the Methodist publishing house to print it,²⁰⁰ and even in his town of Washington, Georgia, he had trouble giving them away.²⁰¹ Irvin is correct in noting, "Not too many people in the Washington area read Dr. Bound's [*sic*] little books."²⁰²

Final Years, Death, and Legacy

In the final years of Bounds' life, his desire to get his writings both completed and printed was prominent in his thinking. Hodge recalls receiving letters from Bounds between 1911 to 1913 that included statements such as, "Pray for me that God will give me new nerves and new visions to finish the manuscripts."²⁰³ When B. F. Haynes published his own autobiography, he referenced these unprinted works of Bounds, saying,

Other books he leaves behind him unpublished. He was too poor to bring them out. He left that matter with God. We are sure God will bring out these books in His own time and by His own methods. We predict a rich heritage for spiritual believers in these unpublished books of our dear brother.²⁰⁴

While Bounds did pray and trust God as Haynes indicates, he also actively worked to get

¹⁹⁸Irvin states that his stipulation was that the book had to cost one dollar (Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 2), whereas King notes that the stipulation was that the book had to cost less than 35 cents (Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 30 July 2012). Regardless, it appears Bounds wanted to make sure his books were affordable to the general population.

¹⁹⁹Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 2.

²⁰⁰King, telephone interview by author, 30 July 2012.

²⁰¹Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 16 July 2012.

²⁰²Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 1.

²⁰³Homer W. Hodge, Introduction, in *Prayer and Praying Men*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), v.

²⁰⁴Haynes, *Tempest-Tossed on Methodist Seas*, 147.

his materials organized and printed. Hodge provides several excerpts of letters he received during Bounds' final years, letters that contained pleas to get the materials published. For example, in December of 1912, Bounds wrote to Hodge, saying,

I am turning to you and Chilton. One of you must help me to do the work on my manuscripts that I want finished and published. I could go to you and then you could help me in odd times by prayer and consultation. We would then be together as long as God lets me live for His great work. We can issue the books conjointly and you can keep them if necessary until I die—until God's fitting time to publish.²⁰⁵

Similarly, Hodge received the following letter in April of 1913:

God will manage our affairs if we will be filled with His affairs. I am trying to get matters in shape for my manuscripts. I am very feeble. I want to live for God, and then depart and be with Christ. I have an unspeakable desire to know the future, to see it and enjoy it, and to be there—to see and enjoy. God bless you.²⁰⁶

While Haynes was correct in noting that Bounds trusted God to have his writings published, one should realize that Bounds also actively pled with those closest to him to help him with the task.

By 1912, Bounds was weak and frail. Hodge recalls hearing Bounds preach in in Brooklyn that year: "His voice was feeble and his periods were not rounded out. His sermon was only twenty minutes long, when he quietly came to the end and seemed exhausted."²⁰⁷ In July of that year, Bounds preached his final sermon as he dedicated a new church.²⁰⁸

During 1913, his health continued to decline. His wife wrote to Hodge on August 9 of that year saying, "He was glad to hear from you but soon forgets. My physician says he will never be well again. His last message to you is characteristic: 'Tell him he is on the right line; press it. Have a high standard and hold to it.'"²⁰⁹ Yet, it

²⁰⁵Hodge, Introduction, in *Heaven*, 8.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰⁷Hodge, Introduction, in *Prayer and Praying Men*, vii.

²⁰⁸King, *E. M. Bounds*, 144.

²⁰⁹Hodge, Introduction, in *Heaven*, 10.

appears that even in his weakness he still worked on his manuscripts. Hodge recounts, “He was busily engaged in writing on his manuscripts when the Lord said unto him, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant.’”²¹⁰ On August 24, 1913, with Hattie sitting by his side, Bounds died, just nine days after his seventy-eighth birthday.²¹¹ Hattie sent Hodge the following telegram: “Doctor Bounds went home this afternoon; funeral here tomorrow afternoon. —Hattie Bounds.”²¹² She felt such grief from his death that she died less than four months later.²¹³

Most of what we know about Bounds today is due to the influence of Hodge. Dorsett concludes, “Homer W. Hodge did more than any human to keep the evangelist’s legacy alive.”²¹⁴ Similarly, Chilton concludes,

There is no man on earth to-day except the present editor [Hodge] who would have accepted this mass of matter and devoted the time to give it to the world—a world that will not begin to realize the magnitude and expanse of the work until editor, compiler and reviewers have been in eternity many ages.²¹⁵

What Hodge did was, in fact, very tedious work. As King describes, “Even after his death, a dear friend, Dr. H. W. Hodge, worked diligently with the little pieces of paper, paragraphs, and articles and continued to assemble volumes that have become a library on prayer and spiritual matters.”²¹⁶ The immensity of that work of compiling all of the loose fragments and manuscripts is also evident in a comment Hodge made in the foreword to the second of nine books he compiled, edited, and published for Bounds:

²¹⁰Hodge, Introduction, in *Prayer and Praying Men*, v.

²¹¹Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds*, 61.

²¹²*Ibid.*

²¹³*Ibid.*

²¹⁴*Ibid.*, 63.

²¹⁵Hodge, Foreword, in *Satan*, 5.

²¹⁶King, “A Biography of E. M. Bounds,” 14.

His prayer that his manuscripts be left until proper time for publishing has been answered. We have been working and compiling them for the space of six years, off and on, and have good reasons to believe that the Publishers will in due season issue them for the benefit of a world that sorely needs the golden thoughts of such a saint of God as was Edward M. Bounds.²¹⁷

With that recognition, the issue of editing arises as well as the question of how one can know with confidence that what is read is in fact Bounds, and not Hodge. However, it should be noted here that Hodge did edit the works in the years after Bounds' death. As already noted in a quote from Chilton, he references Hodge as the editor,²¹⁸ a title that Hodge applies to himself in the last of the five books he published, beginning with *The Possibilities of Prayer* in 1923.²¹⁹ As well, Hodge notes he owes "many obligations" to Chilton for "suggestions in editing the Bounds Spiritual Life Books."²²⁰ Furthermore, Hodge admits,

It is barely possible that I have escaped making many errors involving so many examinations and rewriting of so many pages in his published and unpublished works, but I still hope that many souls will be edified and made holier and more devout by the reading and that God will receive additional glory when Bounds' complete works have been given to a needy world.²²¹

Furthermore, Irvin notes that "some of the Bounds family feel that they can tell the difference between the books that Bounds wrote, those that Bounds left unfinished and Hodge edited and those that Hodge wrote from Bounds' notes."²²² Yet, King concludes that Hodge's editing resulted in only changing phrases, not ideas,²²³ something with

²¹⁷Hodge, Introduction, in *Heaven*, 10.

²¹⁸Hodge, Foreword, in *Satan*, 5.

²¹⁹Edward M. Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1923).

²²⁰Homer W. Hodge, Foreword, in *The Necessity of Prayer*, by Edward M. Bounds (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), 6.

²²¹Hodge, Foreword, in *Satan*, 7.

²²²Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 15.

²²³King, telephone interview by author, 17 January 2012.

which I agree. In addition, there is a strong possibility that the perspective of Bounds' family is biased by a tension that arose between them and Hodge after Bounds' death. King says that animosity came from Hodge keeping for himself all of the royalties from the sales of Bounds' books.²²⁴ King said that Osborne specifically wrote of that hostility in a letter years later.²²⁵ However, as will become evident in the next chapter, there is remarkable consistency between what Bounds is known to have written in his editorials and first two books, and what is later published by Hodge. Such provides confidence that even the books published by Hodge accurately reflect Bounds' thoughts and intent.

Regardless, without Hodge's influence and work, those writings likely would never have been known. Hodge edited and published *Purpose in Prayer* in 1920,²²⁶ *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home* in 1921,²²⁷ *Prayer and Praying Men* also in 1921,²²⁸ *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow* in 1922,²²⁹ *The Possibilities of Prayer* in 1923,²³⁰ *The Reality of Prayer* in 1924,²³¹ *The Essentials of Prayer* in 1925,²³² *The Necessity of Prayer* in 1929,²³³ and finally *The Weapon of Prayer: A Study in Christian*

²²⁴King, interview by author, 21 June 2011.

²²⁵King, telephone interview by author, 17 January 2012.

²²⁶E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920).

²²⁷Edward M. Bounds, *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921),

²²⁸Edward M. Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921).

²²⁹Edward M. Bounds, *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922).

²³⁰Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*.

²³¹Edward M. Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924).

²³²Edward M. Bounds, *The Essentials of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925).

²³³Edward M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929).

Warfare in 1931.²³⁴ Those books have been published repeatedly by different publishers and even under different titles in the decades that have passed since Hodge made them available. An appendix at the end of this project provides a summary of all of Bounds' books and the various titles under which they have appeared. In light of the scope of the material that Hodge made available, Irvin provides a helpful conclusion when he writes,

I feel that Hodge has done an excellent job to maintain the style and character of the *Old Prayer Warrior* [*sic*]. It was not an easy job to produce some ten books²³⁵ either written or edited. It took a great amount of dedication and tough discipleship to complete the task. Therefore, all who appreciate Bounds must be grateful to Hodge for his dedication, for without him, we would have never known the fail [*sic*] little prophet with his undying dedication to his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Bounds has taught us to pray, but Hodge has recorded many great teachings for us to remember.²³⁶

Were it not for Hodge putting all of Bounds' notes into a format easy to read in each book, it is unlikely that Bounds would have the legacy he has today.

²³⁴Edward M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer: A Study in Christian Warfare*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931).

²³⁵As already noted here and as listed in the appendix, Hodge published nine of Bounds' books after Bounds died, not ten as Irvin records here. Irvin's self-published biography of Bounds contains this error as well as numerous spelling errors as already seen in his quotes. Yet, it remains a helpful source for information on Bounds' life that is not available in other works.

²³⁶Irvin, *The Prayer Warrior*, 15.

CHAPTER 3

AN EXAMINATION OF BOUNDS' WRITINGS

E. M. Bounds never systematized his writings, whether newspaper editorials or manuscripts, into groupings by theme or topic. His first writings to appear publicly were editorials in newspapers. Specifically, during the approximately four years he served as the Assistant Editor of the *Christian Advocate*, the national newspaper for the Methodist Episcopal Church South denomination, he wrote about a wide range of topics including ambition, church singing, leadership, patriotism, and discipline, yet the major themes that appeared repeatedly were preaching, revival, and prayer. Despite such a wide range of topics covered, there does not appear to be an intentional order to what he wrote each week, and rarely did an article directly connect with the previous week's article.

After leaving the *Christian Advocate* and adopting more of a mystical, reclusive lifestyle, Bounds spent hours each day writing manuscripts, only two of which he published during his lifetime. Readers today are indebted to Homer Hodge for the laborious work of compiling his loose manuscripts into the nine other books which we now know as Bounds' classics. Apart from the two books about heaven and Satan, these later books focus almost exclusively on the topic of the practice of prayer in a believer's life.

With only two manuscripts published as books during his life, with nine of his eleven eventual books demonstrating great similarities in their treatment of the practice of prayer, and with providing diverse topics week to week at the newspaper, one can conclude that Bounds did not view himself as a systematic theologian, nor did he seek to systematize his writings on theological topics other than those of prayer, heaven, the

resurrection, and spiritual warfare. Thus, to ascertain what Bounds believed about a specific topic, one must return to all of Bounds' published writings to search them for insights. With none of his books or articles written specifically about providence or sovereignty, and with only infrequent references to those concepts in the scope of all of his writings, one must look in depth at each book and editorial for glimpses of his theological understanding of God's providence, and how that understanding of providence relates to his favorite topic of petitionary prayer.

Bounds' Books

Since Bounds' eleven books provide the greatest source of materials, those books will be discussed first in the order in which they were published. At the outset, two comments should be made about such ordering. First, the discussion of such an order is not meant to suggest that Bounds actually wrote the books in that order. With only two of the books published in Bounds' lifetime, there is no way to see if there is progression in his thought over time as Hodge did not give any indication as to how he compiled Bounds' manuscripts. Second, as noted in the introduction, due to editing by the publishers of later editions, all references to these books will be to the first printings from the original publishers of each.

Preacher and Prayer (1907)

Bounds' first book, *Preacher and Prayer*, was published during his lifetime in 1907.¹ With several publishers printing this book while he was alive, it provides great certainty to readers today who seek to understand Bounds' theology in a work that is in its original format and known to not have been edited by others. Thus, the insights into Bounds' view of the relationship between providence and man's will in prayer that

¹E. M. Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., 1907).

appear here will be foundational to this research. Several important themes regarding that relationship appear in this first book.

God needs men of prayer. The first insight into Bounds' theology of providence and prayer is his underlying belief that God needs men.² *Preacher and Prayer* begins and ends with such an assertion. On the very first page, Bounds says in what has become one of his more popularly quoted statements, "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."³ Repeating the same idea at the end, Bounds states on the next to last page of the book, "God can work wonders if he can get a suitable man."⁴ Between these "bookend" statements, the idea that God needs men repeats itself. For example, Bounds states,

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

²As already noted in chap. 1, since Bounds uses the gender specific notation for people in the words "men" and "man," those terms will be utilized here for the sake of clarity in representing his views. However, it should be noted that Bounds often had in mind male preachers as the audience, particularly in this first book. For clarification, in *Purpose and Prayer* Bounds states, "Praying women and children are invaluable to God, but if their praying is not supplemented by praying men, there will be a great loss in the power of prayer—a great breach and depreciation in the value of prayer, great paralysis in the energy of the Gospel" (E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* [New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920], 78).

³Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 5. I have found more than a hundred books on a wide variety of topics that cite this particular quote. These books include biographies, commentaries, preaching guides, Christian living books, and church growth books. Some specific examples include Neil Anderson and Elmer Towns, *Rivers of Revival* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 102; Bill Bright, *Teacher's Manual for the Ten Basic Steps Toward Christian Maturity* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1982), 199; Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 96; Thomas Hale, *On Being a Missionary* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995), 159; Tony Merida, *Faithful Preaching* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 136; Ben Patterson, *Deepening Your Conversation with God* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 2001), 29; Steve Sonderman, *How to Build a Life-Changing Men's Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 2010), 70; Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), xi; and Warren W. Wiersbe, *History, The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2003), 106.

⁴Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 127.

methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer.⁵

In addition to stating that it is men God needs through whom He can move, Bounds clarifies that such men are not men of great talent, learning, or preaching ability, but rather men who are great in faith, love, and fidelity.⁶ Basically, he believes God is looking for men who will love Him and be faithful to Him as seen in their prayers.

Specifically, Bounds believes God needs men so that His Gospel can advance. He believes that the very success of the Gospel is committed to the men whom God needs, namely men of prayer. Bounds directly states that “the character as well as the fortunes of the gospel is committed to the preacher” as “he makes or mars the message from God to man.”⁷ Bounds believes that idea because he also believes that the gospel of Christ “has no self-propagating power,” but rather “moves as the men who have charge of it move.”⁸ It appears that in this context, Bounds is primarily thinking of preachers. Consequently, he speaks of the necessity of unction, which he believes is “simply putting God in his own word and on his own preacher,”⁹ which “makes the word of God ‘quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.’”¹⁰ Such unction is said to come only in the closet as a result of “many an hour of tearful, wrestling prayer.”¹¹ Bounds believes such unction is necessary to God because “unction in the preacher puts God in

⁵Ibid., 7.

⁶Ibid., 11.

⁷Ibid., 7.

⁸Ibid., 10.

⁹Ibid., 90.

¹⁰Ibid., 89.

¹¹Ibid., 93.

the gospel.”¹² Bounds asserts that without such unction, “God is absent.”¹³ Yet, he states such unction is a conditional gift that only comes from asking for it in prayer.¹⁴

Prayers move God to do what He otherwise would not do. A second, and related, insight into Bounds’ theology is found in his belief that the prayers of men move God to act in ways He would not act without that prayer. For example, Bounds writes, “The preacher must, by prayer, put God in the sermon. The preacher must, by prayer, move God toward the people before he can move the people to God by his words.”¹⁵ In the next chapter he repeats the same idea that prayer “indeed puts God into the work,” and elaborates that “God does not come into the preacher’s work as a matter of course or on general principles, but he comes by prayer and special urgency.”¹⁶ Bounds further explains with a strong assertion that “the apostles’ commission to preach was a blank till filled up by the Pentecost which praying brought.”¹⁷ This statement becomes the first of several statements found in later books where Bounds indicates a belief that the timing of the coming of the Holy Spirit and of Pentecost is a result of the prayers of God’s people. He goes on to state that the New Testament preachers “put God in full force into their Churches by their praying.”¹⁸ Such assertions come from his conviction that God “yields to the persistency of a faith that knows him.”¹⁹

¹²Ibid., 97.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., 100.

¹⁵Ibid., 33.

¹⁶Ibid., 39.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 102.

¹⁹Ibid., 44.

A lack of prayer hinders God's purposes. A third, and closely related, principle is that since prayer moves God to act in ways He otherwise would not act, then a lack of prayer means that God's will on earth will not be fulfilled. Bounds quotes Wesley in saying, "God does nothing but in answer to prayer."²⁰ Thus, in regard to preaching, preaching that is not rooted in fervent prayer not only is ineffective, but also has results contrary to God's desire, including filling hell and leading to a lack of sanctification in believers. Bounds writes about such prayerless preaching,

The preacher and the preaching have helped sin, not holiness; peopled hell, not heaven. Preaching which kills is prayerless preaching. Without prayer the preacher created death, and not life. The preacher who is feeble in prayer is feeble in life-giving forces. The preacher who has retired prayer as a conspicuous and largely prevailing element in his own character has shorn his preaching of its distinctive life-giving power.²¹

Bounds later writes that such prayerless preaching, even if in masterful sermons, only has short-lived effects and cannot be spiritually victorious.²²

Bounds expounds that idea even further, concluding that a lack of prayer in general, not just related to the sermon, actually stops God's kingdom advance. Bounds writes,

No amount of money, genius, or culture can move things for God. Holiness energizing the soul, the whole man aflame with love, with desire for more faith, more prayer, more zeal, more consecration—this is the secret of power. These we need and must have, and men must be the incarnation of this God-inflamed devotedness. God's advance has been stayed, his cause crippled, his name dishonored for their lack.²³

Bounds repeats this idea several times in the later chapters of the book. For example, he writes,

²⁰Ibid., 101.

²¹Ibid., 23.

²²Ibid., 35.

²³Ibid., 61.

The prayers of apostolic, saintly leaders do much in making saints of those who are not apostles. If the Church leaders in after years had been as particular and fervent in praying for their people as the apostles were, the sad, dark times of worldliness and apostasy had not marred the history and eclipsed the glory and arrested the advance of the Church.²⁴

Bounds believes such an advance of the church is slow because “the gospel moves with slow and timid pace when the saints are not at their prayers early and late and long.”²⁵

As already noted, Bounds suggests that the coming of the Spirit and the timing of Pentecost was a direct result of the prayers of the saints. Bounds now takes that idea a step further and concludes that the timing of the second coming of Christ directly relates to prayer, and, in particular, is delayed because of a lack of prayer. He writes,

Ages of millennial glory have been lost by a prayerless Church. The coming of our Lord has been postponed indefinitely by a prayerless Church. Hell has enlarged herself and filled her dire caves in the presence of the dead service of a prayerless Church.²⁶

The relationship between providence and prayer. An outstanding summary of Bounds’ view of how man’s will in prayer impacts God’s providence is found in two examples of praying men that he cites in *Preacher and Prayer*. First, looking to a Biblical example, Bounds upholds Paul as illustrative of these principles. He writes,

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 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 show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him,” 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 on the work of God as would be the striking of the sun from his sphere. Darkness, confusion, and death would ensue.²⁷

Within this one quote Bounds states his belief that God is dependent on men and has

²⁴Ibid., 103.

²⁵Ibid., 124.

²⁶Ibid., 107.

²⁷Ibid., 6.

chosen to stake the efficacy of the Gospel on them. One can also see in this example his belief that a lack of such praying men leads to hindering the work of God, which, in turn, leads to darkness, confusion, and death.

Second, Bounds looks to modern church history for another example, and finds it in David Brainerd. In describing Brainerd, the same themes emerge:

With the Word of God in his heart and in his hand, his soul fired with the divine flame, a place and time to pour out his soul to God in prayer, he fully established the worship of God and secured all its gracious results. The Indians were changed with a great change from the lowest besotments of an ignorant and debased heathenism to pure, devout, intelligent Christians; all vice reformed, the external duties of Christianity at once embraced and acted on; family prayer set up; the Sabbath instituted and religiously observed; the internal graces of religion exhibited with growing sweetness and strength. The solution of these results is found in David Brainerd himself, not in the conditions or accidents but in the man Brainerd. He was God's man, for God first and last and all the time. God could flow unhindered through him. The omnipotence of grace was neither arrested nor straightened by the conditions of his heart; the whole channel was broadened and cleaned out for God's fullest and most powerful passage, so that God with all his mighty forces could come down on the hopeless, savage wilderness, and transform it into his blooming and fruitful garden; for nothing is too hard for God to do if he can get the right kind of man to do it with.²⁸

Perhaps no statement in this book better summarizes Bounds' view of the relationship between providence and prayer as the last one of that paragraph, namely that nothing is too hard for God if He can find a man who will surrender himself in prayer. Consistently in *Preacher and Prayer* Bounds presents a view of God's providence as being limited in such a way that God needs men, commits the success of the Gospel to them, only acts if they pray, and, hence, will not see His will accomplished if they do not pray. Such themes that appear in this first book will repeatedly appear in the books that follow.

***The Resurrection* (1907)**

Bounds' second book, *The Resurrection*, is the only other book published during his lifetime.²⁹ In addition, it is one of his three books that does not focus primarily

²⁸Ibid., 67.

²⁹E. M. Bounds, *The Resurrection* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South,

on the topic of prayer. Rather, it is a response to those who deny the bodily resurrection of Christ. It serves as a defense of orthodox beliefs and relies heavily on extended Scripture citations about the resurrection. Unlike the previous book, this book does not have any direct references to Bounds' views on the issue of the relation of providence and prayer. However, it does provide a few additional insights into his view of God's providence.

First, in descriptions beyond what is found in his other books, Bounds describes God as being all powerful and ruling with providential care. In addressing skeptics who question the possibility of resurrection, Bounds asks two rhetorical questions. First, he asks, "Has God promised to raise the body from the dead? Is he able to perform his promise in this respect?"³⁰ Second, he asks, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? Is anything too hard for God?"³¹ Later he explains the resurrection as an event that is "not inconceivable by referring to God's omnipotence, as shown in his daily providence."³² Though skeptics see the resurrection as an impossibility, Bounds holds to the view that an all-powerful God can make anything happen.

Second, Bounds mentions plans of God which cannot be thwarted, specifically the resurrection of the dead. Such an idea that God wills something that cannot be thwarted is unique in his writings to this one book. Bounds writes,

The resurrection is one of God's unconditional facts; it will take place all the same though never a man, woman, or child believe in it. In regard to this alarming and comforting fact, our unbelief, neglect, cannot make the truth of God a lie. It is

1907).

³⁰Ibid., 14.

³¹Ibid., 16.

³²Ibid., 94.

inevitable and irresistible. God, who cannot lie, has promised, and Jesus has sealed the promise by his resurrection.³³

Similarly, in addressing the question of how the reuniting of scattered particles at the resurrection is possible and how such particles do not combine in the present age, he answers by saying, “It supposes that the constant care of Providence is exerted to maintain the incorruptibility of those individual germs, or stamina, to prevent their assimilation with each other.”³⁴ He goes on to state that such is possible because God has “infinite power and wisdom”³⁵ and because no operation of nature can frustrate the final plan of God.³⁶

Yet, alongside these assertions of God’s power and plans, Bounds holds up faith as the necessary response from man. He states,

Faith holds to God, faith holds to God’s Son, faith holds to God’s Word. Faith, almighty faith, sees God, sees the Son of God, sees his word, laughs at mysteries and impossibilities, and cries: “It shall be done!”³⁷

Such “almighty faith” is held up as exemplary in the life of John Wesley. Bounds concludes that if Wesley had not held on to the belief in the resurrection with such strong faith, then “he would neither have been God’s apostle nor the founder of Methodism.”³⁸

While the references to providence and man’s will are infrequent here, the emphasis on God’s power and providential care provides a glimpse into a belief that does not appear strongly in his other writings. Yet, in the midst of these unique assertions,

³³Ibid., 70.

³⁴Ibid., 102.

³⁵Ibid., 103.

³⁶Ibid., 104.

³⁷Ibid., 145.

³⁸Ibid., 137.

Bounds is consistent in speaking of how “faith had wrought its wondrous work,”³⁹ a faith that other books will describe as being manifest in prayer that can change God’s mind.

Purpose in Prayer (1920)

The third of Bounds’ books, *Purpose in Prayer*,⁴⁰ begins the series of books edited and published by Homer Hodge after Bounds’ death in 1913. It provides greater insight into the understanding of Bounds’ view on the relationship between providence and man’s will in prayer than was seen in his first book, *Preacher and Prayer*. With a greater number of comments on the issue, greater length of explanations, and now with scriptural support provided in this book, Bounds’ theological beliefs on the issue begin to become more clear.

God needs men of prayer. First, *Purpose in Prayer* repeatedly emphasizes the idea that God needs men who pray. Bounds believes that prayer is the only means God has ordained by which He will work in the world. In the opening pages, Bounds asserts, “God shapes the world by prayer.”⁴¹ He goes on to describe prayer as “the great spiritual force,”⁴² and the means by which the cause of God is kept alive.⁴³ Prayer has such an impact because he believes it “puts God in full force into God’s work”⁴⁴ and does so with “commanding force.”⁴⁵ Bounds believes the prayers of saints are given that type of authority since they are part of the plan of God. Furthermore, he describes prayer as

³⁹Ibid. 24.

⁴⁰Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*.

⁴¹Ibid., 9.

⁴²Ibid., 47.

⁴³Ibid., 12.

⁴⁴Ibid., 30.

⁴⁵Ibid., 100.

“the one prime, eternal condition by which the Father is pledged to put the Son in possession of the world,” and goes on to say that “Christ prays through His people.”⁴⁶

Thus, he can conclude,

The prayers of God’s saints are the capital stock in heaven by which Christ carries on His great work upon earth. The great throes and mighty convulsions on earth are the results of these prayers. Earth is changed, revolutionised, angels move on more powerful, more rapid wings, and God’s policy is shaped as the prayers are more numerous, more efficient.⁴⁷

Bounds does not think that prayer is *a* way that God operates in the world, rather he sees it as *the* only way in which God will move. He says that prayer is the “settled and only condition to move His Son’s Kingdom.”⁴⁸ Thus, it is incumbent upon the people of God to command the power of God by the power of prayer.⁴⁹

Bounds believes that God’s will is dependent upon the prayers of His people for its success. If God’s people pray, His will is accomplished and His Kingdom advances. Bounds directly states that “God conditions the very life and prosperity of His cause on prayer,” and reminds his readers,

It is true that the mightiest successes that come to God’s cause are created and carried on by prayer God’s conquering days are when the saints have given themselves to mightiest prayer. When God’s house on earth is a house of prayer, then God’s house in heaven is busy and all potent in its plans and movements, then His earthly armies are clothed with the triumphs and spoils of victory and His enemies defeated on every hand.⁵⁰

Bounds uses the same idea in describing the Gospel when he says, “The Gospel cannot live, fight, conquer without prayer—prayer unceasing, instant and ardent.”⁵¹ He also

⁴⁶Ibid., 29.

⁴⁷Ibid., 10.

⁴⁸Ibid., 12.

⁴⁹Ibid., 80.

⁵⁰Ibid., 10.

⁵¹Ibid., 82.

repeats this idea in describing the call of Christian laborers. He states that the number of Christian workers directly relates to prayer: “The mightiness of these men of prayer increases, by the divinely arranged process, the number and success of the consecrated labours.”⁵² Bounds provides a helpful summary of this understanding of God’s need for men of prayer to accomplish His will when he writes, “God alone can save the world, but God cannot save the world alone. God and man unite for the task, the response of the Divine being invariably in proportion to the desire and the effort of the human.”⁵³

It should be noted that Bounds makes one reference here as to a reason why he believes God has ordained such a plan. He writes, “Praying men keep God in the Church in full force; keep His hand on the helm, and train the Church in its lessons of strength and trust.”⁵⁴ That statement is the first indication in his works of the idea that God ordains prayer not only to accomplish His purposes, but also for the purpose of training the church. As will be discussed in the next chapter, such an idea is termed the church dominion model for understanding providence and prayer.⁵⁵

A lack of persistent prayer hinders God’s purposes. Since God’s will for His Kingdom, the Gospel, and the calling of Christian laborers all require prayer, then the natural corollary is that a lack of prayer hinders God’s purposes. Bounds teaches this corollary when he states,

When we calmly reflect upon the fact that the progress of our Lord’s Kingdom is dependent upon prayer, it is sad to think that we give so little time to the holy exercise. Everything depends upon prayer, and we neglect it not only to our own spiritual hurt but also to the delay and injury of our Lord’s cause upon earth. The forces of good and evil are contending for the world. If we would, we could add to

⁵²Ibid., 81.

⁵³Ibid., 148.

⁵⁴Ibid., 81.

⁵⁵See Terrance Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* (Downers Grove: IL, InterVarsity Press, 2000), 119.

the conquering power of the army of righteousness, and yet our lips are sealed, our hands hang listlessly by our side, and we jeopardise the very cause in which we profess to be deeply interested by holding back from the prayer chamber.⁵⁶

Bounds sees such a jeopardizing of God's cause especially in the area of sin and worldliness. He states, "Sin reigns, Satan reigns, sighing marks the lives of many; all tears are fresh and full. Why is all this so? We have not prayed to bring the evil to an end; we have not prayed as we must pray."⁵⁷ Bounds goes on to state that a failure to pray also impacts the church as it "loses its Divine characteristics, its Divine power."⁵⁸

Bounds states that such failures are not just the result of a lack of prayer, but can also be the result of a lack of repetitive prayer. He teaches that persistent, repetitive prayer is necessary for success. For example, he writes, "Christ puts importunity as a distinguishing characteristic of true praying. We must not only pray, but we must pray with great urgency, with intentness and with repetition. We must not only pray, but we must pray again and again."⁵⁹ Bounds goes on to say that "God loves the importunate pleader, and sends him answers that would never have been granted but for the persistency that refuses to let go until the petition craved for is granted."⁶⁰ In an example for support, he indicates that perhaps God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because Abraham did not ask enough: "If, as already indicated, he had not ceased in his asking, perhaps God would not have ceased in His giving. 'Abraham left off asking before God left off granting.'"⁶¹

⁵⁶Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 29.

⁵⁷Ibid., 24.

⁵⁸Ibid., 103.

⁵⁹Ibid., 55.

⁶⁰Ibid., 63.

⁶¹Ibid., 61.

Prayer changes the purposes of God as God cannot deny what is asked.

Another theme found in *Purpose and Prayer* is that prayer changes the very purposes of God. Bounds writes, “The possibilities and necessity of prayer, its power and results are manifested in arresting and changing the purposes of God and in relieving the stroke of His power.”⁶² He believes that such is possible because God’s power to do anything is matched by His willingness to answer the prayers lifted up in faith.⁶³ Thus, Bounds can conclude that “prayer in Jesus’ name puts the crowning crown on God, because it glorifies Him through the Son and pledges the Son to give to men ‘whatsoever and anything’ they shall ask.”⁶⁴

Bounds believes that anything one asks for in prayer will be granted. Later he writes, “How wide and comprehensive is that ‘whatsoever.’ There is no limit to the power of that name. ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask.’ That is the Divine declaration.”⁶⁵ Yet, consistent with what already has been said, he acknowledges that to receive the answer one must ask repeatedly, as seen when he writes,

He then urges to importunity, and that every unanswered prayer, instead of abating our pressure should only increase intensity and energy. If asking does not get, let asking pass into the settled attitude and spirit of seeking. If seeking does not secure the answer, let seeking pass on to the more energetic and clamorous plea of knocking. We must persevere till we get it.⁶⁶

Such asking with boldness to change God’s purposes is something Bounds believes God has given man to do. He writes, “To man is given to command God with all this authority and power in the demands of God’s earthly Kingdom.”⁶⁷

⁶²Ibid., 15.

⁶³Ibid., 17.

⁶⁴Ibid., 31.

⁶⁵Ibid., 160.

⁶⁶Ibid., 159.

⁶⁷Ibid., 24.

Bounds provides several examples of God's purposes changing in regard to the bold commands from His people. He cites healing Abimelech in response to Abraham's prayers, delivering Jonah in response to his prayer, lifting the curse on Pharaoh in response to Moses' prayers, turning from his anger against the people of Israel after the golden calf in response to Moses' prayer, turning from his plan to destroy Nineveh after they repent, and adding fifteen years of life to Hezekiah in response to his prayers.⁶⁸ Since Bounds teaches that believers have the right and power to change God's purposes through their repeated prayers, he can conclude that they are responsible for their surrounding conditions. He teaches that point in a great summary of this entire concept when he writes,

The lesson of it all is this, that as workers together with God we must regard ourselves as in not a little measure responsible for the conditions which prevail around us to-day. Are we concerned about the coldness of the Church? Do we grieve over the lack of conversions? Does our soul go out to God in midnight cries for the outpouring of His Spirit? If not, part of the blames lies at our door. If we do our part, God will do His. Around us is a world lost in sin, above us is a God willing and able to save; it is ours to build the bridge that links heaven and earth, and prayer is the mighty instrument that does the work. And so the old cry comes to us with insistent voice "Pray, brethren, pray."⁶⁹

Scriptural support. More so than in his other books, Bounds provides some scriptural backing for his ideas as well as brief elaborations on those texts. Such comments from Bounds are extremely helpful in understanding why he believed as he did. First, he repeatedly references Psalm 2 as the basis for the authority of believers to pray so that God's will is accomplished. Psalm 2:7-8 states, "I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession."⁷⁰ Bounds

⁶⁸Ibid., 15-17.

⁶⁹Ibid., 155.

⁷⁰Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references will be from the English Standard Version.

focuses on the phrase “ask of me.” He says, “*Ask of Me* is the condition—a praying people willing and obedient. ‘And men shall pray for Him continually.’”⁷¹ He later elaborates on this phrase by saying, “*Ask of Me* is the one condition God puts in the very advance and triumph of His cause.”⁷² Further explanation of his understanding of this text is found when he writes,

In the invitation is conveyed the assurance of answer; the shout of victory is there and may be heard by the listening ear. The Father holds the authority and power in His hands. How easy is the condition, and yet how long are we in fulfilling the conditions!⁷³

In his one recognition that this text refers to Christ asking of the Father, Bounds turns the focus to believers by saying, “If the Royal and Divine Son of God cannot be exempted from the rule of asking that He may have, you and I cannot expect the rule to be relaxed in our favour.”⁷⁴

The other text that Bounds cites most frequently in *Purpose and Prayer* is Isaiah 45:11 which says, “Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: ‘Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?’” Bounds focuses on the phrase as rendered in the King James Version, “Command ye me.” He uses it to conclude that “to man is given to command God.”⁷⁵

In addition to these primary references, Bounds looks to Luke 18 and Mark 7 for the basis of repetition in prayers. He uses the story of the woman who gets the judge to listen to her because of her persistence, as well as the account of the Syrophenician

⁷¹Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 11.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., 25.

⁷⁴Ibid., 62.

⁷⁵Ibid., 24.

woman who begs Jesus to cast out the demon from her daughter, to conclude, “Jesus Christ surrenders Himself to the importunity of a great faith.”⁷⁶ He also uses Matthew 7:7 and John 14:14 to teach that if believers continue in importunate prayer, then they will certainly receive that for which they ask since “how wide and comprehensive is that ‘whatsoever.’ There is no limit to the power of that name. ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask.’ That is the Divine declaration, and it opens up to every praying child a vista of infinite resource and possibility.”⁷⁷ Furthermore, he uses the healing of King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20 to illustrate his idea that God will always grant the requests of His people.⁷⁸ Bounds repeatedly uses these Scripture passages in other books as well. Chapter 5 will provide a thorough evaluation of his interpretation and application of these texts.

Inconsistencies. It is worth noting that two statements that appear in this book are inconsistent with these themes already discussed. As already discussed, Bounds states that believers have the right to ask God to change His plans, and that God does so. However, two references in chapter eleven appear inconsistent. First, in response to the story of a woman who prayed many times for her husband’s salvation, he quotes S. D. Gordon to say, “Now, you can see at once that there was no change in the purpose of God through that prayer. The prayer worked out His purpose; it did not change it. But the woman’s surrender gave the opportunity of working out the will that God wants to work out.”⁷⁹ Second, just a few pages later Bounds quotes a poem describing a storm at sea, and uses it to make the point, “That is how we feel when through the gateway of prayer we find our way into the Father’s presence. We see His face, and we know that all is

⁷⁶Ibid., 57.

⁷⁷Ibid., 160.

⁷⁸Ibid., 17.

⁷⁹Ibid., 139.

well, since His hand is on the helm of events, and ‘even the winds and the waves obey Him.’”⁸⁰ These two isolated comments do not appear congruent with the teachings of the remainder of the book. One can only speculate if these are Bounds’ own inconsistencies or later editorial additions from Hodge.

In spite of those two isolated statements, *Purpose and Prayer* continues the themes found in Bounds’ first book. He continues to emphasize that God has established an order so that the success of His work is conditioned upon the repetitive prayers of His people. When His people do not pray, His work ceases and His will is thwarted. Yet, God gives those same people the authority to change His very purposes. Perhaps the best summary of the relation between providence and prayer as seen in this book appears in chapter nine when he writes,

The possibilities of prayer run parallel with the promises of God. Prayer opens an outlet for the promises, removes the hindrances in the way of their execution, puts them into working order, and secures their gracious ends. More than this, prayer like faith, obtains promises, enlarges their operation, and adds to the measure of their results.

The possibilities of prayer are found in its allying itself with the purposes of God, for God’s purposes and man’s praying are the combination of all potent and omnipotent forces. More than this, the possibilities of prayer are seen in the fact that it changes the purposes of God. It is in the very nature of prayer to plead and give directions. Prayer is not a negation. It is a positive force. It never rebels against the will of God, never comes into conflict with that will, but that it does seek to change God’s purpose is evident.⁸¹

Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home (1921)

The fourth of Bounds’ books is one of the three that does not deal specifically with the topic of prayer.⁸² Having much in common in style, structure, and focus with *The Resurrection*, this book provides the least number of insights into Bounds’ view of

⁸⁰Ibid., 142.

⁸¹Ibid., 97.

⁸²Edward M. Bounds, *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921).

providence and its relationship to prayer. In fact, prayer is mentioned only occasionally in this book, and there is a remarkable silence on the topic that most fills Bounds' writings. Yet, there are several statements that provide additional insights into Bounds' view on the topic of providence and prayer.

Unique to *Heaven* and *The Resurrection* are statements indicating that God has plans, which in His providence cannot be thwarted. For example, Bounds describes Heaven's existence in terms of God's plans and power. He says, "The God who laid the deep foundations of the world, and brought into being and order its mightily framed and mighty movements, condescends to enter again into the work of creation, and builds a city as the superb home for His elect ones of earth."⁸³ Bounds uses similar descriptions of an all-powerful God accomplishing his plans when he describes God's desire to have a people in Heaven. He states, "That Jesus wants us with Him is not a mere sentiment, to adorn or sweeten, but it is a declared, operative, and eternal decree, 'Father *I will*.'"⁸⁴ Bounds even takes it a step further in saying that God is the one who puts "the fact of heaven, the taste of heaven and the ambition and toil for heaven, freshly, strongly and constantly in our hearts."⁸⁵ Later, Bounds conveys the same idea with the language that God "implants in us these heavenly desires."⁸⁶ Unlike his other writings, there is no mention of the conditions of prayer or faith being present for God to do these things. Rather, it appears he sees it as God's sovereign work, though that terminology is not used. For example, Bounds says, "God has committed Himself in the strongest way to give knowledge and assurance of heaven to every child of God."⁸⁷

⁸³Ibid., 37.

⁸⁴Ibid., 63.

⁸⁵Ibid., 72.

⁸⁶Ibid., 107.

⁸⁷Ibid., 116.

Bounds' application of this perspective takes a unique position here that is not found in his other writings. He urges believers that when trials come, they are "not to fight against them, nor murmur at them, but endure them, endure with sweetness and joy."⁸⁸ He explains his reason when he says,

This chastening process often comes through persecutions from the hands of evil men and devils, and yet God holds the control and results of the process in His own hands. Nothing is outside of His power, nothing excluded from His control for the good of His children. "All things," whether they be things from the devil or bad men, or the mistakes of good men; "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." Nothing of the nature of persecution and affliction can hinder God from pressing His faithful elect ones on till they are glorified.⁸⁹

Such a perspective appears to be unique and confined within Bounds' writings to this particular book on heaven.

Interestingly, within this same book where Bounds affirms that God has plans which cannot be thwarted, he also makes indications of a belief in a risk-type view of providence. For example, in contrast to the previous quote, Bounds writes in the second chapter,

Many earthly things, by chance, by happenings and of direct purpose and appointment, shape our earthly lives, but in a direct and most evident and all inclusive way, our heavenly lives will be from God, and the air and conditions of heaven will shape them.⁹⁰

It appears that Bounds believes the "chance" happenings in the world are a result of God turning over control to people. For example, Bounds acknowledges that "secondary causes are the agencies through which God ministers to us in this world."⁹¹ Yet, Bounds takes it a step further and states, "God gives Jesus the key to everything, and Jesus turns

⁸⁸Ibid., 130.

⁸⁹Ibid., 136.

⁹⁰Ibid., 31.

⁹¹Ibid., 33.

everything over to His followers.”⁹² Such a claim is once again an indication of Bounds’ embrace of a church dominion type understanding of providence and prayer.

In addition, in ways similar to the book on the resurrection, Bounds makes statements here that believers must work hard in order to earn heaven. He describes striving for heaven in the same way an earthly kingdom is won.⁹³ Thus, he concludes that the strong ones are the ones who gain heaven, to which he adds, “They need strong men there.”⁹⁴ Such work is described as “incessant effort and incessant prayer,”⁹⁵ “to agonize,”⁹⁶ and a “laborious and persistent effort” which requires bringing “all diligence at the outset.”⁹⁷ Bounds clarifies this idea when he writes, “Heaven is gained only by the most intense and persistent effort, which taxes all the strength and demands the outlay of all possible energy to secure it.”⁹⁸ The correlated truth is also stated that if we gain heaven by persevering effort, then “we miss heaven by not persevering.”⁹⁹ The tension in this book between God’s ordained plans and man’s involvement in making them happen is perhaps best summarized in a statement Bounds makes in chapter eight on “Graces Which Fit For Heaven,” when he writes,

The apostle has been writing of the wonderful provision God had made for our salvation We have in this statement a summary of God’s great outlay, laid out, laid down before us, and we are to contribute, besides what God has done, our

⁹²Ibid., 105.

⁹³Ibid., 53.

⁹⁴Ibid., 89.

⁹⁵Ibid., 101.

⁹⁶Ibid., 111.

⁹⁷Ibid., 91.

⁹⁸Ibid., 111.

⁹⁹Ibid., 89.

quota, or as the Revised Version says: “Yea and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence,” introducing by the side of God’s great works, all diligence.¹⁰⁰

Prayer and Praying Men (1921)

Prayer and Praying Men, the fifth of Bounds’ books, published by Homer Hodge in 1921, is unique among his writings in that it primarily is example after example of how the prayers of men in the Bible influenced God and changed things. He discusses the impact of the prayers of Joshua, Jacob, Samuel, Jonah, David, Abraham, Job, Moses, Elijah, Hezekiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Samuel, Daniel, and Paul in that order. In each of the instances, the focus is on how “true prayer always deals with God.”¹⁰¹ Through his comments about how each man dealt with God, Bounds’ beliefs on providence become more evident and themes seen in the previous books appear again.

God needs men of prayer to accomplish His will. As previously seen, one of Bounds’ foundational beliefs is that prayer is the means God ordained by which He works in the world. Bounds states that prayer is the means “of projecting God in full force on the world.”¹⁰² Hence, he can state of Ezra that his praying “brought Almighty God to do His own work.”¹⁰³ Bounds understood such bringing God into His own work as applying to any situation. He states that the energy of prayer is “absolutely required in the simplest as well as in the most complex dispensations of God’s grace.”¹⁰⁴ Such includes commanding the powers of nature as Elijah did,¹⁰⁵ influencing the “very

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 91.

¹⁰¹Edward M. Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), 49.

¹⁰²Ibid., 45.

¹⁰³Ibid., 70.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 29.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 44.

heavenly bodies” as Joshua did,¹⁰⁶ changing the hearts of other people as happened to Esau as a result of Jacob’s prayer,¹⁰⁷ and even resulting in the birth of children such as Samuel who “was given existence in direct answer to prayer.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, Bounds can conclude that “all things are opened by prayer.”¹⁰⁹

Consequently, Bounds concludes that even the fulfillment of God’s will is dependent upon the prayers of men. He states, “God does not do things in a matter-of-course sort of way. God must be invoked, sought unto, and put into things by prayer.”¹¹⁰ Bounds takes that belief as far as applying it to the promises of God. In speaking of Elijah’s prayer for rain, he concludes that “prayer carries the promise to its gracious fulfillment,” and, as such, “It takes persistent and persevering prayer to give to the promise its largest and most gracious result.”¹¹¹ Bounds believes the same is true for the New Testament age. He writes,

Paul’s praying and his commands and the urgency with which he pressed upon the Church to pray, is the most convincing proof of the absolute necessity of prayer as a great moral force in the world, an indispensable and inalienable factor in the progress and spread of the Gospel, and in the development of personal piety. In Paul’s view, there was no Church success without prayer, and no piety without prayer, in fact without much prayer.¹¹²

Continuing in his discussions of Paul, Bounds concludes, “Grace only comes through the channels of prayer, and only abounds more and more as prayer abounds more and more.”¹¹³ Hence, we can conclude that Bounds believed God needed man, and

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 13.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 80.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 125.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 134.

¹¹¹Ibid., 51.

¹¹²Ibid., 111.

¹¹³Ibid., 125.

specifically his prayers, for the dispensation of His grace and His involvement in the affairs of people.

Prayer changes the purposes of God as God cannot deny what is asked.

Second, Bounds teaches that prayer changes the purposes of God since God cannot deny what believers ask of Him. Bounds references that idea in several places. For example, he states that God is “pleased to order His policy, and base His actions on the prayers of His saints.”¹¹⁴ As a result, “God sometimes changes His mind.”¹¹⁵ That statement is not an oversight. Bounds elaborates on it elsewhere in this book when he writes,

Moses accepts at its full face value the foundation principle of praying that prayer has to do with God It declared that prayer affected God, that God was influenced in His conduct by prayer, and that God hears and answer[s] prayer even when the hearing and answering might change His conduct and reverse His action. Stronger than all other laws, and more inflexible than any other decree, is the decree, “Call upon me and I will answer you.”¹¹⁶

Bounds further illustrates this belief by noting how the prayers of God’s followers are a means “to restrain God’s wrath” as in the case of Moses interceding for Israel,¹¹⁷ and a means to reverse God’s edict in the case of Hezekiah, about which he writes,

The decree came direct from God that he should die. What can set aside or reverse that Divine decree of heaven? Hezekiah had never been in a condition so insuperable with a decree so direct and definite from God. Can prayer change the purposes of God? Can prayer snatch from the jaws of death one who has been decreed to die? Can prayer save a man from an incurable sickness? These were the questions with which his faith had now to deal. But his faith does not seem to pause one moment. His faith is not staggered one minute at the sudden and definite news conveyed to him by the Lord’s prophet. No such questions which modern unbelief or disbelief would raise are started in his mind. At once he gives himself to prayer. Immediately without delay he applies to God who issued the edict. To whom else could he go? Cannot God change His own purposes if He chooses?¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴Ibid., 35.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 61.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 36.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 59.

In *Prayer and Praying Men*, Bounds repeats the idea introduced in *Purpose in Prayer*, namely that God cannot deny the prayers of His people. For example, he writes, “Praying puts God in haste to do for us the very things which we wish at His hands.”¹¹⁹ It is important to notice his terminology, “the very things which we wish,” as he will expound on that idea in the subsequent books. Similarly, he states that prayer “moves God to do things that it nominates.”¹²⁰ Thus, Bounds can emphatically assert that “if prayer is put first, then God is put first, and victory is assured.”¹²¹ Bounds includes in that victory one’s health since “sickness dies before prayer,”¹²² and even one’s freedom since “prayer breaks all bars, dissolves all chains, opens all prisons and widens all straits by which God’s saints have been holden.”¹²³ Perhaps the introduction of this idea in Bounds’ writings is best summarized in his description of Jonah:

Prayer was the mighty force which brought Jonah from “the belly of hell.” Prayer, mighty prayer, has secured the end. Prayer brought God to the rescue of unfaithful Jonah, despite his sin of fleeing from duty, and God could not deny his prayer. Nothing is too hard for prayer because nothing is too hard for God.¹²⁴

Again, Bounds introduces the concept that God cannot deny the specific prayers of His people. In case one thinks he is only referring to great saints of old in these matters, Bounds states, “Even so to-day, deliverance always come[s] to God’s saints who tread the path of prayer as the saints of old did.”¹²⁵

¹¹⁹Ibid., 144.

¹²⁰Ibid., 148.

¹²¹Ibid., 114.

¹²²Ibid., 62.

¹²³Ibid., 63.

¹²⁴Ibid., 23.

¹²⁵Ibid., 90.

A lack of prayer hinders God's purposes. A closely related idea is that since God needs men of prayer in order to accomplish His will, then a failure of those men to pray limits God and hinders the fulfillment of His will. Bounds states, "How often would the wise and benign will of God fail in its rich and beneficent ends by the sins of the people if prayer had not come in to arrest wrath and make the promise sure!"¹²⁶ In a positive example, he notes that Samuel's prayer for Israel was essential because "the future welfare of Israel was in the balance."¹²⁷ In a negative example previously cited in *Purpose in Prayer*,¹²⁸ he notes that Sodom's destruction could have been prevented if Abraham had prayed more.¹²⁹ Bounds believes those principles hold true today. He says, "Elijah's results could be secured if we had more Elijah men to do the praying."¹³⁰ Similarly, he believes that there are many unbelieving children of Christians because of a lack of prayer of mothers, and concludes that if mothers just pray more and rear those children in an environment of prayer, then "more children would hear the voice of God's spirit speaking to them, and would quickly respond to those divine calls to a religious life."¹³¹ Perhaps this particular implication, and his entire view as presented in this book, is best summarized in his question about the modern church:

It is a question worthy of earnest consideration, how far the present-day Church is responsible for the unbelief of sinners of these modern times in the value of prayer as an agency in averting God's wrath, in sparing barren lives and in giving deliverance. How far is the Church responsible for the precious few mourners in Zion in these times, who ignore your altar calls and treat with indifference your appeals to come and be prayed for?¹³²

¹²⁶Ibid., 33.

¹²⁷Ibid., 88.

¹²⁸Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 60.

¹²⁹Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 31.

¹³⁰Ibid., 53.

¹³¹Ibid., 82.

¹³²Ibid., 100.

Inconsistencies. It needs to be noted that inconsistencies in Bounds' thinking also appear in this book. As previously shown, Bounds believes that God cannot deny the specific prayers of His people. However, he mentions three examples of people in the Bible whose prayers were not answered as requested. He describes how David's prayer for the life of his child from Bathsheba was "denied" as he "did not receive what he asked for," yet how that denial did not hurt David's faith.¹³³ Bounds provides no explanation except that being given Solomon was a greater blessing to David than the child for which he asked would have been.¹³⁴ Similarly, regarding Moses, he notes that the prayer to go into Canaan was not answered specifically; rather, the answer of only being able to see the land was not what he had asked.¹³⁵ Likewise, Paul's request for the removal of the thorn was not granted. Bounds' only response is that God's grace made the thorn into a blessing.¹³⁶ In those comments, he does not provide any explanation as to how such can be true if God is required to grant every request of His people.

It also should be noted that Bounds makes two references to providence in this book. First, in writing about Nehemiah, he says, "God can even affect the mind of a heathen ruler, and this he can do in answer to prayer without in the least overturning his free agency or forcing his will."¹³⁷ Even there, Bounds presents God's power as bound to prayer. Second, in discussing prison doors opening for Paul, he says,

He did not go out when his chains were loosed, and the stocks fell off. His praying taught him that God had nobler purposes than his own individual freedom. His praying and the earthquake alarm were to bring salvation to that prison God's mighty providence had opened his prison door and had broken his prison bonds, not

¹³³Ibid., 25.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid., 41.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid., 75.

to give freedom, but to give freedom to the jailer. God's providential openings are often to test our ability to stay rather than to go. It tested Paul's ability to stay.¹³⁸

Unfortunately, no other insights are provided by Bounds as to how God answering Paul's request was actually for a greater purpose than Paul realized.

Regardless, the general theme of the book remains, namely that God needs praying men to accomplish His will; yet, He also is willing to change that will since He cannot deny their requests. Closely connected is the idea that a lack of their prayers effectively limits Him. Bounds provides a good summary of these ideas when he concludes,

By prayer enemies are to be swept out of the way. By prayer prejudices are to be driven out of the hearts of good men. [Paul's] way to Jerusalem would be cleared of difficulties, the success of his mission would be secured, and the will of God and the good of the saints would be accomplished. All these marvelous ends would be secured by marvelous praying. Wonderful and world-wide are the results to be gained by mighty praying. If all apostolic successors had prayed as Paul did, if all Christians in these ages had been one with apostolical men in the mighty wrestlings of prayer, how marvelous and divine would have been the history of God's Church! How unparalleled would have been its success! The glory of its millennium would have brightened and blessed the world ages ago.¹³⁹

Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow (1922)

Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow, published in 1922, is the third, and final, book of Bounds on a topic other than prayer.¹⁴⁰ It stands out among the writings attributed to Bounds in that it barely mentions his favorite topic of prayer. It is the least helpful of all of the books for this project and for seeking to understand Bounds' views on the topics of providence, prayer, and the relationship between the two. Only two comments from this book are noteworthy here.

¹³⁸Ibid., 130.

¹³⁹Ibid., 147.

¹⁴⁰Edward M. Bounds, *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922).

First, there is almost no reference to God’s providence or rule in this book. In a brief section about Paul’s thorn in the flesh, Bounds states that the thorn was a type that “cannot be extracted by prayer.”¹⁴¹ However, he states that the thorn made him more of a saint as “Satan only lifted him higher by keeping him lower.”¹⁴² There is no mention of God’s sovereignty over Paul’s thorn, only a turning it for good, though how that good comes about is not stated. Interestingly, there is no mention of Paul’s prayer requesting the removal of the thorn. Bounds does apply the general principles here to believers now by saying, “[Satan] may put in us thorns which no prayer power can extract. Thorns which will poison and pain, but the thorn will enrich grace, increase and mature humility and make infirmities strong and glorious.”¹⁴³ These statements about thorns that even prayer cannot remove are inconsistent with other books where he teaches that God will grant the very thing for which a person asks, if it is asked with great earnestness.

Second, this book is noticeably silent on the topic of prayer until the final chapter. In fact, the first of the two chapters on “our defense against the Devil” has no mention of prayer in it.¹⁴⁴ When prayer is mentioned at the beginning of the final chapter, the idea is the same as what appears in other books, namely that prayer often fails because of a lack of vigilance in praying.¹⁴⁵ The only other reference to prayer is found in the final two paragraphs of the book. Interestingly, apart from some capitalization differences and the addition of one phrase, the final two paragraphs are an exact reprint of something previously published in *Purpose in Prayer*.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹Ibid., 110.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 136-44.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 147.

¹⁴⁶Compare the quote that follows with Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 100. Apart from dropping the capitalization of pronoun references to God, the changing of the singular or plural forms to the

Prayer puts God in the matter with commanding force. “Ask of me things to come concerning my sons,” says God, “and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.” We are charged in God’s Word, “always to pray,” “in everything by prayer,” “continuing instant in prayer,” to “pray everywhere,” “praying always.” The promise is as illimitable as the command is comprehensive. “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” “Whatsoever ye shall ask,” “if ye shall ask anything;” “Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” “Whatsoever ye ask the Father he will give it to you.” If there is anything not involved in “All things whatsoever,” or not found in the phrase “Ask anything,” then these things may be left out of prayer. Language could not cover a wider range, nor involve more fully all minutia. These statements are but samples of the all-comprehending possibilities of prayer under the promises of God to those who meet the conditions of right praying.

These passages, though, give but a general outline of the immense regions over which prayer extends its sway. Beyond these the effect of prayer reaches and secures good from regions which cannot be traversed by language or thought. Paul exhausted language and thought in praying, but conscious of necessities not covered, and realms of good not reached, of battles not gained over enemies and not conquered, he covers these impenetrable and undiscovered regions by this general plea: “Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” The promise is, “Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”¹⁴⁷

Since what one can learn about Bounds’ view in that quote was discussed previously in the section on *Purpose in Prayer*, no other discussion of it will be made here except to note the inconsistency about what was previously said regarding thorns not able to be removed by prayer and now the emphasis that “all things” can be received via prayer.

The Possibilities of Prayer (1923)

Published in 1923, *The Possibilities of Prayer* is one of Bounds’ most insightful books in terms of his view of the relationship between providence and man’s will as expressed in petitionary prayer. It should be noted that it is the first of Bounds’ books that lists Homer Hodge as the editor.¹⁴⁸ While carrying on the themes found in the

other in three words, and changing “whatever” to “whatsoever,” the only major change is the addition in the second paragraph of the phrase “of battles not gained over enemies and not conquered.”

¹⁴⁷Bounds, *Satan*, 156.

¹⁴⁸Edward M. Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1923).

previous books, this particular book provides additional insights as Bounds, for the first time, provides definitions of both prayer and providence. It also is his only book where he directly addresses the relationship between prayer and providence beyond a few isolated comments.

Definitions of prayer and providence. Bounds' definitions of prayer and providence here are very helpful in understanding what he believed. Regarding prayer, Bounds states, "Prayer is simply asking God to do for us what He has promised to do if we ask Him."¹⁴⁹ He provides more definition when he says, "Man makes the plea and God makes the answer. The plea and the answer compose the prayer."¹⁵⁰ He continues, and provides the statement which Hodge likely used in titling this work, "The possibilities of prayer lie in the ability of God to give large things."¹⁵¹ Elsewhere he explains that the possibilities of prayer are vast since "prayer has in it the possibility to affect everything which affects us."¹⁵² In addition, Bounds explains that prayer is the medium by which God communicates with us and is the way that God, His presence, His gifts, and His grace, are all secured.¹⁵³

Bounds also provides helpful insights into his understanding of providence. He states a strong belief in it: "To dispute the doctrine of providence is to discredit the entire revelation of God's Word. Everywhere this Word discovers God's hand in man's affairs."¹⁵⁴ He also provides a more lengthy definition of providence, saying,

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 126.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Ibid., 78.

¹⁵³Ibid., 89.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 157.

What is termed providence is the Divine superintendence over earth and its affairs. It implies gracious provisions which Almighty God makes for all His creatures, animate and inanimate, intelligent or otherwise. Once admit that God is the Creator and Preserver of all men, and concede that He is wise and intelligent, and logically we are driven to the conclusion that Almighty God has a direct superintendence of those whom He has created and whom He preserves in being. In fact creation and preservation suppose a superintending providence. What is called Divine providence is simply Almighty God governing the world for its best interests, and overseeing everything for the good of mankind.¹⁵⁵

Furthermore, Bounds rejects the distinction between general and special providence.

Instead, Bounds sees “no general providence but what is made up of special providences.

A general supervision on the part of God supposes a special and individual supervision of each person, yea, even every creature, animal and all alike.”¹⁵⁶ In addition, Bounds

explains that providence deals particularly with temporalities, meaning it has to do “with food and raiment, with business difficulties, with strangely interposing and saving from danger, and with helping in emergencies at very opportune and critical times.”¹⁵⁷ Bounds

further explains providence as God being “everywhere, watching, superintending, overseeing, governing everything in the highest interest of man, and carrying forward His plans and executing His purposes in creation and redemption.”¹⁵⁸ He even goes as far as

to state that “Earth’s inhabitants and its affairs are not running independent of Almighty God.”¹⁵⁹ Similarly, he asserts, “Nothing takes place in the world without God’s consent,

yet not in a sense that He either approves everything or is responsible for all things which happen.”¹⁶⁰ To reconcile that tension, Bounds speaks of both direct and permissive

providences, where He orders some things, while permitting others. He explains,

¹⁵⁵Ibid., 140.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 146.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 141.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 142.

But when He permits an afflictive dispensation to come into the life of His saint, even though it originate in a wicked mind, and it be the act of a sinner, yet before it strikes His saint and touches him, it becomes God's providence to the saint. In other words, God consents to some things in this world, without in the least being responsible for them.¹⁶¹

Bounds again states the idea that God does not order everything that happens since "man is still a free agent."¹⁶²

Yet, a tension again appears here in Bounds' ideas. He writes, "Evil things, unpleasant and afflictive, may come with Divine permission, but God is on the spot, His hand is in all of them, and He sees to it that they are woven into His plans."¹⁶³ Similarly, he says, "We can lay it down as a proposition borne out by Scripture, which has a sure foundation, that nothing ever comes in to the life of God's saints without His consent."¹⁶⁴

While consistent with his statements on permissive providence, Bounds does not provide explanation for how such can be possible if believers are able to pray their way out of any evil or trouble.

The relationship between providence and prayer. Most helpful in this particular book is his discussion in chapters 15 and 16 on the relationship between prayer and divine providence. These chapters provide the only in-depth explanation from Bounds on his understanding of the relationship of the two ideas. He begins by first noting their close relationship:

Prayer and the Divine providence are closely related. They stand in close companionship. They cannot possibly be separated. So closely connected are they that to deny one is to abolish the other. Prayer supposes a providence, while providence is the result of and belongs to prayer. All answers to prayer are but the intervention of the providence of God in the affairs of men. Providence has to do specially with praying people. Prayer, providence and the Holy Spirit are a trinity,

¹⁶¹Ibid., 152.

¹⁶²Ibid., 141.

¹⁶³Ibid., 144.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 143.

which cooperate with each other and are in perfect harmony with one another. Prayer is but the request of man for God through the Holy Spirit to interfere in behalf of him who prays.¹⁶⁵

The connection between the two is so strong that Bounds describes them as “twin doctrines” that “stand fast and will abide forever.”¹⁶⁶

Yet, in that close relationship, Bounds appears to give prayer the greater emphasis. For example, he describes providence as the “companion of prayer.”¹⁶⁷ He also writes that “the providence of God reaches as far as the realm of prayer” since “it has to do with everything for which we pray.”¹⁶⁸ Similarly, he states, “Prayer brings God’s providence into action. Prayer puts God to work in overseeing and directing earth’s affairs for the good of men. Prayer opens the way when it is shut up or straitened.”¹⁶⁹ Such is consistent with his other writings.

However, in two isolated comments, he appears to reverse that priority. He notes, “The providence of God goes before His saints, opens the way, removes difficulties, solves problems and brings deliverances when escape seems hopeless.”¹⁷⁰ That description of the result of God’s providential work sounds like the way Bounds normally describes the result of prayer. That change in emphasis is even more directly stated at the end of the book when he writes, “God suspends or overcomes the laws of disease and rain often without or independent of prayer. But quite often He does this in answer to prayer.”¹⁷¹ The idea of God’s providence going *before* the saints and doing

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 139.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 159.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 144.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 146.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 156.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 159.

things independently is not consistent with his primary teaching that God does nothing except in answer to prayer.

Prayer is the means God has ordained to work in the world. In addition to these definitions and insights Bounds provides into his understanding of the connection between the doctrine of providence and man's will in prayer, this book is filled with examples of the themes previously found in his other writings. One of these themes is his belief that prayer is the means God has ordained to work in the world. Bounds directly states that idea: "God has ruled the world by prayer; and God still rules the world by the same divinely ordained means."¹⁷² He goes on to write that prayer is the divinely ordained means by which all good is gained.¹⁷³ The same idea appears later in the book when he writes, "Prayer is using the divinely appointed means for obtaining what we need and for accomplishing what God purposes to do on earth."¹⁷⁴ Bounds continues by teaching, "The doctrine of prayer brings Him directly into the world, and moves Him to a direct interference with all of this world's affairs."¹⁷⁵ In more descriptive terms, Bounds says that "prayer moves the hand that moves the world."¹⁷⁶ Such prayer is described as essential for Kingdom advance. Bounds repeats the previous phrase, adding that prayer "moves the hand which moves the world, to bring salvation down,"¹⁷⁷ and is the thing that makes the Gospel move rapidly.¹⁷⁸ Viewing prayer as God's ordained plan is so foundational in Bounds' thinking, that he concludes, "God is so much involved in prayer

¹⁷²Ibid., 69.

¹⁷³Ibid., 89.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 125.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 142.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 41.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 42.

¹⁷⁸Ibid., 38.

and its hearing and answering, that all of His attributes and His whole being are centered in that great fact.”¹⁷⁹

As seen in his previous writings, Bounds expands this idea to include the idea that God has committed Himself into the hands of His people who pray. He directly states, “We see how God commits Himself into the hands of those who truly pray.”¹⁸⁰ Bounds repeats that idea several times in the book. For example, he says, “He puts Himself so fully into the hands of the praying ones, that it almost staggers our faith and causes us to hesitate with astonishment.”¹⁸¹ Such prayer is “a wonderful power placed by Almighty God in the hands of His saints.”¹⁸² That power is not limited, according to Bounds. He writes, “God, by promise, puts all things he possesses into man’s hands.”¹⁸³ His scriptural basis is the text he uses in other books as well, namely Isaiah 45:11. As previously noted, he takes the phrase “command ye me” as rendered in the King James Version, and concludes that it is a “strong promise in which He commits Himself into the hands of His praying people.”¹⁸⁴ Later, Bounds again uses the phrase “God has committed Himself to us,”¹⁸⁵ indicating how strongly he believes in this perspective.

Bounds believes that such a plan is intentional on God’s part. He concludes that God has “voluntarily placed Himself under obligation to answer the prayer of him who truly prays.”¹⁸⁶ Such an idea of voluntary, but intentional, limitation of God to only

¹⁷⁹Ibid., 91.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., 136.

¹⁸¹Ibid., 42.

¹⁸²Ibid., 34.

¹⁸³Ibid., 44

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 64.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 94.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 98.

do things in answer to prayer again indicates a belief in the church dominion model for understanding the relationship between providence and petitionary prayer. Furthermore, Bounds indicates here that the structure God ordained is designed for the training and good of His people, an idea consistent with what is described in that theological perspective. Bounds writes,

Prayer is a Divine arrangement in the moral government of God, designed for the benefit of men and intended as a means for furthering the interests of His cause on earth, and carrying out His gracious purposes in redemption and providence.¹⁸⁷

Quoting John 16:23, Bounds states that the Lord told the disciples that “whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you,” so that “our Lord might prepare them for the New Dispensation, in which prayer was to have such marvellous results, and in which prayer was to be the chief agency to conserve and make aggressive His Gospel.”¹⁸⁸ Thus, Bounds writes that “God is waiting to be put to the test by His people in prayer.”¹⁸⁹ These quotes provide a rare glimpse in Bounds’ writings to his understanding of why he believes God has limited Himself only to do things in answer to prayer.

God’s will is dependent on prayer for its success. A closely related idea, and one that is seen in his other books, is the idea that God’s will is dependent upon prayer for its success. Bounds directly states, “God’s will on earth can only be secured by prayer.”¹⁹⁰ Prayer is presented as something which “moves Him to do what He otherwise would not do if prayer was not offered.”¹⁹¹ It is what moves God “to do great

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 35.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 39.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 108.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 133.

¹⁹¹Ibid., 34.

and wonderful things.”¹⁹² Similarly, Bounds writes that it is great faith that “enables Christ to do great things.”¹⁹³

Bounds believes that the necessity of prayer for God’s will to be done goes as far as including the promises of God. Bounds states about the promises of God, “Howsoever exceeding great and precious they are, their realization, the possibility and condition of that realization, are based on prayer Prayer makes the promise rich, fruitful and a conscious reality.”¹⁹⁴ Similarly, he says, “It is prayer which makes the promises weighty, precious and practical. The Apostle Paul did not hesitate to declare that God’s grace so richly promised was made operative and efficient by prayer. ‘Ye also helping together by prayer for us.’”¹⁹⁵ Again, Bounds writes, “Prayer takes hold of the promise and conducts it to its marvelous ends, removes the obstacles, and makes a highway for the promise to its glorious fulfillment.”¹⁹⁶ Perhaps most insightful are the following comments about the promises and prayer:

God’s promises are dependent and conditioned upon prayer to appropriate them and make them a conscious realization. The promises are inwrought in us, appropriated by us, and held in the arms of faith by prayer. Let it be noted that prayer gives the promises their efficiency, localizes and appropriates them, and utilizes them. Prayer puts the promises to practical and present uses. Prayer puts the promises as the seed in the fructifying soil. Promises, like the rain, are general. Prayer embodies, precipitates, and locates them for personal use. 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. The promises, like electricity, may sparkle and dazzle and yet be impotent for good till these dynamic, life-giving currents are chained by prayer, and are made the mighty forces which move and bless.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹²Ibid., 41.

¹⁹³Ibid., 61.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., 17.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 16.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 18.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., 23.

Yet, it is not only general promises that require prayer for fulfillment. Bounds provides several examples of things in the eternal plan of God that he believes also required prayer for their fulfillment. For example, he speculates that Zacharias and Elizabeth were the ones blessed with the forerunner of the Messiah because they were the ones who asked for Him. He says,

God had promised through His prophets that the coming Messiah would have a forerunner. How many homes and wombs in Israel had longed for the coming to them of this great honour! Perchance Zacharias and Elizabeth were the only ones who were trying to realize by prayer this great dignity and blessing It was then that the word of the Lord as spoken by the prophets and the prayer of the old priest and wife brought John the Baptist into the withered womb.¹⁹⁸

Similarly, Bounds sees the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as conditioned upon prayer, as seen when he writes,

The promise of the Holy Spirit to the disciples was in a very marked way the “Promise of the Father,” but it was only realized after many days of continued and importunate praying. The promise was clear and definite that the disciples should be endued with power from on high, but as a condition of receiving that power of the Holy Spirit they were instructed to “tarry in the city of Jerusalem till ye be endued with power from on high.” The fulfillment of the promise depending upon the “tarrying.” The promise of this “endowment of power” was made sure by prayer. Prayer sealed it to glorious results

After Jesus Christ made this large and definite promise to His disciples, He ascended on high, and was seated at His Father’s right hand of exaltation and power. Yet the promise given by Him of sending the Holy Spirit was not fulfilled by His enthronement merely, nor by the promise only, nor by the fact that the Prophet Joel had foretold with transported raptures of the bright day of the Spirit’s coming. Neither was it that the Spirit’s coming was the only hope of God’s cause in this world. All these all-powerful and all-engaging reasons were not the immediate operative cause of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The solution is found in the attitude of the disciples. The answer is found in the fact that the disciples, with the women, spent several days in that upper room, in earnest, specific, continued prayer. It was prayer that brought to pass the famous day of Pentecost. And as it was then, so it can be now. Prayer can bring a Pentecost in this day if there by the same kind of praying, for the promise has not exhausted its power and vitality. The “promise of the Father” still holds good for the present-day disciples.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸Ibid., 28.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., 29-30.

Bounds clearly believes that the same pattern holds true today. In addition to what is found at the end of the previous quote, he also writes, “Prayer, mighty prayer, united, continued earnest prayer, for nearly two weeks, brought the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the world in Pentecostal glory and power. And mighty continued and united prayer will do the same now.”²⁰⁰

While Bounds’ earlier books indicated his belief in this idea that God’s will is dependent upon prayer for its success, *The Possibilities of Prayer* takes the idea to a new level. The lengthy descriptions of the necessity of prayer for promises provide more insight into his perspective on this topic than any other book. It is also here that one finds his most picturesque description of these ideas:

Prayer is a tremendous force in the world. Take this picture of prayer and its wonderful possibilities. God’s cause is quiet and motionless on the earth. An angel, strong and impatient to be of service, waits round about the throne of God in heaven, and in order to move things on earth and give impetus to the movements of God’s cause in this world, he gathers all the prayers of all God’s saints in all ages, and puts them before God just like Aaron used to cloud, flavor and sweeten himself with the delicious incense when he entered the holy sanctuary, made awful by the immediate presence of God. The angel impregnates all the air with that holy offering of prayers, and then takes its fiery body and casts it on the earth.

Notice the remarkable result. “There were voices and thundering and lightnings and an earthquake.” What tremendous force is this which has thus convulsed the earth? The answer is that it is the “prayers of the saints,” turned loose by the angel round the throne, who has charge of those prayers. This mighty force is prayer, like the power of earth’s mightiest dynamite.²⁰¹

A lack of prayer hinders God’s purposes. Another closely related idea is that if prayer is necessary for God’s will to be done, then a lack of prayer hinders God’s will and His Kingdom purposes. Writing about the promises of which he focuses on so much in this book, Bounds asks, “Why do the eternal purposes of God move so tardily?” His answer is “our failure to appropriate the Divine promises and rest our faith on

²⁰⁰Ibid., 31.

²⁰¹Ibid., 134.

them,²⁰² something he equates with prayer. In fact, not only do they fail, but he also believes they turn bad. He writes, “God’s deep and wide river of promise will turn into the deadly miasma or be lost in the morass, if we do not utilize these promises by prayer.”²⁰³ Bounds believes such is true because God “is limited by the law of prayer in the measure of the answers He gives to prayer.”²⁰⁴ He also believes it is true because our failure to pray ultimately hinders any effects from Christ’s own intercession: “Failure in our intercession affects the fruits of His intercession. Lazy, heartless, feeble, and indifferent praying by us mars and hinders the effects of Christ’s praying.”²⁰⁵

However, in these pages Bounds takes that idea one step further than in the previous books. For the first time he makes two comments indicating that a failure to pray not only limits God’s plan, but actually limits God Himself. First, he says, “Unfortunately we have failed to lay ourselves out in praying. We have limited the Holy One of Israel.”²⁰⁶ A few pages later he also writes, “Unbelief in God as one who is concerned about even the smallest affairs which affect our happiness and comfort limits the Holy One of Israel.”²⁰⁷ According to Bounds, these limitations on God from a lack of prayer make the followers of Christ responsible for their situation and surroundings. He states, “What riches of grace, what blessings, spiritual and temporal, what good for time and eternity, would have been ours had we learned the possibilities of prayer and our faith had taken in the wide range of the Divine promises to us to answer prayer!”²⁰⁸

²⁰²Ibid., 22.

²⁰³Ibid., 29.

²⁰⁴Ibid., 126.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 67.

²⁰⁶Ibid., 43.

²⁰⁷Ibid., 56.

²⁰⁸Ibid., 37.

However, the limitations from a lack of prayer do not just affect the person who fails to pray as he or she should. “Failure to pray entails losses far beyond the person who neglects it,” according to Bounds.²⁰⁹ Thus, he attributes the spiritual darkness in the world to a lack of prayer, as seen when he says,

How much of prayer do all these unpossessed alienated provinces of earth demand in order to enlighten them, to impress them and to move them toward God and His Son, Jesus Christ? Had the professed disciples of Christ only have prayed in the past as they ought to have done, the centuries would not have found these provinces still bound in death, in sin, and in ignorance.

Alas! how the unbelief of men has limited the power of God to work through prayer! What limitations have disciples of Jesus Christ put upon prayer by their prayerlessness! How the Church, with her neglect of prayer, has hedged about the Gospel and shut up doors of access!²¹⁰

Bounds’ one scriptural example of this principle is that of Nazareth.²¹¹ He believes that such a lack of faith as seen there “restrains the exercise of God’s power, paralyzes the arm of Christ, and turns to death all signs of life.”²¹²

Prayer changes the purposes of God as God cannot deny what is asked.

Continuing a theme that emerged in *Purpose and Prayer* and that continued in *Prayer and Praying Men*, Bounds also asserts here that prayer can change God and His purposes, as He cannot deny anything asked by His children. Bounds states, “So eager is He to answer prayer which always and everywhere brings glory to the Father, that no prayer offered in His name is denied or overlooked by Him.”²¹³ Bounds is strong in his belief that the answer to the prayer always will be the very thing for which a person asks, not a

²⁰⁹Ibid., 44.

²¹⁰Ibid., 36.

²¹¹Though prayer is not mentioned specifically in this context, throughout his writing he speaks of faith in the same terms as he speaks of prayer, indicating that he believes prayer and faith are inseparable. For example, in a quote recently cited, Bounds laments the conditions of the world that would be different “had we learned the possibilities of prayer and our faith” (ibid., 38).

²¹²Ibid., 113.

²¹³Ibid., 93.

denial or a substitution. He says,

Not only do these and all the promises pledge Almighty God to answer prayer, but they assure us that the answer will be specific, and that the very thing for which we pray will be given.

Our Lord's invariable teaching was that we receive that for which we ask, and obtain that for which we seek, and have that door opened at which we knock. This is according to our Heavenly Father's direction to us, and His giving to us for our asking. He will not disappoint us by not answering, neither will He deny us by giving us some other thing for which we have not asked, or by letting us find some other thing for which we have not sought, or by opening to us the wrong door, at which we were not knocking.²¹⁴

Later he repeats the idea when he says, "When you ask, the very thing asked for will be given."²¹⁵ He also says, "The child does not ask for one thing and get another."²¹⁶

Bounds believes that idea is true since "God is pledged that if we ask, we shall receive. God can withhold nothing from faith and prayer."²¹⁷

When Bounds states, "The man who prays can pray for anything and for everything, and God will give everything and anything," he believes it applies to every area of life.²¹⁸ In this particular book, he cites several examples. He believes that prayer "remedies all ills, cures all diseases, relieves all situations, however dire, most calamitous, most fearful and despairing."²¹⁹ He specifically notes sickness, saying that "sickness flees before prayer."²²⁰ He also states that "doubts, misgivings, and trembling fears retire before prayer."²²¹ Receiving such specific answers to prayer is, to Bounds,

²¹⁴Ibid., 96.

²¹⁵Ibid., 103.

²¹⁶Ibid., 104.

²¹⁷Ibid., 47.

²¹⁸Ibid., 126.

²¹⁹Ibid., 46.

²²⁰Ibid., 78.

²²¹Ibid., 79.

“evidence of our abiding in Christ.”²²² Furthermore, he views a denial of this principle as spiritual sloth. For example, he writes,

We have been nurturing a false faith and hiding the shame of our loss and inability to pray, by the false, comforting plea that God does not answer directly or objectively, but indirectly and subjectively. We have persuaded ourselves that by some kind of hocus pocus of which we are wholly unconscious in its process and its results, we have been made better. Conscious that God has not answered us directly, we have solaced ourselves with the delusive unctio that God has in some impalpable way, and with unknown results, given us something better. Or we have comforted and nurtured our spiritual sloth by saying that it is not God’s will to give it to us. Faith teaches God’s praying ones that it is God’s will to answer prayer. God answers all prayers and every prayer of His true children who truly pray.²²³

He later communicates the same idea:

God’s Word does not say, “Call unto me, and you will thereby be trained into the happy art of knowing how to be denied. Ask, and you will learn sweet patience by getting nothing.” Far from it. But it is definite, clear and positive: “Ask, and it shall be given unto you.”²²⁴

In another rare comment about sovereignty in His writing, Bounds also rejects the idea that unanswered prayer has to do with God’s will for a person. Bounds strongly states,

The millions of unanswered prayers are not to be solved by the mystery of God’s will. We are not the sport of His sovereign power. He is not playing at “make-believe” in His marvellous promises to answer prayer. The whole explanation is found in our wrong praying. “We ask and receive not because we ask amiss.” If all unanswered prayers were dumped into the ocean, they would come very near filling it. Child of God, can you pray? Are your prayers answered? If not, why not? Answered prayer is the proof of your real praying.²²⁵

Inconsistencies. As with the previous books, there are several inconsistencies within *The Possibilities of Prayer* that need to be mentioned. First, Bounds again references examples in Scripture where prayers are not answered as requested. However, he notes that such denials are “the exceptions to the general rule.”²²⁶ The two examples

²²²Ibid., 85.

²²³Ibid., 88.

²²⁴Ibid., 102.

²²⁵Ibid., 85.

²²⁶Ibid., 102.

he cites here are David's request that his child be spared and Paul's request for the thorn to be removed. His explanation is merely that they are exceptions and that "there must have been unrevealed reasons which moved God to veer from His settled and fixed rule to answer prayer by giving the specific thing prayer for."²²⁷ Regarding the death of David's child, Bounds concludes that "God ordered it," and that "David thoroughly understood it" as "prayer and providence in all this affair worked in harmonious cooperation."²²⁸ With how strongly he asserts that God must do the very thing asked, such a comment does not provide adequate explanation and appears inconsistent in his thinking.

Second, Bounds makes several isolated statements that God does some things without prayer. Bounds notes that some miracles were done unconditionally,²²⁹ including when He "suspends or overcomes the laws of disease and rain often without or independent of prayer."²³⁰ He even says that "the providence of God goes before His saints, opens the way, removes difficulties, solves problems and brings deliverances when escape seems hopeless."²³¹ However, as already noted, Bounds primarily teaches that God does nothing except in answer to prayer.

Third, Bounds makes two comments about God's sovereign rule that differ from his overall teaching. At one point he says, "All things in heaven and earth, are absolutely under the control of Him who made heaven and earth and who governs all things according to His will."²³² Later, he notes that our Father is one "who knows all

²²⁷Ibid., 106.

²²⁸Ibid., 151.

²²⁹Ibid., 111.

²³⁰Ibid., 159.

²³¹Ibid., 156.

²³²Ibid., 120.

things, who has control of all things.”²³³ However, such does not seem consistent with what was already noted about his view of man as free agents and God being limited without the prayers of the saints.

Despite those inconsistencies, the prevailing themes of *Possibilities of Prayer* are that while prayer and providence work together, prayer is God’s ordained means to work in the world in order to train the church. The result is that His will is accomplished or hindered depending on the prayers of His people. Thus, “prayer is a wonderful power placed by Almighty God in the hands of His saints, which may be used to accomplish great purposes and to achieve unusual results.”²³⁴

The Reality of Prayer (1924)

Published in 1924, and the second book that directly lists Hodge as editor, *The Reality of Prayer* focuses particularly on the prayers of Jesus that are found in Scripture.²³⁵ Unlike the previous book, there is no direct mention of providence. However, as with the earlier books discussed, there are several conclusions that can be drawn as to Bounds’ view on the relationship between providence and man’s will in prayer. These conclusions mostly will be the same as has been found his in previous books. In addition, Bounds provides the most comprehensive definition of prayer so far in his writings when he says,

The word “Prayer” expresses the largest and most comprehensive approach unto God. It gives prominence to the element of devotion. It is communion and intercourse with God. It is enjoyment of God. It is access to God. “Supplication” is a more restricted and more intense form of prayer, accompanied by a sense of personal need, limited to the seeking in an urgent manner of a supply for pressing need.

²³³Ibid., 129.

²³⁴Ibid., 34.

²³⁵Edward M. Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924).

“Supplication” is the very soul of prayer in the way of pleading for some one thing, greatly needed, and the need intensely felt.

“Intercession” is an enlargement in prayer, a going out in broadness and fullness from self to others. Primarily, it does not centre in praying for others, but refers to the freeness, boldness and childlike confidence of the praying. It is the fullness of confiding influence in the soul’s approach to God, unlimited and unhesitating in its access and its demands. This influence and confident trust is to be used for others.

Prayer always, and everywhere, is an immediate and confiding approach to, and a request of, God the Father

So elsewhere (James 1:5) we have “asking” set forth as prayer: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” “Asking of God” and “receiving” from the Lord—direct application to God, immediate connection with God—that is prayer.²³⁶

Prayer is the means God has ordained to work in the world. As found throughout Bounds’ writings, in this book he again emphasizes the idea that prayer is the means God has ordained by which He works in the world. For example, he states, “By prayer God’s kingdom comes. By prayer is His kingdom established in power and made to move with conquering force swifter than the light. By prayer God’s will is done till earth rivals Heaven in harmony and beauty.”²³⁷ Bounds believes such a plan is found in eternity past, as seen when he writes,

Prayer, by God’s very oath, is put in the very stones of God’s foundation, as eternal as its companion, “And men shall pray for him continually.” This is the eternal condition which advanced His cause, and makes it powerfully aggressive. Men are to always pray for it. Its strength, beauty and aggression lie in their prayers. Its power lies simply in its power to pray.²³⁸

He also believes that according to God’s plan, prayer is to be “the channel through which all good flows from God to man, and all good from men to men.”²³⁹

Hence, Bounds concludes that prayer is necessary for any of God’s purposes to be done. He states, “The mighty ongoing of God’s purposes rests on prayer.”²⁴⁰

²³⁶Ibid., 9-11.

²³⁷Ibid., 42.

²³⁸Ibid., 16.

²³⁹Ibid., 17.

²⁴⁰Ibid., 40.

Similarly, he states that “God does His best work for the world through prayer” as “God’s greatest glory and man’s highest good are secured by prayer.”²⁴¹ Such good includes the Word of God going forth as seen when he states, “The Word depends on prayer that it ‘may have free course and be glorified.’”²⁴² It also includes the salvation of non-believers, as seen when Bounds speaks of “the relation and necessity of saintly prayers to God’s plans and operations in executing the salvation of men.”²⁴³ He later repeats this idea when he writes that the “spirit of conviction on sinners comes in answer to the prayers of God’s people.”²⁴⁴ As seen in previous books, the necessity of prayer for such good to come includes even the promises of God. For example, Bounds states, “Prayer gives efficiency and utility to the promises.”²⁴⁵ In more figurative language, he describes this relationship between the promises and prayer:

Promise is like the unsown seed, the germ of life in it, but the soil and culture of prayer are necessary to germinate and culture the seed. Prayer is God’s life-giving breath. God’s purposes move along the pathway made by prayer to their glorious designs.²⁴⁶

In an interesting application of this principle, Bounds includes the interaction of the members of the Trinity as well as God’s eternal plans as being subject to this ordained requirement of prayer for anything to be done. He says,

The possibilities and necessity of prayer are graven in the eternal foundations of the Gospel. The relation that is established between the Father and the Son and the decreed covenant between the two, has prayer as the base of its existence, and the conditions of the advance and success of the Gospel. Prayer is the condition by which all foes are to be overcome and all the inheritance is to be possessed.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹Ibid., 35.

²⁴²Ibid., 149.

²⁴³Ibid., 40.

²⁴⁴Ibid., 126.

²⁴⁵Ibid., 40.

²⁴⁶Ibid., 35.

²⁴⁷Ibid., 19.

One example he cites of this idea is Jesus' baptism when the Holy Spirit descends. Bounds writes, "The descent and abiding of the Holy Spirit in all His fullness, the opening heavens, and the attesting voice which involved God's recognition of His only son—all these are the result, if not the direct creation and response to His praying on that occasion."²⁴⁸ Later, he elaborates on the same idea in describing Psalm 2:

In the second Psalm the purposes of God to His enthroned Christ are decreed on prayer, as has been previously quoted. That decree which promises to Him the heathen for His inheritance relies on prayer for its fulfillment: "Ask of me." We see how sadly the decree has failed in its operation, not because of the weakness of God's purpose, but by the weakness of man's praying. It takes God's mighty decree and man's mighty praying to bring to pass these glorious results.²⁴⁹

Similarly, he states that "Christ's movements are put into the hands of prayer."²⁵⁰ He conveys the same idea in relation to the Holy Spirit when he says, "Prayer is the only element in which the Holy Spirit can live and work. Prayer is the golden chain which happily enslaves Him to His happy work in us."²⁵¹

Bounds again applies these principles even to the timing of the coming of the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension, as seen when he says,

A few days after Pentecost the disciples were in an agony of prayer, "and when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." This incident destroys every theory which denies prayer as the condition of the coming and re-coming of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, and confirms the view that Pentecost as the result of a long struggle of prayer is illustrative and confirmatory that God's great and most precious gifts and [*sic*] conditioned on asking, seeking, knocking, prayer, ardent, importunate prayer. The same truth comes to the front very prominently in Philip's revival at Samaria. Though filled with joy by believing in Christ, and though received into the Church by water baptism, they did not receive the Holy Spirit till Peter and John went down there and prayed with and for them.²⁵²

²⁴⁸Ibid., 71.

²⁴⁹Ibid., 39.

²⁵⁰Ibid.

²⁵¹Ibid., 150.

²⁵²Ibid., 127.

Bounds then makes application of this principle to believers today. He says, “With the disciples, Pentecost was made by prayer. With them, Pentecost was continued by giving themselves to continued prayer. Persistent and unwearied prayer is the price we will have to pay for our Pentecost, by instant and continued prayer.”²⁵³ He continues, “Only importunate and invincible prayer can bring the Holy Spirit to us, and secure for us these ineffably gracious results.”²⁵⁴

A similar, and closely related, idea that is expounded more in other books, does still receive a passing reference here as Bounds mentions that a lack of prayer hinders the purposes of God. He boldly states, “Without prayer His name is profaned, His kingdom fails, and His will is decried and opposed.”²⁵⁵ In light of those considerations, Bound concludes, “Prayer, in the moral government of God, is as strong and far-reaching as the law of gravitation in the material world, and it is as necessary as gravitation to hold things in their proper sphere and in life.”²⁵⁶ Perhaps no theme in his writings appear as strong as this theme, that prayer is ordained by God as the necessary and only means by which He will work in the world.

Prayer moves God to do what He otherwise would not do. As Bounds teaches in his other works, he also teaches here that prayer leads God to things that He would not do if His people did not pray. Bounds states early in the book, “The whole force of Bible statement is to increase our faith in the doctrine that prayer affects God, secures favors from God, which can be secured in no other way, and which will not be bestowed by God if we do not pray.”²⁵⁷ He also states, “That which is true of the

²⁵³Ibid., 151.

²⁵⁴Ibid., 152.

²⁵⁵Ibid., 98.

²⁵⁶Ibid., 14.

²⁵⁷Ibid., 15.

promises of God is equally true of the purposes of God. We might say that God does nothing without prayer. His most gracious purposes are conditioned on prayer.”²⁵⁸

Similar to ideas already mentioned, Bounds continues to stress that not even the Holy Spirit will come without “ardent and intense praying.”²⁵⁹ He does not limit that to the time of the early church, but also applies it to today, saying,

The truth is, that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit at any given meeting is conditioned on praying faith. Christ lays down the doctrine that the reception of the Holy Spirit is conditioned on prayer, and He Himself illustrated this universal law, for when the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His baptism, He was praying.²⁶⁰

However, Bounds takes the idea further in this book by indicating that God orders His very ways according to the prayers of His people. He states, “God waits on prayer to order His ways.”²⁶¹ Later, he says,

Prayer affects God more powerfully than His own purposes. God’s will, words and purposes are all subject to review when the mighty potencies of prayer come in. How mighty prayer is with God may be seen as he readily sets aside His own fixed and declared purposes in answer to prayer.²⁶²

To substantiate such a claim, Bounds points to the example of how the fasting and praying of the Ninevites “changed God’s purposes to destroy that wicked city.”²⁶³

God cannot deny what is asked in prayer. As Bounds has taught in other books, he again teaches here that God is obligated to give people the very thing for which they ask. Bounds writes, “He has not promised to do something general if we pray, but He has promised to do the very things for which we pray.”²⁶⁴ Later, he repeats the idea,

²⁵⁸Ibid., 39.

²⁵⁹Ibid., 86.

²⁶⁰Ibid., 127.

²⁶¹Ibid., 36.

²⁶²Ibid., 41.

²⁶³Ibid.

²⁶⁴Ibid., 13.

saying,

God's rule is to answer by giving the specific thing asked for We do but follow the plain letter and spirit of the Bible when we affirm that God answers prayer, and answers by giving us the very things we desire, and that the withholding of that which we desire and the giving of something else is not the rule, but rare and exceptional.²⁶⁵

For support he looks to Matthew 7:7. Bounds says about that text,

There is no elect company here, only the election of undismayed, importunate, never-fainting effort in prayer: "For to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." Nothing can be stronger than this declaration assuring us of the answer unless it be the promise upon which it is based, "And I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you."²⁶⁶

Bounds also looks to support this idea in the concept of God as a Father. He says that as a Father, God "finds His greatest pleasure in relieving the wants and granting the desires of His children."²⁶⁷ Yet, he does not stop with the idea of God's desire, but takes it to the point of an obligation when he says,

This Divine Teacher of prayer lays Himself out to make it clear and strong that God answers prayer, assuredly, certainly, inevitably; that it is the duty of the child to ask, and to press, and that the Father is obliged to answer, and to give for the asking It is a lesson of getting that for which we ask, of finding that for which we seek, and of entering the door at which we knock.²⁶⁸

In light of such confidence, Bounds concludes, "How many evils in this life can be escaped by prayer! How many fearful temporal calamities can be mitigated, if not wholly relieved, by prayer!"²⁶⁹

Inconsistencies. Unique to this book is a brief discussion Bounds provides as to the relationship between prayer and the will of God. Bounds describes the

²⁶⁵Ibid., 21.

²⁶⁶Ibid., 132.

²⁶⁷Ibid., 21.

²⁶⁸Ibid., 132.

²⁶⁹Ibid., 65.

relationship: “Prayer is [to] complement, make efficient and cooperate with God’s will, whose sovereign sway is to run parallel in extent and power with the atonement of Jesus Christ.”²⁷⁰ In that complementary role, he sees prayer as conformity, not submission to the will of God:

To pray in conformity—together with God—is a far higher and diviner way to pray than mere submission. At its best state, submission is non-rebellion, an acquiescence, which is good, but not the highest. The most powerful form of praying is positive, aggressive, mightily outgoing and creative. It molds things, changes things and brings things to pass.

Conformity means to “stand perfect and complete in the will of God.” It means to delight to do God’s will, to run with eagerness and ardour to carry out His plans. Conformity to God’s will involves submission, patient, loving, sweet submission. But submission in itself falls short of and does not include conformity. We may be submissive but not conformed. We may accept results against which we have warred, and even be resigned to them.

Conformity means to be one with God, both in result and in processes. Submission may be one with God in the end. Conformity is one with God in the beginning, and the end.²⁷¹

Bounds makes application of this idea of conformity to the lives of believers today in reconciling the idea of prayer and God’s will. He writes,

But how do I know that I am praying by the will of God? Every true attempt to pray is in response to the will of God. Bungling it may be and untutored by human teachers, but it is acceptable to God, because it is in obedience to His will. If I will give myself up to the inspiration of the Spirit of God, who commands me to pray, the details and the petitions of that praying will all fall into harmony with the will of him who wills that I should pray.²⁷²

It should be noted that he cites Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane as an exception to this pattern of praying in conformity with the will of God. Bounds says that it was “exceptional” in this one instance as Jesus was “constrained to pray against the will of God.”²⁷³

These unique ideas on prayer and the will of God that are confined to this book

²⁷⁰Ibid., 12.

²⁷¹Ibid., 117.

²⁷²Ibid., 12.

²⁷³Ibid., 116.

lead to inconsistencies in the ideas presented here. As already noted, Bounds believes we can pray to God about anything, and He is obligated to give us what we ask. However, in this book he now states,

If our hearts are true to God, we may plead with Him about His way, and seek relief from His painful processes. But the fierce fire of the crucible and the agonising victim with His agonising and submissive prayer, is not the normal and highest form of majestic and all-commanding prayer. We can cry out in the crucible, and can cry out against the flame which purifies and perfects us. God allows this, hears this, and answers this, not by taking us out of the crucible, nor by mitigating the fierceness of the flame, but by sending more than an angel to strengthen us.²⁷⁴

Bounds does not provide explanation as to how it can be true that God must answer every prayer with the very thing asked, yet also true that there are times when He does not do so because of His will. Perhaps the following quote best summarizes this tension in his thinking:

We can pray against God's will, as Moses did, to enter the Promised Land; as Paul did about the thorn in the flesh; as David did for his doomed child; as Hezekiah did to live. We must pray against God's will three times when the stroke is the heaviest, the sorrow is the keenest, and the grief is the deepest. We may lie prostrate all night, as David did, through the hours of darkness. We may pray for hours, as Jesus did, and in the darkness of many nights, not measuring the hours by the block, nor the nights by the calendar. It must all be, however, the prayer of submission.

When sorrow and the night and desolation of Gethsemane fall in heaviest gloom on us, we ought to submit patiently and tearfully, if need be, but sweetly and resignedly, without tremor, or doubt, to the cup pressed by a Father's hand to our lips.²⁷⁵

In addition, Bounds provides one more statement about prayers that are contrary to God's will:

We always pray according to the will of God when the Holy Spirit helps our praying. He prays through us only "according to the will of God." If our prayers are not according to the will of God they die in the presence of the Holy Spirit. He gives such prayers no countenance, no help. Discountenanced and unhelped by

²⁷⁴Ibid., 119.

²⁷⁵Ibid., 118-19.

Him, prayers not according to God's will, soon die out of every heart where the Holy Spirit dwells.²⁷⁶

Such is the first and only idea in his writings that there are prayers that are ineffective because they are not in accordance with God's will. One can only wonder how Bounds can hold to that statement alongside his claims that God "has promised to do the very thing for which we pray,"²⁷⁷ an idea that he repeatedly makes without any qualifications both here and in his other books.

One final inconsistency in this book also needs to be mentioned. At one point Bounds makes the statement that "God alone can choose the labourers and thrust them out, and this choosing He does not delegate to man or church."²⁷⁸ That idea is consistent with the statements above about the will of God, but is incompatible with his overall teaching that God does nothing except in answer to prayer.

Regardless of those inconsistencies in this book, the general theme remains, a theme similar to what is found in his previous books, namely that God has ordained prayer as the means by which He works in the world. Closely related, then, is the idea that a lack of prayer hinders His will, while an abundance of prayer leads Him to do what He otherwise would not do, even if it means changing His will since He cannot deny what He is asked. Such a view of the power of prayer in that understanding is seen when he declares, "Heaven will be fuller and brighter in glorious inhabitants, earth will be better prepared for its bridal day, and hell robbed of many of its victims, because we have lived to pray."²⁷⁹ Even in that one summary statement, a hint of church dominion theology once again appears as prayers not only enable God to move, but prepare the church for a future rule with Christ.

²⁷⁶Ibid., 142.

²⁷⁷Ibid., 13.

²⁷⁸Ibid., 60.

²⁷⁹Ibid., 25.

The Essentials of Prayer (1925)

The Essentials of Prayer, published in 1925, is the third of Bounds' books where Hodge lists himself as the editor.²⁸⁰ While not providing as much material on the issue of the relationship between providence and prayer as his other books, it does have several mentions of themes found in the previous works. Before addressing the major themes, it should be noted that Bounds also provides one hint of church dominion theology here. In speaking of troubles in this life, he describes them in terms of God's disciplinary process that comes from his moral government. He concludes, "This is a life of probation, where the human race is on probation. It is a season of trial."²⁸¹ While he does not elaborate, that one quote indicates that he sees this life as a training ground for something yet to come, an idea at the center of church dominion theology.

God needs men of prayer. Regarding the major themes of the book, the first to appear is the idea that God needs men, particularly men surrendered to Him as evident in their prayers. Bounds defines prayer here as an "intense and profound business which deals with God and His plans and purposes," and notes that "it takes whole-hearted men to do it."²⁸² However, he does not present prayer as just dealing with God, but as something that God needs. Bounds believes that the men who caused things to happen in church history were those "who were entirely given over to God in their praying." He continues, "God wants, and must have, all that there is in man in answering his prayers."²⁸³ Bounds even goes as far as describing prayer as something that will "bring to

²⁸⁰Edward M. Bounds, *The Essentials of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925).

²⁸¹*Ibid.*, 50.

²⁸²*Ibid.*, 13.

²⁸³*Ibid.*, 10.

the knowledge of God” the things that we need and want.²⁸⁴ Though limited, these two references are along similar lines to what was seen in previous books.

Prayer moves God to do what He otherwise would not do. A second theme in this particular book is the idea previously found that “prayer sets God to work,” doing what He otherwise would not do.²⁸⁵ In explaining the nature of prayer, he states, “It lays hold upon God and moves Him to interfere in the affairs of earth.”²⁸⁶ Bounds believes that prayer works in that way since it “reaches up to heaven, and brings heaven down to earth.”²⁸⁷ Bounds even includes the spread of the Gospel in this idea, teaching that the Gospel needs prayer for its power. He says, “The one [and] only condition which is to give world-wide power to this Gospel is prayer, and the spread of this Gospel will depend on prayer. The energy which was to give it marvelous momentum and conquering power over all its malignant and powerful foes is the energy of prayer.”²⁸⁸ Thus, he concludes, “The ingathering of the harvests of earth for the granaries of heaven is dependent on the prayers of God’s people.”²⁸⁹

Closely related is his idea that prayer is necessary for Christ’s will to be done on earth, including the promise in Psalm 2 of the nations for Christ’s inheritance. He writes,

The fortunes of the kingdom of Jesus Christ are not made by the feebleness of its foes. They are strong and bitter and have ever been strong, and ever will be. But mighty prayer—this is the one great spiritual force which will enable the Lord Jesus

²⁸⁴Ibid., 46.

²⁸⁵Ibid., 41.

²⁸⁶Ibid., 121.

²⁸⁷Ibid., 127.

²⁸⁸Ibid., 139.

²⁸⁹Ibid., 107.

Christ to enter into full possession of His kingdom, and secure for Him the heathen as His inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for His possession.

It is prayer which will enable Him to break His foes with a rod of iron, that will make these foes tremble in their pride and power, who are but frail potter's vessels, to be broken in pieces by one stroke of His hand. A person who can pray is the mightiest instrument Christ has in this world. A praying Church is stronger than all the gates of hell.

God's decree for the glory of His Son's kingdom is dependent on prayer for its fulfillment: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession." God the Father gives nothing to His Son only through prayer. And the reason why the Church has not received more in the missionary work in which it is engaged is the lack of prayer. "Ye have not, because ye ask not."²⁹⁰

Thus, Bounds can conclude, "Prayer holds in its grasp the movements of the race of man, and embraces the destinies of men for all eternity."²⁹¹ Perhaps the best summary of this theme and the previous theme about God's need of men of prayer, and the relationship between those two ideas, is found in the chapter on "Prayer and Consecration:"

It is the consecrated man who accomplished most by His praying. God must hear the man wholly given up to God. God cannot deny the requests of him who has renounced all claims to himself, and who has wholly dedicated himself to God and His service. This act of the consecrated man puts him "on praying ground and pleading terms" with God. It puts Him in reach of God in prayer. It places him where he can get hold of God, and where he can influence God to do things which He would not otherwise do. Consecration brings answers to prayer. God can depend upon consecrated men. God can afford to commit Himself in prayer to those who have fully committed themselves to God. He who gives all to God will get all from God. Having given all to God, he can claim all that God has for him.²⁹²

A lack of prayer hinders God's purposes. Closely related is the idea that without consecrated men of prayer, God's ordained will fails. Bounds first applies this idea to one's own personal life. After presenting trials as being something for our good, Bounds states, "These present afflictions can work for us only as we co-operate with God in prayer. As God works through prayer, it is only through this means He can accomplish His highest ends for us. His Providence works with greatest effect with His praying

²⁹⁰Ibid.

²⁹¹Ibid., 128.

²⁹²Ibid., 85.

ones.”²⁹³ Later, he says that God is in a person’s troubles and will work it for good “if you will but be patient, submissive, and prayerful.”²⁹⁴ Hence, he concludes that “if trouble fails in its mission, it is either because of prayerlessness or unbelief, or both.”²⁹⁵

However, Bounds believes that it is not just God’s will for a person that fails without prayer; he extends the idea to God’s Kingdom purposes. Bounds states, “As prayerless men are in His way, hinder Him, and prevent the success of His cause, so likewise unconsecrated men are useless to Him, and hinder Him in carrying out His gracious plans, and in executing His noble purposes in redemption.”²⁹⁶ He later states even more strongly, “It may be stated as an axiom: That the work of God fails as a general rule, more for the lack of grace, than for the want of gifts And a lack of grace flows from a lack of praying. Great grace comes from great praying.”²⁹⁷

Inconsistencies. Rare in Bounds’ writings are mentions of providence.

However, *The Essentials of Prayer* does provide another rare insight into his views about the topic. Here he provides a brief definition of providence: “God is governing this world, with its intelligent beings, for His own glory and for their good.”²⁹⁸ Beyond that definition, the remainder of references to providence in this book all relate to troubles or trials. In these references, Bounds presents troubles as something God uses in His providence for the good of His people. There is no mention of praying to remove those troubles. Instead, he now presents a more complacent approach of accepting the troubles as being from God. For example, he says,

²⁹³Ibid., 62.

²⁹⁴Ibid., 68.

²⁹⁵Ibid., 59.

²⁹⁶Ibid., 87.

²⁹⁷Ibid., 78.

²⁹⁸Ibid., 69.

But when we survey all the sources from which trouble comes, it all resolves itself into two invaluable truths: First, that our troubles at last are of the Lord. They come with His consent. He is in all of them, and is interested in us when they press and bruise us. And secondly, that our troubles, no matter what the cause, whether of ourselves, or men or devils, or even God Himself, we are warranted in taking them to God in prayer; in praying over them, and in seeking to get the greatest spiritual benefits out of them.

Praying in the time of trouble tends to bring the spirit into perfect subjection to the will of God, to cause the will to be conformed to God's will, and saves from all murmurings over our lot and delivers from everything like a rebellious heart or a spirit critical of the Lord. Prayer sanctifies trouble to our highest good. Prayer so prepares the heart that it softens under the disciplining hand of God.²⁹⁹

Similarly, Bounds states, "In God's dealings with [Israel], we find what is called a history of Divine Providence, and providence always embraces troubles."³⁰⁰ Following that example, he exhorts his readers to remember that "the final glory of heaven" is "the reward of all who patiently endure the ills of Divine Providence."³⁰¹ This connection between God's will and troubles, and how God utilizes them, is best seen in the chapter on "Prayer and Trouble." There, Bounds writes,

Trouble is God's servant, doing His will unless He is defeated in the execution of that will. Trouble is under the control of Almighty God, and is one of His most efficient agents in fulfilling His purposes and in perfecting His saints. God's hand is in every trouble which breaks into the lives of men. Not that He directly and arbitrarily orders every unpleasant experience of life. Not that He is personally responsible for every painful and afflicting thing which comes into the lives of His people. But no trouble is ever turned loose in this world and comes into the life of saint or sinner, but comes with Divine permission, and is allowed to exist and do its painful work with God's hand in it or on it, carrying out His gracious designs of redemption.

All things are under Divine control. Trouble is neither above God nor beyond His control. It is not something in life independent of God. No matter from what source it springs nor whence it arises, God is sufficiently wise and able to lay His hand upon it without assuming responsibility for its origin, and work it into His plans and purposes concerning the highest welfare of His saints. This is the explanation of that gracious statement in Romans, so often quoted, but the depths of whose meaning has rarely been sounded, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

²⁹⁹Ibid., 58.

³⁰⁰Ibid., 52.

³⁰¹Ibid., 62.

Even the evils brought about by the forces of nature are His servants, carrying out His will and fulfilling His designs.³⁰²

It is worth noting here that this connection between trouble and providence presents a view of the believer's response to trials that is not consistent with previous writings, or even other statements in this book. Whereas Bounds has mentioned that God is obliged to answer every prayer as asked by a person set apart for Him, he now presents prayer as embracing trouble rather than seeking to change those plans of God. For example, he says, "If trouble is of the Lord, then the most natural thing to do is to carry the trouble to the Lord, and seek grace and patience and submission. It is the time to inquire in the trouble, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'"³⁰³ Bounds continues,

Prayer in the time of trouble brings comfort, help, hope, and blessings, which, while not removing the trouble, enables the saint the better to bear it and submit to the will of God. Prayer opens the eyes to see God's hand in trouble. Prayer does not interpret God's providences, but it does justify them and recognise God in them. Prayer enables us to see wise ends in trouble. Prayer in trouble drives us away from unbelief, saves us from doubt, and delivers from all vain and foolish questionings because of our painful experiences.³⁰⁴

Such an embrace of God's will without pleading to change it appears to be either a change in his thinking here or an inconsistency within his writings. Regardless, the overall theme of the book persists, namely that God needs men of prayer who can lead Him to do things He otherwise would not do so that His purposes, both for the individual and for His Kingdom, can be accomplished.

The Necessity of Prayer (1929)

The Necessity of Prayer, published in 1929, is the next to last of Bounds' books, and it again lists Hodge as the editor.³⁰⁵ It has much in common with *The*

³⁰²Ibid., 49.

³⁰³Ibid., 53.

³⁰⁴Ibid., 54.

³⁰⁵Edward M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929).

Essentials of Prayer in that it makes brief references to similar themes found in the previous books and in the nature of the inconsistencies that appear. Those themes will again include the ideas that God needs men of prayer, God cannot deny what those men ask, and their prayers will determine what He does.

God needs men of prayer. Bounds returns to the idea that God needs men of prayer to accomplish His purposes. He states that the “Word of God is made effectual and operative, by the process and practice of prayer.”³⁰⁶ Later he repeats the same idea:

Prayer opens the way for the Word of God to run without let or hindrance, and creates the atmosphere which is favourable to the word accomplishing its purpose. Prayer puts wheels under God’s Word, and gives wings to the angel of the Lord “having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” Prayer greatly helps the Word of the Lord.³⁰⁷

Similarly, Bounds believes that the promises of God require prayer in order to be fulfilled as seen when he says, “By prayer, we bring these promises of God’s holy will into the realm of the actual and the real.”³⁰⁸ Perhaps the best summary of his view on this topic is found when speaking about the Bible. He writes,

God’s Word is a record of prayer—of praying men and their achievements, of the Divine warrant of prayer and of the encouragement given to those who pray. No one can read the instances, commands, examples, multiform statements which concern themselves with prayer, without realizing that the cause of God, and the success of His work in this world is committed to prayer; that praying men have been God’s viceregents on earth; that prayerless men have never been used of Him.³⁰⁹

It should also be noted there that Bounds refers to praying men as vice-regents. Such terminology is again a hint of a church dominion view of providence as God’s people are being trained for a future rule with Christ.

³⁰⁶Ibid., 122.

³⁰⁷Ibid., 130.

³⁰⁸Ibid., 125.

³⁰⁹Ibid., 119.

God cannot deny what is asked in prayer. Continuing an idea first seen in *Purpose and Prayer* and elaborated on in *The Possibilities of Prayer*, Bounds again teaches that God will do the very thing that a believer asks. He says,

As the faith is specific, so the answer likewise will be definite: “He shall have whatsoever he saith.” Faith and prayer select the things, and God commits Himself to do the very things which faith and persevering prayer nominate, and petition Him to accomplish.

The American Revised Version renders the twenty-fourth verse of the eleventh chapter of Mark, thus: “Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Perfect faith has always in its keeping what perfect prayer asks for. How large and unqualified is the area of operation—the “All things whatsoever!” How definite and specific the promise—“Ye shall have them!”³¹⁰

Bounds is emphatic here that the answer will be exactly what is requested, not a refusal or a substitute. He continues,

The giving is not to be something other than the things prayed for, but the actual things sought and named. “He shall have whatsoever he saith,” It is all imperative, “He shall have.” The granting is to be unlimited, both in quality and in quantity.³¹¹

Just a few sentences later, Bounds continues, “If the order on God be made clear, specific and definite, God will fill it, exactly in accordance with the presented terms.”³¹² He specifies, “The giving is not to be something other than the things prayed for, but the actual things sought and named.”³¹³ Bounds does provide support for his view toward the end of the book:

“All things, whatsoever” are received by prayer, because “all things whatsoever” are promised. There is no limit to the provisions, including 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.”³¹⁴

³¹⁰Ibid., 20.

³¹¹Ibid., 21.

³¹²Ibid.

³¹³Ibid.

³¹⁴Ibid., 124.

Consistent with previous writings, Bounds stresses the need for importunity in praying in order to receive what one desires. Bounds states, “God stands pledged to give us the desire of our hearts in proportion to the fervency of spirit we exhibit, when seeking His face in prayer.”³¹⁵ Later he writes, “A limit is set to His tarrying, by the importunate praying of His people, and the answer richly given.”³¹⁶ The example he uses again for the necessity of such importunity to receive an answer is that of Abraham praying for Sodom.³¹⁷

Prayer determines what God will do. While noted in previous books that Bounds believes prayer changes the purposes of God, in this book he becomes more direct in stating the idea in terms of prayer determining what God will do. Bounds directly states that idea: “Faith and prayer select the subjects for petition, thereby determining what God is to do.”³¹⁸ As already noted, he speaks of praying as making an “order on God.”³¹⁹ Such statements are stronger than those found about this same idea in previous books. Bounds believes such orders on God are possible because “God turns Himself over to the will of His people,” and cites John 15:7 as evidence, which says “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”³²⁰ As an example of this principle in action, Bounds cites the prayer of King Hezekiah that he has cited in previous books:

It was a potent plea which changed God’s decree that he should die and not live. The stricken ruler called upon God to remember how that he had walked before Him

³¹⁵Ibid., 58.

³¹⁶Ibid., 68.

³¹⁷Ibid., 65.

³¹⁸Ibid., 21.

³¹⁹Ibid.

³²⁰Ibid., 126.

in truth, and with a perfect heart. With God, this counted. He hearkened to the petition, and, as a result, death found his approach to Hezekiah barred for fifteen years.³²¹

Inconsistencies. As with the previous books, there are several points of inconsistency. First, Bounds now adds a condition to receiving whatever one asks. In his previous writings, the promise of receiving what one asks of God was presented as unconditional. Here, he adds the condition of obedience. He writes,

If Jesus dwell at the fountain of my life; if the currents of His life have displaced and superseded all self-currents; if implicit obedience to Him be the inspiration and force of every movement of my life, then He can safely commit the praying to my will, and pledge Himself, by an obligation as profound as His own nature, that whatsoever is asked shall be granted.³²²

Interestingly, that condition is mentioned in the first chapter about faith, not in connection with the references cited about God doing the very thing a believer asks. Later, he states the same idea when he says, “Loving obedience puts us where we can ‘ask anything in His name,’ with the assurance that ‘He will do it.’”³²³ In addition, in one other place in this book he mentions faith as a condition for the guaranteed answer. Bounds states, “An answer to prayer is conditional upon the amount of faith that goes to the petition.”³²⁴

Second, Bounds has one passing reference to God not answering prayers that presumably met the conditions outlined above. Bounds says,

We have need, too, to give thought to that mysterious fact of prayer—the certainty that there will be delays, denials, and seeming failures, in connection with its exercise. We are to prepare for these, to brook them, and cease not in our urgent praying.³²⁵

³²¹Ibid., 104.

³²²Ibid., 17.

³²³Ibid., 103.

³²⁴Ibid., 70.

³²⁵Ibid., 76.

Unfortunately, he provides no explanation as to how it can be true that God is required to answer prayers as requested from obedient saints while also true that there can be denials to such prayers.

Finally, Bounds makes reference here to submitting to the divine will. He states that praying must come from a clean heart and from a life that has “come into submission to the Divine will.”³²⁶ Unfortunately, he does not provide any explanation as to how that is consistent with what he upholds in the example of Hezekiah and the accompanying teaching to pray to change God’s will. The only insight into how he holds to both ideas is in chapter twelve when he differentiates prayers of faith from prayers of petition:

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.³²⁷

Unfortunately, Bounds provides no further elaboration into this distinction here or in any of his other writings. These paragraphs are the only indication in his thought of such a distinction, and do not provide enough material or support, including the scriptural warrant he references, to draw conclusions as to what he really believes on that distinction.

³²⁶Ibid., 88.

³²⁷Ibid., 121-22.

The Weapon of Prayer (1931)

The Weapon of Prayer, first published in 1931, is the final book of Bounds' writings that Hodge published.³²⁸ It also ends the series of eleven books for which Bounds is known.³²⁹ In it, Bounds discusses issues related to providence and prayer in deeper ways than any of his previous writings. It is on the pages of this final book that Bounds makes his boldest claims regarding his view of God's providence and how prayer impacts it. It is also in this book that Bounds provides more repetition of his key ideas than are found in any one of his other books. Consequently, in completing the analysis of his published books, *The Weapon of Prayer* is a fitting place to end as it provides an outstanding summary of Bounds' theological views on the issues discussed.

God needs men of prayer. As repeatedly seen in his other books, one of the main themes in *The Weapon of Prayer* is the idea that God needs men of prayer. Here Bounds provides many references throughout the book to the idea. He directly states that "God needs prayer" as "it is indispensable to God's work in this world."³³⁰ Bounds believes that our action of prayer comes in response to recognizing God's need. He states, "Prayer is the sense of God's need and the call for God's help to supply that need."³³¹ Since God needs that prayer, Bounds can conclude, "All things and everything are dependent on the measure of men's praying."³³² Again, Bounds applies the "all

³²⁸Edward M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer: A Study in Christian Warfare*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931).

³²⁹As listed in the bibliography, Darrel King has published in book format additional writings of Bounds. However, those materials are all excerpts from Bounds' editorials at his time as Assistant Editor of the *Christian Advocate*. The material from those books will not be considered for this project since the original newspaper editorials from which those books draw have been studied in full and will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

³³⁰*Ibid.*, 30.

³³¹*Ibid.*, 12.

³³²*Ibid.*, 51.

things” even to God’s redemptive causes. He states, “Prayer is the great, universal force to advance God’s cause; the reverence which hallows God’s name; the ability to do God’s will, and the establishment of God’s kingdom in the hearts of the children of men.”³³³ That idea goes as far as the spread of the Word of God, as seen when Bounds writes,

To no other energy is the promise of God committed as to that of prayer. Upon no other force are the purposes of God so dependent as this one of prayer. The Word of God dilates on the results and necessity of prayer. The work of God stays or advances as prayer puts forth its strength.³³⁴

Bounds repeats the same idea later when he writes, “And so the Word of the Lord is dependent for its rapid spread and for its full, and most glorious success in prayer.”³³⁵ In that context, Bounds does provide a brief explanation as to why he believes it is so. He states, “The Word of God is inseparably linked with prayer. The two are conjoined, twins from birth, and twins by life.”³³⁶

If God is dependent on such prayer, then He is dependent upon those who pray. Bounds makes that conclusion, particularly in terms of church leaders, and describes it in terms of an axiom, saying, “It may be laid down as an axiom, that God needs, first of all, leaders in the Church who will be first in prayer.”³³⁷ Elsewhere, Bounds echoes that same idea by saying about church leaders who pray, “God depends upon them, employs them and blesses them.”³³⁸ Again, he says, “God’s business requires men who are versed in the business of praying.”³³⁹ Bounds applies his idea to Jesus’

³³³Ibid., 30.

³³⁴Ibid., 23.

³³⁵Ibid., 119.

³³⁶Ibid.

³³⁷Ibid., 46.

³³⁸Ibid., 12.

³³⁹Ibid., 49.

disciples and comes to the conclusion that Peter, James, and John were chosen by Jesus to be closer to Him because they were more committed to prayer than the others:

So averse was the general body of Christ's disciples to prayer, having so little taste for it, and having so little sympathy with Him in the deep things of prayer, and its mightier struggles, that the Master had to select a circle of three more apt scholars—Peter, James, and John—who had more of sympathy, and relish for this divine work, and take them aside that they might learn the lesson of prayer. These men were nearer to Jesus, fuller of sympathy, and more helpful to Him because they were more prayerful.³⁴⁰

Bounds does not limit his application to only the disciples; he also applies it to believers today. In the chapter on “Modern Examples of Prayer,” he concludes, “God has not confined Himself to Old and New Testament times in employing praying men as His agents in furthering His cause on earth, and He has placed Himself under obligation to answer their prayers just as much as He did the saints of old.”³⁴¹ Such people become “God's real agents in His world, through whom He could effectually work, because they were praying men.”³⁴² Bounds believes that God tells such praying ones,

You are on earth to carry on My cause. I am in heaven, the Lord of all, the Maker of all, the Holy One of all. Now whatever you need for My cause, ask me and I will do it. Shape the future by your prayers, and all that you need for present supplies, command Me. I made heaven and earth, and all things in them. Ask largely. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.³⁴³

God's need for prayer and for men who pray is not an accident, according to Bounds. He believes it is part of God's ordained plan for the world. In noting that God rules the world and that “His hand is ever on the throttle of human affairs,” Bounds qualifies it by saying, “He rules the world just as He rules the Church by prayer.”³⁴⁴ In addition, Bounds writes that God's choice to rule the world through prayer is intentional.

³⁴⁰Ibid., 83.

³⁴¹Ibid., 129.

³⁴²Ibid., 17.

³⁴³Ibid., 24.

³⁴⁴Ibid., 9.

Providing a summary of this idea, Bounds explains,

Praying men are a necessity in carrying out the divine plan for the salvation of men. God has made it so. He it is who established prayer as a divine ordinance, and this implies men are to do the praying. So that praying men are a necessity in the world. The fact that so often God has employed men of prayer to accomplish His ends clearly proves the proposition. It is altogether unnecessary to name all the instances where God used the prayers of righteous men to carry out His gracious designs. Time and space are too limited for the list.³⁴⁵

Prayer moves God to do what He otherwise would not do. A second theme found in previous books that appears strongly in *The Weapon of Prayer* is the idea that prayer moves God to do things which He would not do if there was not that prayer.

Bounds repeats this idea in many places and in many ways throughout this book. For example, he states that prayer “brings God into the world to work and save and bless.”³⁴⁶

Later, he elaborates,

When we say that prayer puts God to work, it is simply to say that man has it in his power by prayer to move God to work in His own way among men, in which way He would not work if prayer was not made. Thus while prayer moves God to work, at the same time God puts prayer to work.³⁴⁷

Again, Bounds says, “Prayer in the hands of men moves God to intervene and do things, which He would not otherwise do if prayer was not used as the instrument.”³⁴⁸ Similarly, he says, “The Apostles were under the law of prayer, which law recognizes God as God, and depends upon Him to do for them what He would not do without prayer.”³⁴⁹ While not providing direct scriptural evidence, he does provide one comment on the scriptural basis of his idea:

³⁴⁵Ibid., 17.

³⁴⁶Ibid., 12.

³⁴⁷Ibid., 21.

³⁴⁸Ibid., 37.

³⁴⁹Ibid., 14.

Everywhere in His Word God conditions His actions on prayer. Everywhere in His Word His actions and attitude are shaped by prayer. To quote all the Scriptural passages which prove the immediate, direct and personal relation of prayer to God, would be to transfer whole passages of the Scripture to this study.³⁵⁰

Bounds provides additional emphasis on this idea not found in other books. In addition to the repetition of the idea throughout the book, he also says, “Nothing is clearer when the Bible is consulted than that Almighty God is brought directly into the things of this world by the praying of His people.”³⁵¹ A few pages later he continues that idea: “God seems to have taken great pains in His divine revelation to men to show how He interferes in earth’s affairs in answer to the praying of His saints.”³⁵²

It should be noted here that one inconsistency does appear in this book. After the statement mentioned above that “nothing is clearer” from Scripture than this idea, Bounds then references Jonah, specifically how God followed him “by a strange providence.”³⁵³ Here he appears to note an exception to the normal pattern requiring prayer for God to move, but does not provide the reader with any explanation as to why God would use a strange providence to pursue Jonah apart from people interceding for Him to do so.

As previously seen, Bounds makes the case that God limiting Himself to do things only as a result of prayer is part of His ordained plan for the world. In speaking about prayer as being necessary for carrying on God’s work, he concludes, “God has made it so.”³⁵⁴ In a more extensive explanation, he says,

God has of His own motion placed Himself under the law of prayer, and has obligated Himself to answer the prayers of men. He has ordained prayer as a means whereby He will do things through men as they pray, which He would not otherwise

³⁵⁰Ibid., 25.

³⁵¹Ibid., 34.

³⁵²Ibid., 36.

³⁵³Ibid., 34.

³⁵⁴Ibid., 12.

do. Prayer is a specific divine appointment, an ordinance of heaven, whereby God purposes to carry out His gracious designs on earth and to execute and make efficient the plan of salvation.³⁵⁵

On the very next page, Bounds repeats the idea:

God has so placed Himself subject to prayer that by reason of His own appointment, He is induced to work among men in a way in which He does not work if men do not pray. Prayer lays hold upon God and influences Him to work. This is the meaning of prayer as it concerns God. This is the doctrine of prayer, or else there is nothing whatever in prayer. Prayer puts God to work in all things prayed for.³⁵⁶

Bounds again concludes that God's will can occur only if people pray. For example, he states, "Prayer is such a condition without which the graces, the salvation and the good of God are not bestowed on men."³⁵⁷ He applies that idea to the Gospel message itself. For example, he describes how prayer "puts wings on the Gospel and power into it" so that "it moves forward with conquering force and rapid advance."³⁵⁸ Similarly, he states that prayer "takes the shackles off of the message, and gives it a chance to run straight to the hearts of sinners and saints alike" as it "opens the way, clears the track, furnishes a free course."³⁵⁹ Bounds even concludes that God's very plans for redemption are contingent upon prayer for their success, as seen when he says,

God's great plan for the redemption of mankind is as much bound up to prayer for its prosperity and success as when the decree creating the movement was issued from the Father, bearing on its frontage the imperative, universal and eternal condition, "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession."³⁶⁰

After that reference to Psalm 2, he concludes regarding God's plans for human redemption that "all things and everything are dependent on the measure of men's

³⁵⁵Ibid., 21.

³⁵⁶Ibid., 22.

³⁵⁷Ibid., 30.

³⁵⁸Ibid., 98.

³⁵⁹Ibid., 115.

³⁶⁰Ibid., 50.

praying.”³⁶¹ Later he comes to the same conclusion when he says, “How difficult it appears to be for the Church to understand that the whole scheme of redemption depends upon men of prayer.”³⁶² As he concluded in *Preacher and Prayer*, he again concludes here that the timing of the return of Christ is connected to the prayer, or lack thereof, of the church. He says, “If the preachers of the twentieth century will learn well the lesson of prayer, and use it fully in all its exhaustless efficiency, the millennium will come to its noon ere the century closes.”³⁶³

To support this idea that prayer moves God to do what He otherwise would not do, Bounds provides two examples from Scripture. First, he cites the exodus to conclude, “God’s movement to bring Israel from Egyptian bondage had its inception in prayer. Thus early did God and the human race put the fact of prayer as one of the granite forces upon which His world movements were to be based.”³⁶⁴ No elaboration or further mention of this example can be found here or anywhere else in his writings. Second, he again returns to the issue of Abraham’s prayer for Sodom as a “representative case illustrative of Old Testament praying, and disclosing God’s mode of working through prayer.”³⁶⁵ He notes that for Abraham, “The purpose of God must be changed. God’s decree for the destruction of this evil city’s inhabitants must be revoked.” Thus, Abraham “sets himself to change God’s purpose and to save Sodom.”³⁶⁶ However, Bounds attributes the failure of Abraham to change God’s purposes as a failure to ask

³⁶¹Ibid., 51.

³⁶²Ibid., 71.

³⁶³Ibid., 100.

³⁶⁴Ibid., 10.

³⁶⁵Ibid., 28.

³⁶⁶Ibid., 27.

enough because of his “optimistic view of the piety of Sodom.”³⁶⁷ Thus, Bounds concludes, “Abraham left off asking before God left off granting”³⁶⁸ as “God stays and answers as long as Abraham stays and asks.”³⁶⁹ Bounds further speculates, “If [Abraham] did not save Sodom by his importunate praying, the purposes of God were stayed for a season, and possibly had not Abraham’s goodness of heart over-estimated the number of pious people in that devoted city, God might have saved it had he reduced his figures still further.”³⁷⁰

God cannot deny what is asked in prayer. Another recurring theme that appears here is the idea that God will give to people the very thing for which they ask in prayer. It should be noted that in this book, Bounds describes prayer as including asking for things we desire. He says, “In Bible terminology prayer means calling upon God for things we desire, asking things of God.”³⁷¹ He elsewhere says that prayer “puts God to work in all things prayed for.”³⁷² However, it is not just inference from those quotes that God will give a person whatever he or she asks for in prayer. Bounds directly states, “Persevering prayer always wins; God yields to importunity and fidelity. He has not heart to say No [*sic*] to such praying as Moses did.”³⁷³ In addition, in a rare instance of an extensive quote from another person, Bounds cites Charley Finney in his final page of the book to support his view that God will give the person the very thing for which they

³⁶⁷Ibid., 28.

³⁶⁸Ibid.

³⁶⁹Ibid., 29.

³⁷⁰Ibid., 28.

³⁷¹Ibid., 26.

³⁷²Ibid., 23.

³⁷³Ibid., 19.

ask.³⁷⁴ He attributes the following to Finney:

“When God has specially promised the thing,” said Charles G. Finney, “we are bound to believe we shall receive it when we pray for it. You have no right to put in an ‘if,’ and say, ‘Lord, *if* it be Thy will, give me Thy Holy Spirit.’ This is to insult God. To put an ‘if’ in God’s promise when God has put none there, is tantamount to charging God with being insincere. It is like saying, ‘O God, if Thou art in earnest in making these promises, grant us the blessing we pray for.’”³⁷⁵

Bounds does reference two Scripture passages to provide support for this view. In looking to John 14 and 15, he concludes,

Jesus Christ commits Himself to the force of prayer. “Whatsoever ye ask in My Name,” He says, “that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it.” And again: “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done for you.”³⁷⁶

However, he does not provide any explanation on those passages here. The second scriptural support to which Bounds turns is the passage he references many times throughout his books; he again appeals to Isaiah 45, focusing on the phrase “command ye me.”³⁷⁷ After referencing it for the second time in this book, he concludes with the following sentence fragment: “As though God places Himself in the hands and at the disposal of His people who pray—as indeed He does.”³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴While Bounds does not provide any reference material for this quote, it comes from Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., 1835), 66. Bounds makes minor revisions to the wording of the quote, as well as removes a sentence from it. The original quote appears in the context of Finney discussing the idea that “faith must always have evidence” (ibid., 66). The first evidence that Finney provides to argue that a person will receive what is asked for in prayer is this quote that Bounds references. In its original form from Finney it reads, “Suppose that God has *especially promised* the thing. As for instance, God says he is more ready to give his Holy Spirit to them that *ask* him, than parents are to give bread to their children. Here we are bound to believe that we shall receive it when we pray for it. You have no right to put in an *if*, and say, ‘Lord, *if it be thy will*, give us thy Holy Spirit.’ This is to insult God. To put an *if* into God’s promise, where God has put none, is tantamount to charging God with being insincere. It is like saying, ‘O God, if thou art in earnest in making these promises, grant us the blessing we pray for’” (ibid.).

³⁷⁵Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 157.

³⁷⁶Ibid., 23.

³⁷⁷Interestingly, for this Isa 45 passage that Bounds uses so frequently in his works, he mistakenly cites it here as Isa 46 (ibid., 31).

³⁷⁸Ibid., 67.

A lack of prayer hinders God's plans and God Himself. Another recurring theme throughout Bounds' writings has been the idea that a lack of prayer hinders God. He repeats that theme in *The Weapon of Prayer*. For example, he says, "God is restrained in doing because we are restrained by reason of our non-praying."³⁷⁹ In a more lengthy description that appears to give equal weight to God's power and man's praying, Bounds explains,

The progress to consummation of God's work in this world has two basic principles—God's ability to give and man's ability to ask. Failure in either one is fatal to the success of God's work on earth. God's inability to do or to give would put an end to redemption. Man's failure to pray would, just as surely, set a limit to the plan. But God's ability to do and to give has never failed and *cannot* fail; but man's ability to ask can fail, and often does. Therefore the slow progress which is being made toward the realization of a world won for Christ lies entirely with man's limited asking. There is need for the entire Church of God, on the earth, to betake itself to prayer. The Church upon its knees would bring heaven upon the earth.³⁸⁰

Thus, the limit on God comes from people. Bounds concludes, "The Lord our God is not straitened within Himself, but He *is* straitened in us, by reason of our little faith and weak praying."³⁸¹

The application of this principle is that if God's people fail in the asking, His plans will certainly fail. Bounds states,

We must believe that the divine record of the facts about prayer and God are given in order that we might be constantly reminded of Him, and be ever refreshed by the faith that God holds His Church for the entire world, and that God's purpose will be fulfilled. His plans concerning the Church will most assuredly and inevitably be carried out. That record of God has been given without doubt that we may be deeply impressed that the prayers of God's saints are a great factor, a supreme factor, in carrying forward God's work, with facility and in time. When the Church is in the condition of prayer God's cause always flourishes and His kingdom on earth always triumphs. When the Church fails to pray, God's cause decays and evil of every kind prevails. In other words, God works through the prayers of His people, and when they fail Him at this point, decline and deadness ensure. It is according to the divine plans that spiritual prosperity comes through the prayer-

³⁷⁹Ibid., 58.

³⁸⁰Ibid., 57.

³⁸¹Ibid., 66.

channel. Praying saints are God's agents for carrying on His saving and providential work on the earth. If His agents fail Him, neglecting to pray, then His work fails.³⁸²

Elsewhere Bounds repeats this idea when he notes that "God's cause does not suffer through lack of divine ability, but by reason of the lack of prayer-ability in man."³⁸³

Bounds provides several examples in this book of how God's plan fails. He notes that a lack of prayer leads not only to backsliding, but also to God's bigger plans being thwarted. He says,

Failure to pray has been the baneful, inevitable cause of backsliding and estrangement from God. Prayerless men have stood in the way of God fulfilling His Word and doing His will on earth. They tie the divine hands and interfere with God in His gracious designs. As praying men are a help to God, so prayerless men are a hindrance to Him.³⁸⁴

He also notes that "prayerlessness in the pew is a serious hindrance to the running of the Word of the Lord."³⁸⁵ Similarly, he states, "Non-praying officials stood in the way of the Word preached, and became veritable stumbling blocks in the way of the Word, definitely preventing its reaching the hearts of the unsaved."³⁸⁶

However, Bounds takes these ideas to a new level in this final book. In *The Weapon of Prayer*, Bounds now indicates a belief that God's very providence and power will fail if His people do not pray. Bounds writes that "prayer enthrones God as sovereign and elevates Jesus Christ to sit with Him."³⁸⁷ Thus, he believes that "had Christian preachers used to its full the power of prayer, long ere this the 'kingdoms of this world would have become the kingdom of God and of His Christ."³⁸⁸

³⁸²Ibid., 11.

³⁸³Ibid., 50.

³⁸⁴Ibid., 33.

³⁸⁵Ibid., 114.

³⁸⁶Ibid., 115.

³⁸⁷Ibid., 93.

³⁸⁸Ibid.

Even more boldly, Bounds now claims that a lack of prayer prevents God from exercising His sovereign rule. He states,

Prayer, with its antecedents and attendants, is the one and only condition of the final triumph of the Gospel Little and poor praying has weakened Christ's power on earth, postponed the glorious results of His reign, and retired God from His sovereignty. Prayer puts God's work in His hands, and keeps it there.³⁸⁹

The implications of the belief that a lack of prayer “retired God from His sovereignty” are staggering, and Bounds appears to recognize the implications of that belief. He states regarding one's own life, “He who does not pray, therefore, robs himself of God's help and places God where He cannot help man.”³⁹⁰ However, Bounds does not stop there. Not only is God unable to help that person who does not pray, but such a lack of prayer prevents God from intervening more broadly in the world. Bounds states,

If prayer puts God to work on earth, then, by the same token, prayerlessness rules God out of the world's affairs, and prevents Him from working. And if prayer moves God to work in this world's affairs, then prayerlessness excludes God from everything concerning men, and leaves man on earth the mere creature of circumstances, at the mercy of blind fate or without help of any kind from God. It leaves man in this world with its tremendous responsibilities and its difficult problems, and with all of its sorrows, burdens and afflictions, without any God at all.³⁹¹

To state that a lack of prayer hinders God to the point that people are at the mercy of blind fate is a new level of his idea, a level not seen in his earlier books. These new ideas would appear to indicate that Bounds believes that prayer trumps providence in his thinking of the “twin doctrines,” as he previously termed them.

Church dominion ideas. While there have been a few glimpses of church dominion ideas in the previous books, there are more seen here than previously. The

³⁸⁹Ibid., 24.

³⁹⁰Ibid., 9.

³⁹¹Ibid., 22.

most helpful insight here is found in Bounds' discussion of prayer and dispensations. He writes,

The dispensation of the Holy Spirit is a dispensation of prayer, in a preeminent sense. Here prayer has an essential and vital relation. Without depreciating the possibilities and necessities of prayer in all the preceding dispensations of God in the world it must be declared that it is in this latter dispensation that the engagements and demands of prayer are given their greatest authority, their possibilities rendered unlimited and their necessity insuperable.³⁹²

Not only is prayer given a special place in this dispensation, but it is given that place specifically for use by the church to train people to pray. Bounds notes, "The work of our Lord, while here on earth, as well as of the Apostle Paul was, by teaching and example, to develop men of prayer, to whom the future of the church should be committed."³⁹³ While the majority of Bounds' references in previous books to Isaiah 45:11 were applied to individuals, he now applies it to the church. In speaking of the phrase "command ye me," he concludes, "[God] actually places Himself at the command of praying preachers and a praying Church."³⁹⁴

Bounds also teaches here that God's ordained plan of training the church to pray is designed to fulfill His plans on earth, another application consistent with church dominion theology. As previously noted, Bounds believes that "the whole scheme of redemption depends upon men of prayer."³⁹⁵ Bounds provides a statement that helps interpret that idea in light of a church dominion view when he says that prayers provide people a "high partnership with God" whereby they function as "His viceregents on earth."³⁹⁶ Elaborating on that idea, he writes,

³⁹²Ibid., 66.

³⁹³Ibid. 71.

³⁹⁴Ibid., 94.

³⁹⁵Ibid., 71.

³⁹⁶Ibid., 60.

Jesus Christ, God's Leader and Commander of His people, lived and suffered under this law of prayer. All His personal conquests in His life on earth were won by obedience to this law, while the conquests which have been won by His representatives since He ascended to heaven, were gained only when this condition of prayer was heartily and fully met. Christ was under this one prayer condition. His saints are under it, and even His angels are under it.³⁹⁷

These ideas will be discussed more in the following chapter about the church dominion model and how Bounds' views are consistent with it.

Bounds' Newspaper Editorials

In addition to Bounds' eleven books, there is an additional wealth of Bounds' writings available from his time as Assistant Editor of the *Christian Advocate* newspaper.³⁹⁸ Between June 7, 1890, and May 31, 1894, Bounds provided a column most weeks for the newspaper.³⁹⁹ Those columns, though lacking in apparent planning as to

³⁹⁷Ibid., 88.

³⁹⁸As noted in chap. 2, Bounds also wrote newspaper editorials for *The Saint Louis Christian Advocate* for eight years, beginning in 1883. Unfortunately, those editorials appear to be lost to history. Though some of the newspapers printed prior to 1879 are available on microfilm, I was unable to locate any from Bounds' years there. In addition, King has spent countless hours trying to locate those newspapers as well, but has been unable to do so. He speculates that since it was a regional paper, instead of a national paper like the *Christian Advocate*, its records were not well preserved (Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 4 January 2013).

³⁹⁹It should be noted here that the columns attributed to Bounds appear on p. 8 of each edition of the *Christian Advocate*, a page that is simply labeled as "Editorial Paragraphs." Apart from a few exceptions, Bounds' name does not appear anywhere on that page. Since there are additional "Editorial Paragraphs" on p. 1, the question must be raised as to how one knows that this material is Bounds' own writings. Both of the current biographers of Bounds, Lyle Dorsett and Darrell King, attribute in their books the material on p. 8 to Bounds. However, I wanted to become persuaded for myself that the material really was from Bounds. Upon closely studying each article on p. 8 from the date ranges mentioned where Bounds' name appears on the top of the first page as Assistant Editor, I observed the following:

First, in the first issue where Bounds' name appears in his role at the newspaper, he introduces himself on p. 8 (Bounds, "Editorial on 7 June 1890," *Christian Advocate*, 7 June 1890, 8). He also signs his name to the article on that page in the issues for December 15, 21, and 29, 1892.

Second, he provides historical references that are consistent with what has been discussed in chap. 2. In one issue he states on p. 8, "When I was an evangelist, I labored in a Church that had enjoyed many revivals" (Bounds, "A Working Church," *Christian Advocate*, 11 January 1894, 8). He also writes of his time pastoring in Eufaula, Alabama, from 1871 to 1875 (Bounds, "The Alabama Conference," *Christian Advocate*, 22 December 1892, 8). In addition, in the issues for September 19, 1891, and September 22, 1892, he speaks of being "at home" for the proceedings of the Missouri Conference. All of those references are consistent with what is known about the biographical details of Bounds' life as discussed in chap. 2 of this project.

Third, he provides ten references in articles on p. 8 where he refers to himself in the third person as "the Assistant Editor" followed by an account of somewhere he travelled: 20 June 1890, 6 June 1891, 20

the topics covered from week to week, and discussing a wide variety of issues, provide additional insights into Bounds' view of God's providence and how it is related to the practice of petitionary prayer. It should be noted here that these articles are the only place within Bounds' writings where one can look to see if there is progression or change in his thinking as the order in which they were written is known. However, they provide no evidence of changes in or progression in Bounds' thought. Therefore, the major themes found throughout the five years of these writings will be analyzed together. It should also be noted that these writings were published up to seventeen years prior to the first printing of his first book, *Preacher and Prayer*. However, one quickly notices that the same themes already discussed in his eleven books appear here. Such provides increased confidence that the books edited by Hodge do accurately reflect Bounds.

God Needs Men of Prayer

One of the first themes that emerges in Bounds' writings at the *Christian Advocate* is the idea that God needs men who pray. In one of the early editorials, Bounds

June 1891, 17 October 1891, 12 May 1892, 7 July 1892, 15 June 1893, 6 July 1893, 7 September 1893, 28 September 1893, and 19 October 1893.

Fourth, there are several columns on p. 8 of the *Christian Advocate* that provide the exact material as can be found in his books that were published in the years after his time at the newspaper. On August 23, 1890, in the article on "Revolutionizing Preachers," Bounds provides the same quote about David Brainerd that appears in *Preacher and Prayer* on p. 67. On August 18, 1892, in the article on "Conditions of Prayer," he cites the example of Abraham not praying long enough for Sodom to be spared. That same example is used in *Purpose and Prayer* on p. 60 and *Prayer and Praying Men* on p. 30. On August 25, 1892, in the article on "The Possibility of Prayer," he provides two lengthy quotes almost identical to those found in *Purpose and Prayer* on pp. 97 and 100 and again in *Satan* on p. 156. On March 9, 1893, in the article on "The Men Needed," the first half of that article is almost exactly the same as lengthy excerpts from chap. 1 of *Preacher and Prayer*. Finally, comments about the coming of the Holy Spirit being the result of prayer are printed both in *The Reality of Prayer* on p. 127 and in the editorial on April 27, 1893, titled "Praying for the Holy Ghost."

Those proofs confirm with confidence that the editorials appearing on p. 8 of the *Christian Advocate* during Bounds years there are, in fact, his writings. It should be noted that both Dorsett and King attribute some additional editorials from p. 1 to Bounds and provide those in their books. However, I can find no compelling reasons to attribute to Bounds those editorials, which normally would be written by the senior editor, apart from the appearance of common themes within them. As such, those limited instances of p. 1 editorials will not be included in this project.

writes, “God can work wonders if he can get a suitable man.”⁴⁰⁰ In an almost exact quote from *Preacher and Prayer*,⁴⁰¹ one of his 1893 editorials repeats the idea. He writes, “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.”⁴⁰² Similarly, he notes that “if heaven were to advertise its greatest need for Earth it would be for saints.”⁴⁰³ Though he generally appears to have all Christians in mind, he again has a special focus on the need for pastors who pray. He writes about such spiritual leaders by saying, “God needs them, God puts them there.”⁴⁰⁴

Bounds continues this idea in his writings by explaining why God needs such men. He is persuaded that “praying hearts and hands only can do God’s work,” and that “men who know how to pray are the greatest boon God can give to earth.”⁴⁰⁵ They have such an impact because he believes that “men of faith make God’s history, work God’s miracles, fight God’s battles, and gain God’s victories.”⁴⁰⁶ In an exact quote that later will appear in *Preacher and Prayer*,⁴⁰⁷ Bounds looks to David Brainerd as an example of how God needs men, and how He works through such men. He describes Brainerd: “With the Word of God in his heart and in his hand, his soul fired with the divine flame, a place and time to pour out his soul to God in prayer, he fully established the worship of

⁴⁰⁰E. M. Bounds, “Revolutionizing Preachers,” *Christian Advocate*, 26 July 1890, 8.

⁴⁰¹For comparison, see Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 5.

⁴⁰²E. M. Bounds, “The Men Needed,” *Christian Advocate*, 9 March 1893, 8.

⁴⁰³E. M. Bounds, “Saints Wanted,” *Christian Advocate*, 30 November 1893, 8.

⁴⁰⁴E. M. Bounds, “Spiritual Leadership,” *Christian Advocate*, 2 June 1892, 8.

⁴⁰⁵E. M. Bounds, “Praying Men Wanted,” *Christian Advocate*, 21 February 1891, 8.

⁴⁰⁶E. M. Bounds, “The Leadership of Faith,” *Christian Advocate*, 18 October 1890, 8.

⁴⁰⁷For comparison, see Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 67.

God and secured all its gracious results.”⁴⁰⁸ He continues by seeking to explain how Brainerd had such success:

The solution of these results is found in David Brainerd himself, not in the conditions or accidents or God’s peculiar election, but in the man Brainerd. He was God’s man, for God, first, and last, and all the time. God could flow unhindered through him. The omnipotence of grace was neither arrested nor straightened by the conditions of his heart; the whole channel was broadened and cleaned out for God’s fullest and most powerful passage, so that God with all his mighty forces could come down on the hopeless, savage wilderness, and transform it into his blooming and fruitful garden; for nothing is too hard for God to do if he can get the right of man to do it with.⁴⁰⁹

Bounds further teaches that God needs such praying men because the Gospel has no power on its own. In writing about the power needed for success in preaching, he describes it as “conditional” and says, “It must be waited for, sought for, wrestled for until received, realized.”⁴¹⁰ He continues, “This power does not inhere in the Word of God, it does not lie in the facts of the gospel. It is the fire of God which has descended on the preacher and gives to these divine facts and truths their dynamic force.”⁴¹¹ Thus, Bounds concludes that men of prayer have tremendous power as they pray. For example, he teaches that their prayer “moves the arm that moves the universe.”⁴¹² He also teaches that their work is that of a partnership. For example, he states, “The Bible makes prominent the fact God and man are partners in working out the spiritual good of men.”⁴¹³ However, Bounds believes that man’s role in that partnership is so important that God puts “a kind of discount on all else.”⁴¹⁴

⁴⁰⁸E. M. Bounds, “Revolutionizing Preachers,” *Christian Advocate*, 23 August 1890, 8.

⁴⁰⁹Ibid.

⁴¹⁰E. M. Bounds, “Power from on High,” *Christian Advocate*, 22 August 1891, 8.

⁴¹¹Ibid.

⁴¹²E. M. Bounds, “The Prayer Meeting,” *Christian Advocate*, 19 September 1891, 8.

⁴¹³E. M. Bounds, “A Lesson from Eli,” *Christian Advocate*, 14 January 1892, 8.

⁴¹⁴E. M. Bounds, “The Man,” *Christian Advocate*, 15 June 1893, 8.

With that belief, Bounds similarly concludes that God has trouble finding such men of prayer who can accomplish His purposes. He notes,

God is ever on the search for sincere, true men. He needs them greatly, values them highly. “The eyes of the Lord,” says the prophet, “run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.” These perfect-hearted ones seem so scarce that the Lord has some difficulty in finding them.⁴¹⁵

Later, he repeats the idea when he says, “God needs men, but he cannot always find the man he wants.”⁴¹⁶ Bounds believes such a lack of men of prayer leaves God in a difficult situation. He continues the same idea saying,

God is in a great strait for men of the right sort. “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.” So spake God’s prophet; so might every prophet of God speak down to this hour. God is dependent on men to get into this world, with saving efficacy.⁴¹⁷

Perhaps the best summary of this idea that God needs men of prayer is from one of his 1893 editorials, and is a quote that will appear again years later in *Preacher and Prayer*.⁴¹⁸ He says,

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 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 show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him,” 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 on the work of God as would be the striking of the sun from his sphere, darkness, confusion, and death would ensue.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵E. M. Bounds, “Editorial Quotes,” *Christian Advocate*, 7 November 1891, 8.

⁴¹⁶E. M. Bounds, “Editorial Quotes,” *Christian Advocate*, 17 March 1892, 8.

⁴¹⁷Bounds, “Revolutionizing Preachers,” 23 August 1890, 8.

⁴¹⁸For comparison, see Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 6.

⁴¹⁹Bounds, “The Men Needed,” 9 March 1893, 8.

Prayer Moves God to Do What He Otherwise Would Not Do

Closely related is the idea that since God needs men of prayer, their prayers move Him to do what He otherwise would not do if they did not pray. This idea is prominent throughout many of Bounds' editorial columns. For example, he writes that prayer "moves God toward the world," and continues by saying, "Prayer projects God into our affairs in full force. He does not intrude himself. He does not come unasked into our holiest efforts, nor into the work that so greatly concerns him."⁴²⁰ Similarly, speaking of preachers, he says, "The preacher that prays indeed puts God into the work. God does not come into the preacher's work as a matter of course, or on general principles, but he comes by prayer and special urgency."⁴²¹ Later, he communicates the same idea when he writes, "Prayer is great because it reaches God and brings him to shape us, shape our lives, and shape events."⁴²² Perhaps the best summary of this idea is a quote in one of his editorials from 1892 that appears years later both in *Purpose in Prayer* and in *Satan*.⁴²³

Prayer puts God in the matter with commanding force: "Ask of me things to come concerning my sons," says God, "and concerning the work of my hands command ye me." We are charged in God's Word "always to pray," "in everything by prayer," "continuing instant in prayer," to "pray everywhere," "praying always." The promise is as illimitable as the command is comprehensive. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing ye shall receive," "whatsoever ye shall ask," "if ye shall ask anything," "Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." "Whatsoever ye ask the Father he will give it to you." If there is anything not involved in "All things whatsoever," or not found in the phrase "Ask anything," then these things may be left out of prayer. Language could not cover a wider range, nor involve more fully all *minutia*. These statements are but samples of the all-comprehending possibilities of prayer under the promises of God to those who meet the conditions of right praying.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁰E. M. Bounds, "A Call to Prayer," *Christian Advocate*, 13 September 1890, 8.

⁴²¹E. M. Bounds, "A Prayerful Ministry," *Christian Advocate*, 18 February 1892, 8.

⁴²²E. M. Bounds, "Editorial Quotes," *Christian Advocate*, 7 September 1893, 8.

⁴²³For comparison, see Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 100, and Bounds, *Satan*, 156.

⁴²⁴E. M. Bounds, "The Possibility of Prayer," *Christian Advocate*, 25 August 1892, 8.

The scope of what prayer causes God to do is very broad, according to Bounds.

In addition, these editorials repeatedly contain the idea that prayer secures God's presence, which will be lacking if there is not such prayer. For example, he states that without prayer, there is no unction, and without unction, "God is absent."⁴²⁵

Similarly, in writing about revivals, he states, "If the spirit of prayer is absent or is quenched, God is not in the assembly. He comes and stays only in the cloud of glory formed by the incense of a Church whose flame of prayer is ascending to him."⁴²⁶

Bounds will repeat that idea three years later when he writes, "The revival is nothing more nor less than God's coming, and God comes only in answer to prayer."⁴²⁷ Again, he writes, "The truth is the presence and power of the Holy Ghost at any given meeting is conditioned on praying faith."⁴²⁸ In a lengthy quote that later appears in the *Reality of Prayer*,⁴²⁹ he explains this idea:

The gift of the Holy Ghost is one of the benefits flowing to us from the glorious session of Christ at the right hand of God, and this gift of the Holy Ghost and all the other gifts of the enthroned Christ are secured to us by prayer as the condition. The Bible by express statement, as well as by its general principles and clear and constant intimations, teaches us that the gift of the Holy Ghost is connected with and conditioned in prayer. Christ declared this general principle: "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" When the Holy Ghost came on Christ at his baptism he was praying. He told his disciples he would secure the Holy Ghost for them by praying to God. The descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was preceded by many days of intense prayerfulness. A few days after Pentecost the disciples were in agony of prayer, "and when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." This incident destroys every theory which denies prayer as the condition of the coming and recoming of the Holy Ghost after Pentecost, and confirms the view that Pentecost as the result of a long struggle of

⁴²⁵E. M. Bounds, "The Unction," *Christian Advocate*, 25 October 1890, 8.

⁴²⁶E. M. Bounds, "Revivals that Stay," *Christian Advocate*, 6 December 1890, 8.

⁴²⁷E. M. Bounds, "Worked Up, Prayed Down," *Christian Advocate*, 4 January 1890, 8.

⁴²⁸E. M. Bounds, "Praying for the Holy Ghost," *Christian Advocate*, 27 April 1893, 8.

⁴²⁹For comparison, see Bounds, *Reality of Prayer*, 127.

prayer is illustrative and confirmatory that God's great and most precious gifts are conditioned on asking, seeking, knocking, prayer, ardent, importunate prayer.⁴³⁰

Applying the idea to modern revivals, he states that prayer is the "triumphal chariot" for the Holy Spirit, meaning that "a prayerless spirit puts an injunction on his coming or quenches the power of that coming. The Holy Ghost does no mighty work, begets no strong convictions where the spirit of prayer does not rule."⁴³¹

In addition, Bounds mentions two other areas in regard to the power and extent of prayer. First, Bounds includes in the scope of prayer's power the implementation of the very promises of God. In a quote that also appears in *Purpose in Prayer*,⁴³² he writes in the *Christian Advocate*,

The possibilities of prayer run parallel with the promises of God. Prayer opens an outlet for the promises, removes the hindrances in the way of their execution, puts them into working order, and secures their gracious ends. More than this, prayer, like faith, obtains promises, enlarges their operation, and adds to the measure of their results.⁴³³

Second, he includes the calling of Christian laborers, as seen when he says,

The number and efficiency of the laborers in God's vineyard in all lands is dependent on the men of prayer. The mightiness of these men of prayer increase, by the divinely arranged process, the number and success of the consecrated laborers. Prayer opens wide the doors of access, gives holy aptness to enter, and holy boldness, firmness, and fruitage.⁴³⁴

Bounds repeats this idea in a column the following year when he describes the prayer for workers as the "greatest prayer."⁴³⁵ He concludes, "If we will furnish the desire, the faith, and the prayer, God will call the men and furnish the transportation."⁴³⁶ In unique

⁴³⁰Bounds, "Praying for the Holy Ghost," 8.

⁴³¹E. M. Bounds, "Feeble Convictions," *Christian Advocate*, 14 April 1892, 8.

⁴³²For comparison, see Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 97.

⁴³³Bounds, "The Possibility of Prayer," 8.

⁴³⁴Bounds, "Praying Men Wanted," 8.

⁴³⁵E. M. Bounds, "Men and Money," *Christian Advocate*, 8 August 1891, 8.

⁴³⁶*Ibid.*

terminology within Bounds' writings, he refers to how this prayer for workers results in God electing them, as it would "secure the right kind of men and implant the right kind of motives to move them in their going, for God would elect the men and kindle in them the irrepressible desire to go."⁴³⁷

He does provide limited scriptural support for this view that prayer moves God to do what He otherwise would not do. The text he references here, Isaiah 45:11, is also the primary reference in many of his other writings. Bounds comments on it, saying,

He hereby puts himself in our hands and gives up his keys to the authority of an all-conquering faith. This gracious attitude of God is to create and mature in us the forces of resistless praying, forces that must underlie the praying that reaches and affects the destiny of things.⁴³⁸

For an example of this principle, he again looks to Abraham and Sodom as he does in *Purpose in Prayer* and in *Prayer and Praying Men*.⁴³⁹ He concludes, "Perhaps Abraham lost Sodom by failing to press to the utmost his privilege of praying."⁴⁴⁰ In continuing the idea that God does not move if the people do not pray enough, he says,

Joash, we know, lost because he stayed his smiting. Perseverance counts with God as well as with man. If Elijah had ceased at his first petition the heavens would have scarcely yielded its rain to his feeble praying. If Jacob had quit praying at decent bedtime he would scarcely have survived the next day's meeting with Esau.⁴⁴¹

Bounds also makes passing references in one editorial to Hezekiah's prayer and to the Syrophenician woman, references found frequently in his books.⁴⁴² As previously noted,

⁴³⁷Bounds, "A Call to Prayer," 8.

⁴³⁸E. M. Bounds, "Wrestling Prayer," *Christian Advocate*, 15 August 1891, 8.

⁴³⁹For comparison, see Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 60, and Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 30.

⁴⁴⁰E. M. Bounds, "Conditions of Prayer," *Christian Advocate*, 18 August 1892, 8.

⁴⁴¹Ibid.

⁴⁴²Bounds, "Wrestling Prayer," 8.

he cites the example of Pentecost as something that would not occur had the early followers of Christ not devoted themselves to intense prayer while they waited.⁴⁴³

Bounds also looks to contemporary examples to make his point that prayer moves God to do what He otherwise would not do. In writing about Louis Harms, he concludes, “The secret of his power is the open secret of every man who does mighty things for God. He was a man of mighty faith and mighty prayer. He moved spiritual things because he moved God mightily.”⁴⁴⁴ He also uses John Wesley as an example, concluding, “Without John Wesley’s praying, there would be neither John Wesley nor Methodism in history nor in fact.”⁴⁴⁵ He continues, “The prayers of John Wesley kept the heavens propitious, and made it pour down its deluges of grace.”⁴⁴⁶ He even includes modern revival preachers as examples since they “must carry the key that unlocks the storehouse of God and opens up all the treasures of grace.”⁴⁴⁷

In summarizing Bounds’ view on this issue, he provides two helpful summaries. First, in his article, “Wrestling Prayer,” he writes, “The Bible is exhaustless in its pressure and illustration of the fact that the highest spiritual good is secured as the return of the outgoing of the highest form of spiritual effort. Grace it is, but grace in its rewarding compensating form.”⁴⁴⁸ Thus, it appears Bounds believes that even the good God desires to do for His people is conditional based upon their prayers. Second, Bounds provides a good summary of these ideas in his editorial, “Wrestling Prayer,” when he says,

⁴⁴³Bounds, “Praying for the Holy Ghost,” 8.

⁴⁴⁴Bounds, “Revolutionizing Preachers,” 26 July 1890, 8.

⁴⁴⁵E. M. Bounds, “Pictures of Wesley,” *Christian Advocate*, 4 April 1891, 8.

⁴⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷E. M. Bounds, “Where the Revival Begins,” *Christian Advocate*, 19 December 1891, 8.

⁴⁴⁸Bounds, “Wrestling Prayer,” 8.

In the Revelation of John the whole lower order of God's creation and his providential government, the Church, and the angelic world are in the attitude of waiting on the efficiency of the prayers of the saintly ones on earth to carry on the various interests of earth and heaven. The angel takes the fire kindled by prayer and casts it earthward, "and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake." Prayer is the force that creates all these alarms, stirs, and throes. "Ask of me," says God to his Son, and to the Church of his Son, "and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."⁴⁴⁹

In that reference to Psalm 2, Bounds again is teaching the idea that there are things that God is waiting to do and will not do until His people pray.

Prayer Changes the Very Purposes of God as God Cannot Deny What is Asked in Prayer

Another theme found in Bounds writings in his books and in his editorials is the idea that prayer changes the purposes of God since He will give the very thing for which a person asks. For example, in an editorial on "Answers to Prayer," he writes,

Faith teaches the praying ones that God's purposes are always conditioned on hearing and answering prayer. That to hear prayer is God's primary and most inviolate law, and that all other plans of God are subordinate to this. God rules the world and administers the plan of salvation in harmony with and by means of our prayers.⁴⁵⁰

That same year, he wrote a stand-alone quote in the newspaper where he communicated the same idea:

We sometimes hear it said that prayer does not change God. In a remote sense that is true, but in a more important sense it is not true. God sent Isaiah to tell Hezekiah to put his house in order that he should die. Hezekiah prayed and wept, and God sent Isaiah back to tell him he had heard his prayer and seen his tears and would add to his life fifteen years. God in all his plans has promised to answer prayer. Prayer in one sense changes God's purposes, or the results of his purposes, because to answer prayer is God's greatest plan, his strongest decree.⁴⁵¹

Similarly, in another quote that will appear years later in exact form in *Purpose in*

⁴⁴⁹Bounds, "The Possibility of Prayer," 8.

⁴⁵⁰E. M. Bounds, "Answers to Prayer," *Christian Advocate*, 4 August 1892, 8.

⁴⁵¹E. M. Bounds, "Editorial Quotes," *Christian Advocate*, 28 July 1892, 8.

Prayer,⁴⁵² he repeats the same idea:

The possibilities of prayer are found in the allying it with the purposes of God, for God's purposes and man's praying are the combination of all potent and omnipotent forces. More than this, the possibilities of prayer are seen in the fact that it changes the purposes of God. It is in the very nature of prayer to plead and give directions. Prayer is not a negation. It is a positive force. It never rebels against the will of God, never comes in conflict with that will, but that it does seek to change God's purposes is evident.⁴⁵³

He goes on in that column to look at examples of prayers designed to change God's purposes and cites Christ in the garden, Paul with the thorn, Moses' plea to save Israel, the repentance of people during the time of the judges, Hezekiah's plea regarding his death, and Nineveh.⁴⁵⁴ In light of those teachings, Bounds concludes, "God surrenders himself to those who really pray."⁴⁵⁵

Bounds not only teaches that God changes His purposes based on the prayers of His people, but he also concludes that God must give the person the very thing for which he or she asks. In a lengthy, but insightful, description in his column on "Answers to Prayer," he states,

The Bible declaration is that God not only hears, but that he answers prayer, gives us the thing we ask for not only in value but in kind. The Bible saints were not only concerned about praying, but they were more concerned about the answer to their prayers. The motive and end of the prayer was the answer. They prayed to God because they desired something of him and prayer was valued because it was to them the channel by which their desires were met by God. The rule is that God gives us the very thing we pray for. We may, like Paul, pray for the removal of the thorn which is for our discipline, and God may answer by giving increased grace. We may, like Moses, insist on going into the promised land, when God's purposes are settled against it. But these are exceptional. They seem to be but one rare instance in each of the lives of these eminent servants of God, while the reproduction of the instances in which they received the very things they asked for would make up in a large measure the history of their marvelous lives of prayer.

The promise is as direct as the command is terse and emphatic, "Ask, and ye shall receive;" "Call unto me, and I will answer;" "Whatsoever ye ask in prayer ye

⁴⁵²For comparison, see Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 97.

⁴⁵³Bounds, "The Possibility of Prayer," 8.

⁴⁵⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵E. M. Bounds, "Prayer and Power," *Christian Advocate*, 1 March 1894, 8.

shall receive,” “Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” We do but follow the plain letter and spirit of the Bible when we affirm that God answers prayer by giving us the very things we desire, and that the withholding of that which we desire and the giving of something else is not the rule but the rare and exceptional. When his children cry for bread he gives them bread.⁴⁵⁶

Several paragraphs later, he continues that idea:

The child asks because the parent is in the habit of granting the child's requests. As the children of God we need something and we need it badly, and we go to God for it. Neither the Bible nor the child of God knows anything of that half infidel declaration, that he is to answer his own prayers. God answers prayer. The true Christian does not pray to stir himself up but his prayer is the stirring up of himself to take hold of God. The heart of faith knows nothing of that specious skepticism that stays the steps of prayer and chills its ardor by whispering that prayer does not change God.⁴⁵⁷

In his editorials, Bounds does not put any qualifications on this promise of receiving whatever is asked. In fact, his terminology in two places suggests he does not see any restrictions on it. In an editorial on “Desire in Prayer,” he states, “Desire is the basis of prayer—‘Whatsoever thing ye desire when ye pray,’ said Christ.”⁴⁵⁸ In addition, in “Answers to Prayer,” the same editorial referenced above, Bounds concludes in the end, “God has an inexhaustible store of good waiting the demands of our prayers.”⁴⁵⁹

With no qualifications listed and with his utilizing terms about our desires and demands in prayer, one can conclude that Bounds believes that God certainly will give whatever a person asks, even if that means changing his purposes. It is also worth noting that in this context, Bounds twice cites the example of the Syrophenician woman,⁴⁶⁰ at one point calling her “an object lesson of desire.”⁴⁶¹ Furthermore, he quotes Charles

⁴⁵⁶Bounds, “Answers to Prayer,” 8.

⁴⁵⁷Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸E. M. Bounds, “Desire in Prayer,” *Christian Advocate*, 4 October 1890, 8.

⁴⁵⁹Bounds, “Answers to Prayer,” 8.

⁴⁶⁰Bounds, “Conditions of Prayer,” 8.

⁴⁶¹Bounds, “Desire in Prayer,” 8.

Finney discussing how those whose prayers are not answered are a stumbling block to others.⁴⁶²

A Lack of Prayer Hinders God

As already noted, Bounds repeatedly teaches in these editorial columns his belief that prayer leads God to do that which He otherwise would not do. As in his books, he takes that idea to the next level and concludes that a lack of prayer then hinders God's plans. While not seen as strongly or as repeatedly as in his books, three mentions of this idea appear in his editorials.

First, in discussing lessons from Eli's life, he concludes, "The failures which have brought disaster and sorrow on individuals or on nations have been caused by the lack of fidelity on man's part in discharging the duties imposed by this partnership," a partnership he describes between God and man and which requires man's praying.⁴⁶³ Second, as already noted, Bounds believes that a lack of prayer hinders the Holy Spirit from operating in the world. He states, "A prayerless spirit puts an injunction on his coming or quenches the power of that coming."⁴⁶⁴ Finally, in speaking about the terrible condition of the world due to the materialism of the time, Bounds concludes that "Earth is shutting out heaven."⁴⁶⁵ As a result, he concludes that the "men and women who know how to pray and who can project God and all his divine institutions with saving efficiency on the world, is our only safety."⁴⁶⁶ It appears from those statements that Bounds believes God's operation in the world is stopped if His people fail to pray.

⁴⁶²E. M. Bounds, "Prayerless Praying," *Christian Advocate*, 27 October 1892, 8.

⁴⁶³Bounds, "A Lesson from Eli," 8.

⁴⁶⁴Bounds, "Feeble Convictions," 8.

⁴⁶⁵E. M. Bounds, "Hindrances to Prayer," *Christian Advocate*, 11 August 1892, 8.

⁴⁶⁶Ibid.

Church Dominion Ideas

As in his books, Bounds' editorials give glimpses into his underlying belief in what has been termed a church dominion perspective on the issue of the relationship between providence and prayer. Though these ideas are not directly stated, there are several glimpses of them. First, in an article on "Christian Perfection," he states, "Methodism holds that this perfection is not designed simply to fit the Christian for heaven, but is the preparation for the fittest and most useful service we can render God, either on earth or in heaven."⁴⁶⁷ Here is a glimpse of the idea that Christians are being trained to rule, both now and in the future, with Christ.

Second, in speaking of the struggle of prayer, he indicates an intentionality in God's design for such a struggle:

Prayer in its highest and most availing form assumed the attitude of a wrestler with God. It is the contest and victory of faith; a victory not secured from an enemy, but from one who tries our faith, that he may enlarge and increase its desires; from one who makes the acquisition of great spiritual good a notable event in our experience, that the event may stand out a luminous era, a transitional epoch, from which a new spiritual calendar may begin.⁴⁶⁸

It appears that he see the trials of prayer as being orchestrated by God to prepare His people for something greater.

Third, in a quote already noted, he references the church as God's "providential government" in this lower order of creation.⁴⁶⁹ Perhaps the best indication of his view of church dominion thinking, and one of the best summaries of all of his ideas, is found in an article he titled "Praying Men Wanted." There he writes, "Praying men keep God in the Church in full force; keep his hand on the helm, and train the

⁴⁶⁷E. M. Bounds, "Christian Perfection," *Christian Advocate*, 31 January 1891, 8.

⁴⁶⁸Bounds, "Wrestling Prayer," 8.

⁴⁶⁹Bounds, "The Possibility of Prayer," 8.

Church in its lessons of strength and trust.”⁴⁷⁰ These ideas will be discussed in the next chapter on the church dominion model and Bounds’ place within that thinking.

Direct References to Providence

In addition to the themes already discussed, Bounds makes several references to God’s providence and sovereignty that need to be noted. First, for three weeks in a row during November of 1890, Bounds makes some reference to God’s providence in comments in his editorials. First, he writes in a stand-alone editorial quote that closely parallels one in *Prayer and Praying Men*,⁴⁷¹

The openings of Providence are intended to test our ability not to go in as well as to make a door for our entrance. The Philippian prison-doors were opened for Paul, and his fetters unloosed, not that he might be free to go out, but that he might be free to stay in.⁴⁷²

Second, the following week he provides another stand-alone quote about Paul and God’s providence. There he writes,

Paul’s broadness, patience, and faith are nowhere more evidence than in his comprehensive and cheerful view of God’s universal and sovereign control. “Some, indeed,” he says, “preach Christ even of envy and strife,” “not sincerely, but to add affliction to my bonds.” An impatient, narrow spirit of feeble faith would view this condition of things with discouragement or complaint. But he from his high point of observation says: “Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”⁴⁷³

The following week he again addresses God’s providence, this time in the context of his Thanksgiving article as he thanks God for his providential care of this nation:

It is a recognition of God in the beneficence of his providence over the nation’s being and well-being. This is a feature that must be constantly called to mind. God rules in the natural as well as in the moral world. His providential care includes nations as well as individuals. And the recognition of this great fact is binding on

⁴⁷⁰Bounds, “Praying Men Wanted,” 8.

⁴⁷¹For comparison, see Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 130.

⁴⁷²E. M. Bounds, “Editorial Quotes,” *Christian Advocate*, 8 November 1890, 8.

⁴⁷³E. M. Bounds, “Editorial Quotes,” *Christian Advocate*, 15 November 1890, 8.

national authority and national life. And to adore God in his majesty as Ruler of the universe belongs to piety as well as to adore him in the tender relation of Father to the individual.⁴⁷⁴

In addition to those three subsequent references, he makes four additional references to God's providence in later editorial articles. First, in the only instance in Bounds' published writings that provide a direct reference to Calvinism and Arminianism, Bounds states,

Another distinctive feature of Methodism was the emphasizing the universality and sovereignty of grace. Calvinism had hardened grace into terrific decrees, exalting sovereignty but limited [*sic*] grace. Arminianism exalted the universality of grace at the expense of its sovereignty. Wesley held to the sovereignty of grace, but rejected the decrees of Calvinism; he held to the Arminian freedom of man, but rejected its Pelagianism. The sovereignty, fullness, and presence of the Holy Ghost was the power that Wesley substituted for the decrees. He declared the fullness of the atonement or the freedom of the will were nothing without the energizing, almighty grace and sovereignty of the Spirit. Wesley went back of the decrees of Calvin, back of the system of Augustine, to the primitive pentecostal sources of power. The distinctive power of Christianity in every age is found right here in the endowment of the Holy Ghost. To secure this power in its exhaustless plenitude Methodism applied itself. It thereby secured all the sovereign authority of grace to declare a free, full, present, conscious salvation to all.⁴⁷⁵

Two weeks later, Bounds makes a passing reference to God's reign and plans in a stand-alone quote:

God reigns, and all things are subordinate to his glory, and made to serve the good of his people. He used the devil to keep Paul from spiritual pride. The tears and penitence of Peter's dastardly denial helped to confirm Peter's faith and cure his cowardly weakness and boastful impulses.⁴⁷⁶

Similarly, several months later, he references God's control over all things in another stand-alone quote:

To refuse to see God's hand coming to us through secondary agents, malign though they be, is not to see him at all. If God cannot make the wrath and malice of men and devils to praise him, and be our help heavenward, then his power is truly limited and his throne unsettled.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁴E. M. Bounds, "Thanksgiving Day," *Christian Advocate*, 22 November 1890, 8.

⁴⁷⁵E. M. Bounds, "John Wesley and His Work," *Christian Advocate*, 11 April 1891, 8.

⁴⁷⁶E. M. Bounds, "Editorial Quotes," *Christian Advocate*, 25 April 1891, 8.

⁴⁷⁷E. M. Bounds, "Editorial Quotes," *Christian Advocate*, 4 July 1891, 8.

Finally, in writings about the early Church, Bounds concludes, “The sovereignty of the Holy Ghost is declared and accepted. He designates the specific individuals and their specific work The movement is ordered by the Holy Spirit and is under his sovereign control.”⁴⁷⁸

In addition, there are two references in the editorials where Bounds addresses the relationship between providence and prayer. First, he states, “Prayer honors God, acknowledges his being, exalts his power, adores his providence, secures his aid.”⁴⁷⁹ Second, in encouraging people to pray about temporal things, he writes,

It looked like Christ’s main business while on earth was to answer prayer for temporal good. Christ is changeless in his character and the principles of his action—“the same yesterday, to-day, and forever”—and prayer has the same influence with him now as then, and enters into the same regions of temporal and spiritual good.

Our temporal matters should be the subject of our continuous prayers. God is the God of providence and prayer. We not only dishonor him, but dethrone him, when we refuse to pray about our temporal affairs. We can only accept him as universal Lord when we rest in his providence with calm serenity that all things in earth as well as in heaven are subject to his sway.

If we cannot pray about temporal things then God is not only kept out of the largest and most vexatious portions of our lives, but he is kept out of our spiritual interests as well; for the things that concern this life, its good or bad fortunes, have a direct bearing on the interests of our souls and on the affairs of the life to come. Not to pray for our everyday matters will be to neglect at vital points the higher affairs of heaven.⁴⁸⁰

As seen in his other works, Bounds again asserts that prayer secures God’s providential involvement in the world and in the lives of believers, while a lack of prayer keeps God out of the world and out of people’s lives.

⁴⁷⁸E. M. Bounds, “A Typical Movement,” *Christian Advocate*, 23 June 1892, 8.

⁴⁷⁹Bounds, “The Possibility of Prayer,” 8.

⁴⁸⁰E. M. Bounds, “Prayer for Temporal Things,” *Christian Advocate*, 21 September 1893, 8.

Inconsistencies

As in many of his books, there are several inconsistencies within what Bounds writes in these editorials. First, he makes several references to submitting to God's will. In one of his stand-alone quotes on the same page as his article suggesting that the disciples' prayers are what brought about Pentecost, he states, "The constant reference of our purposes and plans to the will of God is one of the first and strongest suggestions of faith."⁴⁸¹ Later he writes that "God has an order and his order must direct all our movements."⁴⁸² In addition, in the same article where he suggests that Sodom was destroyed because Abraham did not pray enough, he also speaks of being "absorbed in God's will," as well as how being "in earnest about doing his will" is the "prime condition of praying."⁴⁸³ Finally, in another stand-alone quote, he writes, "Prayer seeks to know the will of God and to be in harmony with it, and ask according to his will. Even an earthly parent does not feel good to have a foolish child ask for foolish and hurtful things."⁴⁸⁴ Such assertions about submitting to God's will and praying in harmony with it appear to be inconsistent with his teaching in these editorials about praying to change God's purposes, a Father giving a child the very thing for which he asks, and his use of terms like "desire," "demanding," and "command" to describe prayer, as has already been noted.

A second inconsistency is closely related, and involves several statements he makes about accepting trials. As already noted, Bounds advocates praying to change God's will, and he cites the Syrophenician woman as well as Hezekiah as examples of God changing in response to prayers. However, in a quote on providence noted in the

⁴⁸¹E. M. Bounds, "Editorial Quotes," *Christian Advocate*, 19 September 1891, 8.

⁴⁸²Bounds, "A Typical Movement," 8.

⁴⁸³Bounds, "Conditions of Prayer," 8.

⁴⁸⁴E. M. Bounds, "Editorial Quotes," *Christian Advocate*, 25 May 1893, 8.

previous section, he says that God providentially opens things, not for us to go through those open doors, but rather to test our ability to stay. He uses the example of Paul staying in prison when the doors opened.⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, in an article about “Plans, Work, Consecration,” he concludes,

This submission to God’s will is much more than the passive principle of fortitude which submits by endurance to the chastenings of God. This submission is an active virtue, it works as well as suffers under the sweet supremacy of God’s direction. It bears the rod, but works under the rule of the same divine will when the rod is neither seen, feared, nor felt. The consecrated life adores the fact that God is sovereign, that it is his business and wisdom to plan and arrange his own work, settle his methods, choose his agents to carry out His purposes. The efficiency and success of these agents do not depend on the maturity of their plans, or on their contrivance and skill, but on their submission to God’s will, their fidelity in executing God’s plans.⁴⁸⁶

Most striking is what Bounds writes in the editorial, “The School of Sorrow.” There he asserts that it is good to be afflicted:

The furnace is not heated for exceptional cases. Every soul must pass through it and feel the pain of its fires “I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction,” is the only divine election It is good to be afflicted, to have tears for God to wipe away, to have griefs for God to comfort. Our sorrows impoverish earth, but enrich heaven. Submission, meekness, patience are learned in the school of sorrow, and learned nowhere else.⁴⁸⁷

Submitting to afflictions from God as part of submission to His will does not sound like it comes from the same author who encourages people to pray to change the will of God when it involves one’s own afflictions.⁴⁸⁸

Three other passing comments are worth noting because they are inconsistent with the majority of Bounds’ other writings. First, in contrast with *Preacher and Prayer* where Bounds states that what the church needs is not machinery but rather men,⁴⁸⁹ here

⁴⁸⁵Bounds, “Editorial Quotes,” 8 November 1890, 8.

⁴⁸⁶E. M. Bounds, “Plans, Work, Consecration,” *Christian Advocate*, 14 February 1891, 8.

⁴⁸⁷E. M. Bounds, “In the School of Sorrow,” *Christian Advocate*, 5 September 1891, 8.

⁴⁸⁸For example, see *Prayer and Praying Men*, 62-63.

⁴⁸⁹Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 7.

he asserts a similarly worded, but significantly different idea. He states, “The Holy Ghost is what the Church needs, and not more machinery—the Holy Ghost is the individual member that he may be in place in the body and performing his divinely-appointed functions is our great need.”⁴⁹⁰ Second, in contrast to Bounds’ teaching that God will give the very thing for which we ask, Bounds now presents a softer view of that idea in one of his stand-alone quotes from his final year at the newspaper:

God answers prayer often directly by indirection. He gives us the thing we are seeking, but in a way unlooked-for by us. It comes in such a strange, and to us such an unhappy, way, that if we are not watchful we will refuse to receive the answer to our prayers. God had said to Abraham, “be thou perfect,” and Abraham was doubtless seeking perfection, but it never occurred to him that the finishing touches could only be given to his perfection by offering Isaac. Paul sought and prayed for humility, but he never dreamed that the thorn in the flesh would be God’s way of making and keeping him humble.⁴⁹¹

Finally, in his final months at the newspaper, Bounds proposes a very different explanation for the disaster of the world’s condition. Whereas in other works he places the blame on believers who do not pray, he now seeks to explain it in terms of the mystery of providence: “The whole matter finds its solution in a Providence whose reign and results lie beyond the review, and often beyond the ken of earthly law and lawgivers.”⁴⁹²

Despite those inconsistencies, which resemble the inconsistencies found within his books, Bounds’ articles and quotes on his editorial page sound remarkably similar to the writings in his books, and in several cases already noted, are reproduced exactly in his later books. Though a progression of thought is not found in these dated writings, the reader is able to see consistent themes through his editorial pages in the *Christian Advocate*. As in his books, his core idea appears to be a belief that God has ordained a

⁴⁹⁰E. M. Bounds, “Pentecost—Its Lessons,” *Christian Advocate*, 26 December 1891, 8.

⁴⁹¹E. M. Bounds, “Editorial Quotes,” *Christian Advocate*, November 9, 1893, 8.

⁴⁹²E. M. Bounds, “An Old-Fashioned Revival,” *Christian Advocate*, 15 February 1894, 8.

structure whereby He needs men of prayer in order to accomplish His will. Such men of prayer are necessary because their prayers move God to do what He otherwise would not do, even if it involves His promises. Thus, these men of prayer are given great power in that they can change God's very purposes since God, in a fundamental decree, ordained that He would always do the very things for which He is asked. Though not strongly present here, there still are indications of the correlated belief that if God's people fail to adequately pray, then God's will is hindered. Such a risky plan is part of God's desire to train the church for a future reign with Christ. While not addressed in this chapter, chapter 5 will provide a critique of these themes in Bounds' writings related to his view of the understanding of the relationship between God's providence and man's will as expressed in petitionary prayer.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH DOMINION MODEL AND BOUNDS' PLACE WITHIN IT

Having discussed Bounds' extraordinary prayer life in chapter 2, and having analyzed Bounds' writings to discern his view on the relationship between providence and prayer in chapter 3, it now becomes helpful to look at how his view fits into the broader evangelical discussion of how a person's understanding of providence impacts that person's practice of petitionary prayer. Such an approach will prove helpful in making the critique of Bounds' views in the next chapter more applicable to the contemporary discussion.

In order to summarize and describe Bounds' views in terms of the broader evangelical discussion on the issue, one cannot do so without indebtedness to Terrance Tiessen for his book *Providence & Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?*¹ As already noted in the first chapter, there are few resources today on the topic of the relationship between providence and prayer. While there are many books on providence, and even more on the topic of prayer, there are few that seek to bring them together as Tiessen has done. Steve Lemke, though he does not agree with the way Tiessen approaches everything in the book, still recognizes the significant contribution of this work:

Every few years a theological book comes out that is written with such clarity and comprehensiveness that it becomes a classic text in the field for years to come. The

¹Terrance Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

book *Providence and Prayer* by Terrance Tiessen, professor of theology and ethics at Providence Theological Seminary in Manitoba, could be such a magisterial text.²

In describing Bounds' views in comparison with other views, the spectrum of models Tiessen proposes becomes the most helpful starting point.

It should be noted that what drove Tiessen to provide such a spectrum of models about the relationship between one's theological view of providence and one's practice of prayer was his concern that there is a disconnect between the way many people pray and what they profess to believe about God's nature. He is persuaded that many people "ask God to do things that he cannot do, given the way he has chosen to relate to the world that he has created, as they understand the situation."³ On the other hand, he believes that some pray too timidly if God is able to do what they state they believe He can do.⁴ Hence, Tiessen advocates for coherence, emphasizing that people's beliefs should be both internally consistent as well as consistent with their actions.⁵

Though less academic in nature, and arriving at a significantly different conclusion than Tiessen, Dutch Sheets makes a similar case for the need for coherence. He writes,

If God is going to do something regardless of whether or not we pray, then He doesn't need us to ask and we don't need another waste of time. If it's all *que sera, sera*, then let's take a siesta and let it all just happen. If, on the other hand, John Wesley was correct when he said, "God does nothing on the earth save in answer to believing prayer," I'll lose a little sleep for that. I'll change my lifestyle for that. I'll turn the TV off, and even miss a meal or two.⁶

For those who have thought through the relationship between providence and prayer and who have sought to arrive at coherence, a variety of perspectives have

²Steve W. Lemke, "Review of *Providence & Prayer*," *Criswell Theological Review* 1/2 (2004), 205.

³Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer*, 13.

⁴*Ibid.*, 24.

⁵*Ibid.*, 14.

⁶Dutch Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer: How God Can Use Your Prayers to Move Heaven and Earth* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1996), 23.

emerged. In dealing with such “thorny issues,” as Tiessen calls them, he notes that while Christian theologians and philosophers for the most part agree on God’s omnipotence, they differ “as to what that means in the practical terms of God’s acts in the world.”⁷ Those differences of understanding result in significantly different models to explain how God works. Such theories and models cover a wide spectrum that can be classified into two major categories of risk and no-risk views of providence. As Tiessen explains,

In presenting the models that I have identified for study, I will move from the one that perceives the least involvement of God in the details of history to the one that puts the outcome of events most strongly in the hands of God. Therefore, they could be considered on a spectrum that correlates divine and human agency, with the first model giving maximum effect to human agency, and the last giving least significance to the action of humans within history. A distinction is sometimes made between “risk” and “no risk” models of providence, depending on whether God has taken a personal risk in creating other personal beings and giving them the ability to choose and act within the world that he created.⁸

It should also be recognized that “each of these theological positions pulls together a number of theories (about causation, time, knowledge, freedom, power, agency, etc.) and forms a coherent representation that we are calling a model.”⁹ With the complexity of the issues represented in each model that seeks to explain the role of prayer in God’s providential rule of the world, the simple spectrum of risk to no-risk becomes helpful in providing a framework from which to begin to categorize the diverse views. Such also becomes helpful in assessing Bounds’ beliefs.

The Church Dominion Model

In consideration of the themes found in Bounds’ writings as summarized in the previous chapter, a survey of the models Tiessen provides leads to an easy identification of one as most like Bounds, a model that Tiessen terms the “church dominion model” and

⁷Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer*, 16.

⁸Ibid., 25.

⁹Ibid., 20.

that is on the risk side of the spectrum he utilizes. Tiessen provides a helpful overview of this model that represents not only Bounds, but other influential writers and speakers as well:

The church dominion model believes that God is immensely powerful and is able to accomplish his will in the world but that he has chosen to restrict his special action to those things for which the church prays. He has done this in order that prayer might be a training ground in dominion for the church. In the beginning, God gave dominion over the earth to human beings. They relinquished it to Satan, who then became legally the prince of this world. Through the perfectly obedient life of the incarnate Word and his voluntary death, the legal claim of Satan was annulled. Those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior are the people of God who will ultimately exercise dominion over the renewed creation. In order to prepare them for that rule, God has made the petitions of the church the range of his special and redemptive activity in the world. He will not act unless believers ask him to do so. When they petition according to his purpose for the world, he answers powerfully. Indeed, they can even change his mind about the particular way in which he would accomplish his will.¹⁰

It should be noted that this particular model has similarities with the openness model, the model most closely associated with a view known as open theism. Tiessen places both the openness and church dominion models next to each other on the risk side of the spectrum since God is understood to have limitations in both models. As Tiessen describes these views he says, “The church cannot increase God’s power, but she can limit it.”¹¹ However, the church dominion model differs significantly from the openness model in that the limitation of God is by God’s own design for a very specific purpose for His people. Again, Tiessen describes,

Whereas the openness model emphasizes God’s self-restraint in giving his creatures libertarian freedom, the church dominion model argues that God’s primary purpose is to develop the administrative or ruling skills of the church. This model attributes a decisive role to the church within God’s providential ordering of the creation, and this provides for a distinctive theology of prayer.¹²

Unique, then, in the church dominion perspective is the emphasis on the role of

¹⁰Ibid., 119.

¹¹Ibid., 127.

¹²Ibid., 120.

prayer not only as God’s instrument for His will to be accomplished in this world, but also as His means to prepare the church for her future rule with Christ. Since prayer functions to train believers for their rule with Christ, God has “limited his own initiative in acting in the world, in order to maximize the training of church members and thereby to fulfill his primary intention for human history.”¹³ Those who hold to this model believe that “the reason God restrains his own freedom in action is that if he were to take things out of the church’s hands, to go over her head, as it were, it would sabotage the training program.”¹⁴ Thus, there is much emphasis in this view on persistence, sometimes called either importunity or overcoming, as a necessary part of the training that prayer provides. Again, as Tiessen summarizes, “God is all-powerful, and he answers all prayer that is offered in his name, so we need only persist. If we do not give up, we can be assured that a positive answer will be obtained.”¹⁵

Proponents of the Church Dominion Model

It is important to realize that apart from Tiessen’s book and the reviews of it, the term “church dominion,” as used in the context of discussions of prayer or providence, is absent in other literature. When I asked Tiessen about the lack of the term elsewhere, he responded, “I confess to having made up the term ‘church dominion model,’ in my attempt to capture succinctly what I saw as the common thread in the works of those who spoke about prayer and its role in God’s purpose in the world, from this distinctive perspective.”¹⁶ Even though the terminology is unique to Tiessen, the ideas it summarizes are influential in Christian thinking and continue to be advocated

¹³Ibid., 123.

¹⁴Ibid., 127.

¹⁵Ibid., 126.

¹⁶Terrance Tiessen, email interview by author, 15 December 2012.

today, including, in part, through the legacy of Bounds' own writings. Therefore, the church dominion model warrants analysis and discussion.¹⁷

Tiessen attributes this particular model to three primary, well-known individuals: Paul Billheimer, Brother Andrew, and Watchman Nee. Though they do not seek to label their beliefs on providence and though they do not cite each other's works, "there is a remarkable similarity in the general tenor of their understanding of providence and prayer."¹⁸ Such remarkable similarity will be demonstrated below. To make sure that other advocates of the same model have not been missed, I contacted Tiessen to ask if he is aware of others with the same perspective. His response was, "I regret to say that I cannot think of any other authors propounding this view than the ones you have listed."¹⁹ I raised the same question to Darrel King who responded that the only other person to possibly consider besides those mentioned by Tiessen is Leonard Ravenhill since he was influenced heavily by Bounds in general.²⁰ Yet, a reading of Ravenhill reveals similarities to Bounds' thinking on revival, but not on the issue of providence. My own research has led me to identify only one other contemporary proponent of the church dominion view: Dutch Sheets. A brief examination of the writings of these four advocates is needed in order to demonstrate how their thinking, and that of Bounds, possesses enough similarities to be grouped under the same model.

Paul Billheimer

Of the advocates of a church dominion type understanding of the relationship

¹⁷For the sake of clarity, the term "church dominion" will be used here to describe the ideas contained within this particular model. It is acknowledged that the advocates of this thinking do not utilize this terminology in their writings. Further discussion of the legitimacy of this perspective as a model will be provided in the next section of this chapter.

¹⁸Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer*, 120.

¹⁹Tiessen, email interview by author, 15 December 2012.

²⁰Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 4 January 2013.

between providence and prayer, Paul Billheimer is the most outspoken representative. Three books in particular, *Destined to Overcome*,²¹ *The Mystery of God's Providence*,²² and *Destined for the Throne*,²³ contain the most systematic and intentional presentation of that model available from any author. It becomes the best starting point for a comparative look at church dominion advocates.

Billheimer bases his understanding on the foundational idea that everything was created in order to provide a companion for Christ. He says, "From the creation of the universe to the eternal ages, the goal of all of God's aims, purposes, and actions is one—only one: the selection and preparation of an eternal companion for the Son. That is the only biblical or rational explanation of existence."²⁴ The purpose for mankind's existence falls under that eternal purpose as well. Billheimer teaches that man was made not only for companionship, but also for shared rule with Christ as seen when he says, "From the very beginning it was God's plan and purpose that out of the riven side of His Son should come an Eternal Companion to sit by His side upon the throne of the universe to share with Him His sovereign power and authority over His eternal Kingdom."²⁵ Thus, from creation God gave to mankind authority and dominion. Billheimer teaches that such authority was unconditional, as seen when he says, "God gave the dominion of the entire earth to man. It was his to do with as he should decide to do. God did not give

²¹Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome: Classic Biblical Tools for Defeating the Enemy* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1982).

²²Paul E. Billheimer, *The Mystery of God's Providence* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983).

²³Unless otherwise noted, all references to this particular book by Billheimer will be for the following edition of it: Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne: How Spiritual Warfare Prepares the Bride of Christ for Her Eternal Destiny* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996). Other editions will be cited for historical reasons, and will be so indicated.

²⁴Billheimer, *The Mystery of God's Providence*, 27.

²⁵Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 26.

the earth to man with certain strings attached. What man did with that dominion and authority was his own responsibility.”²⁶

One of Billheimer’s foundational texts for these ideas is Revelation 3:21, which says, “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.” Billheimer teaches that such a desired outcome of ruling with Christ requires preparation. Hence, he concludes that training is the “sole reason for the method and practice of prayer” since it is to “give the Church exercise and practice in overcoming in order to increase her eternal rank and efficiency.”²⁷

An embrace of this model leads to several implications about the relationship between petitionary prayer and God’s providence, implications that Billheimer acknowledges in his writings. The first is that God will not act unless His people pray. Billheimer emphatically teaches that point. For example, he says, “That He will do nothing in the realm of human redemption, since its inception, outside of this scheme of prayer and intercession is indicated by God’s many pressing invitations to prayer in His Word.”²⁸ His basis of this belief is found in Ezekiel 22:30-31, about which he comments, “He, himself, longs to spare the nation. But, strangely, He has bound himself *not* to act without man, without an intercessor. If no one will intercede, God cannot withhold judgment.”²⁹ Later, Billheimer uses the same text to conclude, “By God’s own decree, all of this vast delegated authority is wholly inoperative apart from the prayers of man.”³⁰ Perhaps the most vivid and striking explanation Billheimer provides of this idea is his

²⁶Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome*, 24.

²⁷Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome*, 58.

²⁸Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 45.

²⁹Ibid., 44.

³⁰Ibid., 48.

explanation of the scriptural metaphor of the body. He concludes,

The Church is His Body, the fullness of Him that fills all things everywhere. He is not full or complete without His Church, which is His Body. This is true only because of God's voluntary self-limitation. In the absolute, God is wholly self-sufficient. He needs nothing and can be served by no one. Yet He has chosen voluntarily to limit himself in order that the Church share in His reign. It is true that the Body cannot function without the Head. It is just as true that the Head, by His own choice, will not function without the Body. Both are important to the accomplishment of His plan.³¹

Thus, he concludes that "the Body is as important as the Head for functioning just as the branch is equally important as the vine for their fruit-bearing."³²

The second implication of Billheimer's church dominion thought is the correlated idea that since God will not act unless His people pray, then a lack of prayer hinders Him. Billheimer acknowledges this related idea in his writings. For example, in describing the need of laborers for the harvest, he asks, "Why should He stand helplessly by while urging men to pray reapers into the fields?"³³ The picture of a helpless God hindered by the lack of prayers of His people is also applied to the issue of salvation as seen when Billheimer says, "No soul is saved apart from intercession" since if the church will not pray then "the Holy Spirit, by His own choice, cannot do His work of convicting and persuading."³⁴ Hence, he speculates that the delay in Christ's final victory over Satan is awaiting "aggressive action by the Church."³⁵ This idea of limitation is perhaps best summarized when he writes, "Because all authority over Satan in earthly affairs has been delegated to His Church, even Christ himself exercises no authority in mundane affairs except through her prayer and faith."³⁶

³¹Ibid., 89.

³²Ibid., 90.

³³Ibid., 45.

³⁴Ibid., 65.

³⁵Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome*, 47.

³⁶Ibid., 77.

A third, and also closely related, implication that Billheimer acknowledges is the idea that God will give believers whatever they ask. Looking to John 14:13-14 and 16:23-24 for support, he concludes that God binds himself “unequivocally to answer” whatever His people pray.³⁷ Billheimer notes that such promises are unqualified, unconditional, and with no “fine print,” meaning that “God’s offer of His scepter to redeemed humanity is, therefore, a real offer.”³⁸

It should be noted here that Billheimer believes the limitation of God is a self-limitation that He created for a reason, not something inherent in his nature. As seen in a quote previously cited, Billheimer believes God’s need of mankind to accomplish His purposes is a “voluntary self-limitation.”³⁹ Billheimer is emphatic that the reason for such a self-limitation is the good of the church. He says, “By practicing in her prayer closet the enforcement of heaven’s decision in mundane affairs, the Church is in training to rule with Christ over His universal empire.”⁴⁰ Similarly, he says, “The prayer closet is the arena that produces the overcomer.”⁴¹

To have coherence, such beliefs require an embrace of a risk view of providence. Billheimer makes two statements indicative of his acceptance of such a risk perspective of it. First, as already noted, he believes that the fate of the lost is in the hands of the church. He concludes, “No soul is saved apart from intercession, and that every soul who is saved, is saved because someone—who would not give him up to Satan—prayed.”⁴² However, it is not just the state of people’s souls that is contingent

³⁷Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 45.

³⁸Ibid., 46.

³⁹Ibid., 89.

⁴⁰Ibid., 49.

⁴¹Ibid., 40.

⁴²Ibid., 65.

upon the prayers of God's people. Billheimer applies that principle to the entire world. He says, "It has been truly said, 'The fate of the world is in the hands of nameless saints.'"⁴³ If God's people, not God, are ultimately responsible for the salvation of others and the conditions of the entire world, then God has taken a significant risk in establishing such an order. Billheimer appears to recognize the staggering implications of that belief:

God never goes "over the head" of His Church to enforce His decision. He will not take things out of her hands. To do so would sabotage His training program. Only by bearing this over-whelming weight of responsibility can the Bride be brought to her full stature as co-sovereign of the universe. This is the reason that when she fails, He will wait. This is why He will do nothing in the realm of human redemption until she accepts her responsibility and uses her privilege and prerogative of intercession. If she will not pray, God will not act, because this would abort His purpose to bring His Church to her full potential as His co-sovereign.

This was God's plan from the beginning. He will not spoil it now by taking things out of her hands. He will let the whole world go to destruction first.⁴⁴

For God to allow His world to be destroyed, when He desires a different outcome, because of the failure of the church to pray indicates that He has taken a significant risk.

In the midst of Billheimer's teachings on these ideas, there are three points where internal coherence is lost and inconsistencies appear. First, as noted previously, Billheimer teaches that God gives a person whatever they ask since His promise is unconditional.⁴⁵ Later, though, he adds the condition of repetition, or importunity, and even notes that one reason prayers are unanswered is because the person did not "continue with importunity."⁴⁶ Second, even though he asserts that God will do whatever a believer asks, he also mentions failures and unanswered prayers as being part to God's sovereign plans. For example, he says, "In all that God does with us, in all the puzzling

⁴³Ibid., 62.

⁴⁴Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome*, 67.

⁴⁵Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 46.

⁴⁶Ibid., 109.

and bewildering vicissitudes of life, His purpose is the development of Christlike character, of pure selflessness, of agape love. Failure may be a better instrument to achieve that in us than success.”⁴⁷ Similarly, he notes that the denial of Paul’s request for the removal of the thorn is an explanation as to why prayers for healing today are also sometimes denied: “If God felt compelled to withhold from Paul the answer to his prayer to prevent his being ‘exalted above measure,’ may this explain why God cannot answer more prayers for His children?”⁴⁸ Third, based on the life of Joseph, Billheimer concludes that “nothing can go wrong in a universe that He regulates.”⁴⁹ Such appears to be a very different perspective from his previous statements that God will not intervene in the world if the church fails to rule it through prayer. Despite those inconsistencies, the major themes remain, themes best summarized when he says,

Some have Satan-inspired misgivings about spending time in the ministry of prayer, because they do not understand why God works only through prayer. His object in originating His prayer program was to give us training for overcoming in preparation for rulership. He is using it as an apprenticeship. He did not devise prayer as merely His unique way of getting things done. In His plan, prayer has only one purpose—to give us exercise in overcoming.

God has the power to accomplish all His other purposes without our cooperation in prayer except our need for training and education. He has no other way of training us for rulership except by our cooperation in prayer. He has tied all of His activity and accomplishment to prayer. All that He does in this field is limited to the prayers of His people.⁵⁰

Brother Andrew

Andrew van der Bijl, best known as “Brother Andrew” from his biographical account of smuggling Bibles into communist countries as recorded in *God’s Smuggler*,⁵¹

⁴⁷Billheimer, *The Mystery of God’s Providence*, 81.

⁴⁸Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 99.

⁴⁹Billheimer, *The Mystery of God’s Providence*, 95.

⁵⁰Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome*, 36.

⁵¹(Brother) Andrew, John Sherrill, and Elizabeth Sherrill, *God’s Smuggler* (Bloomington, MN: Chosen Books, 2001).

also wrote a book dealing specifically with the issue of the relationship between the prayers of believers and God’s providence. That book, *And God Changed His Mind*, contains a similar church dominion understanding as already seen in Billheimer.⁵²

Andrew undertook to write the book as a response to the rise of what he terms “Christian fatalism,”⁵³ which represents the views on the no-risk side of the spectrum that Tiessen provides. To illustrate, Andrew shares the story of his response to overhearing two women speaking about God’s will in regard to a hostage situation:

As I listened, I felt indignation rising within me. I could barely control the urge to turn to them and say, “What’s the matter with you? Why are you talking this way? You’re not helpless! God has given you the power to change that situation! Why don’t you use it? Why don’t you pray?”

But sometimes I know when it’s pointless to open my mouth, and this was one of those times. Those women wouldn’t have understood what I wanted to say. Even so, I couldn’t get them out of my mind, and their conversation continued to trouble me because it illustrated perfectly a problem that has caused a tremendous weakening of the Body of Christ in our time.⁵⁴

Interestingly, Andrew sees such “fatalism,” which appeals to the will of God to explain difficult circumstances, as not being new. He even faults Job for that attitude.

Concerning Job 1:21, “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD,” Andrew says,

It is “scriptural” only in the sense that the words are found in the Bible. What we must recognize is that these words were uttered in absolute ignorance by a man who had no idea that God and Satan were using his body as a battleground. Job couldn’t see that Satan was counting on fatalism as his most potent weapon.⁵⁵

In contrast with what he calls fatalism, Andrew proposes a view similar to other church dominion advocates. He writes, “God has given us the privilege of choosing how our lives (and our world) will turn out. And those of us who know God are elevated

⁵²(Brother) Andrew and Susan DeVore Williams, *And God Changed His Mind* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 1999).

⁵³Ibid., 13.

⁵⁴Ibid., 12.

⁵⁵Ibid., 20.

to a stunning position within this framework: We become God’s partners and collaborators in writing the story of mankind.”⁵⁶ In terminology similar to Billheimer, he notes that such a plan goes back to creation:

Who gave the devil so much power in our world? Not God! God created the world and turned it over to us, the people He made in His own image, the people He endowed with free wills so we could freely choose to love and obey Him. He entrusted the world to our care, and we gave it to Satan.⁵⁷

Andrew teaches that God now needs people to be His partner, even to the point of stating that “God is depending on us.”⁵⁸ Because of that dependence, Andrew believes that Christians must pray to “keep the door open for God to do what ‘no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived.’”⁵⁹ Consequently, he believes God is looking for intercessors.⁶⁰

Out of that foundational understanding, Andrew mentions two implications that are found among the other church dominion advocates as well. First, he notes that a lack of prayer hinders God’s purposes. Andrew writes, “If you don’t do the job God has called you to do, it will go undone.”⁶¹ Similarly, he writes, “If we confine ourselves to asking *only* for those things God has done in the past, or even for things we can imagine, we may actually be limiting God.”⁶² To substantiate this idea, he appeals to the example of Sodom and Gomorrah:

He said yes to everything Abraham asked—not for Sodom and Gomorrah’s sake, but for Abraham’s. You see, the accuracy of Abraham’s perception was not the

⁵⁶Ibid., 13.

⁵⁷Ibid., 118.

⁵⁸Ibid., 14.

⁵⁹Ibid., 168.

⁶⁰Ibid., 40.

⁶¹Ibid., 94.

⁶²Ibid., 169.

issue, nor was presumption. His friendship with God was. And in this case, I am convinced that Abraham didn't go far enough in "presuming" upon that friendship. Why? Because the final outcome for Sodom and Gomorrah was the same as if Abraham had not prayed at all Abraham, with his limited human understanding, could not bring himself to presume that God might change His own plans of destruction for the sake of fewer than ten righteous people, and ten could not be found. Like many of us, Abraham stopped too soon in his prayers.⁶³

Hence, Andrew believes that Abraham's failure to pray enough led to God's mercy not being shown to those people.

A second, and closely related, implication is that God will do whatever a believer asks for in prayer. He bases this idea on John 14:12-14, which says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." About those verses he concludes that God "couldn't make a more explicit statement."⁶⁴ Andrew elaborates, "We don't believe it's our place to 'tell God what we want Him to do with His world'—which is the way I recently heard a Christian man describe intercessory prayer. But why not? God invites us—even commands us—to do it."⁶⁵

Andrew acknowledges that granting our request exactly as we ask may require God to change His will. He writes, "God is always ready to listen to our side of the story, and even if He has made plans to do something, He is open to changing those plans under the right conditions."⁶⁶ Andrew takes that idea as far as stating that God is willing to change even when the change is not best for us. In order to teach us the consequences of

⁶³Ibid., 80.

⁶⁴Ibid., 14.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., 15.

our own selfishness, Andrew says God “shakes His head and says, ‘If that’s what you want, I won’t say no, but you’ll have to pay the price.’”⁶⁷

As already seen with Billheimer, the only condition that Andrew cites as a requirement to see prayers answered is that of persistence. He says, “We cannot call ourselves intercessors unless we are willing to persist in our prayers. We must keep on praying until God moves.”⁶⁸ He again cites the example of Sodom and Gomorrah, this time as an example of not persisting long enough in prayer.⁶⁹

As previously described, coherence requires an embrace of a risk view of providence to also hold to these ideas. Andrew appears to embrace such a risk view. For example, he says, “He in a sense restricted His own omnipotence by allowing us to say yes or no to His will.”⁷⁰ Similarly, he teaches that the fate of the world is in the hands of God’s people as seen when he writes, “He has given us ‘the keys of the kingdom’ (Matthew 16:19)—the power to change human history for the better.”⁷¹ To grant humans such power to shape the future requires a risk on God’s part. Such a risk means that if the church fails, human history does not turn out as God desires. This conclusion is seen when Andrew writes that “the pain and misery in this world are not God’s doing or His choice,” but rather have come about because “we have permitted the forces of evil to wreak havoc upon our world.”⁷² He concludes, “We are the authors of our own misery.”⁷³

⁶⁷Ibid., 181.

⁶⁸Ibid., 102.

⁶⁹Ibid., 103.

⁷⁰Ibid., 13.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., 39.

⁷³Ibid.

With the consistent themes of God’s plan for man’s co-rule from creation, God’s limitation if man does not pray, and God’s promise to do whatever man asks, Andrew fits into the church dominion model as already seen with Billheimer. Such a church dominion perspective is summarized in his thinking when he writes about Psalm 2:8,

How do we respond when God says, “Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession” (Psalm 2:8)? Yes, we must ask for the nations and for the ends of the earth. God will give them to us! The unsaved world is waiting for us to ask. Our oppressed brothers and sisters in the suffering Church are waiting for us to ask. Above all, God is waiting for us to ask.⁷⁴

Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee, who is known for his writings that emerged from his life in China both in founding churches and in being imprisoned there for his faith, also held to a church dominion perspective. Two of his books provide evidence of that model in this thinking: *Sit, Walk, Stand*⁷⁵ and *What Shall This Man Do?*⁷⁶ Of those, few writings today provide as concise a summary of church dominion ideology as does the section of chapter nine of *What Shall This Man Do?* entitled “The Limitations of God.”⁷⁷ From those books, and especially from that section, several themes emerge that have already been seen in the writings of Billheimer and Andrew.

For example, Nee teaches that God needs mankind to fulfill his purposes. He says, “The Lord’s need today is for ready instruments.”⁷⁸ Specifically, he believes that such instruments are believers who are overcomers. As Nee describes, “God looks for

⁷⁴Ibid., 190.

⁷⁵Watchman Nee, *Sit, Walk, Stand* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977).

⁷⁶Watchman Nee, *What Shall This Man Do?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978).

⁷⁷Watchman Nee, “The Limitations of God,” in *What Shall This Man Do?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978), 197-203.

⁷⁸Nee, *Sit, Walk, Stand*, 49.

those of his people who will be overcomers within the churches.”⁷⁹ Such overcomers are needed because the dominion God gave to man at creation was lost and is now usurped by Satan, who is “an illegal squatter on God’s inheritance.”⁸⁰ Nee believes that God has called the church to “displace Satan from his present realm and to make Christ Head over all.”⁸¹

With that type of authority now granted to the church, God has promised to do whatever the church asks for in prayer. Nee also uses John 14-16 to support his view:

We will turn now to the Church’s prayer. As we have said, fundamentally there are two kinds of prayer. The first is individual and devotional. We find it repeatedly alluded to in John’s Gospel in such promises as the following: “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (14:13; compare verse 14 and chapters 15:7; 16:23, 24). There are no conditions here. It is a promise for every individual member of Christ, and it makes prayer a very great thing. If, in the light of such statements, God does not hear and answer our individual prayers, we may feel there is surely something wrong with them.

But the second kind of prayer both includes the first and goes beyond it. It is that described in our passage in Matthew 18: “Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven” (verse 19). This is the Church’s task, her God-given ministry of prayer. For the promise here is conditional; there must be at least two, and they in agreement.

And why is their prayer answered? The next verse explains: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” They “are gathered” (passive voice); they do not just meet. We see the difference, for to be gathered is not merely to go of ourselves.⁸²

Like the other advocates, he also describes the unconditional promise of receiving specific answers for exactly what is asked for in prayer.

As with Billheimer, Nee also recognizes the closely related idea that God will not move unless His people ask Him to do so. He says, “God will not act alone. He

⁷⁹Nee, *What Shall This Man Do?*, 244.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 205.

⁸¹Nee, *Sit, Walk, Stand*, 53.

⁸²Nee, *What Shall This Man Do?*, 197.

awaits our prayers.”⁸³ Similarly, he says, “When men cease to pray, God ceases to work, for without their prayer he will do nothing.”⁸⁴ He elaborates even more fully on that idea when he says,

God waits for the prayers of his children to bring in His Kingdom. For if this age is important, the age that follows is infinitely more so. All the privileges and power we enjoy now are only a foretaste of the powers of the age to come. The fullness of God that is hidden now will be manifest then. In the light of this, we see the importance of what we call “The Lord’s Prayer.” For thousands of years God commanded his people to pray, but through the centuries he gave them no instruction as to what they should pray about, apart from this one prayer.

“Thy Kingdom come!” We are to pray for this. If his Kingdom would come of itself, we should not have been given that command. But God’s people are to pray, for his work is always done in response to his people’s cry. The Lord’s prayer is not just a model prayer for me; it is a revelation of God’s heart. “True prayer begins at the heart of God, is made known to the hearts of men, is prayed back to God again, and God answers.” That is more than a definition; it is, I believe, the principle of God’s working in the universe.⁸⁵

Thus, Nee can conclude,

Read again Matthew 18:18-20 and see the tremendous range of the Church’s responsibility in prayer. The measure of the Church is the measure of God in the earth today. As once he was revealed through Jesus himself in Jerusalem and Galilee, so now he is revealed through his Church wherever it is found worldwide. He cannot go beyond the extent of the Church, for the Church alone represents the coming race. She stands for God on the earth, and what she looses and binds, heaven looses and binds. On earth today God’s power is as great as her prayers; no greater.⁸⁶

The above quotes are significant in that they contain the foundational church dominion idea that God only moves in answer to prayer for the specific reason of training the church for her future rule with Christ. Though the ideas are not stated as frequently in Nee’s book as is found with the previous authors, the comments above indicate that Nee held to the same perspective.

As previously discussed, an embrace of these beliefs also requires an embrace

⁸³Ibid., 199.

⁸⁴Ibid., 201.

⁸⁵Ibid., 198.

⁸⁶Ibid., 201.

of a risk view of providence if coherence is to be maintained. Nee recognizes such a risk view, and acknowledges it even more directly than Billheimer and Andrew. For example, he writes, “Twice we are told: ‘Whatsoever ye shall ask . . .’; and twice: ‘If ye shall ask anything . . .’ (John 14:13, 14; 15:16; 16:23). Faced with these challenging words, well might we reverently say: ‘Lord, your courage is very great!’ For God thus to commit himself to his servants is indeed a tremendous thing.”⁸⁷ He also says, “We know the risk God was willing to run in order to gain this end.”⁸⁸ To speak so directly of the risk God took and His courage in doing so indicates that Nee understood what his beliefs about prayer required of his beliefs about God’s providence.

However, in ways more bold than Billheimer and Andrew, Nee speaks of the natural corollary to these ideas, namely that God, Himself, is limited. For example, he says, “All that he does in relation to his eternal purpose, he does through [the Church], and where she falls behind in her work to that extent he is limited. The Church cannot increase God’s power, but she can limit it.”⁸⁹ Even more boldly, he says, “The Church is to secure for God the release of his power into the world, by bringing it to bear on evil situations in the realm of the spirit, for their overthrow. The Church is—I speak reverently—to restore to God his own omnipotence.”⁹⁰ Whereas the other advocates so far speak of God’s will being limited or hindered by a lack of prayer, Nee takes it a step further in recognizing that such a view means that God Himself, not just His will, is limited, even to the point of lacking His omnipotence if the church fails to pray.

In looking to summarize Nee’s views, what is perhaps one of the best summaries of church dominion theology anywhere emerges. Within several paragraphs,

⁸⁷Nee, *Sit, Walk, Stand*, 61.

⁸⁸Nee, *What Shall This Man Do?*, 201.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 202.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 201.

the themes of God’s self-limitation, God’s purpose in that limitation, and the scriptural examples cited by the advocates for such beliefs are all found:

There are many passages in the Gospels which affirm that God has subjected himself to limitations. We find Jesus prevented from entering a Galilean city, or refused passage through a Samaritan village, or again, powerless to do any mighty work in Nazareth (Mark 1:45; Luke 9:53; Mark 6:5). “How am I straitened!” he would cry; “How often would I have gathered thy children . . . and ye would not.” “Ye will not come to me that ye may have life” (Luke 12:50; Matt. 23:37; John 5:40). So the grain of wheat has no other course than to “fall into the earth and die”; and still today the word of God must be sown “among thorns” (John 12:24; Matt. 13:22). The same thing continues on into the later New Testament history, as well as being found, of course, everywhere in the Old. The water of divine deliverance depends upon the provision of human ditches. The oil of the Spirit flows until “there is not a vessel more.” “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities . . .” (2 Kings 3:16, 18; 4:6; Isaiah 59:1, 2).

How did it come about that Omnipotence became limitable by man? And will it continue throughout eternity? For surely, God is El Shaddai, “God Almighty”; eternity past and eternity to come hold nothing able to limit him, nothing to arrest or hinder or delay.

But God has a will. He seeks communion with a people who will share his life and manifest his Son. To that end he created heaven and earth—and man; and then the trouble started. For, in keeping with his purpose, God had created man a being with free will, and he has determined not to accomplish that purpose without the free cooperation of man’s will. This is a solemn principle; none more so. It means that, whereas in the eternities God was absolute, here in time he has chosen, instead of compelling his creatures, to limit his own omnipotence to their free choice. Man has been given power to make way for, or to obstruct, the power of God.

To such limitation God was prepared to subject himself, knowing the triumph of divine love that would as a result be manifest in future eternity. He works towards that goal.⁹¹

Other Proponents

In addition to these three proponents whom Tiessen accurately categorizes as advocating a church dominion model, I have found one additional contemporary author who has significant church dominion theology in at least one of his books: Dutch Sheets.⁹² While his writings do not contain the repeated mentions of church dominion

⁹¹Ibid., 199.

⁹²As already noted, Tiessen and King are not aware of any other advocates of the church dominion model. My research has led me to believe that the contemporary author Dutch Sheets has significant church dominion ideas in his thinking as will be discussed in this section. It is important to note that the lack of inclusion of any other authors here does not imply that no other people believe or mention

ideas found among the previous proponents, it does contain the same ideas.

the ideas of church dominion theology, but rather that they do not advocate those ideas in a systematic way as the proponents here do.

For example, Andrew Murray, who predates Bounds and the other proponents discussed here, does not focus on providence in his writings. However, he has several isolated statements that are similar to church dominion ideas. For example, he says that prayer can “bring down to earth what without prayer would not have been given” (Andrew Murray, *The Ministry of Intercession: A Plea for More Prayer* [New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898], 10). Similarly, he indicates a belief that God needs prayer to move when he says that through intercession “He continues His saving work, and can do nothing without it” (ibid., 13). He also speaks of importunity in order to “obtain what God at first could not and would not give” (ibid., 10). He believes such importunity is needed to teach us, as seen when he writes, “Just imagine what the result would be if the child of God had only to kneel down and ask, and get, and go away. What unspeakable loss to the spiritual life would ensue” (ibid., 51). Yet, such statements are isolated and are not a major focus of his writings, thus not warranting him to be included among the others here.

Similarly, a more contemporary example can be found in C. Peter Wagner. In his book that focuses on spiritual warfare, some comments hint at church dominion theology. For example, he articulates a risk view of providence when he says, “We must understand that our sovereign God has for His own reasons so designed this world that much of what is truly His will He makes contingent on the attitudes and actions of human beings. He allows humans to make decisions that can influence history” (C. Peter Wagner, *Spiritual Warfare Strategy: Confronting Spiritual Powers* [Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1996], 234). Wagner also writes, “Although our prayers do not change the nature or character of God, they can have a direct influence on what God does or does not do. Our sovereign God has established a law of prayer. This means He has made certain things He wishes to do in human affairs contingent on the prayers of His people. If God’s people are obedient and faithful in prayer, God’s ‘Plan A,’ so to speak, will go into effect. If not, we can expect a less desirable ‘Plan B’” (ibid.). Again, such church dominion ideas are isolated and not present in significant ways. Other examples of authors who provide passing mentions of portions of ideas from the church dominion model are beyond the scope of this project. Only those who give significant attention to the broader scope of the entire model’s ideology are considered here.

It should be noted that Douglas Kelly (Douglas F. Kelly, *If God Already Knows Why Pray?* [Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2007]) was originally intended to be included in this analysis because he mentions several ideas close to church dominion thought. For example, like Billheimer, the church is central in his thinking. Kelly writes, “God’s intervention in the general affairs of men will always be contingent upon His plans for the Church” (ibid., 51). He also teaches that the prayers of the church are a necessary part of accomplishing God’s purposes. For example, he says, “We are given a mandate to become involved in His divine plan through our human praying Our prayer can be effective in seeing that the divine ‘will is done’” (ibid., 52). More simply, he says that prayer “gets God’s will done” (ibid., 78). Like the other advocates, he stresses the need for continual asking to receive, also citing John 14-16 for support with its “straightforward promises about asking and receiving” (ibid.). He says, “When we look at the promises that encourage us that our prayers will be answered, we do indeed discover that some of them are conditional. They will only be fulfilled after continual asking” (ibid., 79). In describing that persistence, he has a view similar to Sheets in emphasizing that it means approaching God without shame (ibid., 121). While not speaking of risk as the other proponents do, he does understand the implications of his ideas, stating that God “invites our input into the making of history” (ibid., 52), and that such input through praying “changes history” (ibid., 48). However, I am not including him in the scope of his project as he differs in some foundational areas including never mentioning the idea of a self-limitation of God or a need of God. In addition, he focuses on praying within God’s will, not trying to change it except in the situation of asking for mercy (ibid., 60). He also teaches that God initiates prayer and gives people the specific burden for which they are to pray (ibid., 64). Such departures from the other church dominion advocates place him outside the normal parameters of the church dominion model.

Sheets, who has in recent years authored several books on prayer and speaks frequently at revival gatherings within the charismatic community, describes many of the same church dominion ideas in his book, *Intercessory Prayer: How God Can Use Your Prayers to Move Heaven and Earth*.⁹³ In fact, he cites both Bounds and Billheimer in this particular book.⁹⁴ Also, similar to Andrew, he writes in response to his concern about fatalism, noting that if God is going to do things regardless of whether or not we pray, we should not waste our time praying.⁹⁵

In addition to those shared influences, he also articulates the entire ideology of the church dominion model. For example, he emphasizes the initial dominion God gave people at creation, saying, “How things went on planet Earth, for better or worse, depended on Adam and his offspring.”⁹⁶ Thus, he concludes, “Humanity really was in charge!”⁹⁷ Similarly, he concludes that while God is omnipotent, he has imposed on Himself a self-limitation resulting in His need of humanity in order to see His purposes accomplished, as seen when he writes,

Though God is sovereign and all-powerful, Scripture clearly tells us that He limited Himself, concerning the affairs of Earth, to working through human beings. Is this not the reason the earth is in such a mess? Not because God wills it so, but because of His need to work and carry out His will through His people.⁹⁸

Sheets applies the principle of the need of God to God’s promises as well, as seen when he says, “I can’t help wondering how many promises from God have gone unfulfilled because He can’t find the human involvement.”⁹⁹ Thus, he concludes, “Our prayers do

⁹³Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer*.

⁹⁴Ibid., 24 and 33.

⁹⁵Ibid., 23.

⁹⁶Ibid., 28.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid., 29.

⁹⁹Ibid., 33.

more than just motivate the Father to action. They actually release the power of the Holy Spirit from us to accomplish things.”¹⁰⁰ Like the other proponents, Sheets recognizes that such requires a risk view of providence. He asks, “Why would God do it this way? Why would He take such a risk?”¹⁰¹

To support his views, he primarily looks to three Scripture passages. From 1 King 18, he concludes that Elijah needed to pray because “God has chosen to work through people” and “He still needs us to ask.”¹⁰² From Daniel 9 he speculates about Daniel that “somehow he must have known that God needed his involvement.”¹⁰³ Finally, he appeals to Ezekiel 22 as Billheimer does. Sheets’ analysis of that text provides a good summary of his overall view on providence and prayer:

The passage is clearly saying, “While My justice demanded judgment, My love wanted forgiveness. Had I been able to find a human to ask Me to spare this people, I could have. It would have allowed Me to show mercy. Because I found no one, however, I had to destroy them.”

I don’t like the implications of this passage any more than you do. I don’t want the responsibility. I don’t like to consider the ramifications of a God who has somehow limited Himself to us earthlings. But in light of these and other passages, as well as the condition of the world, I can come to no other conclusion.

Either God wants the earth in this condition or He doesn’t. If He doesn’t, which is certainly the case, then we must assume one of two things. Either He is powerless to do anything about it, or He needs and is waiting on something from us to bring about change.¹⁰⁴

Differences and Similarities among Proponents

As already noted, these advocates do not ascribe their own teaching to the church dominion model or label their views as such. Therefore, one should not be

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 211.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 28.

¹⁰²Ibid., 31.

¹⁰³Ibid., 32.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 34.

surprised to find some differences between them. Two primary areas of difference emerge in their thinking.

First, they differ as to why God limited Himself to only act in response to prayer. Billheimer stresses that God has done so in order to train the church for her future reign with Christ. He directly says that through prayer, the “Church is in training to rule.”¹⁰⁵ Andrew is not as specific, stating that the reason God limited Himself is because God wants to give us “the privilege of choosing how our lives (and our world) will turn out.”¹⁰⁶ Sheets believes differently, teaching that God imposed that self-limitation out of His relational desire. In answering the question as to why God took such a risk, he concludes, “From what I know about God in the Scriptures and from my personal walk with Him, I find only one conclusion: God wanted a family—sons and daughters who could personally relate to Him, and vice versa God was now a dad, and He was thrilled.”¹⁰⁷ Nee appears to combine elements of all of those ideas, noting that God’s limitation comes out of His desire to seek “communion with a people who will share his life,” as well out a desire for “the triumph of divine love” that “would be manifest in future eternity.”¹⁰⁸

The second area where a difference appears is in the issue of whether or not prayer seeks to persuade God. Andrew takes the boldest approach in saying that prayer does seek to change God’s mind. In fact, he says, “I tell God what to do almost every time I pray.”¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, Billheimer rejects that idea and insists that prayer never

¹⁰⁵Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 49.

¹⁰⁶Andrew and DeVore, *And God Changed His Mind*, 13.

¹⁰⁷Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer*, 28.

¹⁰⁸Nee, *What Shall This Man Do?*, 200.

¹⁰⁹Andrew and DeVore, *And God Changed His Mind*, 88.

seeks to influence or change God, but rather is “on-the-job training.”¹¹⁰ Billheimer speaks of his contrasting view, saying,

In the past, many have thought that prayer influences God. This is a mistake. Prayer does not influence God. God is wholly sovereign. He Himself initiates all prayer that is according to His will. When in His divine wisdom He decides on a course of action in the world He has created and governs, He seeks for a man upon whose heart He can lay a burden, and who will cooperate with Him by voicing God’s purpose and desire.¹¹¹

Sheets appears to take a position somewhere between those extremes as seen when he writes about persistence in prayer. For example, he says, “Persistence in prayer is necessary, but it is not to overcome God’s reluctance.”¹¹² His basis for that idea is his understanding of the concept of importunity. He believes the translation of importunity is unfortunate because the Greek word implies a call to “approach the throne of grace boldly, not with a sense of unworthiness or shame.”¹¹³ Thus, any delay in receiving an answer is likely a waiting period designed to teach the believer.¹¹⁴ As such, Sheets appears to view prayer more in terms of training than in overcoming God’s reluctance. Nee is silent as to this particular issue, though the context of his writings would appear to be more consistent with that of Sheets.

Despite those differences, the overall themes among church dominion advocates remain. Those major ideas shared by each of the proponents are

1. God will give believers whatever they ask for in prayer, even if doing so means that He has to change His will.
2. Such also means that God will not act unless His people pray.
3. Thus, a lack of prayer hinders God’s purposes, and even God Himself.

¹¹⁰Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome*, 65.

¹¹¹Ibid., 64.

¹¹²Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer*, 165.

¹¹³Ibid., 210.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

4. God has ordained such a structure so as to give man the ability to rule both now and in the future.
5. Believing in such a plan requires a person also to hold to a risk view of providence, something that each author acknowledges.
6. God intentionally took such risks. Yet, those risks and the structure He ordained whereby prayer is essential for Him to act are not the result of any inherent limitation in His being but are for a specific purpose.

The scriptural basis these church dominion advocates provide for their views is limited to a few key texts, particularly John 14-16 which is cited by Billheimer, Andrew, and Nee. Ezekiel 22 is also used as support by Billheimer and Nee. They also appeal to Matthew 28 to explain the delegation of the authority of God to the church.¹¹⁵ Primarily, though, these authors only discuss their ideas and provide limited scriptural support for their assertions. An analysis of these ideas, while using the texts that Bounds primarily references to support them, will be provided in the next chapter.

Legitimacy of the Church Dominion Model

As is evident by this point, all of the proponents of the church dominion model are found from popular Christianity. They are a popular television speaker, two missionary authors, and a pastor. None of the advocates wrote from or for an academic perspective. I can find no writings advocating the church dominion model in scholarly journals. As Tiessen readily acknowledges in his introduction to the model in *Providence & Prayer*, “The church dominion model is represented in popularly written books on prayer rather than in scholarly treatises on providence.”¹¹⁶ Due to that lack of academic support, Lemke is concerned about the inclusion of church dominion as a legitimate model for consideration. In his review of the book, he writes, “One could quibble with Tiessen’s selection of models to examine in the book. Church dominion theology may

¹¹⁵See Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome*, 34, and Nee, *Sit, Walk, Stand*, 59.

¹¹⁶Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer*, 120.

deserve to be included because of its influence in popular piety, but its paucity of scholarly advocates makes it rather uneven with the other chapters.”¹¹⁷

While Lemke is correct in his statement that the church dominion model is uneven with the other models in that it lacks scholarly advocates, it does deserve to be included not only in Tiessen’s book but also in other discussions on providence. First, Lemke’s concern is unique to him among the published reviews of Tiessen’s book. No other review expresses that concern. For example, as Christopher Morgan writes in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, “Tiessen has provided a substantial summary of the major views of providence. His analysis of the ten major models of providence is fair, thorough, and nuanced.”¹¹⁸ Morgan is correct in recognizing all ten of the major models Tiessen cites, including the church dominion model.

Second, and more significant, is the reality of the influence of the church dominion advocates. In response to my inquiry about the model, Tiessen replied,

I grant that this is not a view that has been put forward by academics. At least one of the journal reviews of my book made this point, and he argued that the chapter did not belong in the study for that reason. I certainly understand why someone might reach that conclusion. The model differs significantly from the others in that important regard. But here is the interesting thing—many more people have read these books, or heard this view, either from these men or from other non-scholars who have absorbed them, than are familiar with the names of the scholars representative of the more academically rigorous models. In putting my book together, I decided that the extent of the influence of these men and their books, within Christian churches, warranted an exposition of the position. The men who have written about it are, admittedly, not scholars, but they have been widely respected in segments of the church.¹¹⁹

Whether or not scholars accept the legitimacy of church dominion thought does not change the fact that the proponents have a significant following. For example,

¹¹⁷Lemke, “Review of *Providence & Prayer*,” 206.

¹¹⁸Christopher W. Morgan, “Review of *Providence & Prayer*,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 1 (2002): 156.

¹¹⁹Terrance Tiessen, email interview by author, 15 December 2012.

Billheimer's *Destined for the Throne* was in its thirteenth printing by 1978 and already had sold more than 250,000 copies.¹²⁰ In 1996 it was revised and remains in print today.¹²¹ Well known and respected evangelicals have endorsed it and continue to do so. For example, Billy Graham wrote about it,

I have just read the manuscript of Paul E. Billheimer's book *Destined for the Throne*, and have been inspired and challenged by the insights and fresh interpretations of the Scriptures regarding prayer, praise, and the church's place in the world. Every Christian who feels impelled to find a deeper dimension of Christian witness should not only read this book, but study it prayerfully, and apply its principles to his life.¹²²

The most recent edition of it from 2005 also includes an endorsement from Max Lucado.¹²³ In addition, *Destined to Overcome* includes the story of how the Trinity Broadcasting Network founders became familiar with Billheimer and how they made him a regular guest in order to intentionally spread his ideas that had so impacted them.¹²⁴ In fact, Billheimer spent the later years of his life on the teaching staff of that television network, spreading his ideas to the broader Christian community.¹²⁵ Similarly, Sheets' book, *Intercessory Prayer*, has endorsements from Bill Bright and Peter Wagner and has sold more than 500,000 copies.¹²⁶ In addition, as was discussed in earlier chapters, Bounds' own writings, which represent similar church dominion views as will be shown in the next section, continue to be read and to be highly influential. Tiessen provides a

¹²⁰Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1978), 8.

¹²¹Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne: How Spiritual Warfare Prepares the Bride of Christ for Her Eternal Destiny* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996).

¹²²*Ibid.*, 13.

¹²³Paul E. Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne: How Spiritual Warfare Prepares the Bride of Christ for her Eternal Destiny* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2005).

¹²⁴Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome*, 116.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 120.

¹²⁶Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer*.

light-hearted but helpful perspective on such a reality when he wrote to me about this issue:

E. M. Bounds is one more person whose books have been published, and presumably read, by a great many people who have never heard of key proponents of some of the other models. In a quick Google search, I see that Baker Books chose to publish a compendium of Bounds' 8 books on prayer, in 1990, and that it ranks higher on Amazon's sales rankings (which are admittedly rather mysterious) than my own book does.¹²⁷

With such a wide influence in contemporary Christianity, the church dominion model cannot be excluded or ignored simply because academic theologians are not advocating it and because it is not found in scholarly works. Regardless of its absence from the academy, its ideas shape the thinking of countless evangelical Christians to this very day. Therefore, scholarly assessments of it must be made and helpful critiques must be made available to the very people allowing themselves to be shaped by its thoughts and by its proponents, including Bounds. Again, Tiessen provides a helpful reminder in his response to me:

I'm certainly aware that there are many widely read books that are just plain nonsense. But the church dominion model does not appear to me to be in that category. These authors were not nut cases. The view they put forward has been derived from a particular selection of biblical texts, and has obviously struck millions of people as plausible My point is simply that, if theologians are called to serve the church, we need to be aware of what is going on in the church, and not just what is going on in the Seminary classroom.¹²⁸

This project should not be the end of an assessment of church dominion theology, but should be the beginning of many other research projects that look more widely at the teachings and influence of church dominion proponents beyond the particular focus on Bounds' beliefs and influence here. Such additional research is needed for the academy to serve the churches, to help Christians think biblically about why they pray as they do,

¹²⁷Terrance Tiessen, email interview by author, 15 December 2012.

¹²⁸Ibid.

and to help them develop coherence between what they profess to believe about God and how they pray.

Bounds' Place within the Church Dominion Model

As already seen in chapter 2, Bounds did not systematize his writings apart from his three books on the topics of heaven, the resurrection, and Satan. As such, he did not advocate for a particular model of understanding God's providence, and rarely did he even focus on that concept. Yet, not only are his ideas consistent with other church dominion advocates, but his influence on contemporary understandings of prayer likely drove the development of and popularization of the church dominion perspective.

For example, the most vocal proponent of this model is Billheimer. He describes his efforts in *Destined for the Throne* as presenting “what some consider a totally new and unique cosmology.”¹²⁹ Though the presentation of those ideas was new to many at the time, the ideas were not. Nee predated him in the development of it. But, more importantly, Billheimer's own thinking had been significantly shaped by Bounds. In inquiring of King about this influence, he replied that Billheimer is “one hundred percent Bounds' influence.”¹³⁰ King recalls that when Billheimer lived near him in Atlanta, Billheimer proudly showed him his collection of Bounds books.¹³¹ Not surprisingly, Bounds' quotes can be found in his books,¹³² as well as a commendation to his readers to read prayer classics, of which “those by E. M. Bounds are among the

¹²⁹Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 15.

¹³⁰Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 4 January 2013.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²For example, see Billheimer, *Destined to Overcome*, 65 and 68.

best.”¹³³ Thus, it should not be surprising to find some of the same themes from Bounds’ writings repeated by Billheimer.

Before looking at the church dominion themes previously listed in this chapter in order to see Bounds’ place within church dominion thought and his influence on the development of it, it should be noted that among the advocates of the models that Tiessen describes, most share a common belief in the omnipotence of God.¹³⁴ Such is true of Bounds. For example, in his book *The Resurrection*, he asks the rhetorical question, “Is anything too hard for God?”¹³⁵ Later, he explains the resurrection as being understandable in terms of “God’s omnipotence.”¹³⁶ Similarly, in his book, *Prayer and Praying Men*, he explains prayer as being powerful “because it gets the Omnipotent God to grant its request.”¹³⁷ While the advocates of the various models basically agree on that point of omnipotence, most of the similarities end there as they seek for coherence between a belief in God’s providence and how petitionary prayer impacts it. As these different models are studied, Bounds’ thought will be seen to be most consistent with the church dominion model as later articulated by Andrew, Billheimer, Nee, and Sheets. While Bounds has some brief mentions of the foundational explanations as to the reason for his belief in the existence of this particular relationship between prayer and providence, his writings are filled with the themes regarding the implications of this theology, themes that already have been seen in the writings of the other advocates.

¹³³Billheimer, *Destined for the Throne*, 133.

¹³⁴Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer*, 16.

¹³⁵E. M. Bounds, *The Resurrection* (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1907), 16.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, 94.

¹³⁷Edward M. Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), 148.

Similar Themes on the Implications of Church Dominion Theology

The themes found among the writings of the other church dominion advocates, as outlined previously in this chapter, sound identical to those found in Bounds' writings as summarized in chapter 3. These themes include the idea that God will give believers whatever they ask in prayer if they persist. They also include the correlated ideas that God will not act unless His people pray, and that a lack of prayer hinders Him. As with the previous authors, such beliefs will also result in Bounds embracing a risk view of providence, while holding that God took such risks by choice and not because of a limitation in His nature.

God will do the very thing asked for in prayer. Bounds advocates for this same idea that each of the other advocates who follow him also emphasize in their writings. Writing about Isaiah 45:11 which says, "Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: 'Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?'" Bounds says it is "God's *carte blanche* to prayer."¹³⁸ Similarly, he says that a prayer which is specific and definite is an "order on God" that "God will fill" exactly as requested.¹³⁹ Elsewhere he describes prayer as something which "moves God to do things that it nominates."¹⁴⁰

In light of that understanding of prayer, Bounds concludes that "no prayer offered in His name is denied"¹⁴¹ since "He has promised to do the very thing for which we pray."¹⁴² Bounds applies this idea to specific situations in an individual's life, such as

¹³⁸E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920), 30.

¹³⁹Edward M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), 21.

¹⁴⁰Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 148.

¹⁴¹Edward M. Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1923), 93.

¹⁴²Edward M. Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H.

when he says, “Pure praying remedies all ills, cures all diseases, relieves all situations, however dire.”¹⁴³ More broadly, he applies it to God’s redemptive purposes in the world, as seen when he says, “The great movements of God have had their origin and energy in and were shaped by prayers of men” since God “is pleased to order His policy, and base His action on the prayers of His saints.”¹⁴⁴ Bounds acknowledges that such a willingness on the part of God means that answering prayers as requested may require God to change His purposes.¹⁴⁵ He believes that God answers the prayer as requested “even when the hearing and answering might change His conduct and reverse His action.”¹⁴⁶ Like Billheimer and Andrew, he also mentions the requirement of importunity as he writes that believers must pray with repetition since “importunity gains its end.”¹⁴⁷ He believes repetition succeeds, or as he writes elsewhere, “always wins,” since “God yields to importunity and fidelity. He has not heart to say No [*sic*] to such praying as Moses did.”¹⁴⁸

God will not act unless believers pray. As Billheimer and Nee directly state, and as Sheets alludes, Bounds similarly teaches that God will not do anything unless believers ask for it in prayer. In his very first book, *Preacher and Prayer*, he quotes Wesley to say “God does nothing but in answer to prayer.”¹⁴⁹ In subsequent books he

Revell Company, 1924), 13 .

¹⁴³Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 46.

¹⁴⁴Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 34.

¹⁴⁵Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 97.

¹⁴⁶Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 36.

¹⁴⁷Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 56.

¹⁴⁸Edward M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer: A Study in Christian Warfare*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931), 19.

¹⁴⁹E. M. Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., 1907), 101.

repeats that teaching. For example, looking to Ezekiel 36 and Psalm 2 for support, he writes, “God does nothing without prayer. His most gracious purposes are conditioned on prayer.”¹⁵⁰

As already seen in the previous chapter, Bounds applies this idea to the promises of God. For example, he writes that prayer “makes way for and brings into practical realization the promises of God.”¹⁵¹ Later, he elaborates on that idea, saying, “God’s promises are dependent and conditioned upon prayer to appropriate them and make them a conscious realization.”¹⁵² Bounds applies it even to the coming of the Holy Spirit, noting that it happened only “after many days of continued and importunate praying.”¹⁵³ Providing a succinct summary of these ideas, Bounds describes prayer by saying, “It lays its hand on Almighty God and moves him to do what he otherwise would not do if prayer was not offered.”¹⁵⁴

A lack of prayer hinders God. Closely connected is the idea that since God will not act without prayer, then a lack of prayer hinders His work, an idea found in the writings of all church dominion advocates, including Bounds. Bounds writes in his first book that without devotion marked by much prayer, “God’s advance has been stayed, his cause crippled, his name dishonored for their lack.”¹⁵⁵ He also speaks of the same hindrance in terms of God’s kingdom failing,¹⁵⁶ as well as specifically of how a lack of

¹⁵⁰Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, 39.

¹⁵¹Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 17.

¹⁵²Ibid., 23.

¹⁵³Ibid., 29.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 34.

¹⁵⁵Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 61.

¹⁵⁶Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, 98.

prayer “arrested the advance of the church.”¹⁵⁷ As shown in the previous chapter, one example of this principle that Bounds, like Andrew, repeatedly uses is the destruction of Sodom after Abraham quit praying. In one mention of it he writes, “If, as already indicated, he had not ceased in his asking, perhaps God would not have ceased in His giving. ‘Abraham left off asking before God left off granting.’”¹⁵⁸

However, like Nee, Bounds teaches in several of his books that it is not only God’s will that is hindered, but also God Himself. In one instance he writes that a failure to pray has “limited the Holy One of Israel.”¹⁵⁹ In another statement he notes that men are able to hinder God from executing his redemptive purposes.¹⁶⁰ Yet, his boldest statement on this idea is found in *The Weapon of Prayer*. There he writes that a lack of prayer has “weakened Christ’s power on earth, postponed the glorious results of His reign, and retired God from His sovereignty.”¹⁶¹

Coherence requires an embrace of a risk view of providence. As the other church dominion advocates all do, Bounds also embraces a risk view of providence that is necessary in order to maintain coherence with the previous ideas. While Bounds nor any of the other authors directly state that they embrace a risk view of providence, each has teachings that clearly indicate such a belief. Bounds makes several statements indicating that he believes God turns everything over to His people. He directly states that idea when he writes, “God gives Jesus the key to everything, and Jesus turns

¹⁵⁷Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 103.

¹⁵⁸Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 61.

¹⁵⁹Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 43.

¹⁶⁰Edward M. Bounds, *The Essentials of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925), 87.

¹⁶¹Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 24.

everything over to His followers.”¹⁶² Citing John 15:7 which says, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you,” Bounds concludes, “God turns Himself over to the will of His people.”¹⁶³ Similarly, Bounds again looks to Isaiah 45:11 to say, “He commits Himself into the hands of His praying people.”¹⁶⁴

Like Billheimer and Andrew, Bounds writes that because God has turned over everything to His people, His people are responsible for the conditions of the world: “The lesson of it all is this, that as workers together with God we must regard ourselves as in not a little measure responsible for the conditions which prevail around us to-day.”¹⁶⁵ The condition of the salvation of others falls under the scope of what Bounds intends in that statement. He also writes, “Prayer holds in its grasp the movements of the race of man, and embraces the destinies of men for all eternity.”¹⁶⁶ Hence, Bounds can conclude, “How difficult it appears to be for the Church to understand that the whole scheme of redemption depends upon men of prayer!”¹⁶⁷ Bounds appears to recognize the seriousness of such claims, and to acknowledge his belief that God took risks in giving such authority to His people, as seen when he says that God “puts Himself so fully into the hands of the praying ones, that it almost staggers our faith and causes us to hesitate with astonishment.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶²Edward M. Bounds, *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921), 105.

¹⁶³Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, 126.

¹⁶⁴Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 64.

¹⁶⁵Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 155.

¹⁶⁶Bounds, *The Essentials of Prayer*, 128.

¹⁶⁷Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 71.

¹⁶⁸Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 42.

The indication of a risk view of providence is evident in those statements.

Yet, Bounds makes even clearer indications of a belief in a risk view of providence characteristic with broader church dominion thought. For example, he says,

When the Church is in the condition of prayer God's cause always flourishes and His kingdom on earth always triumphs. When the Church fails to pray, God's cause decays and evil of every kind prevails. In other words, God works through the prayers of His people, and when they fail Him at this point, decline and deadness ensue. It is according to the divine plans that spiritual prosperity comes through the prayer-channel. Praying saints are God's agents for carrying on His saving and providential work on the earth. If His agents fail Him, neglecting to pray, then His work fails.¹⁶⁹

Providing more explanation as to the reason why God's work fails when the church does not pray, Bounds says, "Little and poor praying has weakened Christ's power on earth, postponed the glorious results of His reign, and retired God from His sovereignty."¹⁷⁰ If the decisions of people can remove sovereignty from God, then God truly has taken a risk in granting people such power. Bounds appears to embrace such a conclusion and its consequences:

If prayer puts God to work on earth, then, by the same token, prayerlessness rules God out of the world's affairs, and prevents Him from working. And if prayer moves God to work in this world's affairs, then prayerlessness excludes God from everything concerning men, and leaves man on earth the mere creature of circumstances, at the mercy of blind fate or without help of any kind from God. It leaves man in this world with its tremendous responsibilities and its difficult problems, and with all of its sorrows, burdens and afflictions, without any God at all.¹⁷¹

The primary texts that Bounds uses for support for that risk view of providence, as well as for coming to the same conclusions as other church dominion advocates as seen here, will be discussed and analyzed in the following chapter.

¹⁶⁹Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 11.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 24.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 22.

Mentions of Foundational Church Dominion Ideas

The themes already mentioned are prominent in Bounds' writings as well as those of the other advocates. Those ideas are the outworking of an underlying church dominion thought. While Bounds does not provide as many statements about his understanding of the foundational explanation as to why he believes God operates in the world as He does, there are several indications that his underlying beliefs are consistent with that of church dominion thought. In particular, several comments indicate that he believes man was made for both companionship and co-rule with Christ and that God intends prayer to be a means to train the church, both of which are foundational ideas in the church dominion model.

Man was made for companionship and co-rule with Christ. Though not as prevalent as the themes already mentioned, this underlying belief is evident in Bounds' writings. For example, in the beginning of his first book he writes, "God's plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else."¹⁷² Similarly, in one of his editorials he writes, "God regards the man in so important a way as to put a kind of discount on all else."¹⁷³ One of Bounds' statements indicates that in so doing, God's goal was companionship, something that Sheets teaches. Bounds writes, "That Jesus wants us with Him, is not a mere sentiment, to adorn or sweeten, but it is a declared, operative, and eternal decree."¹⁷⁴

However, Bounds' primary emphasis is on man's role in co-ruling with Christ, the idea prominent in Billheimer's later teachings. Bounds uses several terms to indicate his belief that man is created to rule with Christ, terms such as captain generals, vice-

¹⁷²Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 5.

¹⁷³E. M. Bounds, "The Man," *Christian Advocate*, 15 June 1893, 8.

¹⁷⁴Bounds, *Heaven*, 63.

regents, and God's agents.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, he indicates that man specifically co-rules with Christ through prayer. For example, he says, "In all ages God has ruled the Church by prayerful men. When prayer fails, the divine rulership fails."¹⁷⁶ Bounds believes such is especially true now: "It is in this latter dispensation that the engagements and demands of prayer are given their greatest authority, their possibilities rendered unlimited and their necessity insuperable."¹⁷⁷ Yet, Bounds does not think such co-rule is limited only to the current time. He also gives an indication of his belief in a future co-rule with Christ when he looks to Revelation 3:21 and comments, "The future of man will be divinely glorious and divinely illustrious. He is to share the place of Jesus, where Jesus and his followers are to be."¹⁷⁸

Important to this idea of co-rule with Christ is the idea of man having been given dominion to rule, a dominion that was lost when he first sinned and that is now being fought for to be reclaimed. As a result, a spiritual battle is ongoing for that dominion. Bounds alludes to this idea in several places. He acknowledges that "the forces of good and evil are contending for the world," and that too often "we jeopardise the very cause in which we profess to be deeply interested by holding back from the prayer chamber."¹⁷⁹ He later describes that spiritual battle for dominion as a "fearful contest in this world between God and the devil," a contest where "prayer is the mighty force for overcoming Satan."¹⁸⁰ Finally, Bounds notes that "Satan reigns" because "we

¹⁷⁵For use of the term "captain general," see Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 57. For use of the term "vice-regents" see Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, 119, and Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 60. For use of the term "agents," see Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 129.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 68.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 66.

¹⁷⁸Bounds, *The Resurrection*, 169.

¹⁷⁹Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 29.

¹⁸⁰Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 123.

have not prayed to bring the evil to an end; we have not prayed as we must pray.”¹⁸¹ A few pages later he reiterates that idea by saying, “The world needs more true praying to save it from the reign and ruin of Satan.”¹⁸² While not elaborating on these ideas like Billheimer, these statements indicate his belief in the cosmic battle between God and Satan, and his belief that man has a role in that battle of reclaiming dominion by defeating Satan through praying.

God established prayer to train the church. Closely related to the idea that man is made for co-rule with Christ is the idea in church dominion thought that God established prayer to train mankind for that role. Elements of that idea do appear in Bounds’ writings, though limited. For example, he makes several mentions of the role of prayer in training believers. Even in his first book he simply says, “Prayer makes the man.”¹⁸³ Similarly, he says that “men are bettered by prayer.”¹⁸⁴ More specifically as to what prayer does to people, he writes that it “makes saints” and forms “holy characters.”¹⁸⁵ In addition, he describes the prayer closet as “the perfect school-teacher and school-house” for preachers.¹⁸⁶ More broadly, he says that praying men “train the Church in its lessons of strength and trust.”¹⁸⁷ Similarly, he describes prayerful leadership as necessary to “mould the Church to its heavenly pattern.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸¹Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 24.

¹⁸²Ibid., 30.

¹⁸³Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 12.

¹⁸⁴Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, 35.

¹⁸⁵Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 64.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 82.

¹⁸⁷E. M. Bounds, “Praying Men Wanted,” *Christian Advocate*, 21 February 1891, 8.

¹⁸⁸Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 83.

Bounds provides little explanation as to how prayer trains believers. However, he gives some hints as to how he thinks prayer functions to aid in the growth of believers. He writes that prayer “is the contest, trial, and victory of faith; a victory not secured from an enemy, but from Him who tries our faith that He may enlarge it.”¹⁸⁹ Similarly, he later calls this life “a life of probation” and “a season of trial.”¹⁹⁰ Yet, most helpful, is a comment Bounds provides in an 1891 editorial about the Methodist idea of perfectionism, as it indicates the goal of preparation is both for serving God now and in the future in heaven. He writes, “Methodism holds that this perfection is not designed simply to fit the Christian for heaven, but is the preparation for the fittest and most useful service we can render God, either on earth or in heaven.”¹⁹¹ Thus, Bounds appears to believe that prayer is a trial in this life that is part of the sanctification of believers to train them to persevere and overcome so that they may rule with Christ.

As with other church dominion advocates, the idea of overcoming is seen as a necessary part of what prayer is designed to train the church to do. Bounds says that “great praying is the sign and seal of God’s great leaders and the earnest of the conquering forces with which God will crown their labors.”¹⁹² Elsewhere he writes, “The overcomers, the victorious ones, the conquerors, they are the heaven-crowned ones.”¹⁹³ Granted, none of these quotes are direct statements about co-rule with Christ or prayer being God’s intentional design to prepare for that co-rulership. Yet, with such similar themes found in the writings of both Bounds and other church dominion advocates, and then with these passing statements, it is safe to conclude that while Bounds did not teach

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 58.

¹⁹⁰Bounds, *The Essentials of Prayer*, 50.

¹⁹¹E. M. Bounds, “Christian Perfectionism,” *Christian Advocate*, 31 January 1891, 8.

¹⁹²Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 37.

¹⁹³Bounds, *Heaven*, 103.

these particular ideas as strongly as more contemporary church dominion advocates, the same foundational ideas were present in his thinking.

Bounds' Emphasis on God's Need of Man

The themes previously mentioned on the relationship between the prayers of God's people and God's providential rule are found in the writings of the various church dominion advocates. Yet, as noted earlier in this chapter, not all church dominion advocates agree on some of the foundational issues, particularly on why God chose a risk approach toward providence. As already discussed, Sheets emphasizes God's relational desire, Andrew emphasizes God's desire to empower us, and Billheimer emphasizes prayer as a training ground. Here, Bounds and Nee have the most in common in providing a different explanation than the others. They both indicate that God chose a risk approach because He legitimately needs mankind's assistance in order to accomplish His purposes.

For example, Bounds says, "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,' he declares the necessity of men and his dependence on them as a channel through which to exert his power upon the world."¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Bounds says, "God alone can save the world, but God cannot save the world alone."¹⁹⁵ In view of that idea, Bounds then notes that "prayer is the sense of God's need and the call for God's help to supply that need."¹⁹⁶ That need of God is so strong in Bounds' thinking that he writes, "God is in a great strait for men of the right sort."¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴Bounds, *Preacher and Prayer*, 6.

¹⁹⁵Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 148.

¹⁹⁶Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 12.

¹⁹⁷E. M. Bounds, "Revolutionizing Preachers," *Christian Advocate*, 12 August 1890, 9.

It should be noted here that along with the other church dominion advocates, the risk view of providence Bounds articulates is significantly different from the openness model even though both are on the risk side of the spectrum of views on the relationship between providence and prayer. All of the advocates of church dominion thought recognize that God established the self-limitation just described, though they may have different explanations as to why. They agree it is His plan and not an inherent limitation in His nature, as suggested in the openness model. Bounds is no exception. Though he stresses God's need, his theological framework is one where God willed that reality. Looking to Psalm 2 for support, Bounds concludes, "*Ask of Me* is the one condition God puts in the very advance and triumph of His cause."¹⁹⁸ The wording choice of God putting that condition in place is significant as it indicates intentionality on God's part and not a limitation in His nature. Similarly, in citing Psalm 72:15, Bounds writes, "Prayer, by God's very oath, is put in the very stones of God's foundation."¹⁹⁹ Providing more explanation he says, "God has so placed Himself subject to prayer that by reason of His own appointment, He is induced to work among men in a way in which He does not work if men do not pray."²⁰⁰ Again, the terminology is important as Bounds notes that God has "placed Himself" according to "His own appointment," again indicating a self-limitation for a purpose, not one required because of a limitation in His nature. Thus, Bounds can answer the question of why prayer is necessary for the success of God's work by simply saying, "God has made it so."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 11.

¹⁹⁹Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, 16.

²⁰⁰Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 22.

²⁰¹*Ibid.*, 3.

Bounds' Consistency with Church Dominion Ideas

Bounds' embrace of the conclusions that God will give whatever His people ask, that He will not act unless they pray, and that a lack of their prayers hinders Him, is consistent with each of the other church dominion advocates. In addition, like those other advocates, his statements reveal a recognition that coherence requires the embrace of a risk view of providence. While not as prominent in his writing as other themes, passing mentions of the ideas that God made man for companionship and co-rule with Christ, as well as that God plans for prayer to train the Church, puts his framework of thought clearly within that of the church dominion model and very consistent with the other proponents who were previously discussed.

Bounds' primary point of departure from some of the other church dominion proponents is consistent with their own differing ideas as they struggle to explain why God established an order where He took such risks. The lack of consensus among the advocates on that particular question means that Bounds' stronger emphasis on the need of God does not move him outside of this particular model for understanding the relationship between God's providence and man's will in prayer.

Rather, on the spectrum of models that Tiessen provides, Bounds best fits with the likes of Andrew, Billheimer, Nee, and Sheets, many of whom likely learned their ideas from Bounds' own writings that predated them. Therefore, Bounds' ideas can be labeled as church dominion. As Bounds concludes, and in so doing provides a good summary of the church dominion model, "Prayer is a Divine arrangement in the moral government of God, designed for the benefit of men and intended as a means for furthering the interests of His cause on earth, and carrying out His gracious purposes in redemption and providence."²⁰² Perhaps an even simpler description of this model and an

²⁰²Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 35.

indication of Bounds' place in it is found when Bounds simply says, "Real prayer helps God and man."²⁰³

²⁰³Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 120.

CHAPTER 5

ASSESSMENT OF BOUNDS' BELIEFS ON PROVIDENCE AND PRAYER

Throughout Bounds' eleven books and numerous newspaper editorials, many Scripture verses, and short phrases from those verses, are mentioned, though few are actually cited. Yet, among those many passages, only a few provide insight into Bounds' understanding of God's providence. Six passages in particular, which appear repeatedly in his writings, form the basis of his church dominion type understanding of the relationship between providence and prayer as described in the previous chapter. Those six passages are Genesis 18:20-33, 2 Kings 20:1-6, Psalm 2:8, Isaiah 45:11, Matthew 7:7-8, and John 14:14.¹ In typical Bounds' fashion, the following quote from *Satan: His*

¹It is important to note that Bounds mentions more than just these six texts. For example, regarding his belief that answering prayer is the foundation of God's plan for the world, he uses three texts. Psalm 2:8 is the most indicative of these texts as it is cited in four books and in the *Christian Advocate* editorials. Therefore, it will be the one analyzed here. In addition, Bounds once cites Ps 72:15 and Josh 10:12-14 to further substantiate that view.

Regarding his view that God has put in the hands of believers great power to shape the world and the future through prayer, he primarily uses Isa 45:11 which appears in five books as well as in the *Christian Advocate* editorials. In addition, he cites Isa 62:6-7 and Rev 3:21 one time each to further substantiate this part of his understanding of providence and prayer.

Regarding his belief that God will always give the very thing asked for in prayer, Matt 7:7-8 is his primary text and is used in five of his books. Therefore, it will be the primary text of analysis for discussing this part of his beliefs. In addition, even though John 14:14 is only cited in three books, it will be analyzed here as it provides further clarification of Bounds' views. Other texts that Bounds cites to make the same point include Matt 21:22 in three books, Mark 11:24 in one book, John 15:7 in three books, and John 16:23 in two books. Since Bounds comes to the same conclusion from each of these texts, only Matt 7:7-8 and John 14:14 will be analyzed here as they provide sufficient material to understand and critique his view.

Finally, Bounds cites a number of examples from Scripture to show how prayer can cause God to change His plan or to fulfill His plan which would not happen without that prayer. The most frequently used of these texts in his writings is 2 Kgs 20, which appears in four books and in the *Christian Advocate* editorials. It will be discussed here. Other frequently cited examples include Gen 20:17, Exod 32:9-14, 1 Kgs 18, Job 42:8, Acts 1:14, and Luke 10:2. Of those, only Gen 18 will be analyzed here as it provides unique insights into Bounds' view of how a lack of sufficient, persistent prayer hinders God.

Personality, Power and Overthrow provides a good summary not only of how Bounds utilizes Scripture in his writings, but also of how he interprets several of these texts:

Prayer puts God in the matter with commanding force. “Ask of me things to come concerning my sons,” says God, “and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me.” We are charged in God’s Word, “always to pray,” “in everything by prayer,” “continuing instant in prayer,” to “pray everywhere,” “praying always.” The promise is as illimitable as the command is comprehensive. “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” “Whatsoever ye shall ask,” “if ye shall ask anything;” “Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” “Whatsoever ye ask the Father he will give it to you.” If there is anything not involved in “All things whatsoever,” or not found in the phrase “Ask anything,” then these things may be left out of prayer. Language could not cover a wider range, nor involve more fully all minutia. These statements are but samples of the all-comprehending possibilities of prayer under the promises of God to those who meet the conditions of right praying.²

Since the six passages mentioned are not only extensively used in Bounds’ writings, but also form the foundation of his understanding of providence and how prayer relates to it, a thorough examination of his use of them is needed to see if he properly understood and applied each passage.

Psalm 2:7-8

Psalm 2:7-8 is foundational in Bounds’ understanding of the relationship between providence and prayer. That text says, “I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.’” Bounds focuses on the phrase, “Ask of me,” and understands it to teach how God’s cause is established on the earth. For example, he states,

The Second Psalm is the Divine description of the establishment of God’s cause through Jesus Christ. All inferior dispensations have merged in the enthronement of Jesus Christ. God declares the enthronement of His Son. The nations are incensed with bitter hatred against His cause. God is described as laughing at their enfeebled

²Edward M. Bounds, *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922), 156.

hate. The Lord will laugh; The Lord will have them in derision. “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.” The decree has passed immutable and eternal.³

Similarly, in his final book he elaborates on that idea, saying,

God’s great plan for the redemption of mankind is as much bound up to prayer for its prosperity and success as when the decree creating the movement was issued from the Father, bearing on its frontage the imperative, universal and eternal condition, “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession.”⁴

Bounds initially interprets this passage as a messianic Psalm, stating that the “ask of me” phrase is the Father speaking to Christ. He explains, “God conditions all gifts in all dispensations to His Son on prayer: ‘Ask of me,’ saith God the Father to the Son.”⁵

Despite that acknowledgment, Bounds quickly turns the focus of this psalm away from that messianic interpretation to an application to believers today. For example, in one of his editorials he writes, “‘Ask of me,’ says God to his Son, and to the Church of his Son.”⁶ Without providing support, he adds the interpretation that Psalm 2 involves the Father telling the church the same thing he told and promised Jesus. Similarly, in one of the books already cited, he makes a second reference to Psalm 2, this time adding the application, “If the Royal and Divine Son of God cannot be exempted from the rule of asking that He may have, you and I cannot expect the rule to be relaxed in our favour.”⁷ He also says, “*Ask of Me* is the condition—a praying people willing and obedient,” to which he then clarifies, “The cause of God was kept alive in the world by

³E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920), 11.

⁴Edward M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer: A Study in Christian Warfare*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931), 50.

⁵Edward M. Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924), 36.

⁶E. M. Bounds, “The Possibility of Prayer,” *Christian Advocate*, 25 August 1892, 8.

⁷Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 62.

the flame of their praying.”⁸ Bounds’ focus, then, becomes God the Father telling his people to ask of Him so that His plan for the world can occur.

In changing the focus to a contemporary prayer application and in teaching from it that God’s plans can only occur when His people pray, Bounds also uses this text to teach the related idea that a lack of prayer hinders God. For example, he says,

God’s decree for the glory of His Son’s kingdom is dependent on prayer for its fulfillment: “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession.” God the Father gives nothing to His Son only through prayer. And the reason why the Church has not received more in the missionary work in which it is engaged is the lack of prayer.⁹

Bounds takes that understanding even further when he concludes that God’s very decree in Psalm 2 has failed because of the church’s failure in prayer:

In the second Psalm the purposes of God to His enthroned Christ are decreed on prayer, as has been previously quoted. That decree which promises to Him the heathen for His inheritance relies on prayer for its fulfillment: “Ask of me.” We see how sadly the decree has failed in its operation, not because of the weakness of God’s purpose, but by the weakness of man’s praying. It takes God’s mighty decree and man’s mighty praying to bring to pass these glorious results.¹⁰

Thus, Bounds ultimately uses Psalm 2 to build his foundational argument that God will do nothing in the world except in answer to prayer, and, as a result, a failure to pray will keep His purposes, and even His promises, from being fulfilled.

Response

This particular psalm is generally understood not as a messianic psalm with contemporary prayer application for today, but rather as a royal psalm that must be interpreted in view of the Hebrew monarchy.¹¹ Thus, this psalm gives insight into how

⁸Ibid., 11-12.

⁹Edward M. Bounds, *The Essentials of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925), 140.

¹⁰Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, 39.

¹¹Peter C. Craigie, *Psalm 1-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 19 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 64.

the Jewish kings “understood themselves, their authority, their roles, and their hopes.”¹² Many contemporary theologians believe this particular psalm represents part of what was shared at the king’s coronation.¹³ Consequently, it is likely that the speaker is the king himself.¹⁴

Such understanding of the genre of this psalm helps explain the sonship language found in verse 7. That verse contains a declaration of adoption as the new king now “rules his father’s realm as his regent.”¹⁵ Furthermore, “The words uttered on that occasion made him heir to his father’s wealth and authority and are the undergirding of his position now.”¹⁶ This understanding of the covenant relationship between God and the king is rooted in the promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:4-16. Thus, “The ‘official line’ of these Davidic kings was their right to rule all the earth by Yahweh’s authorization and support.”¹⁷ Craigie provides additional help in understanding the role of that covenant when he says, “This covenant principle of sonship is part of the Sinai Covenant between God and Israel,” whereas the focus now narrows from God caring for the nation of Israel in general to the special relationship between God and the nation’s king.¹⁸ Thus, the

¹²Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 107.

¹³For example, Craigie says the decree in this psalm was a document given to the king at the coronation (Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 67). Similarly, Mays states that “the conclusion of Old Testament scholarship is that the psalm was composed for use by a Davidic king of Judah on the occasion of his installation (James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation [Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994], 45). Kraus notes that most newer commentaries use such an explanation. Yet, he concludes differently, saying, “It is no way possible to reconstruct from this text, let us say, the course of an enthronement festival or the ritual of the crowning” (Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988], 126).

¹⁴Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 125.

¹⁵John Goldingay. *Psalms*, vol. 1, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 101.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Wilson, *Psalms*, 111.

¹⁸Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 67.

phrase, “You are my son,” indicates “a renewal of the relationship between God and David’s house in the person of the newly crowned king.”¹⁹

It is only out of that understanding of the sonship of the Israelite kings and their covenantal relationship with God that the promise of asking for the nations can be understood in its proper context. The king, as God’s adopted son, had special privileges, “but the privileges were to be asked of God.”²⁰ The question then arises as to what exactly the king was to ask. According to Kraus, the idea of asking for the nations is the king’s request for “the power to preside over the judgment of the peoples,” and ultimately that of “world dominion.”²¹ Similarly, Mays notes that “the promise that the Davidic king can break and smash the nations is conventional royal language for the power to rule.”²² Such makes sense in the historical setting as people at the time believed that “power was mediated” through the king.²³ Thus, the asking for the nations is very specifically the king asking for God’s blessing and power to rule the peoples on His behalf.

In addition, there are two aspects of this promise that should be noted here. First, it is expressed in “ideal terms.”²⁴ It presents a picture of what can be, not necessarily what historically happened or is happening at the time of the coronation. Second, it is not an unconditional promise as it appears at first glance. Broyles provides a helpful reminder of the necessary limitation of this promise in terms of the broader

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Kraus, *Psalm 1-59*, 132.

²²Mays, *Psalms*, 47.

²³Ibid., 46.

²⁴Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 67.

context of all of the psalms. In so doing, he provides an excellent summary of the interpretation of this passage:

Yahweh offers the king upon his enthronement not merely a kingdom or empire—but worldwide dominion (v. 8). This astounding verse, in the face of Israel’s never impressive military might, is not an unconditional promise forecasting automatic results; it is an offer: *Ask of me*. The Hebrew verbs in verses 8-9 do not contain the same ring of certainty as the NIV’s *I will* and *you will*. It is better to read, “so I may make” and “you may break.” Many an OT passage goes misinterpreted because it is read in isolation, as though we should expect each passage to spell out all conditions under which certain claims apply. We have already observed, for example, that Psalm 2 says nothing of the character of Yahweh’s kingship, nor that of Davidic kingship. Likewise, Psalm 2 says nothing of the conditions of this offer, nor should we expect each liturgy of enthronement to spell out all the legal provisos. Psalm 72 similarly promises worldwide dominion (among the royal psalms, “the ends of the earth” is found only in 2:8 and 72:8), but makes it clearly contingent on the king’s governing with justice and righteousness, exemplified especially by his care for the poor (vv. 2, 4, 12-14). Thus, a king may ask, but unless he is the just king of Psalm 72, he will not experience the rest of 2:8-9.²⁵

The king only had the right to ask to rule the people if he met the broader conditions found throughout the entirety of the psalms.

It should also be noted about this passage that the New Testament authors quote it, and in so doing give attribution of it to Jesus as seen in Acts 4:24 and 13:33, as well as in Revelation 2:26-27 and 19:15. While it is true that the psalm in its original context was a royal psalm about the king of Israel, the New Testament authors also correctly attribute it to Jesus. As Ross describes, “Because the royal psalm would have applied to every Davidic king, it ultimately applies to David’s greatest son, Jesus Christ.”²⁶ In addition, Kraus notes that it is appropriate to apply it to Jesus since he is seen in the New Testament as “God’s eschatological king.”²⁷ Though it was originally a

²⁵Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 47.

²⁶Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 200.

²⁷Kraus, *Psalm 1-59*, 134.

royal psalm for the coronation of a king of Israel, it “took on a new life of messianic hope and expectation. What the human kings of Israel and Judah had been unable to do, God would accomplish through his ‘Anointed One,’ the Messiah.”²⁸ Thus, a messianic application of the psalm is legitimate when viewed in terms of both its original use and the New Testament authors’ attribution of it to Jesus and His rule.

In conclusion, Mays provides a helpful and concise summary of Psalm 2 when he says, “Its subject is the relation between God and king. It is really more about God than about the king.”²⁹ Expounding that idea, he says,

The issue that informs the psalm is the question of the ultimate power in the universe. The psalm is based on the faith that the Lord throned in heaven is the ultimate power. The dominion of the son must correspond to the sovereignty of the father. Correspondence between the heavenly king and the anointed king is an important feature of the royal psalms. The human king is not equal to or identical with, but in certain respects corresponds to, the divine sovereign. So the inaugural of the anointed is a declaration that “the Lord reigns” in the midst of a history whose powers deny it.³⁰

Similarly, Ross concludes,

The theology of the psalm portrays the LORD as the sovereign king of the universe who reigns from heaven. It is his prerogative to control nations (Isa. 40:15-17), establish borders (Deut. 32:8), and set up or remove kings (Dan. 2:21). It was he who put his king on the throne. No matter how well-planned or powerful the opposition was, it was doomed to fail if God was against it.³¹

Thus, the ending of the Psalm, which promises blessings to those who take refuge in God, serves as a reminder to the hearer that God is sovereign and ruling over all.

Such an interpretation of Psalm 2 is very different than that provided by Bounds. Bounds completely misses the royal aspect of this psalm. While he gives brief mention to the messianic application, he misses the intention of it. Instead of seeing it as

²⁸Wilson, *Psalms*, 107.

²⁹Mays, *Psalms*, 46.

³⁰Ibid., 48.

³¹Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*, 200.

a promise of future fulfillment of what was promised to the earthly Davidic kings, Bounds tries to make the text say that Christ must pray to see His Kingdom established. Unfortunately, he takes that idea even further in applying it to believers today. The result is his teaching that believers can stop God's kingdom advance if they fail to pray. Such is the exact opposite of the textual meaning. Rather than showing God as the sovereign king who has all power and who will certainly be victorious, Bounds presents a God who takes risks in his providential rule, and, as a result, is limited by the failures of His people to pray. Such a picture of God is not the picture the Psalmist provides of One in whom a person can take refuge because He certainly will reign victorious, even as the nations rage against Him and His people.

Isaiah 45:11

A phrase from Isaiah 45:11 is one of the most utilized Scripture phrases in all of Bounds' writings. Therefore, this particular verse is foundational for understanding his beliefs about God's providence and its relationship to prayer. This particular text appears in five of his books and in his newspaper editorials as well. Though the entire verse reads, "Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: 'Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?,'" Bounds focuses on just two of those phrases.

As he does with Psalm 2, he focuses on the phrase "ask me," and concludes,

In the invitation is conveyed the assurance of answer; the shout of victory is there and may be heard by the listening ear. The Father holds the authority and power in His hands. How easy is the condition, and yet how long are we in fulfilling the conditions!³²

However, his primary focus is on the phrase "command ye me," as he renders it. From that particular phrase he draws the conclusion that "to man is given to command God

³²Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 25.

with all this authority and power in the demands of God’s earthly Kingdom.”³³ Only once does Bounds reference the broader context of this passage. Though incorrectly citing it as Isaiah 46 in *The Weapon of Prayer*, he nevertheless acknowledges the context when he says,

The passage in Isaiah (chap. 46) is too lengthy to be quoted in its entirety but it is well worth reading. It closes with such strong words as these, words about prayer, which are the climax of all which God has been saying concerning His purposes in connection with Cyrus: “Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all theirs hosts have I commanded.”³⁴

Despite the acknowledgment of God's purposes, he places the emphasis of the text on human prayer, even to the point of concluding, “The movements which God purposed under Cyrus, king of Persia, prophesied about by Isaiah many years before Cyrus was born, are conditioned on prayer.”³⁵ However, he provides no support for that assertion. Most striking, though, is his conclusion from this passage that God “turns Himself over to His praying ones to be commanded.”³⁶

That idea of God turning Himself over to His people to be commanded is repeated in Bounds’ writings. Speaking again about Isaiah 45:11, he describes it as a “strong promise in which He commits Himself into the hands of His praying people.”³⁷ In another book he states that this text makes it appear “as though God places Himself in the hands and at the disposal of His people who pray—as indeed He does.”³⁸ Later in

³³Ibid., 24.

³⁴Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 31.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 64.

³⁸Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 67.

that same book, he cites the passage again and remarks, “Think over that remarkable engagement of God to those who pray. ‘Command ye me.’ He actually places Himself at the command of praying preachers and a praying Church.”³⁹ Bounds appears to sincerely believe that this text teaches that God’s people have been given the privilege and responsibility of telling God what He is to do.

Bounds also appears to recognize the significant implications of such a belief as seen in his descriptions in the previous quote of this idea being “remarkable,” as well as in his use of the word “actually” to describe what he believes God does in relation to giving believers such power. In addition, Bounds believes such a plan has been purposely established by God to develop within His people strong praying that will change the future, as seen when he writes about this passage in Isaiah,

He hereby puts himself in our hands and gives up his keys to the authority of an all-conquering faith. This gracious attitude of God is to create and mature in us the forces of resistless praying, forces that must underlie the praying that reaches and affects the destiny of things.⁴⁰

Again, his terminology is significant in noting that God Himself “gives up his keys” so that the authority goes to those who have an “all conquering faith,” in other words to those who persevere in prayer until they get that for which they ask. Providing a good summary of his own beliefs about this text, Bounds writes,

But not all praying is praying. The driving power, the conquering force in God’s cause is God Himself. “Call upon Me and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not,” is God’s challenge to prayer. Prayer puts God in full force into God’s work. “Ask of Me things to come, concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands command ye Me”—God’s *carte blanche* to prayer. Faith is only omnipotent when on its knees, and its outstretched hands take hold of God, then it draws to the utmost of God’s capacity; for only a praying faith can get God’s “all things whatsoever.”⁴¹

³⁹Ibid., 39.

⁴⁰E. M. Bounds, “Wrestling Prayer,” *Christian Advocate*, 15 August 1891, 8.

⁴¹Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 30.

To speak of this passage as a “*carte blanche*” given to believers by which they “take hold of God,” shows that Bounds understood the implications of His interpretation and shows the level to which he was willing to take his ideas about providence and prayer.

Response

At first glance, if this verse is translated in the way Bounds quotes it and is read in isolation, it appears to give believers the power to tell God what to do, knowing that He will certainly do what they ask. However, isolating this verse from its context as Bounds does is dangerous and leads to a serious misinterpretation of it. A reading of the surrounding verses quickly provides clarification as to its meaning, as well as provides a refutation of Bounds’ entire interpretation and application of it.

There is general agreement that the particular section of text in which this verse appears begins in Isaiah 44:24 with the statement, “Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: ‘I am the LORD, who made all things . . .’”⁴² At the beginning of this section, then, God speaks and provides a “self-predication formula” whereby he “again announces to Israel his power over creation, indeed over all in an absolute sense.”⁴³ God then speaks of His plan to utilize Cyrus to restore Jerusalem, “an announcement whose significance 44:24 - 45:25 as a whole explores.”⁴⁴ Yet, before mentioning the benefits that will come to Israel and the world, this section first deals with the anticipated opposition of the Jewish community to that pronouncement about Cyrus.⁴⁵ Such opposition is anticipated since “the news of a

⁴²Such is how most of the scholars cited throughout this section divide the text, including Childs, Goldingay, Hanson, and Motyer.

⁴³Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, The Old Testament Library (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001), 353.

⁴⁴John Goldingay, *Isaiah*, New International Bible Commentary on the Old Testament, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 258.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

Gentile liberator would not receive an ecstatic welcome.”⁴⁶ Goldingay provides a helpful explanation as to why such an announcement would be so unwelcome:

It is one of the Poet’s own opening words that makes the audience miss a heartbeat and means that it is just as well that the rest of verse 1 will reappear in verses 2-7. We are too busy for a moment assimilating the fact that Cyrus has been described not only as Yahweh’s shepherd but as Yahweh’s anointed. The fact that this word *mashiakh* came to be the standard word to express Jewish and Christian hope for a future redeemer, *the Messiah*, means that the application of the word to Cyrus indeed sounds scandalous.⁴⁷

With the anticipated opposition of the Jewish people to such a Gentile deliverer, God speaks and silences any potential objection. It is in this immediate context that “command ye me” appears. After reminding the people of God’s power and plan, verses 9 through 11 provide a strong rebuke as indicated by the opening word, “woe.” As Hanson notes,

Second Isaiah is so confident that the words he has delivered were from God that he replies with an incisive refutation of his opponents. Verses 9 and 10 are introduced with woe, conjuring up images of the lament intoned at a funeral service. The opponents are a sad lot! Their view of reality is totally distorted. They are like clay on the potter’s wheel objecting to the design of the potter, or like an infant breaking through the birth canal with protests against the father and mother.⁴⁸

Similarly, Motyer describes this initial rebuke by saying, “The reply to their remonstrations was sharp: in a word, ‘It’s none of your business!’ The potter cannot, and the parent must not, be questioned. Within their spheres they possess total sovereignty (verses 9-11). So it is with the Lord.”⁴⁹

Yet, the rebuke does not stop there. Verse 11 actually continues that flow of thought by showing the “absurdity of such presumptiveness” in questioning God’s plan.⁵⁰

⁴⁶J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 361.

⁴⁷Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 262.

⁴⁸Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2012), 106.

⁴⁹Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 361.

⁵⁰Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, 106.

Some contemporary translations seek to capture the absurdity of the Israelite’s objections by translating this verse as a question. For example, the NIV renders it as, “Do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?” Similarly, the ESV renders it as, “Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?” Knight also translates it as a question: “Should men ask me for evidences in regard to my children, or give me instructions in connection with my handiwork?”⁵¹ Westermann also provides a similar rendering of it.⁵² Even if the text is translated with the imperative statements instead of the questions, as Oswalt notes, “Then the sense would probably be ironic: ‘Go ahead and question me concerning the things to come; command me concerning my children and the works of my hands.’ The listeners are hardly in a position to do either.”⁵³ Motyer provides a similar explanation of the verse, noting that it is God saying with irony, “Please feel free to give me your orders.”⁵⁴

To further silence the critics, Isaiah “piles up appellatives to make God’s authority unmistakable,” noting just in verse 11 that God is Israel’s Lord, the Holy One, and their creator.⁵⁵ Such reveals that His people have no right to question Him as to why He plans to use Cyrus to accomplish His purposes. Making the argument against Israel even stronger, God continues in verse 12 to say that He is the one who created everything, “I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out

⁵¹George A. F. Knight, *Duetero-Isaiah: A Theological Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 138.

⁵²Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, The Old Testament Library, trans. David M. G. Stalker (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 164.

⁵³John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 210.

⁵⁴Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 362.

⁵⁵Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 210.

the heavens, and I commanded all their host.” The Hebrew word translated here as “commanded” “ironically repeats the same verb as ‘give orders’ in verse 11e.”⁵⁶ The point is being made that only God has the right to command. In addition, the appeal in these verses to His creation and to the “recollection of his fourfold sovereignty over *mankind* (37:16) is contextually a telling point.”⁵⁷ Thus, the context makes clear that verse 11 is a rebuke, either phrased as a question or as a statement full of irony to show the absurdity of Israel’s objection. It is not, as Bounds teaches, a command for believers to follow.

To teach this verse as instruction to command God what He should do is a serious error. Oswalt notes that the “woe” at the beginning of verse 9 is a reminder of the seriousness of such error. He explains, “To disagree with God’s ordering of one’s life or one’s world is not merely a matter of preference or outlook. At bottom, it is a refusal to let God be God, a reversal of roles, in which the creature tries to make the Creator a servant to carry out the creature’s plan.”⁵⁸ Knight agrees, noting that “Not to accept life as God has decreed it is in a sense to take one’s own life. If Israel persists in this attitude, then she is sinning to a far greater degree than the Babylonians.”⁵⁹ Bounds’ misinterpretation of the text leads him to encourage his readers to do the very thing that God speaks “woe” to those who do.

An outstanding summary of the text, which also serves as a helpful critique to Bounds’ interpretation of it, is provided by Goldingay when he says,

We have noted several times that the Poet’s way of speaking implies the expectation that people will have problems with the message. That now comes out into the open. The community cannot believe that God would do what the Poet says

⁵⁶Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 362.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 208.

⁵⁹Knight, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 137.

God is doing. Using a pagan emperor like Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar to bring trouble to Israel because of its wrong-doing is one thing. How could God use a pagan emperor like Cyrus to bring blessing to Israel in fulfillment of the role that God had long ago given to the Davidic king?

We have already read a number of the answers to this sort of question. This kind of action is in keeping with what prophets such as Isaiah have said. True, Yahweh's agent ought to be one who acknowledges Yahweh, and the idea is that Cyrus has the chance to do so. The community may or may not find such answers satisfactory, but in the end, Yahweh claims the power to make decisions about how to run the world whether Jacob-Israel likes them or not. In the NT we find that Paul follows the same form of argument: I will offer you some arguments, but in the end God is God (Rom. 9:20-21).

In Isaiah God is the potter, whereas you and Cyrus are only the pots God is making, even bits of broken pot among other bits (Isa. 45:9). God is father or mother, whereas you and Cyrus are only the children God is begetting or bearing (vv. 10-11). God is creator of the whole cosmos and is applying the creator's sovereign energy, through Cyrus, to the restoring of Jerusalem and the freeing of the exiles in Babylon so they can go home (v. 13). Would they not be wise to let God decide how to achieve this?⁶⁰

In fact, they would be wise, as would believers today, to let God decide how to achieve His purposes. As already noted from Oswalt, it is a role reversal for the created to attempt to make the Creator carry out their plans.

Yet, such is what Bounds does, as he takes verse 11 out of context to encourage his readers to do the very thing that is warned against here, namely telling God what He should do and how He should do it. Instead of "challenging them to let God be God,"⁶¹ Bounds turns the focus away from the sovereignty of God to making God's people think that they are the ones who have that power to direct the future. Such teaching on Bounds' part is a stark contrast to Isaiah's goal of helping the readers "detach their minds from submission to human logic and inculcate a spirit of submission to divine sovereignty."⁶² Thus, Bounds' interpretation of Isaiah 45:11 is incorrect in that it comes from taking a verse out of its immediate context to make it say the exact opposite of what

⁶⁰John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 263-64.

⁶¹Ibid., 279.

⁶²Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 361.

it actually says. Furthermore, his frequent repetition of the phrase “command ye me” throughout his writings becomes dangerous in that it can lead the readers who do not take the time to read the verse in context to believe they have the authority to strive “with him who formed him” and to question “what are you making?” (Isa 45:9).

Matthew 7:7-8

Psalm 2:8 and Isaiah 45:11 provide the foundation for understanding Bounds’ view of how prayer relates to God’s providence. However, there are several additional passages that provide further clarification about his understanding, as well as further explanation as to how he arrives at his beliefs. While not referenced as frequently in his writings as the previous texts, each of these texts provides additional points of insight and clarification into Bounds’ views. The first of these texts is Matthew 7:7-8, which says, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

Bounds uses this passage as support for his view of importunity, or continuing to pray with fervency until God grants the prayer as it is requested. For example, he writes,

He then urges to importunity, and that every unanswered prayer, instead of abating our pressure should only increase intensity and energy. If asking does not get, let asking pass into the settled attitude and spirit of seeking. If seeking does not secure the answer, let seeking pass on to the more energetic and clamorous plea of knocking. We must persevere till we get it. No failure here if our faith does not break down.⁶³

Phrasing it in a different way, Bounds repeats the idea, saying,

God’s Word does not say, “Call unto me, and you will thereby be trained into the happy art of knowing how to be denied. Ask, and you will learn sweet patience by

⁶³Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 159.

getting nothing.” Far from it. But it is definite, clear and positive: “Ask, and it shall be given unto you.”⁶⁴

More succinctly, he restates that idea as, “When you ask, the very thing asked for will be given.”⁶⁵ He seeks to make this point with the same type of parental analogy that the text itself provides in Matthew 7:9, which states, “Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?” Bounds concludes, “The child does not ask for one thing and get another.”⁶⁶ Applying the idea to prayer, he concludes,

To give the very thing prayed for, and not something else, is fundamental to Christ’s law of praying. No prayer for the cure of blind eyes did He ever answer by curing deaf ears. The very thing prayed for is the very thing which He gives. The exceptions to this are confirmatory of this great law of prayer.⁶⁷

It should be noted that in one instance Bounds mentions that this text includes within its scope the assurance of receiving the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. He says,

The coming of the Holy Spirit is dependent upon prayer, for prayer only can compass with its authority and demands, the realm where this Person of the Godhead has His abode. Even Christ was subject to this law of prayer. With Him, it is, it ever has been, and ever will be, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” To His disconsolate disciples, He said, “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter.” This law of prayer for the Holy Spirit presses on the Master and on the disciples as well.⁶⁸

Bounds teaches that even the timing of the promised coming of the Holy Spirit after Jesus’ ascension was contingent upon prayer.⁶⁹ He also applies this idea to believers’ experience of the Holy Spirit since that time, saying, “The measure we receive of Him will be gauged by the fervor of faith and prayer with which we seek Him.”⁷⁰

⁶⁴Bounds, *Possibilities of Prayer*, 102.

⁶⁵Ibid., 103.

⁶⁶Ibid., 104.

⁶⁷Ibid. More analysis will be provided later in this chapter as to how Bounds tries to explain such “exceptions” of denied prayer.

⁶⁸Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, 124.

⁶⁹Ibid., 127.

⁷⁰Ibid., 125.

Overall, Bounds presents this promise of receiving the very thing requested in prayer in very broad, all-encompassing terms. He describes it as being “so direct, simple and unlimited.”⁷¹ Providing more explanation, he comments about Matthew 7,

There is no elect company here, only the election of undismayed, importunate, never-fainting effort in prayer: “For to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.” Nothing can be stronger than this declaration assuring us of the answer unless it be the promise upon which it is based, “And I say unto you, ask and it shall be given you.”⁷²

Bounds is clear that “nothing can be stronger” than God’s promise to answer every prayer, and to answer every prayer in the way it is asked. Consequently, he believes that God is willing to give believers the very things for which they ask, even if it requires Him to change His will.

Response

Bounds is correct in teaching that these verses are about persistence. As D. A. Carson explains, “In the perfect three-fold symmetry of these two verses, the imperatives are emphatic and in the present tense. Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking; ask, seek, knock; and keep on doing it.”⁷³ While Bounds is correct in that understanding of the text, the remainder of his interpretation of it, as well as his application of it, is problematic, particularly in the way he universally applies the promise.

It is important to realize that the text is not unqualified as it appears if read in isolation. Rather, it is qualified, first in terms of to whom it applies, as seen in the immediate context. As Davies and Allison explain,

⁷¹Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 85.

⁷²Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, 132.

⁷³D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Evangelical Exposition of Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), 108.

The striking, unqualified “all” should not be taken absolutely. For in 6.5 and 7 we have met those whose prayers God presumably does not answer. “All” must refer to “the sons of the kingdom” (13.38), all those who count as the “salt of the earth” and the “light of the world” (5.13-16).⁷⁴

Yet, Keener suggests that the promise applies more specifically than to just any believer; rather, he believes it applies to those believers who are committed to God’s purposes, who have “a heart of piety submitted to God’s will,” and who “will seek the good of God’s kingdom.”⁷⁵ Because Bounds writes to believers and because he calls believers to a life of piety and holiness, even though he does not explicitly state this qualification, it can be assumed that he has in mind only believers who are seeking after God and His Kingdom.

Bounds is also correct in noting that God does give things in answer to prayer. In fact, the word “give” is a key word in this passage as it appears five times. However, Bounds’ focus is on teaching that God will certainly give to His children anything they ask. Such an application of the promise of the verse ignores further qualifications suggested by the context. Thus, Bounds’ point of departure comes in his application of the promise of this text to anything and everything for which those believers ask in prayer. Yet, as Blomberg notes, the good gifts promised “do not necessarily correspond to everything for which we ask.”⁷⁶ He explains, “‘It’ in v. 7 is somewhat misleading. The word does not refer to any particular thing requested but forms part of a divine passive construction that means *ask and God will give you [what he deems best]*.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 680.

⁷⁵Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 246.

⁷⁶Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 130.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

In addition to the qualification that God gives what He deems best, there are additional indicators in the surrounding context of specific areas that are included in the promise. In looking at the context of this passage, two things should be noted. First, Luke provides a similar account of this teaching. However, it has one significant variation in that the good gift which God gives is explained. Luke 11:13 reads, “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” The account in Luke provides the specific point of clarification that the good gift received from God is the Holy Spirit. While Bounds references praying for the Holy Spirit as part of the scope of this promise, he never cites this passage from Luke in his books, but only cites the one in Matthew that at first glance appears to better support his teaching.⁷⁸ Second, it is important to realize that “the spirit of the Lord’s prayer permeates this section.”⁷⁹ In Matthew’s account, Jesus’ model prayer appears in the preceding chapter; in Luke’s account, it appears in the preceding verses. The placement of both indicates that there is a close connection between the two. Therefore, the explicit teaching of the model prayer on how a person is to pray provides clarification as to the type of things included in the promise of receiving answers to prayer.

With those contextual factors in mind, three areas appear that are included in the scope of the promise in this text. First, the promise of receiving applies to seeking to know God. As already noted, there is a parallel teaching in Luke “in which the Lord’s prayer and this connected exhortation address prayer for Spirit-empowerment.”⁸⁰ Such

⁷⁸Bounds does cite the account in Luke one time in an editorial (E. M. Bounds, “Praying for the Holy Ghost,” *Christian Advocate*, 27 April 1893, 8). However, it is cited in a different context there and does not appear in any discussion about promises that God will grant whatever a believer asks in prayer.

⁷⁹Donald Senior, *Matthew*, Abingdon New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 88.

⁸⁰Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 245.

indicates that when a person seeks to be filled with the Holy Spirit, as Ephesians 5:18 teaches, God has promised to answer. Hence, Carson concludes,

Persistence is required. But persistence in what? The answer is persistence in prayer—not prayer envisaged as an occasional pious request for some isolated blessing, but, in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, prayer that is a burning pursuit of God. This asking is an asking for the virtues Jesus has just expounded; this seeking is a seeking for God; this knocking is a knocking at heaven’s throne room. It is a divinely empowered response to God’s open invitation: “You will seek me and you will find me when you search for me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).⁸¹

It is a seeking first and foremost to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to know God as one’s Father. It is not primarily about seeking to receive blessings from Him.

Second, the promise includes receiving help to live out the challenging requirements Jesus gives in the Sermon on the Mount, the very sermon in which this particular promise appears. As Davies and Allison explain,

In our estimation, the passage’s function within the sermon on the mount as a whole holds the key. Like 6.25-34, Mt. 7.7-11 serves to offer the disciple assurance in the face of the difficult commands of Mt 5-7. This implies that the “good things” are precisely all that is required to live the life of faithful discipleship as this is set forth in the great sermon.⁸²

Blomberg agrees, noting that “verses 7-11 may also link back with the rest of the sermon in that they show people how to get the help they need to obey all that Jesus has previously commanded.”⁸³ Such is consistent with the part of the model prayer found in Matthew 6:13 that says, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” In consideration of that context, Carson concludes,

The kingdom of heaven requires poverty of spirit, purity of heart, truth, compassion, a non-retalitory spirit, a life of integrity; and we lack all of these things. Then let us ask for them! Are you as holy, as meek, as truthful, as loving, as pure,

⁸¹Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 109.

⁸²Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, 685.

⁸³Blomberg, *Matthew*, 130.

as obedient to God as you would like to be? Then ask him for grace that these virtues may multiply in your life.⁸⁴

Ultimately, such help requires being filled with the Holy Spirit.

A third, and final, area which the immediate context suggests this promise includes is that of provision of basic life needs. Such is consistent with the aspect of the model prayer from 6:11, “Give us this day our daily bread.” It also is consistent with the command from 6:25 not to be anxious about what to eat, drink, or wear, since “your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” In addition, it is consistent with the example Jesus provides in 7:9-10 of a father providing bread and fish when asked by his child. At that time, such things requested by a child were the “basic staples in the Palestinian diet—bread and fish (meat was a rare luxury . . .),” things that “might be all that Palestinian Jewish fathers could provide their children on a regular basis.”⁸⁵ With that image in mind, believers can pray with confidence for basic life needs knowing that God will answer. Such is a contrast to the idea that God will provide for every desire a person has if that person will just keep asking with persistence. First Timothy 6:8-9a provides a corrective to those who expect God to grant their every wish that they express in prayer when it says, “If we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation.”

In light of the three areas to which the promise applies, as suggested by the immediate context, the overall teaching and the specific promise applies then to the “humble petitioner, seeking pardon and grace.”⁸⁶ It is for “the righteous—people who share kingdom values in 6:19-34, who ask God to supply their basic needs and requests concerning the kingdom.”⁸⁷ Such is very different from the implications of an

⁸⁴Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 109.

⁸⁵Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 246.

⁸⁶Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 110.

⁸⁷Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 246.

unconditional promise to believers that they will certainly receive anything for which they ask, regardless of whether or not it is God's will for them, if they will just ask with enough persistence. That picture of a humble petitioner is also very different from that of a person who approaches God thinking they are invited to command Him what to do.

It should also be noted here that Bounds is partially correct in his explanation of the parent analogy that he cites from this text. While Bounds is correct in noting that good parents delight to do things for their children, he takes that idea too far in claiming that such parents will always give their children exactly what they ask. The idea of granting a child every desire and request defies parenting wisdom. One can only speculate whether or not Bounds really parented that way, and if so, if that approach could have contributed to two of his children denying the faith and living as agnostics.⁸⁸ Instead of expecting such from the Heavenly Father, believers have confidence that they serve a God “who gives ‘good gifts’ to his children,” but who “may not grant a child’s request for something harmful.”⁸⁹ Carson elaborates on that idea:

We frame our requests in accordance with what we know of the character of the one whom we are addressing. The child with the kind, gentle and firm father does not fear to ask him for things, but deep down he enjoys the assurance that his father will not give him something which greater wisdom and experience assess as not in the child’s best interests. The child with the extravagant but thoughtless father approaches him with arrogance and lays down his next demand, knowing he will not be refused.⁹⁰

Though likely not meaning to make such an implication, Bounds’ teaching presents the picture of that “extravagant but thoughtless father,” whom the child knows will grant his or her every request.

⁸⁸Lyle Dorsett, *E. M. Bounds: Man of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 53.

⁸⁹Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 247.

⁹⁰Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 110.

Ultimately, in discussing Matthew 7:7-8, Bounds misses the required submission to the will of God in prayer, and the contentment a believer can have, even in denied prayers, in knowing that their heavenly Father knows best.⁹¹ As Blomberg cautions,

Those who today claim that in certain contexts it is unscriptural to pray “if it is the Lord’s will” are both heretical and dangerous. Often our prayers are not answered as originally desired because we do not share God’s perspective in knowing what is ultimately a good gift for us. We are especially tempted to think of the values of this world (e.g. health and wealth) rather than spiritual values.⁹²

But even more compelling than Blomberg’s explanation is what Jesus Himself said when He taught believers to pray “your will be done” (Matt 6:10).

By taking Matthew 7:7-8 out of the context of its overall place within the Sermon on the Mount, disconnecting it from its close ties to the model prayer, and ignoring its parallel account in Luke 11, Bounds makes these verses promise more than they actually promise. In so doing, he takes the focus off of a kingdom perspective and onto believers’ own personal desires. He also gives people the false hope that their repeated prayers, perhaps even prayed over many years, will certainly be answered as they have requested, without giving consideration as to whether what they ask is the will of the sovereign God who knows all things and who knows what is best for them. Bounds’ teachings on this passage also ignore the examples of denied prayer in Scripture,

⁹¹Such does not imply that Bounds never references the will of God or submission to it, but rather that in the context of his discussions about this particular text, it is lacking. As noted in chap. 3, there are a few isolated comments in Bounds’ writings about the will of God. For example, he says, “The will must be surrendered to God as a primary condition of all successful praying” (Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, 107). Similarly, he says, “To be absorbed in God’s will and to be so greatly in earnest about doing his will that our whole being takes fire is the prime condition of praying” (E. M. Bounds, “Conditions of Prayer,” *Christian Advocate*, 18 August 1892, 8). In one instance he even goes as far as to say, “If our prayers are not according to the will of God they die in the presence of the Holy Spirit” (Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, 142). Such statements are isolated comments that are not part of his discussion about the promises being discussed from these texts. Furthermore, such mentions of submitting to the will of God are limited to just a few references within his prolific writings. As such, they are inconsistent with and overshadowed by his broader claims as presented in chaps. 3 and 4.

⁹²Blomberg, *Matthew*, 130.

which will be discussed in the following section. In contrast to the way Bounds misapplies the promise of this text, Guelich provides a helpful corrective and excellent summary of the proper understanding of the scope of the promise of this passage:

Removed from the context, this unit appears to give a blank check to any who have a desire. Without any apparent constraints either in terms of what is requested or who makes the request, all (“everyone who” in 7:8) may “ask,” “seek,” and “knock” with the promise of “receiving,” “finding,” and having it “opened.” Yet this traditional unit has the same basic context in both Matthew and Luke. The subjects and the object are indeed qualified. Those invited to pray have a special relationship with God as their Father, as has been seen repeatedly in the large context (6:6, 7, 14, 15, 26, 32), in the heart of the comparison and conclusion of this unit (7:9-11), and above all in the address of the Lord’s Prayer (6:9).

The object of one’s prayer also finds its qualification within the larger context. In 7:11 Jesus promises that the Father will give his own “good things,” a term that stands in parallelism with the “good gifts” that a father gives his sons (7:11a). The comparison of 7:9-12 suggests that the gifts pertain to one’s material needs as 6:33 has previously promised. But this unit’s role as the conclusion of the larger section on prayer invites one to pray with the promise of the Father’s response to all our needs. These needs which the Father knows even before they are voiced (6:8) are set forth in the Lord’s prayer (6:9-13) and in the life lived accordingly (6:19 - 7:6). In other words, our requests encompass the whole of life as lived under God’s sovereign rule, the life in the Kingdom.

This concluding unit on answered prayer assures us, therefore, that God hears our requests for a life lived in terms of the presence of the Kingdom. God will work to make his name holy, to bring his rule into effect, to accomplish his will through us as we seek “his Kingdom and righteousness.” Furthermore, he will grant us the blessings of the Kingdom by meeting our daily needs, forgiving us our sins and delivering us from the Evil One. In short, the Father enables us to live life now in light of the vertical relationship established by him with his own as promised for the day of salvation.⁹³

John 14:13-14

In addition to Matthew 7, Bounds also utilizes John 14:13-14 several times to teach the same ideas already discussed. However, his use of this text provides further insight into his view that no prayer can be denied by God. Because that idea is so prevalent in Bounds’ thinking, it warrants looking at a second text he uses to support it.

⁹³Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 378.

This particular text in John says, “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

As with the Matthew passage, if this verse is seen in isolation it appears to be another unqualified promise, which is the interpretation that Bounds provides. For example, in describing this verse he says,

Among the large and luminous utterances of Jesus concerning prayer, none is more arresting than this. . . . How wonderful are these statements of what God will do in answer to prayer! Of how great importance these ringing words, prefaced as they are, with the most solemn verity!⁹⁴

These “ringing words” are interpreted by Bounds to mean, “So eager is He to answer prayer which always and everywhere brings glory to the Father, that no prayer offered in His name is denied or overlooked by Him.”⁹⁵ Though he mentions bringing glory to the Father, the focus here, along with the general themes of his writings, indicates that he does not mean that God answers the prayers that glorify Him, but rather that God is glorified as He answers all of the specific prayers of His people. Such is consistent with his teaching that there are no limits or exclusions to the promise of John 14:13-14. For example, he says, “There is no limit to the provisions, including in the promises to prayer, and no exclusion from its promises.”⁹⁶ Stated differently, he conveys the same idea by saying, “If there is anything not involved in ‘All things whatsoever,’ or nor found in the phrase ‘Ask anything,’ then these things may be left out of prayer.”⁹⁷ Thus, Bounds teaches his readers to pray with importunity knowing that God will hear and answer every prayer they pray, and will do so as they request.

⁹⁴Edward M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), 16.

⁹⁵Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 93.

⁹⁶Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, 124.

⁹⁷Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 100.

It should be noted here that in teaching this unqualified understanding of these promises, for the most part Bounds ignores the denied prayers in the Bible. As already noted, he teaches that unanswered prayers should “increase intensity and energy” in prayer to “persevere till we get it” since there is “no failure here if our faith does not break down.”⁹⁸ Similarly, he says, “The millions of unanswered prayers are not to be solved by the mystery of God’s will. We are not the sport of His sovereign power. He is not playing at ‘make-believe’ in His marvelous promises to answer prayer.”⁹⁹

When it comes to the examples of God denying David’s prayer to spare the life of his son (2 Sam 12:13-18), Paul’s request to remove the thorn (2 Cor 12:7-10), or even Christ’s own request to let the cup pass from Him (Matt 26:39), Bounds provides no satisfactory explanation as to how those passages from Scripture can be true while his unqualified understanding of the promise can also be true. Regarding Paul’s request for the removal of the thorn, all Bounds can conclude is that God’s grace made the thorn into a blessing.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in writing about the denial of David’s request, Bounds provides a similar explanation when he says,

The fact that God denied his request does not at all affect the question of David’s habit of praying. Even though he did not receive what he asked for, his faith in God was not in the least affected. The fact is that while God did not give him the life of that baby boy, He afterward gave him another son, even Solomon. So that possibly the latter son was a far greater blessing to him than would have been the child for whom he prayed.¹⁰¹

Only in *The Possibilities of Prayer* does he provide slightly more explanation. After stating that the child always gets what he asks, he concludes, “The very thing prayed for is the very thing which He gives. The exceptions to this are confirmatory of this great

⁹⁸Ibid., 159.

⁹⁹Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 85.

¹⁰⁰Edward M. Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), 41.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 25.

law of prayer.”¹⁰² After dismissing these denials as rare exceptions, he continues,

Two cases of unanswered prayer are recorded in the Scriptures in addition to the Gethsemane prayer of our Lord. The first was that of David for the life of his baby child, but for good reasons to Almighty God the request was not granted. The second was that of Paul for the removal of the thorn in the flesh, which was denied. But we are constrained to believe these must have been notable as exceptions to God’s rule, as illustrated in the history of prophet, priest, apostle and saint, as recorded in the Divine Word. There must have been unrevealed reasons which moved God to veer from His settled and fixed rule to answer prayer by giving the specific thing prayed for.¹⁰³

Unfortunately, he gives no reason as to why God’s will for believers today might also have compelling reasons that lead Him to deny the request as it is asked. Since Bounds provides no explanation or scriptural support for his dismissal of these denied prayers, no further discussion will be made of his handling of those texts. Rather, an analysis will be provided concerning the underlying teaching repeated here that God will always grant every prayer as requested.

Response

As with the previous Matthew passage, Bounds takes John 14:13-14 out of context and presents it in isolation, thus giving it the appearance of being unqualified. However, as Ridderbos notes, “The saying here is not intended as an unconditional pledge that every believing prayer, or whatever content, will be heard. The saying must be understood in immediate connection with what precedes it.”¹⁰⁴ Context once again provides clarification as to the nature of this promise, revealing, as with the Matthew passage, that it is not unqualified as it may first appear.

¹⁰²Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 104.

¹⁰³Ibid., 106.

¹⁰⁴Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to St. John*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 498.

Regarding the context, Andreas Köstenberger sees all of John 13:31 to 14:31 as a single unit where Jesus instructs his disciples about life after His departure.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Ridderbos sees this text as part of a section he titles, “The continuation of Jesus’ work and continuing fellowship with His own, the Assistance of the Spirit.”¹⁰⁶ As such, the promise must be viewed in the context of Jesus preparing the disciples for how they are to live after his ascension. Specifically, Jesus is preparing them for their future mission.¹⁰⁷

Even more immediate in the context is the connection between the promise and the preceding verse: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). There is continuity between these verses. Such continuity demands that “the prayer that is made is in relation to the disciples’ ministry, and the Lord on high will through his disciples perform the greater works.”¹⁰⁸ Such continuity also means that “because one thought flows freely into another, clear breaks in this section are impossible,”¹⁰⁹ breaks that Borchert tries to make.

Since the promise of verses 13 and 14 cannot be separated from the previous verse, the meaning of “greater works” in verse 12 is significant in understanding the overall context. As Borchert notes,

“Greater” can hardly here mean that believers will do more dramatic works than the raising of Lazarus (11:43-44), the changing of water to wine (2:7-11), the walking

¹⁰⁵Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 424.

¹⁰⁶Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 496.

¹⁰⁷Köstenberger, *John*, 432.

¹⁰⁸George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 36, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 255.

¹⁰⁹Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 944.

on the Sea of Galilee (6:19), the multiplying of loaves and fish (6:9-14), or any of the other amazing acts of Jesus.¹¹⁰

Rather, “greater” refers to the scope of the disciples’ ministry that “belongs to a more advanced stage in God’s economy of salvation.”¹¹¹ This stage is the time of “the post-Easter mission of the church,” where Jesus did not cease to work, but rather “continued to work through the early Christians.”¹¹² It serves, then, as a reminder that God’s people are now His agents through whom He acts. Thus, the works are “greater” in the sense that “after his departure his followers were able to influence much larger numbers of people and to work in widely scattered places,” more so than Jesus was able to do during his earthly ministry.¹¹³ In addition, the promise of greater works provides a reminder that “Christ continues to remain active through his presence by the Paraclete and his proclaimed word.”¹¹⁴ The promise, then, provides comfort and hope to the followers of Christ after His ascension, knowing that His Kingdom will certainly continue to advance.

With that perspective in mind, the promise in verses 13 and 14 is regarding prayers about the disciples’ ministry. As Beasley-Murray describes, the promise is primarily about “prayer in the service of the saving sovereignty of God.”¹¹⁵ It is a promise that is to give them hope as they function as God’s agents, carrying on His work. Such hope is found as they remember that “Jesus holds himself responsible and

¹¹⁰Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25b (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 115.

¹¹¹Köstenberger, *John*, 433.

¹¹²Borchert, *John 12-21*, 116.

¹¹³Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 574.

¹¹⁴Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 947.

¹¹⁵Beasley-Murray, however, does not exclude a broader scope. He also states, “A secondary extension to more general prayer is not ruled out,” though he does not elaborate on why he provides that extension (Beasley-Murray, *John*, 255).

accountable for this fulfillment” of the mission He has given to them.¹¹⁶ Thus, when they pray about that mission and their work in it, they are reminded that “the works are still his, and he continues to bear responsibility for them.”¹¹⁷ They can have full confidence that “when they pray for the performance of those works with an appeal to his name, they can count on him to hear them. That is the pledge repeated with all due clarity and emphasis in vs. 14.”¹¹⁸ Consequently, this promise is intended to provide encouragement for his followers “not to let their hearts be troubled.”¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, Bounds misses that important connection. By disconnecting these verses that should be seen with continuity, Bounds removes the scope of the promise that the context requires, and instead presents it in an unqualified way.

Bounds’ use of this text primarily focuses on the phrase “ask me anything in my name.” The focus on asking in Jesus’ name needs explanation. Asking in His name does not “involve magical incantations.”¹²⁰ Even the “early Christians in fact repudiated that use of Jesus’ name (Acts 19:13-20).”¹²¹ Rather, it means praying according to His will and invoking His name.¹²² It is expressing the “alignment of one’s desires and purposes with God.”¹²³ As Morris describes, “It means that prayer is to be in accordance with all that the name stands for.”¹²⁴ Keener provides a similar perspective when he says,

¹¹⁶Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 497.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 498.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹⁹Köstenberger, *John*, 432.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 434.

¹²¹Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 948.

¹²²Borchert, *John 12-21*, 117.

¹²³Köstenberger, *John*, 434.

¹²⁴Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 574.

“It involves prayer ‘in keeping with his character and concerns and, indeed, in union with him.’ This usage (‘in the name of’ meaning ‘as one’s representative’) was common and fits the context (14:26; 15:21; cf. 15:26-27).”¹²⁵ Interestingly, Keener comments, “Nor did Christians likely expect, as in some myths, that their deity would grant destructive gifts for which they wrongly asked in their ignorance.”¹²⁶

That perspective is very different than Bounds’ understanding of a God who changes His will because He has pledged Himself to always do the very thing for which He is asked. Unfortunately, Bounds’ presentation of an unqualified promise, with no reference to the will of God in the discussions about it, does not provide a framework for understanding that God may deny a request out of His sovereign wisdom either because it violates His will or because He has a greater plan than the person making the request realizes. Furthermore, Bounds does not reference in his writings 1 John 5:14-15, a text which provides clarification for these ideas when it says, “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”

Removing John 14:13-14 from its context which clarifies the intended scope of the promise, and in not viewing it in light of the will of God, leads to a serious misinterpretation of the text.¹²⁷ It also results in a dangerous teaching. Whitacre provides a good summary of the critique already provided, but adds an important caution:

¹²⁵Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 949.

¹²⁶Ibid., 950.

¹²⁷As noted previously in this chapter, such does not imply that Bounds never references the will of God, but that in discussions of this particular text it is lacking. Yet, as previously noted, his limited references to the will of God are isolated comments that appear inconsistent with his broader claims as described here and in the previous chapters.

Praying “in Jesus’ name” does not refer to some magic formula added to the end of a prayer. It means to pray in keeping with his character and concerns and, indeed, in union with him. The disciples, through their union with Christ, are taken up into his agenda. This agenda, as throughout his ministry, is to *bring glory to the Father* (v. 13). This verse has been understood by some Christians to be a blanket promise that Jesus will give them whatever they want. Such idolatry of the self is the very opposite of eternal life. “Whatsoever we ask that is adverse to the interests of salvation, we do not ask in the name of the Savior” (Augustine in *John* 73.3). Rather, the promise is made to those who will pray in Jesus’ name and for the glory of the Father. As such it is a great promise for the advance of God’s purposes in oneself, in the church and in the world.¹²⁸

Unfortunately, Bounds’ teachings can lead to “such idolatry of the self,” as it exalts man’s power and presents God as the extravagant Father who has invited his children to “command ye me,” pledging Himself to do anything and everything asked in the name of His son, regardless of His purpose, plans, and will. Providing a helpful corrective to Bounds’ application of this text, is a summary from Borchert:

The invitation to pray for “anything” (14:14) in this context is not, in fact, to be understood as “anything” in the absolute sense because the guiding principle of the believer’s prayer must be the same principle that Jesus followed throughout his life. That principle was the glorification of the Father in and through everything done by the Son (14:13). To read this promise of Jesus concerning asking in any other way would be a complete misunderstanding of the promise.

Jesus lived in the will of the Father, and the Christian is duty bound to live in the will of Jesus. Appropriate praying/asking here, therefore, must follow the same model Jesus exemplified. Mere reciting of the name of Jesus must not be understood as a mantra of magical power that provides the petitioner with his heart’s desire. A “name” in the Semitic context carries a special sense of the nature of the name bearer. Accordingly, from Adam and Eve through Abram/Abraham to Jacob/Israel and Joshua/Jesus, names are purposive designations of important realities. So to pray in the name of Jesus implies that in the praying one recognizes the nature of the name the praying person is using.¹²⁹

2 Kings 20

In addition to the texts already discussed, Bounds uses several additional Scripture passages to provide examples of the principles that he teaches. The example he mentions the most, though he only partially quotes the text of it, is the healing of

¹²⁸Rodney A. Whitacre, *John*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 4 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 355.

¹²⁹Borchert, *John 12-21*, 119.

Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:1-6:

In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover.’” Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, saying, “Now, O LORD, please remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly. And before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: “Turn back, and say to Hezekiah the leader of my people, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD, and I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David’s sake.

Bounds is so drawn to this particular example of answered prayer that he devotes an entire chapter of a book to it. In discussing it, he raises the questions, “What can set aside or reverse that Divine decree of heaven?” and, “Can prayer change the purposes of God?” questions that he answers with an emphatic teaching that importunate prayer can certainly do those things.¹³⁰ For example, he states,

The possibilities of prayer are seen in the fact that it changes the purposes of God. It is in the very nature of prayer to plead and give directions. Prayer is not a negation. It is a positive force. It never rebels against the will of God, never comes into conflict with that will, but that it does seek to change God’s purpose is evident.¹³¹

Even more strongly, he later writes about Hezekiah, “He prayed against the decree of Almighty God, with faith, and he succeeded in obtaining a reversal of God’s word and lived.”¹³²

Bounds provides two glimpses as to why he believes Hezekiah’s prayer was answered, beyond the general promise that God always answers prayers as they are

¹³⁰Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 59.

¹³¹Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 97.

¹³²Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 64.

requested. First, he believes God was drawn to Hezekiah's holiness, as seen when he writes,

It was a potent plea which changed God's decree that he should die and not live. The stricken ruler called upon God to remember how that he had walked before Him in truth, and with a perfect heart. With God, this counted. He hearkened to the petition, and, as a result, death found his approach to Hezekiah barred for fifteen years.¹³³

Interestingly, qualifications, such as holiness as seen here, in order to see prayer answered is an idea that Bounds typically does not mention anywhere else in his writings.¹³⁴ Second, he notes that "God had condescended to grant the request"¹³⁵ because he was moved by Hezekiah's tears and prayer.¹³⁶ Thus, Bounds concludes that prayers and tears are to God "much more than consistency and much more to Him than decrees."¹³⁷ The idea that God is more prone to act in response to His people than in response to His own eternal decrees and His own unchangeable ways is consistent with Bounds' overall teachings on importunate praying.

Bounds also indicates that the answered prayer in this text is significant since "Hezekiah lived to praise God and to be an example of the power of mighty praying."¹³⁸ Bounds uses Hezekiah, then, as a model for all believers today. For example, he uses this account to claim that "sickness dies before prayer."¹³⁹ Even more boldly, he claims that

¹³³Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, 104.

¹³⁴The only other instance where this idea occurs is on the previous page of *The Necessity of Prayer* where he says, "Loving obedience puts us where we can 'ask anything in His name,' with the assurance that 'He will do it' (ibid., 103). Otherwise, such conditions are not mentioned anywhere else in his writings as being pre-requisites for answered prayer except for that of importunity or persistence.

¹³⁵Ibid., 61.

¹³⁶Ibid., 62.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Bounds, "Wrestling Prayer," 8.

¹³⁹Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 62.

we learn from this text that “prayer breaks all bars, dissolves all chains, opens all prisons and widens all straits by which God’s saints have been holden.”¹⁴⁰ Just as Bounds makes application of the promises of Matthew 7 and John 14 to all prayers of all believers, he now takes the example of Hezekiah as a normative principle as well, concluding from it that the prayers of God’s people will certainly heal them from any sickness and deliver them from any trouble.

Response

Bounds, for the most part, properly interprets the basic story of this text. It is, as he clearly shows, God answering a specific prayer. As Nelson concludes, “This ancient story intends to convince us that, with the God of the Bible, prayer makes a critical difference.”¹⁴¹ Even though Hezekiah’s request is not explicitly stated, it is implicit in what he says,¹⁴² and clearly evident in how he responds to the news he has been given of his impending death.

As already noted, Bounds believes that God’s answer to this request was a result of Hezekiah’s prayer matched with his holiness. Such a view sees Hezekiah’s prayer as one of virtuousness and, thus, acceptable to God. Some scholars agree with this explanation. For example, House states, “Following the Israelite tradition of personal laments, he cites his own character, the Lord’s mercy, and the past as the bases for why he might receive what he requests. All three bases happen to be true, so he does not speak arrogantly.”¹⁴³ Similarly, Nelson notes that Hezekiah is a virtuous king and

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 63.

¹⁴¹Richard D. Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1987), 245.

¹⁴²Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 11 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1988), 255.

¹⁴³Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary, vol. 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 373.

concludes, “Hezekiah’s claim to virtue is in no way presumptuous; he follows accepted prayer practice in asserting his own righteousness (Ps. 17:3-5; 26:1-5). Tears underscore his sincerity and desperation (Ps. 6:6; 39:12).”¹⁴⁴ Though not as explicit, Gray notes that Hezekiah’s actions were a symbolic act of his turning to God that came from “a conscience wholly unimpaired and at one with God.”¹⁴⁵ With such perspectives existing among scholars, Bounds’ perspective is a legitimate option.

However, not all scholars agree with House, Nelson, Gray, and Bounds. A contrasting perspective is that Hezekiah’s prayer was problematic in its attitude. For example, Hobbs views Hezekiah’s response as “a sulk” followed by a prayer that is “rather self-serving,” and that “provides a sharp contrast to the image of the king presented thus far in the account of his reign.”¹⁴⁶ Provan agrees, noting, “This prayer is somewhat more self-centered than in 19:15-19, stressing the king’s own righteousness. There is for the first time a suggestion that Hezekiah has an attitude problem.”¹⁴⁷

It is impossible to say with certainty which attitude was the motivation for Hezekiah’s prayer since the text never directly speaks about his heart attitude or motivation. However, the perspective of Hobbs and Provan is compelling. The verses that immediately follow the promise of healing do not reflect belief and trust on Hezekiah’s part, but rather show him doubting, as seen in his demands for proof that God will do what He has said. Furthermore, the subsequent verses do not indicate Hezekiah had wisdom or was seeking after the Lord, but rather reveal his folly in showing off the

¹⁴⁴Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 244.

¹⁴⁵John Gray, *I and II Kings*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 634.

¹⁴⁶T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 13 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 290.

¹⁴⁷Ian W. Provan, *I and 2 Kings*, New International Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 263.

treasures to the foreigners, perhaps indicative that he had a selfish and prideful nature at that point. These contextual clues lead me to agree with Hobbs who says,

The prayer of Hezekiah in the second circumstance is characterized by its self-centeredness, not its faith. When he receives the promise of a longer reign, out of his unbelief he demands more proof. Finally, he parades his wealth before a potential invader and, when he is criticized for it, reacts with an offhand remark that demonstrates his complete lack of responsibility The final note left in the chapter is one of impending doom.¹⁴⁸

Regardless of Hezekiah's motivation, God still answers his prayer as Bounds rightly describes. However, Bounds is emphatic that God answers because of Hezekiah's tears and his holiness that accompany the prayer. While the text states that God has seen the tears and has heard the prayer, it does not necessarily follow that such is the reason why God answered the prayer in the way Hezekiah requested. Fritz believes that in this text "no reason is given for the change in divine will."¹⁴⁹

Yet, the text does give a strong indication as to why God answered this specific prayer as it was requested, and that reason was more than Hezekiah's holiness, tears, and prayer. As Hobbs summarizes from the contextual clues, "He will answer for his own sake and for David's."¹⁵⁰ The final verse of this particular passage provides the specific answer of why the Lord answered, when it says He did so "for my own sake and for my servant David's sake." Hobbs believes that God's great purpose in answering for the sake of Himself and David is also seen in "the use of the self-designation of Yahweh" in this text as "the God of David your father."¹⁵¹ Provan agrees, noting that "God will deliver the king and the city, not because of Hezekiah's wholehearted devotion (v. 3), but

¹⁴⁸Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 296.

¹⁴⁹However, he goes on to say that perhaps the reason is Hezekiah's behavior of repentance for his wrongdoing, a perspective different than the others already discussed (Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, Continental Commentaries, trans. Anselm Hagedorn [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003], 381).

¹⁵⁰Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 287.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

for God’s own sake and the sake of David (v. 6).”¹⁵² Nelson also agrees, citing the terminology of the verse as support, as seen when he says,

There are strong hints that God’s special concern for the dynasty of David plays a role here as well. Hezekiah is addressed as ‘prince’ (*nagid*; a term rich with traditional associations: I Sam. 13:14; 25:30; 1 Kings 1:35), and the Lord is identified as the “God of David.”¹⁵³

Such a concern for David’s line was seen in the previous chapter in 2 Kings 19:34 which says, “For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.” Thus, God answers because He has a purpose beyond what Hezekiah understands. Furthermore, Hobbs also believes that God shared that reason for answering the prayer in order to provide “a correction to Hezekiah’s prayer which is centered on his own achievements.”¹⁵⁴ Considering how Hezekiah subsequently squanders the opportunity God gives him in the extension of his life, this perspective on God’s reason for answering the prayer is very plausible.

In addition, there are two significant matters related to this text that Bounds does not mention in his usage of it. First, the promised healing is limited. “The king will live for fifteen years (v. 6), not forever.”¹⁵⁵ There is no indication that a future prayer in fifteen years asking for another extension of life would even be considered. Second, the answer Hezekiah receives to this prayer, as well as to his previous prayer for deliverance from Sennacherib, does not guarantee future success. Such answered prayers do not mean “that Jerusalem is eternally safe and secure.”¹⁵⁶ Rather, as Nelson reminds, “Even if God had once been willing to protect Jerusalem for God’s own sake and David’s sake

¹⁵²Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, 264.

¹⁵³Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 244.

¹⁵⁴Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 291.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 292.

¹⁵⁶Nelson, *First and Second Kings*, 246.

(19:34; 20:6), there never had been any absolute guarantees. The fall of Jerusalem was God's will, implied already in Isaiah's oracle given generations earlier."¹⁵⁷ Thus, this passage not only provides an example of an answer to prayer, but also "warns the reader not to take God's deliverance for granted. Do not try to extend the protection God offered from the Assyrians into the situation of the Babylonians. That was a different story."¹⁵⁸

Unfortunately, that type of extension is exactly how Bounds errs, not in his understanding of the basic meaning of the text, but in his application of it. Bounds extends what occurs in this example to make it a promise for every believer in every situation. Bounds specifically uses it to promise healing and deliverance every time a believer requests such. Yet, a look at persecution of believers in the world today quickly reveals Bounds' error, or if not, reveals a global church where those who remain imprisoned for their faith are there because of a lack of believing faith expressed in their prayers. Perhaps Bounds' belief of universal deliverance from troubles for believers comes from his overly optimistic view of the condition of the world. In his book about heaven, he says, "Those fierce and cruel days [of persecution] are gone, perhaps forever, but there are petty persecutions."¹⁵⁹ Such fierce persecution was not known in Washington, Georgia, in 1900, but Bounds' experience there was not reflective of the state of the world then or what was to come in the future, and reveals his ignorance of a world where the Scripture promises, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:12). Scripture promises God's presence and the comfort of the Holy Spirit, not deliverance from every trial, persecution, or sickness.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 247.

¹⁵⁹Edward M. Bounds, *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921), 136.

In the end, Bounds is correct in understanding this text as a specific example of God hearing and answering a prayer. While his explanation of why God answered is a legitimate perspective, but one that is still debated, his application of this example in making it a norm for every situation is wrong. There is nothing in this passage that guarantees such future answers as occurred here. Rather, it is a text that reminds believers that God answers prayers when they are in accordance with His will, for His own sake, and for the sake of His Kingdom and His eternal, unchanging purposes, like His commitment to the Davidic line here. Such a perspective stands in contrast to the human centered perspective that can easily result from applying Bounds' teachings.

Genesis 18

While not cited as frequently, Bounds also looks to Abraham's prayer for Sodom in Genesis 18:20-33 as an example of how God acts in response to prayer. Bounds' comments about this passage are some of the most revealing on his understanding of the relationship between prayer and God's providence. This passage begins with the Lord speaking of the greatness of the sin of Sodom to which Abraham replies in verses 23 to 25,

Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?

The Lord agrees to his request, after which Abraham asks if God will destroy the city if He finds forty-five righteous people, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, and finally ten. After asking for ten, this particular passage concludes in verses 32b and 33 with, "He answered, 'For the sake of ten I will not destroy it.' And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place."

Bounds' assessment of this text begins with his idea that God's intentions, which were to destroy the city for its sin, needed to be reversed. Such is seen when he

says, “That purpose of God must be changed. God’s decree for the destruction of this evil city’s inhabitants must be revoked.”¹⁶⁰ Abraham’s attempt, then, to change God’s plans is seen by Bounds as remarkable and exemplary. For example, he says,

What a remarkable story is that of Abraham’s standing before God repeating his intercessions for the wicked city of Sodom, the home of his nephew Lot, doomed by God’s decision to destroy it! Sodom’s fate was for a while stayed by Abraham’s praying, and was almost entirely relieved by the humility and insistence of the praying of this man who believed strongly in prayer and who knew how to pray. No other recourse was opened to Abraham to save Sodom but prayer.¹⁶¹

However, Bounds does not view what Abraham did only as a commendable attempt to change God’s purposes and plans; he also faults Abraham for not trying harder. Bounds continues,

Perhaps the failure to ultimately rescue Sodom from her doom of destruction was due to Abraham’s optimistic view of the spiritual condition of things in that city. It might have been possible,—who knows?—that if Abraham had entreated God once more, and asked Him to spare the city if even one righteous man was found there, for Lot’s sake, He might have heeded Abraham’s request.¹⁶²

In several places Bounds repeats this idea of Abraham not praying enough for the city. For example, he also says, “Perhaps Abraham lost Sodom by failing to press to the utmost his privilege of praying.”¹⁶³ In another book he elaborates even more on that idea:

Abraham has left us an example of importunate intercession in his passionate pleading with God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, and if, as already indicated, he had not ceased in his asking, perhaps God would not have ceased in His giving. “Abraham left off asking before God left off granting.”¹⁶⁴

Ultimately, though, Bounds uses this account of Abraham’s attempt, but failure in stopping too soon, to teach two primary lessons to his readers. First, he uses it to teach

¹⁶⁰Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 27.

¹⁶¹Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men*, 30.

¹⁶²Ibid., 31.

¹⁶³Bounds, “Conditions of Prayer,” 8.

¹⁶⁴Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 61. Bounds provides that last sentence in quotes but does not acknowledge from where he obtained it.

the idea that God defers to the will of His people. He writes, “God stays and answers as long as Abraham stays and asks. To Abraham God is existent, approachable, and all powerful, but at the same time He defers to men, acts favourably on their desires, and grants them favours asked for.”¹⁶⁵ This idea of God deferring to people, even when it means doing something contrary to His purposes, has already been seen throughout Bounds’ writings as described in chapters 3 and 4 and in the previous sections of this chapter.

Second, Bounds uses this example to say that God needs prayer in order to work. He concludes, “God needs prayer, and man needs prayer, too. It is indispensable to God’s work in this world, and is essential to getting God to work in earth’s affairs.”¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, after commenting on Genesis 18, Bounds immediately appeals to Isaiah 45:11 again. Putting together the ideas of those two passages, he concludes,

Failure to pray has been the baneful, inevitable cause of backsliding and estrangement from God. Prayerless men have stood in the way of God fulfilling His Word and doing His will on earth. They tie the divine hands and interfere with God in His gracious designs. As praying men are a help to God, so prayerless men are a hindrance to Him.¹⁶⁷

According to Bounds’ teaching, in this example God needed Abraham in order for His mercy to be shown, but because Abraham was too optimistic about the conditions of the city and did not ask enough, he hindered God from being able to show such mercy. Since God defers to men, God was willing to do whatever Abraham asked. Thus, the fate of Sodom did not ultimately depend on God, but on Abraham.

¹⁶⁵Bounds, *Weapon of Prayer*, 29.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 30.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 33.

Response

In seeking to properly understand this text and to respond to Bounds' interpretation and application of it, there are two issues that need to be addressed. The first is the question of what Abraham was really seeking in his series of questions to God. The second is the question of why God revealed in advance to Abraham His plans to destroy the city. Answers to those questions will provide great clarity to this text and provide a framework in which to respond to Bounds' use of it.

The first aspect of this text that needs addressing is what Abraham really sought in his interaction with the Lord. Bounds interprets the passage as an example of intercessory prayer as Abraham pleads for mercy for the city. Before considering that interpretation, two points should be made. First, there is no parallel in Scripture of the type of interaction Abraham had with God.¹⁶⁸ As such, there is already an indication that it is not to be the normative pattern for how God's people approach Him. Second, Abraham shows incredible honor and deference to the Lord in this interaction. Hamilton notes, "To stand before God may mean to worship him (Jer. 7:10), to enter his presence (Deut. 19:18; 29:14), or to serve him (1 K. 17:1, 18:15; 2 K. 3:14, 5:16). A special use of this phrase is to designate the intercessory ministry of the prophet."¹⁶⁹ The idea of entering God's presence with a worshipful attitude best fits this situation. Verse 27 is indicative of such an attitude when it records Abraham saying, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes." As Sarna describes, "Abraham approaches God with profound deference and humility."¹⁷⁰ Such can more

¹⁶⁸Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27 - 50:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1b (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 222.

¹⁶⁹Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 23.

¹⁷⁰Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 134.

simply be described as “here the man knows his place.”¹⁷¹ Von Rad provides more insight into this attitude that Abraham displays when he says, “Obviously the command to fear God and the din of his problem of faith are struggling within him (cf. Jer. 12.1). Abraham knows, as modern man does not, that as ‘dust and ashes’ (Job 30.19; 42.6) he has no right at all to reason (cf. Job 9.12; Dan. 4.32).”¹⁷² That attitude, overlooked by Bounds, appears to be very different than what Bounds’ teaching can lead to in a believer’s life when it is consistently applied. Teaching believers to command God and encouraging them that God will certainly and always defer to them, even if it means going against His own will, leads to the exact opposite attitude of that seen as Abraham trembles at the thought of asking questions, even with great deference, of the sovereign God.

Yet, the broader issue still remains as to what Abraham was really seeking in those questions that he raised to God. Westermann provides a helpful insight into what the form of the passage indicates about Abraham’s intentions when he says,

The traditional interpretation is that we have here Abraham’s intercession on behalf of Sodom But is this really what is meant? Where there is clearly an intercession, especially in the prophetic texts (Amos chs. 7-9; Jer. 11:14f), then it has a fixed structure and is designated as intercession for . . . , petition for God’s mercy concerning Moreover, at the end comes God’s concession or denial. Neither occurs in Gen. 18; its structure is that of question and answer, not of petition and concession. One cannot, therefore, describe vv. 18-23 as a prayer, as many exegetes do; it bears no relation to the prayer formulas. Now if 18:23-34 is neither intercession nor prayer, then what the history of exegesis right down to the present time thought it found there disappears, namely, bargaining, beating down, haggling with God This cannot be the meaning because Abraham, for all his questioning, is aware from the start that God will go through with his decision to punish Sodom.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹Matthews, *Genesis 11:27 - 50:26*, 230.

¹⁷²Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 213.

¹⁷³Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion S. J. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), 291.

If what Abraham is doing does not follow the pattern of intercession, then what he is doing is not praying for mercy, but rather is seeking to understand the nature of God. As Westermann continues, “Abraham remains throughout the humble questioner but he must know, even to the remotest possibility, whether the decision to destroy is a just decision.”¹⁷⁴ Particularly, Abraham wants to know if God is going to destroy both the just and the wicked.¹⁷⁵ Sarna provides a similar interpretation, saying that Abraham’s approach reveals that “humankind needs assurance that His almighty power is not indiscriminately applied and that He is not capricious like the pagan gods.”¹⁷⁶ Abraham, thus, is seeking to understand the righteousness and justice of God. As such, the passage takes a different focus than if it is seen as an intercessory prayer. As Matthews concludes,

Chapters 18-19 show that the Lord is truly free in his judgment and that his judgment is inscrutable. If Abraham is to father a heritage that adheres to the “way of the LORD by doing what is right and just” (v. 19), the question of the righteousness of God’s conduct is fundamental. The dialogue says more about the nature of God’s justice than the intercessory character of Abraham.¹⁷⁷

Even though Bounds’ interpretation of this passage can be dismissed with the above considerations, his claim that Abraham quit praying too soon still warrants a critique. The issue is why Abraham quit asking if God would destroy Sodom once he asked about ten righteous people. Bounds attributes it to Abraham having an overly-optimistic view of the piety of the city, an optimism that ultimately led to the city’s destruction. While the text does not say why Abraham quit praying at the point of ten people, there is a compelling explanation. Looking to Sarna’s expertise on the Jewish culture for insight, he says,

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 292.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 291.

¹⁷⁶Sarna, *Genesis*, 134.

¹⁷⁷Matthews, *Genesis 11:27 - 50:26*, 228.

Abraham had reached the limit of the ability of a righteous individual to outweigh the cumulative evil of the community. Ten is a round and complete number that symbolizes totality. Ten persons thus constitute the minimum effective social entity.¹⁷⁸

He cites as support for this idea Ruth 4:2, where Boaz calls for ten elders in his meeting with the man who has first right to be Ruth's redeemer.¹⁷⁹ Westermann comes to the same conclusion,

The reason Abraham stops at the number ten is that this represents the smallest group (so B. Jacob and L. Schmidt). If there are fewer than ten in the city, then these are individuals and as such they can be saved from the city as happens in ch. 19. Abraham's query reaches its natural limit with the number ten.¹⁸⁰

Thus, Abraham stopped at ten, not because he misunderstood the nature of the city as Bounds asserts, but because he had reached the smallest unit of a society. Furthermore, as Westermann has already noted, if there are fewer than ten righteous in the city, those could easily be saved when the city is destroyed, which is exactly what happens in the following chapter.¹⁸¹ This insight leads one to realize that Abraham understood both God's righteousness and the basic structure of society, and did not fail by not praying more in his prayers as Bounds suggests.

The second issue that provides clarity in understanding this text is the question of why God, in the first place, chose to reveal to Abraham what He was going to do. Since He ultimately did what He said He would do, there must be significance to this advance revelation about His plan. As Matthews simply concludes, "Revelation is God's prerogative."¹⁸² Granted that is true, but there is more explanation available than just that idea. While Abraham was asking to learn about God's righteousness and justice, God

¹⁷⁸Sarna, *Genesis*, 134.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 292.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²Matthews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, 222.

had a reason much greater than just helping Abraham learn about His nature; that reason was for Abraham to make known to the generations that followed the righteousness and justice of God, and in so doing to let the example of Sodom serve as a warning for them.

Sarna provides an explanation of this idea:

Abraham is granted this singular privilege because he symbolizes the future Jewish nation, which is destined to become a source of blessing to other nations. As such, he cannot avoid direct involvement in the fortunes of humanity at large. At the same time, he is the repository of those eternal values of righteousness and justice that constitute “the way of the Lord.” God relies upon him to transmit this heritage to his posterity, which is the indispensable precondition for the fulfillment of the divine promises. The lessons of Sodom and Gomorrah, the judgment of God, and the actions of Abraham exemplify the principles of justice and righteousness, divine and human.¹⁸³

Aalders provides a similar explanation when he says,

Before the announcement of what was to take place was made, the Lord offered His reason for sharing this information with the patriarch. He mentioned that Abraham stood in a special relationship to Him and He did so in terms previously recorded in 12:2-3. As an added motive for His communication with Abraham the Lord mentioned that the patriarch was to direct his descendants to walk in the ways of the Lord and do what was right. Here the specific stipulation is made that this righteous life on the part of Abraham’s descendants was to be a condition for the fulfillment of the promise that God had made to them. The intent of this becomes obvious from what follows. The judgment of the Lord upon the wickedness of the cities of the plain was to serve as a warning to Abraham’s descendants.¹⁸⁴

Von Rad also agrees, noting that “Abraham has the position of teacher for his descendants, and the event at Sodom will contain a special admonitory significance for all time.”¹⁸⁵ Westermann takes the same view as well, noting that God chose Abraham and revealed these things to him “so that the ‘way of Yahweh’ may begin with him and

¹⁸³Sarna, *Genesis*, 131.

¹⁸⁴Gerard Charles Aalders, *Genesis*, vol. 2, Bible Student’s Commentary, trans. William Heynen (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1981), 10.

¹⁸⁵Von Rad, *Genesis*, 210.

be preserved right down to the present through his instruction (command) to his descendants: the way is that of righteousness and justice.”¹⁸⁶

The textual evidence for this understanding is compelling. The immediately preceding verses teach this very principle:

The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.” (Gen 18:17-19)

Bounds’ references to this account of Abraham ignore these earlier verses. Yet, as Westermann notes, all of these verses “belong necessarily together,” meaning that the verses Bounds cites cannot be interpreted “in isolation from what has preceded (as do most exegetes).”¹⁸⁷ God makes clear that His revelation of the plans to Abraham is rooted in His choosing of Abraham for His purposes, particularly in teaching the generations that follow. Furthermore, Peter’s recounting of this event in 2 Peter 2:6 provides further evidence for this particular understanding of the text as seen when he describes what happened to the city as “an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly,” while also noting that God “rescued righteous Lot.”

In conclusion, this particular account is unique to Abraham. Not only does it not have a parallel in Scripture, it is not to be seen as normative for how believers are to approach God today. Rather, it is a specific situation where God is teaching an important lesson about His character, specifically His righteousness and justice, to Abraham so that it may be passed on to His chosen people. Furthermore, it not only is unique, but it is not even a prayer. Rather, it is a series of questions whereby Abraham humbly inquires to

¹⁸⁶Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 288.

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 287.

learn of God's justice and how He distinguishes the guilty from the righteous. Thus, to make it a formula for contemporary prayer totally misses the very nature of the text itself.

In light of those considerations, this text provides no support for Bounds' claims. In particular, it in no way shows God deferring to man. Rather, it shows a sovereign Lord who in His infinite wisdom reveals what He is certainly going to do, and then allows His chosen servant to approach Him to learn more of His nature in why He does what He does, with the purpose being for Abraham to teach the generations that follow. As such, God is the one in full control, not only in the initiation of the revelation to Abraham, but also in having the final word in the destruction of the wicked city. Even more, this text in no way can support the claim that God needs man, as Bounds concludes. God's plan was to judge the city, and He was not looking to Abraham with a longing hope that He could be persuaded otherwise. God did not need Abraham, but had chosen Him to teach important lessons about His nature to the generations that followed. Therefore, the textual meaning is the exact opposite of Bounds' interpretation of it, meaning that the conclusions he draws from it lack scriptural warrant.

Such conclusions can be drawn from Bounds' use of each of the texts that he looks to in order to develop his foundational understanding of how petitionary prayer and God's providence relate, as has already been seen. In summary, then, the primary problem with Bounds' interpretation of each of these texts is that he takes them out of their context. As Broyles notes, many a "passage goes misinterpreted because it is read in isolation, as though we should expect each passage to spell out all conditions under which certain claims apply."¹⁸⁸ By looking at isolated phrases without considering their immediate surrounding context, as with Isaiah 45:11, their genre, as with Psalm 2:8, their qualifications provided by the larger context of the surrounding chapters, as with

¹⁸⁸Broyles, *Psalms*, 47.

Matthew 7:7-8 and John 14:14, and their historical setting, as with 2 Kings 20 and Genesis 18, Bounds makes each text mean something different, and in some cases the exact opposite, of the intended meaning.

With such misinterpretation of the meaning of those texts, then his applications based on them lack scriptural support. Thus, Bounds' primary teachings that God needs people, that He will not act unless they pray, and that He will change His will in order to answer their prayers exactly as they request all are based on a faulty exegesis and application of the scriptural texts. Furthermore, his use of Psalm 2 to say that God willed such a plan for the world completely misses the history, context, and application of the text. Consequently, Bounds' church dominion ideas are merely his ideas and not what God's Word teaches about how petitionary prayer and God's providence interact. The implications of that serious problem will be addressed in the concluding chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION ABOUT BOUNDS' BELIEFS
ON PROVIDENCE AND PRAYER

As has been seen, Bounds wrote few direct comments about God's providence, yet made many statements that enable us to conclude what he believed about the relationship between God's providential rule over His creation and man's will as expressed in petitionary prayer. Only in *The Possibilities of Prayer* does he directly discuss how those ideas relate. There he states that "praying men and God's providence go together,"¹ so much so that "they cannot possibly be separated."² Furthermore, he describes them as "twin doctrines" that "stand fast and will abide forever."³ Yet, Bounds' writings do not present these twin doctrines as having equal priority; rather he presents prayer as having the greater priority of the two. In the same context of describing them as twin doctrines, he specifies that providence is "the companion of prayer."⁴ Lest one misunderstand his intentions, clarity is found when he writes, "Providence is the result of and belongs to prayer."⁵ He takes that idea to the point of

¹Edward M. Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1923), 158.

²Ibid., 139.

³Ibid., 159.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 139.

saying, “The providence of God reaches as far as the realm of prayer.”⁶ Thus, he concludes, “Prayer affects God more powerfully than His own purposes.”⁷

In Bounds’ thinking, then, man’s prayer has the greater emphasis and priority over God’s providence. For Bounds, providence becomes a tool of prayer, not the other way around. Such a perspective is consistent with the key themes related to providence as described in chapter 3:

1. God has ordained prayer as the only means by which He will work in the world.
2. Thus, God needs people, specifically men of prayer.
3. Prayers move God to act in ways in which He otherwise would not act.
4. Prayers are also necessary for God to fulfill His will and even His promises.
5. Prayers can cause God to change His purposes and expressed will since He cannot deny what is asked of Him by His people.
6. A lack of prayer hinders the implementation of His will, and even Himself.

That understanding of God’s need for prayer presents a picture of a limited God who is not fully sovereign and not fully in control of the world. Such is not merely a speculation drawn from Bounds’ indirect statements; rather, he asserts the idea clearly in *The Weapon of Prayer* when he writes,

If prayer puts God to work on earth, then, by the same token, prayerlessness rules God out of the world’s affairs, and prevents Him from working. And if prayer moves God to work in this world’s affairs, then prayerlessness excludes God from everything concerning men, and leaves man on earth the mere creature of circumstances, at the mercy of blind fate or without help of any kind from God. It leaves man in this world with its tremendous responsibilities and its difficult problems, and with all of its sorrows, burdens and afflictions, without any God at all.⁸

⁶Ibid., 144.

⁷Edward M. Bounds, *The Reality of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924), 41.

⁸Edward M. Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer: A Study in Christian Warfare*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931), 22.

A few pages later he reiterates that idea by saying, “Little and poor praying has weakened Christ’s power on earth, postponed the glorious results of His reign, and retired God from his sovereignty.”⁹ A perspective which believes the created can strip the Creator of His sovereignty and block Him from world affairs is a perspective that must believe God has taken, and continues to take, significant risks. Therefore, Bounds is on the risk side of the spectrum of the views on the relationship between providence and petitionary prayer. Yet, unlike the openness perspective on the same end of the spectrum, Bounds and the others who hold to the church dominion view believe that such a limitation is not because of an inherent limitation in God’s nature, but is something He chose for the good of the church. However, as seen in the previous chapter, the Scripture does not support these teachings as Bounds indicates it does.

Before one dismisses Bounds’ church dominion ideas, there is still a helpful question to consider. Understanding his beliefs on providence as seen through this project provides an answer to the question raised in the first chapter, namely, why did Bounds pray as much as he did? His remarkable practice of spending most of the day in prayer, as described in chapter 2, warrants an answer, especially given how he continues to be presented as a model of prayer for believers today. Though Bounds does not directly answer that question for us, his beliefs on God’s providence hold the clue. If God is in desperate need for men, if God cannot do anything apart from prayer, and if a lack of prayer hinders God Himself, then Bounds most likely forsook other pursuits to retreat to solitude for prayer because he felt the weight of the world on his shoulders. If he failed to pray, he believed that God could not work. Furthermore, if he failed to pray, he believed that he blocked God so much from His world that blind fate would rule his life and the lives of those around him. If a person truly believes these ideas, then that

⁹Ibid., 24.

person's lifestyle and priorities will significantly change in an attempt to not limit God. For Bounds, in the last two decades of his life that meant he had to rise early and pray, and continue in solitary prayer for the majority of the day.¹⁰

An aside is warranted here. There is a historical problem that the biographers do not mention, and that I cannot find written anywhere. There appears to be a disconnect between what Bounds teaches happens in response to prayer and the results he actually experienced from some prayers in his own life. For example, he promises his readers, "Pure praying remedies all ills, cures all diseases, relieves all situations, however dire, most calamitous, most fearful and despairing."¹¹ Clarifying, he continues, "He will always relieve, answer and bless if men will pray from the heart, and if they will give themselves to real, true praying."¹² Yet, as already mentioned in chapter 2, his first wife, Emma, died after two years of sickness and declining health, leaving him with three children who were ages eight, six, and two. In addition, two of his boys died at a young age. The question then has to be raised: Did Bounds pray for their healing prior to their death? If so, then his teachings about an unlimited promise of answered prayer failed in his own life in a significant way. If not, one can only wonder about the state of his family life.

However, that example is not the only one. He also teaches his readers that if more children were "reared under prayer environments," then "more children would hear the voice of God's spirit speaking to them, and would more quickly respond to those

¹⁰As seen in chap. 2, Bounds' life radically changed when he left the *Christian Advocate* to move to Washington, Georgia. Until that point, there is no indication that he gave himself to the prolonged periods of prayer every day as he did in the last two decades of his life. Whether his views on God's providence changed at that point or whether it was some other factor that led to this change is something that, unfortunately, is lost to history and would be a mere speculation.

¹¹Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 46.

¹²Ibid.

divine calls to a religious life.”¹³ Yet, as shown in chapter 2, two of his children denied the faith and lived as agnostics. Did the prayer environment not produce in his own children what he states it will do for others? In addition, if God is required to give people whatever they ask if they just persist, either Bounds did not pray for their spiritual condition or God broke a promise that Bounds assures his readers exists. Unfortunately, with such limited resources available on Bounds’ personal life, his explanation of these life situations in his family appears to be lost to history. Since he teaches his readers to pray about all things, we can only conclude that with so many hours spent in prayer he did pray for his family, but did not always experience the very things that he promises to his readers.

Beyond that question of why Bounds prayed as he did, another question needs to be answered. Looking beyond the isolated, quotable statements from Bounds that appear in countless books even to this day, one should also ask, what are the results of an embrace of his overall theology of providence and prayer? I am persuaded that there are five primary areas of concern when a person embraces Bounds’ teaching on the subject.

First, Bounds’ views can lead to a faulty expectation that God will give every believer everything for which they ask. With no qualifications given except for persistence, believers who base their practice on his teaching have no reason not to expect God to do exactly as they desire. Thus, Bounds’ views can create in believers a sense of entitlement, leading them to do the very thing about which Isaiah 45 warns. Ultimately, the Scriptures do not support Bounds’ teachings on this idea as has already been demonstrated in chapter 5. Beyond that, though, his perspective can present a warped view of God as an undiscerning, lavish Father whose spoiled child can demand anything and get it. It is easy to arrive at such a view of God if a person simply applies

¹³Edward M. Bounds, *Prayer and Praying Men* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921), 82.

what Bounds writes in *The Necessity of Prayer*,

The giving is not to be something other than the things prayed for, but the actual things sought and named. “He shall have whatsoever he saith,” It is all imperative, “He shall have.” The granting is to be unlimited, both in quality and in quantity If the order on God be made clear, specific and definite, God will fill it, exactly in accordance with the presented terms.”¹⁴

Second, Bounds’ views on providence and prayer lead to a diminishing confidence that the promises of Scripture will be fulfilled. If the coming of Jesus and the Holy Spirit were bound to prayer, as Bounds believes, then is the second coming of Jesus certain if His church fails to pray for it? If God’s kingdom advance fails due to a lack of prayer, then will the Gospel be preached in all nations before the end of time? Bruce Ware points out such uncertainty when he responds to the openness view, another risk view of providence with similarities to church dominion thought. Thus, his critique has application to Bounds and the other church dominion advocates. Ware writes, “Since it is true that God’s present purposes may be frustrated by the unforeseen and unanticipated free actions of his creatures, what basis is there for believing that God’s ultimate purposes and promises will be fulfilled in the eschaton?”¹⁵ He continues,

One wonders, though, how it can be both ways. To emphasize the significance of risk is to diminish the confidence we may rightly have that God will get what he desires. Yet to emphasize the certainty of God’s victory is to diminish the notion that God has really taken any significant risk at all. High risk and high confidence seem impossible together.¹⁶

Perhaps some of the inconsistencies from Bounds’ writings as noted in chapter 3 are the result of him trying to have it both ways. Such may provide an explanation as to why Bounds says so much that requires a risk view of providence, but then has isolated and

¹⁴Edward M. Bounds, *The Necessity of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), 21.

¹⁵Bruce A. Ware, *God’s Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 156.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 157.

infrequent statements about God's will, His sovereign rule, and things that God does apart from prayer. In contrast to Bounds' predominant comments, Scripture indicates that there are things that happen unconditionally, such as the coming of God's kingdom.¹⁷ A simple alternative, then, to Bounds' teaching on prayer for such things is the realization that prayers for those certainties in God's plan are, as Paul Helm writes, "not petitions so much as expressions of desire, an affirmation of solidarity with the unfolding will of God."¹⁸

Third, Bounds' teachings can lead to a focus on temporal wants instead of a kingdom focus in prayer. With Bounds not providing explanation about the scope of the promises in Scripture concerning answered prayer, there is little to guide his readers to think in terms of God's will and God's kingdom instead of their own desires. In fact, Bounds says, "Providence deals more especially with temporalities. It is in this realm that the providence of God shines brightest and is most apparent."¹⁹ After specifically mentioning food, clothing, business difficulties, deliverance from danger, and emergencies, he adds, "All of this teaching leads up to the need of a childlike, implicit trust in an overruling providence, which looks after the temporal wants of the children of men."²⁰ By taking his scriptural "support" out of context and by not providing the required qualifications with these passages, readers may not realize that their lives exist for God's glory (Isa 43:7), that everything they do is to be for God's glory (1 Cor 10:31), and thus their prayers should be like the Psalmist who said, "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!" (Ps 115:1). Some readers of Bounds may already know such things and

¹⁷For example, see Matt 24:14 and 1 Cor 15:24-28.

¹⁸Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 158.

¹⁹Bounds, *The Possibilities of Prayer*, 146.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 147.

not err here, but others without such broader understanding of Scripture could easily take Bounds' ideas and apply them only in terms of their own desires, expecting God to give them whatever they want, whether it is material belongings, worldly success, or fame. After all, Bounds says in *Purpose in Prayer*, "God loves the importunate pleader, and sends him answers that would never have been granted but for the persistency that refuses to let go until the petition craved for is granted."²¹ There is no qualification given by Bounds as to what things "craved for" are guaranteed to be given in answer to prayer.

Fourth, I am concerned that Bounds' teaching can be a factor in causing some to waver in their faith. While another study needs to be undertaken to verify this thought, the caution nevertheless should be mentioned. Specifically, Bounds tells his readers, "To get unquestioned answers to prayer is not only important as to the satisfying of our desires, but it is the evidence of our abiding in Christ."²² Such an approach leaves no room for understanding denials to prayer. Bounds directly says that "unanswered prayers are not to be solved by the mystery of God's will," but are the result of not doing "real praying."²³ Furthermore, Bounds tells his readers that "saying that it is not God's will to give it [the very thing for which we ask] to us" is a false comfort that has "nurtured our spiritual sloth."²⁴ That thinking does not explain that the sovereign, all-wise God knows better than we do what is best for us and for His kingdom purposes. Thus, for people who embrace Bounds' teaching that God must always give them whatever they ask, what happens when God denies prayers that perhaps they have prayed for many years? All they can conclude is either that God is not faithful to His promises or that they are

²¹E. M. Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920), 63.

²²*Ibid.*, 85.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*, 88.

spiritually slothful people who are not abiding in Christ and not doing real praying.

Either of those views is harmful to their spiritual growth.

Fifth, the greatest danger in Bounds' teachings on the relationship between providence and petitionary prayer, which also is the greatest danger in the teaching of the other church dominion advocates as well, is that it leads to an elevated view of man, which in turn leads to a depreciated view of God. Bounds teaches, "Prayer is a sense of God's need."²⁵ Similarly, he says, "To employ a familiar phrase, God alone can save the world, but God cannot save the world alone. God and man unite for the task, the response of the Divine being invariably in proportion to the desire and the effort of the human."²⁶ The idea that God needs people is not only self-centered and prideful, but is counter to Scripture. Acts 17:24-25 make clear, "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." Similarly, in Psalm 50:10-12 God says, "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine." Bounds' teachings about God's need for people are problematic. This concern is expressed well by Ware who addresses the similar problem in the openness model when he writes,

Along with open theism's view of God's limitation comes a corresponding exaltation of human beings. God is lowered while man is elevated. Herein lies both the appeal (sadly) and the danger of open theism. The culture in which we live, including much of the Christian subculture, has drunk deeply at the well of self-esteem. Where the Bible enjoins unfettered but deeply humble "God-esteem," we have been conditioned to think that we should have some of that esteem for ourselves. So, when a theology comes along that says, "God often doesn't make up his mind what to do until *he hears first from you*," or, "God and *you together* chart

²⁵Bounds, *The Weapon of Prayer*, 12.

²⁶Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 148.

out your course for the future as *both of you learn together* what unfolds,” or “Sometimes *God makes mistakes* but we need to realize that he was doing his best,” such a view plays well with many in our culture. We feel like we are almost peers with God, in a relationship in which we are encouraged to have an elevated view of what we think and feel, struggling along together with God while we are both subject to many of the same limitations—and all of this feels so right.

In fact, it is so very, very wrong. It is so demeaning to God as it is so unrightfully exalting of us.²⁷

The idea that God needs us and does not act until we pray elevates mankind to that feeling of being a peer with God, something very appealing to our culture of empowerment and entitlement. In reality, as already discussed about Isaiah 45:11 in chapter 5, we as the created have no right to tell the Creator what He should do or how He should do it. Ironically, Bounds asserts that “no man with narrow views of God . . . can pray effectually.”²⁸ Yet, his view is the one that places the narrowing limits on God and what He is able to do without His people.

Furthermore, this exaltation of mankind takes on an additional troubling aspect in Bounds’ thinking. If God only acts in response to prayer, then a lack of prayer means that other people may be denied the good that God wills for them because the believers around them fail to pray. For example, in terms of salvation, if God is not going to do anything unless His people pray, then even if it is His will to save a person, even if He has chosen them before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4), that person still will be lost because of a failure not of God’s people to share the Gospel, but because of their failure to pray for that lost person. As Bounds says, “Prayer holds in its grasp the movements of the race of man, and embraces the destinies of men for all eternity.”²⁹ Such is not a true Arminian view as the non-believers do not have libertarian free wills. Bounds’ beliefs require that they be limited in their ability to choose God, and that

²⁷Ware, *God’s Lesser Glory*, 148.

²⁸Edward M. Bounds, *The Essentials of Prayer*, ed. Homer W. Hodge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925), 126.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 128.

limitation comes from whether or not believers are praying for them. Such also is far removed from the Calvinistic viewpoint. In the view of Bounds and the other church dominion advocates, God is not the sovereign One who determines the destinies of people. Instead, God's people have the sovereignty and power! The person who prays is the person who takes on the attribute of sovereignty in this model as it is their prayers that determine what God does and who God saves, thus determining the destinies of others. Describing the same concern in terms of evil in the world, Helm writes,

If some particular evil will be averted if, and only if, an intercessor properly intercedes for its removal, then the burden of responsibility for the continuing evil falls squarely upon the shoulders of the intercessor. The evil continues, on this view, only because the intercessor has not prayed sufficiently fervently, or sincerely, or at sufficient length for its removal Who is to blame for Auschwitz? . . . On this view of petitionary prayer, the blame at least for the continuation of the atrocity (once it has come to the notice of a potential intercessor) falls not on Nazi Germany, or on God, but on the numerous potential intercessors who did not pray as hard or as sincerely as they might have done.³⁰

Bounds' view requires such to be true. In fact, Bounds says, "The lesson of it all is this, that as workers together with God we must regard ourselves as in not a little measure responsible for the conditions which prevail around us to-day."³¹

Such a picture of a world controlled by fallen people who have the power to shape the destinies of others, either by their prayers or lack thereof, as God simply watches and uses His power to intervene only to fill their orders when such orders are made to Him, quickly becomes a scary image, as well as an unrealistic burden for those intercessors to carry. Again, Ware's response to a similar concern in the openness model is helpful when he says,

Openness advocates make it sound so commendable that God will listen to us and make his decisions based in part on what he hears from us in prayer. However, when one considers that *only God* (and not us) knows all that can be known, and *only God* (and not us) has unsurpassable wisdom to discern what is best in any

³⁰Helm, *The Providence of God*, 159.

³¹Bounds, *Purpose in Prayer*, 155.

situation, and *only God* (and not us) has purity of motives and freedom from the distortion of sinful perspectives and urgings, and *only God* (and not us) is in the optimal situation to judge the probable effects of a decision on other people, situations, future developments, and kingdom purposes, it begins to make one wonder why it is so wonderful that “divine activity is at times dependent on our freely offered petitions.”

Given the supremacy of God in all these relevant ways, and given the deeply sinful and vastly limited perspectives we bring to the table, do we really want God to do what *we* think he should do? Again, the truth of the matter simply is that, because God’s knowledge and wisdom is vastly superior to ours, we would be utter and absolute fools to want God to wait to “hear from us first” before he decides what is best to do. If we truly want what is best, we will yield to his judgment every time.³²

With Bounds’ overall perspective problematic in the ways noted, a corrective needs to be made. Corrections to Bounds’ faulty interpretation of his key Scripture passages were provided in the previous chapter. However, in terms of the big picture now, the corrective to his church dominion perspective, and that of the other advocates of it, is simply to embrace a higher view of God’s providence and sovereignty while maintaining a passion for prayer like he demonstrated. Such a higher view of sovereignty specifically is a view where God is understood to not need anything, as Psalm 50:10-12 has already been shown to teach. Furthermore, it is a perspective where God is understood to not take any risks. As Daniel 4:35 says, “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’”

Believers need this confidence that nothing can stop God’s will. Such an understanding of the all-sufficient, all-wise, and all-powerful God leads His people not only to pray, but to do so according to His will. That, in fact, is how Jesus taught His disciples to pray in the model prayer when He said, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10). It also is the example that Jesus Himself modeled, as seen in the Garden of Gethsemane when he prayed, “Nevertheless, not my

³²Ware, *God’s Lesser Glory*, 168.

will, but yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42). Borchert summarizes this idea well when he says, “Jesus lived in the will of the Father, and the Christian is duty bound to live in the will of Jesus. Appropriate praying/asking here, therefore, must follow the same model Jesus exemplified.”³³ Helm comes to a similar conclusion, noting that a no-risk view of providence in terms of petitionary prayer does not have the problems described in the risk views like those of Bounds. Rather, in a no-risk understanding of providence he believes,

On this [no-risk] view, prayer is a God-ordained means of fulfilling what God wills. Intercessory prayer is not one means of settling God’s mind on a course of action, but one of the ways in which the already settled mind of God effects what he has decreed. So the “burden of responsibility” for the answering or not answering of intercessory prayers (if one is permitted to use that expression) is placed firmly upon shoulders wide and strong enough to bear it, the shoulders of God himself.³⁴

Those ideas are not merely opinions of Borchert or Helm, but are what I believe Scripture itself teaches as seen not only in the examples already mentioned, but also in 1 John 5:14-15 which says, “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.” Believers can ask anything, but with the confidence that God will do what He knows is best. As such, the omnipotent, sovereign God carries the burdens of knowing how His world should be run and how things will turn out on His own shoulders, allowing His children to experience that His “yoke is easy” and His “burden is light” (Matt 11:30). Believers do not have to carry the overwhelming sense of burden that I believe Bounds felt, a burden that explains his extensive practice of prayer to the exclusion of almost everything else during the last two decades of his life.

³³Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25b (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 119.

³⁴Helm, *The Providence of God*, 159.

Once again, Ware provides a helpful summary, this time as to why believers are able to pray confidently while holding to a high view of God's providential rule. He says,

Why pray if God is sovereign? In the end, the answer to this question is as deeply devastating to our sense of self-attainment as it is strengthening to our sense of dependence upon God. Though God doesn't need our prayers—he is sovereign and could accomplish all he does without ever instituting prayer or enlisting us to pray—he longs for his people to pray. He loves us deeply and wants us to share in the work, his very work, which is the most meaningful and important work in all of the world to do. What a privilege we have been given in this marvelous gift of prayer by which we enter into closer relationship with and heartfelt dependence upon God, and by which we are allowed—indeed, called—to participate in the outworking of the very eternal plans and purposes of God. As the self-sufficient God, he cannot benefit from our prayers, and as the sovereign God, he doesn't need our prayers. But as the full self-sufficient and sovereign God who also loves his people so very deeply, he calls us into greater relationship and participation with him through the acts of petitionary prayer that God establishes as necessary to the fulfillment of some portion of his work.³⁵

Thus, a high view of sovereignty provides the corrective needed. It does not diminish prayer, but rather enhances it as believers understand how and why they are to relate to God in prayer.

In conclusion, during the course of this study other areas that need further research were discovered. First, additional research needs to be done on the other church dominion advocates. This study only looked at one of the early proponents of it. The influence of others like Brother Andrew, Paul Billheimer, Watchman Nee, and Dutch Sheets continue to this day, yet I am aware of no other analysis having been made of their views on providence or on how their views are shaping the church. As noted in the first chapter, their works are bought, and presumably read, by many. Churches today are filled with people who embrace their views. If the academy does not begin to respond to the church dominion view in order to equip the pastors to equip the people, many believers will continue to embrace a dangerous view of God's providence that exalts man

³⁵Bruce A. Ware, "Prayer and the Sovereignty of God," in *For the Fame of God's Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, eds. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 143.

and diminishes God's greatness and power. They must be taught by their pastors who themselves have been taught to think biblically about these issues of providence and prayer.

Second, theological correctives need to be provided to the church dominion model, as well as to the other risk-based models. The brief comments already provided about a theological corrective barely begin to mention the myriad of things that could be said. Yet, such further discussion is beyond the scope of this project. It is my hope that subsequent research will be done to provide additional resources for a theological corrective to the church dominion model and the other models with a risk view of providence as it relates to petitionary prayer. Specifically, Tiessen has already provided an intriguing proposal in his book *Providence & Prayer*, which has been cited throughout this project. His corrective to the risk views is to propose his own middle-knowledge Calvinistic model.³⁶ Thorough theological analysis should be made to see if it does provide the solution that he believes it does and to assess what contribution it makes to the broader discussion.

Finally, further research needs to be undertaken on this broad topic of the relationship between providence and petitionary prayer. The paucity of available resources on their connection is shocking, and is a gaping hole in theology today. It is hard to imagine why such an important topic that influences how believers understand God and how they pray, and that impacts whether or not there is coherence between their beliefs and practice, is limited in its discussion to only a few books and a few articles. Scholarly resources need to be available on the topic, and need to be adapted to equip the laity of churches as well, so that believers can learn how to achieve coherence between what they profess to believe about God's control of His world and how they pray, all

³⁶Terrance Tiessen, "A Middle Knowledge Calvinist Model of Prayer," in *Providence & Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 337.

while maintaining a high view of God. Truly, “There is indeed much at stake. The two visions of God and of Christian hope are vastly different.”³⁷ Too much is at stake for this project to be only the second thesis or dissertation undertaken on Bounds, or for it to be the end of the discussion on how God’s providence and petitionary prayers are related. Let us pray that God will raise up additional people to research these topics so that believers may be equipped to have a passion for prayer like Bounds while coupling it with a high view of God’s providential rule so that God receives the glory for all of the answers, as well as for the denials, that He provides in response to the prayers of His people.

³⁷Ware, *God’s Lesser Glory*, 160.

APPENDIX

BOUNDS' BOOKS: EDITIONS, REVISIONS, AND CHANGES THROUGH THE YEARS

Since the initial publication of Bounds' books between 1907 and 1931, those books have been reprinted, edited, and even published under different names. Throughout this project, unless otherwise noted, every citation has been to those first editions. However, to aid in identifying the connection between newer printings and the originals, the various titles under which Bounds' books have been printed are provided below. The original editions used throughout this project are listed first in chronological order of publication. Editions with different titles are then listed with notes as to how each relates to the original. Finally, a sampling of compilations and collections of Bounds' writings will be noted.

First Editions

The following list contains Bounds' original eleven books in chronological order. It also provides the original publisher of each book. Readers should be advised that any book not on this list and with these specific publication dates may be significantly edited from what Bounds wrote, even though his name still appears as the only author.

Bounds, E. M. *Preacher and Prayer*. Chicago: The Christian Witness Co., 1907.

_____. *The Resurrection*. Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1907.

_____. *Purpose in Prayer*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920.

Bounds, Edward M. *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1921.

- _____. *Prayer and Praying Men*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921.
- _____. *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1922.
- _____. *The Possibilities of Prayer*. Edited by Homer W. Hodge. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1923.
- _____. *The Reality of Prayer*. Edited by Homer W. Hodge. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1924.
- _____. *The Essentials of Prayer*. Edited by Homer W. Hodge. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925.
- _____. *The Necessity of Prayer*. Edited by Homer W. Hodge. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929.
- _____. *The Weapon of Prayer: A Study in Christian Warfare*. Edited by Homer W. Hodge. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1931.

Editions with Different Titles

Power through Prayer is the popular reprint of Bounds' first book, *Preacher and Prayer*. There are numerous editions and repeated printings of it from several different publishers. The 1962 printing of it by Zondervan¹ remains close to the original edition.² However, the 1979 printing by Moody Press³ includes significant re-wording and editing of Bounds' original text, and is reflective of the printings of it since that time.⁴

*The Ineffable Glory*⁵ is a 1921 reprinting by the George H. Doran Company of Bounds' second book, *The Resurrection*. It does appear to have been published under that title since that time. In addition, I cannot locate any printings of this book under different names.

¹E. M. Bounds, *Power through Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962).

²Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 16 July 2011.

³E. M. Bounds, *Power through Prayer* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979).

⁴Darrel D. King, telephone interview by author, 16 July 2011.

⁵E. M. Bounds, *The Ineffable Glory* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1921).

*Praying with Purpose*⁶ is one of the more recently edited and renamed printings of one of Bounds' books. It is a 2005 revision by Whitaker House to Bounds' third book, *Purpose in Prayer*.

Inside Heaven's Gates,⁷ *Catching a Glimpse of Heaven*,⁸ and *A Place Called Heaven*⁹ are all Whitaker House reprints of Bounds' fourth book, *Heaven: A Place—A City—A Home*.

*Bible Men of Prayer*¹⁰ is a 1964 edition by Zondervan that is a reprinting of Bounds' fifth book, *Prayer and Praying Men*. It does not appear to have been republished under that title since that time. However, it has since been published under the titles *Obtaining Answers to Prayer*¹¹ and *Praying that Receives Answers*.¹²

*Winning the Invisible War*¹³ and *Guide to Spiritual Warfare*¹⁴ are also Whitaker House edited reprints of Bounds' sixth book, *Satan: His Personality, Power and Overthrow*. In addition, there is a 1963 printing by Baker Book House that, as far as I can tell, is identical, even in the page numbering, to the original 1922 version that is very difficult to locate.

*Answered Prayer*¹⁵ is another Whitaker House revision, this time to Bounds'

⁶E. M. Bounds, *Praying with Purpose* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2005).

⁷E. M. Bounds, *Inside Heaven's Gates* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1985).

⁸E. M. Bounds, *Catching a Glimpse of Heaven* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1985).

⁹E. M. Bounds, *A Place Called Heaven* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2003).

¹⁰E. M. Bounds, *Bible Men of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1964).

¹¹E. M. Bounds, *Obtaining Answers to Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984).

¹²E. M. Bounds, *Praying that Receives Answers* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984).

¹³E. M. Bounds, *Winning the Invisible War* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984).

¹⁴E. M. Bounds, *Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984).

¹⁵E. M. Bounds, *Answered Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1994).

seventh book, *The Possibilities of Prayer*. Interestingly, the copyright page of this edition contains the note, “This book has been edited for the modern reader. Words, expressions, and sentence structure have been updated for clarity and readability.”¹⁶

*Thy Will Be Done*¹⁷ is a revision of Bounds’ eighth book, *The Reality of Prayer*. It also is published by Whitaker House and contains the same editing note at the beginning.

*Prayer and Spiritual Warfare*¹⁸ is another Whitaker House revision and corresponds with Bounds’ tenth book, *The Necessity of Prayer*.

I have not been able to locate any re-printings with title changes to Bounds’ ninth book, *The Essentials of Prayer*, or his eleventh book, *The Weapon of Prayer*.

Compilations and Collections

Powerful and Prayer Pulpits,¹⁹ *Prayer and Revival*,²⁰ and *Jewels from E. M. Bounds*²¹ are all compilations of Bounds’ writings that are edited by Darrel D. King. The material for those books comes exclusively from selected editorials from Bounds’ writings at the *Christian Advocate* between 1890 and 1894. King also has published *E. M. Bounds Speaks to the Modern Church Today*,²² which contains lengthy excerpts from Bounds’ editorials and books, along with King’s own conclusions. Those books make

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷E. M. Bounds, *Thy Will Be Done* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2000).

¹⁸E. M. Bounds, *Prayer and Spiritual Warfare* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1984).

¹⁹E. M. Bounds, *Powerful and Prayerful Pulpits: Forty Days of Readings*, ed. Darrel D. King (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993).

²⁰E. M. Bounds, *Prayer and Revival*, ed. Darrel D. King (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993).

²¹E. M. Bounds, *Jewels from E. M. Bounds*, ed. Darrel D. King (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2010).

²²Darrel D. King, *E. M. Bounds Speaks to the Modern Church Today* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2009).

content from the hard to access editorials in the *Christian Advocate* available to the public today.

There are also numerous books that compile excerpts from Bounds' writings and publish them with new titles, but still under his name. Examples include *Memos to God*²³ and *A Treasury of Prayer*.²⁴ One of the more recent of such compilations is *Understanding Prayer: Its Purpose, Its Power, Its Potential*,²⁵ which is a combination of parts of *Purpose in Prayer*, *Power Through Prayer*, and *The Weapon of Prayer*. Considering that Bounds taught readers to have long, uninterrupted, and focused times of prayer, one of the most humorous attempts at such a compilation is *30 Days of Prayer: The Best of E. M. Bounds for ADHD Christians*.²⁶

In addition, there are several collections that provide some of Bounds' books in one volume. *The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer*²⁷ is a printing of eight of Bounds' works, but does not include his books on the resurrection, heaven, and Satan. *E. M. Bounds: The Classic Collection on Prayer*²⁸ contains the same collection of eight books, but slightly modifies the book titles of each, changing, for example, the title of Bounds' first book to *The Power of Prayer*. *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*²⁹ is similar,

²³E. M. Bounds, *Memos to God: A Prayer Journal and Organizer with the Writings of E. M. Bounds*, ed. James S. Bell, Jr. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1994).

²⁴E. M. Bounds, *A Treasury of Prayer*, ed. Leonard Ravenhill (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1981).

²⁵E. M. Bounds, *Understanding Prayer: Its Purpose, Its Power, Its Potential* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Publishing, 2013).

²⁶E. M. Bounds, *30 Days of Prayer: The Best of E. M. Bounds for ADHD Christians*, ed. Matthew Bryan (Memphis, TN: self-published, 2010).

²⁷E. M. Bounds, *The Complete Works of E. M. Bounds on Prayer* (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008).

²⁸E. M. Bounds, *E. M. Bounds: The Classic Collection on Prayer*, ed. Harold Chadwick (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2001).

²⁹E. M. Bounds, *E. M. Bounds on Prayer* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997).

providing seven of Bounds' books. It omits the same three books as the previous collections but also omits *The Reality of Prayer*. In addition, it uses a later edition title of *Obtaining Answers to Prayer* for the book *Prayer and Praying Men*.³⁰ There are other similar collections available. However, I cannot locate any that contain all eleven of Bounds' books.

³⁰Ibid., 377.

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ABSTRACT

EDWARD MCKENDREE BOUNDS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROVIDENCE AND MAN'S WILL IN PRAYER

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013
Chair: Dr. Timothy K. Beougher

This dissertation examines the writings of Edward McKendree Bounds to discern his understanding of God's providence, how that understanding shaped his radical prayer life, and how what is learned speaks to the contemporary debate on how one's view of providence impacts one's prayer life, particularly intercession. Chapter 1 takes a broad look at the scope of Bounds' influence in the evangelical understanding of prayer today.

Chapter 2 provides a biography of E. M. Bounds. His life is discussed in stages, and his years in ministry are divided into three periods based around the nature of what he primarily did at each time. A discussion of the legacy of his books is included.

Chapter 3 examines all of Bounds' available writings. Each of his eleven books is analyzed individually in terms of what is taught in regard to issues of providence and prayer. A similar analysis is made of his newspaper editorials from his time at the *Christian Advocate*, the official newspaper of the Methodist Episcopal South denomination.

Chapter 4 describes the church dominion model for understanding the relationship between providence and petitionary prayer, including the perspectives of its major advocates: Brother Andrew, Paul Billheimer, Watchman Nee, and Dutch Sheets. A discussion of the legitimacy of this model is also presented. In addition, a summary of

Bounds' beliefs is used to demonstrate that his view most closely resembles that of this particular model.

Chapter 5 provides an assessment of Bounds' beliefs on providence and prayer. The primary texts that Bounds uses as support for his views (Gen 18, 2 Kgs 20, Ps 2:7-8, Isa 45:11, Matt 7:7-8, John 14:13-14), and his explanation of each, are discussed. A detailed critique of his use of each passage is provided.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of this dissertation. In addition to summarizing the research and findings of the previous chapters, a discussion is provided in regard to the results of embracing Bounds' view on God's providence. Several concerns and cautions are provided, along with a theological corrective.

One appendix follows the main chapters. It provides the reader with a summary of Bounds' original eleven books and a listing of the many editions and revisions of each book, including name changes, through the years.

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