

The Essentials of Prayer

by E. M. Bounds

Chapter 2

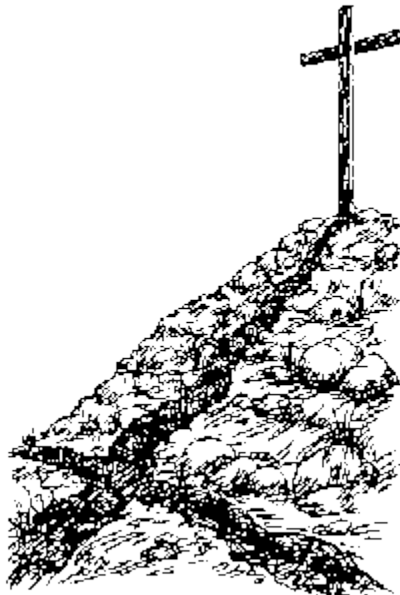
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Bounds

Essentials of Prayer

Rock Hill Baptist Church

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Editor's Preface

I do not pray enough. I wake up in the morning and thank the Lord for being with me. If I get up in the night, I thank the Lord for blessing me with my Church, my family, and my salvation. There are “seasons of prayer” when I go off by myself to pray, to speak to my Master. But I still don't pray enough.

Nor do any of us pray enough. A recent poll by George Barna showed that many people, if they pray, pray less than seven minutes a week. This is shocking when you consider the frequency that prayer is referred to in Scripture. The word “pray” or “prayer” is used over 500 times. Other forms of the word “pray” are numerous: petitions, intercession, call upon, seek. The Bible is truly a Book that emphasizes prayer. And why not? Prayer is the means by which we talk to the Writer of Scripture, our Heavenly Father. We must pray. Prayer must be a priority for every member of this Church. We must pray if we are going to do the works of God! We must pray for laborers. We must pray!

Will you join me in prayer? Will you pray for me,
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for my wife, and for the ministry we oversee here at Rock Hill Baptist Church? Will you pray for the Church itself, for the lost, for the sick and dying? I need your loving prayers, just as you need my loving prayers. Let us pray, for our Father waits to answer. God Bless!

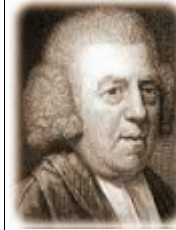
Throughout this study we will look at Dr. E.M. Bounds sixth book on prayer called “The Essentials of Prayer”. All comments that I make will be boxed to separate them from Dr. Bounds' original work. ... Brother David

Prayer and Humility: Chapter 2

**“If two angels were to receive at the same moment a commission from God, one to go down and rule earth’s grandest empire, the other to go and sweep the streets of its meanest village, it would be a matter of entire indifference to each which service fell to his lot, the post of ruler or the post of scavenger; for the joy of the angels lies only in obedience to God’s will, and with equal joy they would lift a Lazarus in his rags to Abraham’s bosom, or be a chariot of fire to carry an Elijah home.”—
John Newton**

To be humble is to have a low estimate of one’s

self. It is to be modest, lowly, with a disposition to



Who was *John Newton*? An ex-slave trader and deserter from the British Navy, Newton was saved by faith in Christ on July 24, 1725. He studied the Scriptures under John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Eventually he went into the ministry, and preached at a parish at Olney, England. He continued to preach till the last year of his life, although he was too blind to see his text, and the failure of his faculties grew painful. In 1806, when entreated to give up preaching, He replied, 'I cannot stop. What! shall the old African blasphemer stop while he call speak?' Newton is now most famous for the hymn he penned, "Amazing Grace".

seek obscurity. Humility retires itself from the public gaze. It does not seek publicity nor hunt for high places, neither does it care for prominence. Humility is retiring in its nature. Self-abasement belongs to humility. It is given to self-depreciation. It never exalts itself in the eyes of others nor even in the eyes of itself. Modesty is one of its most prominent characteristics.

In humility there is the total absence of pride, and it is at the very farthest distance from anything like self-conceit. There is no self-praise in humility. Rather it has the disposition to praise others. “In honour preferring one another.” It is not given to self-exaltation. Humility does not love the uppermost seats and aspire to the high

places. It is willing to take the lowliest seat and prefers those places where it will be unnoticed.

Romans 12:10 (KJV) "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"

Luke 11:43 (KJV) "Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets."

The prayer of humility is after this fashion:

**"Never let the world break in,
Fix a mighty gulf between;
Keep me humble and unknown,
Prized and loved by God alone."**

Humility **does not have its eyes on self, but rather on God and others.** It is poor in spirit, meek in behaviour, lowly in heart. "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love."

Ephesians 4:2-3 (KJV) "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; {3} Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

The parable of the Pharisee and publican is a sermon in brief on humility and self-praise. The **Pharisee, given over to self-conceit, wrapped up in himself, seeing only his own self-righteous**

deeds, catalogues his virtues before God, despising the poor publican who stands afar off. He exalts himself, gives himself over to self-praise, is self-centered, and goes away unjustified, condemned and rejected by God.

The **publican sees no good in himself, is overwhelmed with self-depreciation,** far removed from anything which would take any credit for any good in himself, does not presume to lift his eyes to heaven, but with downcast countenance smites himself on his breast, and cries out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Luke 18:10-14 (KJV) "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. {11} The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. {12} I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. {13} And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. {14} I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Our Lord with great preciseness gives us the sequel of the story of these two men, one utterly devoid of humility, the other utterly submerged in the spirit of self-depreciation and lowliness of

mind.

“I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Luke 18:14.

God puts a great price on humility of heart. It is good to be clothed with humility as with a garment. It is written, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” That which brings the praying soul near to God is humility of heart. That which gives wings to prayer is

James 4:6 (KJV) "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

1 Peter 5:5 (KJV) "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

lowliness of mind. That which gives ready access to the throne of grace is self-depreciation. Pride, self-esteem, and self-praise effectually shut the door of prayer. He who would come to God must approach Him with self hid from his eyes. He must not be puffed-up with self-conceit, nor be possessed with an over-estimate of his virtues and

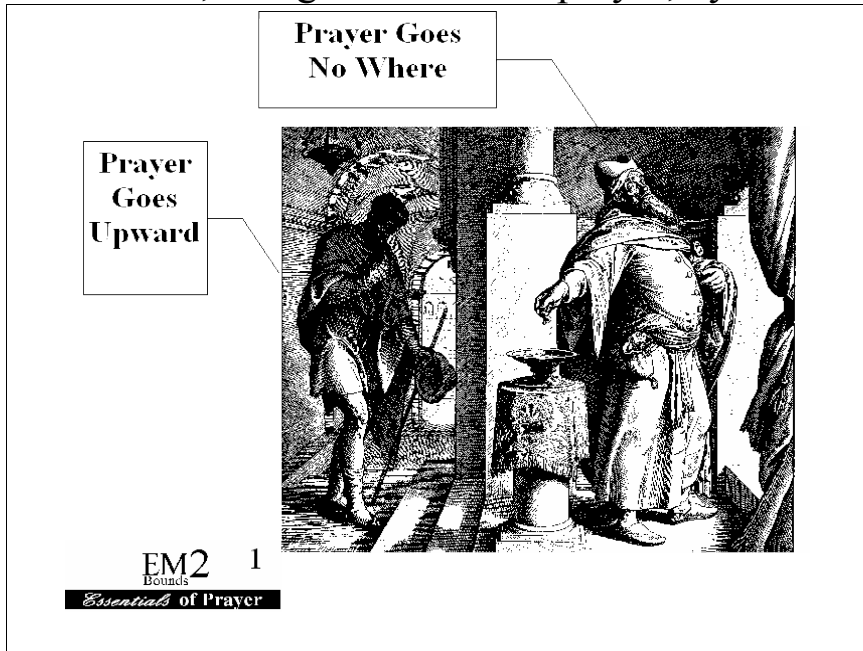
good works.

Humility is a rare Christian grace, of great price in the courts of heaven, entering into and being an inseparable condition of effectual praying. It gives access to God when other qualities fail. It takes many descriptions to describe it, and many definitions to define it. It is a rare and retiring grace. Its full portrait is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our prayers must be set low before they can ever rise high. Our prayers must have much of the dust on them before they can ever have much of the glory of the skies in them. In our Lord's teaching, humility has such prominence in His system of religion, and is such a distinguishing feature of His character, that to leave it out of His lesson on prayer would be very unseemly, would not comport with His character, and would not fit into His religious system.

The parable of the Pharisee and publican stands out in such bold relief that we must again refer to it. The Pharisee seemed to be inured to prayer. Certainly he should have known by that time how to pray, but alas! like many others, he seemed never to have learned this invaluable lesson. He leaves business and business hours and walks with steady and fixed steps up to the house of

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prayer. The position and place are well-chosen by him. There is the sacred place, the sacred hour, and the sacred name, each and all invoked by this seemingly praying man. But this praying ecclesiastic, though schooled to prayer, by



training and by habit, prays not. Words are uttered by him, but words are not prayer. God hears his words only to condemn him. A death-chill has come from those formal lips of prayer—a death-curse from God is on his words of prayer. A solution of pride has entirely poisoned the prayer offering of that hour. His entire praying has been impregnated with self-praise, self-congratulation, and self-exaltation. That season of temple going has had no worship whatever in it.

On the other hand, the publican, smitten with a deep sense of his sins and his inward sinfulness, realising how poor in spirit he is, how utterly devoid of anything like righteousness, goodness, or any quality which would commend him to God, his pride within utterly blasted and dead, falls down with humiliation and despair before God, while he utters a sharp cry for mercy for his sins and his guilt. A sense of sin and a realisation of utter unworthiness has fixed the roots of humility deep down in his soul, and has oppressed self and eye and heart, downward to the dust. This is the picture of humility against pride in praying. Here we see by sharp contrast the utter worthlessness of self-righteousness, self-exaltation, and self-praise in praying, and the great value, the beauty and the Divine commendation which comes to humility of heart, self-depreciation, and self-condemnation when a soul comes before God in prayer.

Happy are they who have no righteousness of their own to plead and no goodness of their own of which to boast. Humility flourishes in the soil of a true and deep sense of our sinfulness and our nothingness. Nowhere does humility grow so rankly and so rapidly and shine so brilliantly, as when it feels all guilty, confesses all sin, and trusts all grace. "I the chief of sinners am, but

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Jesus died for me.” That is praying ground, the ground of humility, low down, far away seemingly, but in reality brought nigh by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. God dwells in the lowly places. He makes such lowly places really the high places to the praying soul.

**“Let the world their virtue boast,
Their works of righteousness;
I, a wretch undone and lost,
Am freely saved by grace;
Other tide I disclaim,
This, only this, is all my plea,
I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.”**

Humility is an indispensable requisite of true prayer. It must be an **attribute, a characteristic of prayer**. Humility must be **in the praying character as light is in the sun**. Prayer has no beginning, no ending, no being, without humility. As a ship is made for the sea, so prayer is made for humility, and so humility is made for prayer.

Humility is not abstraction from self, nor does it ignore thought about self. It is a many-phased principle. Humility is born by looking at God, and His holiness, and then looking at self and man’s unholiness. **Humility loves obscurity and silence,**

dreads applause, esteems the virtues of others, excuses their faults with mildness, easily pardons injuries, fears contempt less and less, and sees baseness and falsehood in pride. A true nobleness and greatness are in humility. It **knows and reveres the inestimable riches of the Cross,** and the humiliations of Jesus Christ. It fears the lustre of those virtues admired by men, and loves those that are more secret and which are prized by God. It draws comfort even from its own defects, through the abasement which they occasion. It prefers any degree of compunction before all light in the world.

Somewhat after this order of description is that definable grace of humility, so perfectly drawn in the publican’s prayer, and so entirely absent from the prayer of the Pharisee. It takes many sittings to make a good picture of it.

Humility holds in its keeping the very life of prayer. Neither pride nor vanity can pray. Humility, though, is much more than the absence of vanity and pride. It is a positive quality, a substantial force, which energises prayer. There is no power in prayer to ascend without it. Humility springs from a lowly estimate of ourselves and of our deservings. The **Pharisee prayed not, though**

well schooled and habituated to pray, because there was no humility in his praying. The publican prayed, though banned by the public and receiving no encouragement from Church sentiment, because he prayed in humility. To be clothed with humility is to be clothed with a praying garment. Humility is just feeling little because we are little. Humility is realising our unworthiness because we are unworthy, the feeling and declaring ourselves sinners because we are sinners. Kneeling well becomes us as the attitude of prayer, because it betokens humility.

The Pharisee's proud estimate of himself and his supreme contempt for his neighbour closed the gates of prayer to him, while humility opened wide those gates to the defamed and reviled publican.

That fearful saying of our Lord about the works of big, religious workers in the latter part of the Sermon on the Mount, is called out by proud estimates of work and wrong estimates of prayer:

“Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you:

depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”
[Matthew 7:22-23]

Humility is the first and last attribute of Christly religion, and the first and last attribute of Christly praying. There is **no Christ without humility**. There is **no praying without humility**. If thou wouldst learn well the art of praying, then learn well the lesson of humility.

How graceful and imperative does the attitude of humility become to us! Humility is one of the unchanging and exacting attitudes of prayer. Dust, ashes, earth upon the head, sackcloth for the body, and fasting for the appetites, were the symbols of humility for the Old Testament saints. **Sackcloth, fasting and ashes brought Daniel a lowliness before God, and brought Gabriel to him**. The angels are fond of the sackcloth-and-ashes men.

How lowly the attitude of Abraham, the friend of God, when pleading for God to stay His wrath

Genesis 18:27 (KJV) "And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:"

against Sodom! “Which am but sackcloth and ashes.” With what humility does Solomon appear

before God! His grandeur is abased, and his glory and majesty are retired as he assumes the rightful attitude before God: "I am but a little child, and know not how to go out or to come in."

1 Kings 3:5-9 (KJV) "In Gibeon the LORD appeared to **Solomon** in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. {6} And Solomon said, Thou hast showed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. {7} And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. {8} And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. {9} Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?"

The **pride of doing sends its poison all through our praying**. The same pride of being infects all our prayers, no matter how well-worded they may be. It was this lack of humility, this self-applauding, this self-exaltation, which kept the most religious man of Christ's day from being accepted of God. And the same thing will keep us in this day from being accepted of Him.

**"O that now I might decrease!
O that all I am might cease!**

**Let me into nothing fall!
Let my Lord be all in all."**

John 3:27-30 (KJV) "**John** answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. {28} Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. {29} He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. {30} He must increase, but I must decrease."

Doctrine of Humility

Humility is not just modesty. It is not just self effacement or downcast eyes. It is not ignorant acceptance of recognizing all others as your superior. It is not turning the other cheek until you're beaten senseless. Humility, True Godly Humility, begins when you gain knowledge of God's Word in your soul. *Humility is an understanding that you are least in God's presence, and subject to fall at any time.* When you have a true knowledge of your own worth, and begin to understand that all that you are, you have from your relationship with Christ, you begin to live a life of humility.

1 **Humility recognizes that we are all worthless unless exalted through our relationship with Christ:**

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men¹ after² the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen³ the foolish⁴ things of the world to confound⁵ the wise; and God hath chosen the weak⁷ things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things⁸ of the world, and things which are

despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are⁹ ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written,¹⁰ He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

2 True humility **doesn't stoop to self-righteousness.** We

promote the righteousness of God as shown in the Scriptures, and uphold what He dictates – not our own opinions. Humility also recognizes that the unbeliever *will not act like a believer*, but the unbeliever needs to accept Christ as Savior before he or she can begin to act in a truly godly manner.

1 Corinthians 2:14

"But the natural¹¹ man receiveth not¹² the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can¹³ he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Matthew 21:12-13

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.¹⁴"

3 Humility doesn't judge another believer's walk with God

based on my opinion, or my supposition. We must judge all things by Scripture, our rule of faith:

Romans 14:1-8

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful

disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

4 We are called to **be humble as Christ was humble**, serving

the Father in His Plan. Jesus set a high standard of humility that we need to follow:

Phillipians 2:5-8

"Let this mind be¹⁵ in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

¹⁵ (eimi, Present Indicative Active= keep on being

Luke 23:9-11

"Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered

him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate."

Isaiah 53:7

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. "

¹ "Wise men" refers to the Greek philosophers who arrogantly expounded and debated on "truth", as if they had a corner on the market.

² kata, Greek preposition of norm or standard, according to the [norm or standard of the world]

³ eklego, aorist middle indicative = chosen, selected. This text emphasizes that God Himself *chose* to save us, even knowing our destitute estate. As Jesus Christ said: **John 15:16 (KJV) "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."** This emphasizes the fact that we have no need to brag – we weren't much when God called us. If we boast, then like the Psalmist said; **Psalms 34:2 (KJV) "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad."** Let us boast in the Lord!

⁴ moros = dull or stupid. from which we get our word "moron". God called the least intelligent of the world, according to worldly standards.

⁵ hina = for the purpose of

⁶ schune = to put to shame or discredit

⁷ asthenes = strength less, more feeble

⁸ agenes = not of noble birth, savages

⁹ eimi, pr ac ind = you keep on being

¹⁰ perfect passive indicative = as it stands written. see Jeremiah 9.23

¹¹ psuchikos = soulless, refers to the unbeliever, a person who is *spiritually dead*.

¹² dechomai, Present Active Indicative & negative me = never will receive or embrace

¹³ dunamai & negative me = does not have the inherent power to do

¹⁴ quoted from Isaiah 56.7



Rock Hill Baptist Church is located between Parsons and Lexington, Tennessee, on Highway 412. Look for our sign! We have services on Wednesdays (Adult, Youth, and children's Bible studies) at 7:00 PM, Sundays at 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Rock Hill is a family oriented Bible believing Church - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Our Pastor, Brother David Buffaloe, will answer any questions you have about our Church if you contact him at 731-845-6104, or through his website at bibleteacher.org; or e-mail him by writing: webmaster@bibleteacher.org

