

# Praying and the Commonplace

by Samuel Chadwick

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*Prayer is a powerful tool for ordinary people to achieve great things and sanctify their commonplace lives.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 7:20, 1 Kings 18:41, Nehemiah 1:4, Matthew 6:6, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, James 5:16

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

Samuel Chadwick preaches about the extraordinary lives of Moses and Elijah, chosen to talk with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration due to their unique tasks and intimate relationship with God, showcasing their power through miracles and prayer. He contrasts their extraordinary experiences with the role of prayer in the lives of ordinary people, emphasizing that prayer can elevate even the most mundane tasks and individuals to a supernatural level. Chadwick highlights the example of Nehemiah, a man of prayer who worked in normal conditions, showing that consistent prayer can lead to remarkable results in building and restoring despite the absence of dramatic miracles.

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## Transcript

Moses and Elijah were not ordinary men. They were so unusual that they were chosen from among all the Old Testament saints', to come and talk with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. One was the leader of the Old Covenant, and the other was the most dramatic of its prophets. Their tasks were unique. God called them to duties that demanded frequent and intimate intercourse with Himself. The miraculous was conspicuous in all they did. The rod of Moses and the mantle of Elijah were symbols and instruments of power. Their prayers were miracles. They moved in the realm of the infinite. They controlled the heavens and commanded the earth. At their word rivers and rain were ruled, life and death were commanded, oil and meal multiplied. Greater than these works of power were the results of prayer in illumination and guidance. God revealed His mind and gave instructions as to His will. It was in answer to their prayer that there came the revelation that was beyond human wisdom, and the miracle of the mind was greater than those of material power.

### Prayer And Ordinary Folk

The dramatic stories of prevailing prayer in the Bible have made a profound impression upon the minds of ordinary people. It has standardized miracle as the normal working power of prayer. It is the true standard, for all prayer is supernatural in its working, but it has its discouraging influence. Moses stands alone, and though Elijah was a man of like passions with ourselves, he was no ordinary man, and his task was by no

means commonplace. What is the place and work of prayer in the life of ordinary people? What about the people in whose life there is no opportunity for either privacy or leisure, and whose duties are an unrelieved monotony of mechanical commonplace? Is prayer for exceptional people and exceptional circumstances? Or has it a place and a work in lives of ordinary gifts and commonplace living?

Of the New Testament successor of Elijah it is said that he did no miracle. He was not less a man of prayer than his Old Testament predecessor, but food did not multiply at his touch, he raised no dead, and neither water nor fire was at his command. The only miracles in him were in personality, in discernment, and in truth. So we find that supernatural power may work along normal lines of natural law. Ordinary people may pray about commonplace things, and the answer to their prayers may be in an enlightened mind, a triumphant soul, a steadfast faith, and a holy life. There may be no miraculous incidents, but prayer lifts the lowliest and most ordinary life to the exalted plane of the supernatural, and that is the greatest miracle of all.

### Prayer And Daily Toil

It is quite certain that we cannot all be Elijahs or Elishas, Abrahams or Daniels, or George Mullers or Hudson Taylors, Barnardos or "Praying Hydes," but that is no reason why we should not be men of prayer. There are praying men in the Scriptures of whom no miracles are told. They moved in other spheres. They were workers in the workshop of the world. Jacob and Moses were keepers of sheep, with ample spaces of solitude in which to pray. We are not told that Elijah ever worked at anything but prayer. The example of Elijah's miraculous record needs to be balanced by that of others who lived and worked among the normal conditions of life. It is expected that preachers and prophets should give themselves to the Word of God and prayer, but what about the man whose life is lived in the factory, the office, and the store? Nehemiah was as truly a man of prayer as Elijah. He was the builder of the wall of Jerusalem. He wrought no miracle, he saw no vision, he had no special commission from Heaven. He never said God had sent him, neither did he ask anyone else to say it for him. A need and an opportunity called him. That was enough. There was a condition that filled his soul with grief, a great work to be done, and no one seeming to care about it; and somehow it was laid upon him that he ought to take it in hand. So he prayed. He prayed over the evil tidings, prayed for the ruined city, prayed about the reproach of the people of God, prayed on behalf of those in distress; prayed till his heart was well-nigh breaking. Nothing extraordinary happened. No angel came. God gave no sign. When Elijah prayed, things happened. Nehemiah prayed, and nothing happened! Oh, yes, there did! Something happened in Nehemiah, and a miracle in personality is greater than a miracle in nature. Emotion turned to prayer, and prayer turned to conviction; then conviction generated purpose, and purpose directed energy; then energy vitalized activity, until the two sayings come together:

"So I Prayed" and

"So We Built."

The praying of Nehemiah wrought no startling and dramatic manifestation of supernatural power, but it built the wall and restored the city, and in the will of God that was his work. Nehemiah prayed about his work. Prayer was the maintained attitude and continued habit of his life. There are those who reserve prayer for special and desperate occasions. We read of some who prayed because they were at their wits' end. Most people pray when they get there. Some pray under the stress of an emotional mood. Nehemiah prayed all the time, all the way through, and about everything. It was so entirely his habit to pray that he

became a man of prayer.

### The Practical Value of Prayer

The habit of prayer implies a certain attitude toward life. It predicates God, and recognizes His sovereignty over all. It submits all things to His will, rehearses all things in His presence, judges all things by His standard of values, and lives by faith in Him. Prayer is the essence and test of the godly life. Who can measure its influence upon mind and character, or estimate its value in practical wisdom and dexterous skill? The book of Nehemiah is in the Bible, and therein it is written for all to see what prayer did for the man of prayer, who wrought no miracle, but built the wall against tremendous odds. It gave him the commission and co-operation of the king, and secured him all necessary supplies. It brought him courage and sense in dealing with critics and adversaries, and it instructed him in wisdom in adjusting difficulties of labor and wages. It saved him from the tricky craft of the official, and gave him sagacity to resist the cunning of the enemy. It gave him sanctuary when they invented lies and slanders about him. It armed him with faith and humor as well as with a sword and trowel. He kept his hands clean, his wits alert, his courage bright, and prayed his way through. He was sure of God: sure of the character of God, the word of God, the covenant of God. So he prayed and so he trusted; so he worked and so he prevailed.

### "Whatsoever Ye Shall Ask"

There is nothing about which we may not pray, but prayer will not avail if it is a mere whim or an idle wish. Nehemiah prayed over his work, but he made it his business to know all about the things of which he prayed. His work prospered because he worked at his work. It is no use to pray about work and then neglect it, or play the fool in it, for lack of courage, efficiency, and sense. He prayed and used his wits. He knew the Lord would send supplies, but he took care to have the king's letters. He knew the Lord would protect, but he added a sword to the equipment of the builder's trowel. Prayer gives vision in the secret place, intelligence in work, sense in judgment, courage in temptation, tenacity in adversity, and a joyous assurance in the will of God. A weaver who prayed over his work, as Nehemiah prayed over his, came to be known as the man who wove every yard of cloth for the Lord Jesus Christ. He never made a fortune, but his work prospered, and his character was of rare worth. Every task and every duty may be sanctified in the word of God and in prayer. The prayer life in which there are no miracles may be the greatest miracle of all.

The secret of life is in the secret place where God waits. Even to those to whom privacy is impossible there is a sanctuary of the soul into which they can withdraw. I want to bear my witness to the priceless value of the habit of secret prayer. There is nothing about which I do not pray. I go over all my life in the presence of God. All my problems are solved there. All questions of liberty as well as duty are settled there. I seek counsel of God, and submit all things to the judgment of God. The sanctuary of my soul is there.

There was a wonderful sight from my study window this morning. I stood and watched a gorgeous rainbow come up over the hill. It rose until it stood like a thing apart, and then it moved toward us till one end rested in the village and the other in the river. Its colors were indescribably beautiful, and it filled all the landscape with its glory. The old ruin was like a fairy palace and every cottage was a blaze of radiant beauty. The fields and the trees reflected the splendor of the heavens. Every common stick and stone was transformed into a thing of radiant beauty and holy splendor.

Even so does prayer sanctify and glorify the commonplace life of ordinary folk.

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