

Praying in Secret

by Samuel Chadwick

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discipline, solitude, and forgiveness in prayer, and encourages listeners to enter into their own inner chamber to seek God.

Scripture: Psalm 66:18

Topics: "Private Prayer", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

Samuel Chadwick emphasizes the importance of prayer as the greatest achievement on earth, highlighting the discipline and cost it requires, such as daily fidelity and a teachable spirit. He delves into the significance of finding a solitary place for prayer, emphasizing the need for reality and sincerity in our communication with God. Chadwick stresses the importance of forgiveness and faith in prayer, as well as the personal discipline and alertness required in the secret place of prayer.

Transcript

If prayer is the greatest achievement on earth, we may be sure it will call for a discipline that corresponds to its power. The School of Prayer has its conditions and demands. It is a forbidden place to all but those of set purpose and resolute heart. Strong men often break down under the strain of study. Concentration is a heavier task than handling a hammer or guiding a plow. The discipline curbs freedom, and drills the mind to attention. Understanding is more taxing than doing, and meditation is a severer tax than service. The reason so many people do not pray is because of its cost. The cost is not so much in the sweat of agonizing supplication as in the daily fidelity to the life of prayer. It is the acid test of devotion. Nothing in the life of faith is so difficult to maintain. There are those who resent the association of discipline and intensity with prayer. They do not pray like that, and certainly they would not like their children to entreat and plead for anything they wanted with "strong crying and tears." That is quite likely, but then no one suspects them of praying like that, and the analogy of their children may not be the whole truth. Nothing can be farther from the truth than a false analogy. The School of Prayer is for those who really want to learn to pray.

Those who come to learn are disciples. They put themselves under the yoke of Him from whom they seek to learn, and the first condition of learning is a teachable spirit. Our Lord has the authority to teach, and He Himself is Example as well as Instructor. There is no appeal beyond Him. Having besought Him to teach us how to pray, we surrender mind and heart to His teaching and yield all to the discipline of loyal and believing obedience.

What does our Lord teach us as to prayer?

One of the first things he commands is that there shall be a place of prayer. It is quite true that the whole earth is the Lord's, and that there is no place where prayer may not be heard. God wills that men should pray everywhere. Wherever we may be, he is nigh at hand, and not afar off, and wherever there is a praying heart, the soul finds the sanctuary of God. No one would suggest that Jesus did not appreciate the sacredness of the earth, which He said was the footstool of God, but it was His habit to withdraw into a solitary place to pray. He needed the fenced spaces of silence. To His disciples He said: "And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (Matthew 6:5,6).

Why does He insist upon this inner chamber and the closed door? The first reason is that the first quality God requires in prayer is reality. Hypocrites never pray in secret. Prayers that are a pretense require an audience. They are intended to be heard of men, and they have their reward in skill of phrasing, a show of earnestness, and a reputation for piety. These things do not count with God. They cannot live in His presence. Prayer is between the soul and God alone.

The Silent Spaces of The Soul

The soul needs its silent spaces. It is in them we learn to pray. There, alone, shut in with God, our Lord bids us pray to our Father who is in secret, and seeth in secret. There is no test like solitude. Fear takes possession of most minds in the stillness of the solitary place. The heart shrinks from being alone with God who seeth in secret! Who shall abide in His presence? Who can dwell with God, who is shadowless light? Hearts must be pure and hands clean that dare shut the door and be alone with God. It would revolutionize the lives of most men if they were shut in with God in some secret place for half an hour a day.

For such praying all the faculties of the soul need to be awake and alert. When our Lord took Peter and James and John with Him to the secret place of prayer, they were heavy with sleep. It was the same in the mount of glory and the garden of agony, and it was not until they were fully awake that they saw the glory or realized the anguish. There are some silent places of rare wisdom where men may not talk, but they find it possible to sleep. Mooning is not meditation, and drowsy repose is not praying. The secret place of prayer calls for every faculty of mind and heart.

Bless the Lord, O my soul;

And all that is within me,

Bless His holy name.

As for praise, so for prayer the whole being is called. There is a vital difference between private and corporate prayer. Each kind of prayer brings blessing after its kind, but there is a difference. Corporate prayer is less exacting. There is a sense of fellowship that gives courage and inspires expression. Guided prayer is companionable, but it has a tendency to do its thinking by proxy. In private prayer the soul stands naked and alone in the presence of God. Thought is personal, prayer is original, motive is challenged. Corporate prayer gives a spirit of fellowship; private prayer disciplines personality. Who can measure the

influence of an hour a day spent alone with God?

The Hill of The Lord

The way into the Holy Presence is not a thoroughfare. The inner chamber into which a man goes is his own, but it is the presence of God that makes it a holy place. To a secular mind there would be no Presence. It is the seeking soul that finds. There are some people to whom no audience is given. There are souls that cannot pray. James says of some men that they need not think they can receive anything of the Lord. Even before Christ taught men to pray, the psalmist declared, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Psalms 66: 18). The Judgment Seat of God is in the inner chamber; but the throne of grace is there also, or none would ever dare to enter in. Forgotten sins start into life, and hidden things stand naked and open before Him with whom we have to do. All who would enter the Holy Presence and live must have a sincere desire for God and a conscience set on dwelling in the light.

Our Lord laid emphasis upon the forgiving spirit. The one thing above all others that bolts and bars the way into the presence chamber of prayer is unwillingness to forgive from the heart. No gift can be accepted of God until reconciliation has been made. "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23,24)

Again, when Jesus stated the law of faith in relation to prayer, he said: "Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them. And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against anyone; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11: 24-26). "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15).

Why did He lay such emphasis upon forgiveness? Was it not for the same reason that the law and the prophets placed the emphasis upon righteousness? All who would come to the Holy One must be holy, and whoever will come to the God of mercy must be merciful. The petitioner for grace must believe in grace.

Thine Inner Chamber

Let no soul be discouraged from making a beginning. Schools are graded to the capacity of the learners. The great souls who became mighty in prayer, and rejoiced to spend three and four hours a day alone with God, were once beginners. They went from strength to strength. For our comfort let us remember that it is into our own inner chamber we enter, and the God who is there is our Father. Many years ago a sweet little girl stole into my bedroom in the house where I was staying. She prattled blithely over all the wonders of her child world, but when I asked if father was up, she looked radiantly and reverently into my eyes and said, "Oh, my daddy always talks with God in the drawing room before breakfast."

Happy father! Happy child! Happy God!

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