

# Prayer *for* Pastors



**Gardiner Spring**  
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# Prayer for Pastors

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# PRAYER FOR PASTORS

**T**he importance of the Christian ministry constrains us to request one particular favor for it. It is a request in which we feel a deep personal concern: Pray for us. “Pray for us,” says Paul. “Pray for us” is the hearty response from every Christian pulpit in the land and in the wide world. If such a man as Paul requested the prayers of good men—and if, with his giant intellect, his eminent spirituality, and his intimate communion with God and things unseen, this holy man needed this encouragement and impulse in his work—who will not say, “Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified” (2Th 3:1)!

## **1. Encouragement for new pastors**

It is a delightful thought to a young man entering the ministry of reconciliation that, unworthy as he is, the prayers of thousands of God’s people are continually going up on his behalf to his Father and their Father, to his God and their God. He seems to hear the church of God saying to him, “We cannot go to this sacred work; but we will follow you with our prayers!” He seems to hear many a Christian parent say to him, “We have no son to send to this hallowed vocation; but you go to it, and you shall not lack a place in our prayers!” Many churches of this land have enjoyed the high privilege of sending into

the spiritual harvest a considerable number of beloved youth from their own more immediate family. And it has been the custom, gratefully remembered, of such churches to assemble for the special service of commending their young brethren to the care and faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God. How fitting, in every way, is such a service! How full of encouragement to the heart that trembles under a view of the responsibilities of the sacred office! How delightful is this spiritual impetus to a mind almost ready to sink under the consciousness of its own weaknesses! And how unspeakably precious the thought to all who labor in this great work, whether in youthful, or riper years, that they are thus habitually remembered in the prayers of the churches! Let the thought sink deep into the heart of every church, that their minister will be very much such a minister as their prayers may make him. If nothing short of omnipotent grace can make a Christian, nothing less than this can make a faithful and successful minister of the gospel.

## **2. The greatness of the work**

We entreat the churches to regard with a more deliberate and devout mind the great work itself to which their ministers are devoted. To explain the doctrines and enforce the duties of genuine Christianity; to defend the truth against all the subtlety and versatility of error; to sustain within their own minds that sense of God's presence, and of those moral sanctions which are revealed in His Word, and

that deep and tender impression of the things that are unseen and eternal, that are necessary to give earnestness, and that consistent life and deportment that are necessary to give effect to their preaching; to do this in a way that shall adapt itself to times, places, occasions and characters, and without being disheartened by difficulties, appalled by enemies, and weary of the yoke which they have taken upon them, is no ordinary work.

If a people are looking for rich discourses from their minister, their prayers must supply him with matter. If [they are looking] for faithful discourses, their prayers must urge him, by a full and uncompromising manifestation of the truth, to commend himself “to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2Co 4:2). If [they are looking] for powerful and successful discourses, their prayers must make him a blessing to the souls of men. Would they have him come to them in the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of peace, with a heaving bosom, a kindled eye, and a glowing tongue, and with discourses bathed in tears and elaborate with prayer? [Then] their prayers must urge him to pray, and their tears inspire his thrilling heart with the strong yearnings of Christian affection. It is in their own closets that the people of God most effectually charge the soul of their beloved ministers to take heed to the ministry they have received of the Lord Jesus.

### **3. Pastors need prayer**

And who and what are ministers themselves? Frail men, fallible, sinning men, exposed to every snare, to temptation in every form; and, from the very post of observation they occupy, a better target for the fiery darts of the enemy. They are no mean victims the great adversary is seeking, when he would wound and cripple Christ's ministers. One such victim is worth more to the kingdom of darkness than a score of common men; and on this very account, their temptations are probably more subtle and severe than those encountered by ordinary Christians. If this subtle deceiver fails to destroy them, he artfully aims at neutralizing their influence by quenching the fervor of their piety, lulling them into negligence, and doing all in his power to render their work irksome. How perilous the condition of that minister, then, whose heart is not encouraged, whose hands are not strengthened, and who is not upheld by the prayers of his people! It is not in his own closet and on his own knees alone that he finds security and comfort, and ennobling, humbling, and purifying thoughts and joys; but it is when they also seek them on his behalf that he becomes a better and happier man, and a more useful minister of the everlasting gospel.

### **4. An interest in their minister**

Nothing gives a people so much interest in their minister, and interest of the best kind, as to pray for

him. The more they commend him to God in their prayers, they love him more, they respect him more, they attend more cheerfully and profitably on his ministry. They feel a deeper interest in his work the more they pray for him. And their children feel a deeper interest both in him and in his preaching, when they habitually listen to supplications that affectionately commend him to the throne of the heavenly grace.

## **5. The results of preaching**

The results of the gospel preached are associated with the most important realities in the universe. Indeed, they form a major part of these affecting realities themselves. There are such bright and radiant manifestations of the ever-blessed and adorable Godhead where the preached gospel has free course and is glorified. That marvelous display of the divine nature, that progressive development which is in itself so desirable, and in its consequences so endeared to every holy mind, never shines forth with such impressive distinctness and subduing luster, as when the hearers of His truth and grace, proclaimed from lips of clay, indicate that appearing of His great glory. If God's earthly people had minds as pure as the intellect of the seraph around the throne, with what deep concern and prayer would they watch the course and follow the labors of the humble and faithful ambassadors of the cross, as they proclaim this glorious gospel, and as the effects of their preaching discover new and perpetual exhibitions of the

manifested Deity! The effects of their preaching upon the souls of men are nothing less than the savor of life unto life in them that are saved, and in them that perish of death unto death (2Co 2:16). The same light and motives that are the means of fitting some for heaven, abused and perverted, only fit others for hell. Oh, it is at a fearful expense that ministers are ever allowed to enter the pulpit without being preceded, accompanied, and followed by the earnest prayers of the churches. It is no marvel that the pulpit is so powerless, and ministers so often disheartened, when there are so few to hold up their hands. The consequence of neglecting this duty is seen and felt in the spiritual declension of the churches, and it will be seen and felt in the everlasting perdition of men, while the result of regarding it would be the ingathering of multitudes into the kingdom of God, and new glories to the Lamb that was slain.

## **6. A plea for regular prayer**

On his own behalf, therefore, and on the behalf of his beloved and respected brethren in the ministry, the writer craves a place in the prayers of all who love the Savior and the souls of men. We are the dispensers of God's truth and at best fall far below our mighty theme. The duties of our calling return upon us with every returning week and day. They often come upon us with many conflicting demands. They sometimes demand all our thoughts at the very time when we have lost the power of thinking; and all the

strength of our affections when we are the least sensitive to them. With these demands can come that gnawing anxiety that exhausts our vigor, prostrates our courage, and drinks up our spirits. And then there are so many disappointments in our work that we need the sympathy of prayer. Our spirit is sometimes stirred within us, and we go forth to our people flushed with the hope of rescuing them from everlasting burnings; and in some unfortunate hour of self-sufficiency, we vainly imagine the work and triumph are our own. We are instant in season, and out of season. We make a business of preparing for the conflict, sometimes polishing our arrows and sometimes leaving them rough and barbed. We put on our armor and enter the field with the determination to lay out all our strength, and with the confident assurance that we must [have success]. But what a lesson of self-abasement! We cannot convert a single soul. We have piped unto them, and they have not danced; we have mourned unto them, and they have not lamented (Mat 11:17). We urge God's commands, and they trample upon His authority. We urge His threatenings, and they despise His justice. We speak of His promises; they heed not His faithfulness. Of His Son, and they tread Him under their feet. Of His patience and longsuffering, but their impenitence and hardness are proof against them all. We reason and argue with them until the obstacles to their conversion seem to us to rise the higher by every effort to overcome them—until we sink in despair and cry out, "What mighty power can break these flinty hearts! What omnipotent grasp can rescue

these perishing men from everlasting burnings?" O ye blood-bought churches, your ministers need your prayers for the exceeding greatness of that power which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.

We have a concert of prayer for the heathen, another for Sabbath schools, and another for the blessing of God upon the distribution of religious tracts. Why shall we overlook the great means of God's own appointment for the salvation of men? May there not be something in the form of a concert of prayer for the ministers of the gospel? If nothing better can be suggested, why may there not be a general understanding among Christian men and Christian families to set apart the morning of every Lord's Day for this great and special object? This was the custom in the family of my venerable father, and it has long been my own. And it is a most precious privilege. The time is a fitting one; and such a service would not fail to exert a delightful influence on the privileges of the sanctuary. "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa 65:24). Should God give to the churches the spirit of prayer for their ministers, it would be with the purpose of answering it. "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Psa 102:17). It is written, that on every dwelling-place of Mount Zion He will create a fire and a smoke (see Isa 4:5); nor will the altar be profaned, nor the incense less fragrant, if those words of hope are more often upon the lips of those who offer it,

“Clothe thy priests with salvation, that thy saints may shout with joyfulness!” (see 2Ch 6:41; Psa 132:16). Nor is this all. Let the ministers of the gospel be habitually remembered at the domestic altar. “It is no small thing,” says a modern writer of our own city, “for any congregation to have daily cries for God’s blessing ascending from a hundred fire-sides. What a spring of refreshment to a pastor! The family devotions of praying Kidderminster, no doubt, made Baxter a better minister, and a happier man; and it is possible we are reaping the fruits of them in his *Saint’s Rest*, and *Dying Thoughts*.”<sup>1</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

“Ye [then] that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest” (Isa 62:6-7). When the churches cease to pray for ministers, ministers will no longer be a blessing to the churches. Brethren, pray for us:

That we may be kept from sin.

That we may “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time” (Eph 5:15-16).

That our hearts may be more devoted to God, and our lives a more impressive exemplification of the gospel we preach.

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<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Family Worship*, by James W. Alexander, D. D. No family should be without this most valuable, seasonable, and beautiful volume.

That we may be more completely girded for our work and our conflicts, and put on the whole armor of God.

That we may be more faithful and more wise to win souls.

And that we may keep under our body, and bring it into subjection, lest after having preached to others, we ourselves be cast away (1Co 9:27).

When we turn our thoughts toward barren ordinances and a fruitless ministry, our hearts sink within us, and we wish we could throw ourselves at the feet of the churches and implore them to remember us in their prayers. If you ever enter into the secret place of the Most High and get near the heart of Him your souls love, plead earnestly that His own power may attend the regular ministry of His gospel. If ever you lie on Jesus' bosom, remember this. Open your desires. Tell your Immanuel of His costly sacrifice and wonderful love. Tell Him of His power and our weakness. Speak to Him of the unutterable glory and the interminable anguish beyond the grave. With earnest tears, urge your case and tell Him that He has committed the treasure to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be all of God (2Co 4:7).

