

BEARING THE BURDENS OF  
YOUR PASTOR THROUGH PRAYER  
(Exodus 17:8-16)

Picture a massive group (numbering approximately 2 million), trekking through the sands of the Sinai Desert. Your caravan includes men, women, *and* children. Without detection you have been followed now for several days by a group of ruthless, warlike marauders. They finally make their initial assault, attacking from the rear—cowardly attacking the weak and weary stragglers of your caravan.

Your men have very little, if any military training or experience. The leader of your company assigns a young man from among your ranks to muster a task force. So you have a non-commissioned officer and inexperienced forces facing the challenge of forming some feasible plan of action against such a barbaric brigade, and all overnight!

Sound impossible? Only if that is all there is to the story. The story is found in Exodus 17:8-16 and Deuteronomy 25:17. While the children of Israel passed through Rephidim, they encountered a surprise attack from the Amalekites. The Amalekites, a nomadic group, not only wanted to protect their district and pasture land, they ultimately wanted to eliminate the people of God. Perhaps the deepest ground for their hostility was due to Amalek being a grandson of Esau. The Amalekites were still trying to “get even” with Jacob (Israel), because he received the birthright and blessing, instead of their father, Esau. If not destroy them, at least keep them from possessing all privileges pertaining to their birthright and blessing.

While the public battle was being waged in the valley between the Amalekites and Israel (led by Joshua), there was also a private battle being waged on top of the hill. There were three men (Moses, Aaron, and Hur) stationed on top of the hill who were “not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). Their conflict was just as real, if not more so, than the one taking place in the valley. The real conflict, though unseen, was actually taking place between Satan with his emissaries and God with His hosts.

While Moses held up the rod of God with his hand, Israel prevailed; but when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands became heavy, so they took a stone and put it under him, with Aaron and Hur holding up his hands until the sun set. So Israel overcame the Amalekites with the edge of the sword.

Jewish and Christian scholars alike, almost unanimously regard the lifting up of hands as a sign or attitude of prayer. The action on the hilltop secured the strength needed to obtain victory from Almighty God—not merely by the elevation of the staff, but by the power of intercessory prayer. Israel was to learn a vital lesson: they could not conquer the ungodly powers of this world by sword alone, but by the power of God coming down on high, obtained through prayer. So the private victory on the hilltop secured a public victory in the valley! So it is true:

“Prayer is not preparation for the battle, prayer *is* the battle.” (E. M. Bounds)

“The battle is won or lost in prayer.” (E. M. Bounds)

“Prayer is striking the winning blow, service is gathering up the results” (S. D. Gordon).

“Pray to our Father in secret, and every public thing will be stamped with the presence of God.”

“God shapes the world by prayer. The prayers of God’s saints are the capital stock of heaven by which God carries on His great work upon earth” (E. M. Bounds).

Here are just a few practical ways to involve yourself in-and-with the ministry of your pastor and assist in bearing his burdens through prayer:

#### TALK WITH YOUR PASTOR

Get to understand and know him better. Ask about his family. Ask what his burdens are. Find what his vision and goals are. In getting to know your pastor better, you can pray for him better.

#### PRAY THOROUGHLY FOR YOUR PASTOR

*First-and-foremost, pray for his spiritual well-being.* Your pastor is in a most strategic position and Satan knows it. Pray for his *and* his family's spiritual protection. Pray that he will overcome the tricks and temptations of the Wicked One. Pray that he will maintain purity in life, as well as in doctrine. We live in perilous times. They are hard, difficult, dangerous, and outrageous. You *and* your pastor live alongside a hostile world. He feels the pressure too! Pray for him!

*Pray that he will boldly proclaim the Word of God.* The time has already come when sound doctrine is not tolerated. While many want their ears tickled, Paul said, "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2). Pray that your pastor will give you what you *need* to hear, not merely what you *want* to hear. Pray that he will have uninterrupted study time. Pray that the power of God will be upon the message from its preparation through its presentation (cf. Eph. 6:19-20).

*Pray that his decisions will be according to divine wisdom.* It is imperative that all decisions of church leadership are made according to God's perspective. The pastor must be certain that he walks in step with His Lord—where God's heartbeat becomes his heartbeat—where God's passion becomes his passion. Pray that his decisions are according to God's desire, rather than popularity or church politics.

*Pray for his family.* There is no greater asset to a man's ministry than a godly wife and children—but they have needs too. The pastor's wife and children share many of his burdens and battles. As you well know, the family is under severe attack, and the pastor's family is not exempt! Satan has another notch in his belt if he can undermine the pastor's family. If you want a strong pastor, he must have a strong family. Pray for them!

*Pray for his physical strength and mental well-being.* Ministry takes its toll on the body. Although it is a "good work," it is a demanding work. It requires a great expenditure of energy, effort, and zeal. He has the responsibility and care of the church family, as well as the daily responsibilities as a husband and father. Because of the demands, sometimes the pastor's mind is going all directions. Pray that he will stay mentally alert.

#### FORM A PRAYER TASK FORCE

Meet at least once a week to pray for your pastor, his family, and the ministry needs of your church. Be careful—focusing on the faults and short-comings of your pastor and his family can easily lead to criticism. However, focusing on his needs and burdens of ministry will bring you to your knees in intercessory prayer.

We need godly men and women who will faithfully and fervently intercede for their pastor. We need men and women who will do battle through private prayer, so their pastor can effectively do battle in public ministry. We need men and women willing to pay the price and win the private victories through prayer, so that every public thing will be stamped with the presence of God. So will the Aarons and Hurs please step forward and bear the burdens of your pastor through prayer?

## CONCLUSION

Several years ago, Randy Sawyer, former pastor of the First FWB Church of Gastonia, NC, shared the following story:

“Recently God has begun a fresh movement of power in our church. However, this ‘new work’ is not the result of personality, procedures, programs, or even preaching, as important as the proper use of each of these is to a growing church. But this time of spiritual renewal is the direct result of sixty men who have committed to pray for heaven’s help. Now, Sunday after Sunday, these men gather before and during the service to plead for divine assistance. Only eternity will reveal the good that is being accomplished through the “Pastor’s Prayer Partners” for an individual and a church. The gateway to supernatural power is abiding long before the throne of God.” (*Integrity, A Journal of Christian Thought*, 22).

While five young college students spent a Sunday in London, England, they went to hear the famed C. H. Spurgeon. While waiting for the doors to open, the students were greeted by Spurgeon himself and he offered to show them around. “Would you like to see the heating plant of the church?” Spurgeon asked. They were not particularly interested, because it was a hot day in July. But they didn’t want to offend him, so they consented. Spurgeon led them down a stairway, quietly opened a door, and whispered, “This is our heating plant.” Surprised, the students saw several hundred people bowed in prayer, asking a blessing on the service that was soon to begin in the auditorium above.