

# The Importunity of Prayer

by Samuel Chadwick

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*Samuel Chadwick's sermon emphasizes the importance of sincere, persistent, and intense prayer as a vital aspect of the believer's relationship with God as Father.*

**Scripture:** Luke 11:5

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

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## Description

Samuel Chadwick delves into the profound yet simple act of prayer, emphasizing the importance of addressing God as Father and the need for sincerity and simplicity in our prayers. He explores the concepts of importunity, persistence, supplication, and wrestling in prayer, drawing examples from the teachings of Jesus and the experiences of biblical figures. Chadwick highlights the paradox of prayer, showcasing its apparent contradictions of being both easy and profound, natural and strenuous. He discusses the cost of prayer, emphasizing the discipline, education, and intensity required in our communication with God.

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## Transcript

Our Lord taught men to pray to God as Father. That is the central fact of His teaching. "When ye pray say, Our Father, which art in heaven." He rebukes all parade and pretense in prayer. It must be in the secret place, and the door must be shut. Within the secret place there must be simplicity and sincerity. Hypocrisy cannot live where either much speaking or fine phrasing is forbidden. Fathers and children do not make speeches to each other. God is not far off. He is near. He does not need to be informed, for Jesus says, "For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." Neither does He need to be persuaded; for if "ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Nothing could be simpler, more natural, more assuring. "Ask, and ye shall receive;" "for every one that asketh receiveth."

### Importunity And Persistence

Alongside this teaching there come the parables of the friend at midnight and the unjust judge. They are not like His other parables, for they teach by contrast, and not by comparison. God is not like the reluctant friend or the unjust judge. Then why tell the stories? The point in common between them and prayer is that in both importunity prevails. If the suppliants were not heard for their much speaking, their persistence had much to do with their prevailing. What place is there for such importunity in the prayers of children to their Heavenly Father?

Our Lord Himself prayed with intensity and importunity. He rose early to pray. He spent all nights in prayer. The Epistle to the Hebrews (5:7) tells us that He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. The awe of Gethsemane is full of mystery. He called upon God as Father, but in His praying there was the sweat and agony of blood. "He kneeled down and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done... and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:41-44). Saint Matthew (26: 38-46) tells us that He prayed a third time using the same words. He wrought many mighty works in nature and in men, calming the tempest, casting out devils, and raising the dead, but in none of them is there any trace of strain or travail. Virtue went out of Him and He wearied in toil, but there was the ease of mastery in all He did; but of His praying it is said, "As he prayed he sweat." He prayed in an agony unto blood. If God be Father, why such agony in the praying of His Son?

### Prayer And Supplication

There is a group of words that greatly enlarge the scope of asking and modify the impression of ease and simplicity of prayer. The man at midnight was prepared to make supplication and entreat with importunity, till his request was granted. That is not much like praying to a Heavenly Father. God is not like that, but praying that prevails is like that. The same is true of the parable of the unjust judge. God is not like him, but prayer pleads and persists until it prevails. Petition asks, supplication entreats, pleading argues. Job asks for an opportunity to plead his cause: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me" (Job 23:3-5). God invites to reason, and prayer is given the right to plead, but if God be Father, knowing what we need, waiting to be asked, why should there be supplication and pleading?

### Striving And Wrestling

When Peter was in prison, "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12: 5). The Revised Version substitutes "earnestly" for "without ceasing." They continued earnestly in prayer. They prayed all night, and kept on praying until the answer came. There was the same contending in the prayer of the Syrophenician woman. She came to grips and held on till Jesus commended her faith and granted her request. Striving is a familiar word in the New Testament. Saint Paul exhorts the Christians in Rome "by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Romans 15:30). He commends Epaphras as a praying pastor who strove and labored in prayer (Colossians 4: 12), and tells the Colossians how greatly he himself strove for them. Prayer is work that involves contending, a toil that implies labor; but why should it be a toil and a labor?

Even the idea of wrestling is associated with prayer. It is not suggested that we wrestle with God, but there is a grip and grappling that calls for vigilance and concentration. It is quite clear that prayer is not the easy thing that seems to be implied in the simplicity of asking our Heavenly Father for what we want and getting it. There is travail in it. There is work in it. There is entreaty in it. There is importunity in it. Maybe Coleridge was not far wrong when he spoke of prayer as the highest energy of which the human heart is capable and the greatest achievement of the Christian's warfare on earth.

### The Paradox of Prayer

Prayer is full of apparent contradictions. It is so simple that a child can pray, and it is so profound that the wisest cannot explain its mystery. It is so easy that those who have no strength can pray, and it is so

strenuous that it taxes every resource of energy, intelligence, and power. It is so natural that it need not be taught, and it is so far beyond nature that it cannot be learned in the school of this world's wisdom. Prayer is a world in itself, and no one aspect of life's similes can explain it. The relation of Father and child, has bigger meanings in revealed truth than in our modern conception. Jesus spoke of Him as the Heavenly, the Holy, and the Righteous Father. Saint Peter combines in Him both Father and Judge. The modern mind resents prayer that is an agony and entreaty, a pleading and striving, a wrestling and persistence. That is not the way parents would like to see their children come to them, and so they reason it is not the way for them to pray.

For many years I kept by me a check on the Bank of Heaven. It was sent to me on Christmas from America by Dr. A. T. Pierson. It was made payable to bearer, and promised to deliver on demand whatever I might need. On the face of it was the text, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Prayer is just cashing checks! Is it as simple as that? Is God at the counter waiting to hand over whatever we ask? Experience soon disillusion those who think that is the whole of prayer. If that were all, why should there be a secret place and a closed door?

### The Cost of Prayer

Fatherhood implies sonship, and sonship involves correspondence of nature, character, and mind. The Holy Father is the Father of holy sons. He is in secret, and we are in secret. To be shut in alone with God is to be at the Judgment Seat. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," said the psalmist, "the Lord will not hear me." We cannot pray so long as our hearts condemn us. God does not give orders any more than He supplies them. He talks with His children and encourages them to reason with Him. He waits to bless, not only in readiness, but with discretion. Prayer is a discipline and an education. Jesus spake divine wisdom when He forbade us to cast pearls before swine: it is contrary to the divine order. Intensity is a law of prayer. God is found of those who seek Him with all their heart. Wrestling prayer prevails. The fervent effectual prayer of the righteous is of great force. God hates strange fire. We must never try to work up an emotion of intensity. Avoid all that is mechanical and perfunctory. Shun the casual and flippant. Suspect all easy and cheap methods like that of the bank and the store. Leave all directors and prompters to the place of corporate and liturgical prayer. When alone with God, be alone with Him. Begin in silence. Speak with simplicity. Listen in meekness. Never leave without a conscious season of real communion. We have not to persuade God, but He has to discipline and prepare us. In all moods and at all seasons pour out the soul in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, and if the Spirit groans in intercession do not be afraid of the agony of prayer. There are blessings of the Kingdom that are only yielded to the violence of the vehement soul.

A minister told of his Sunday-school teacher who despaired of his class and asked to be released. The superintendent persuaded him to try again, and to promise that every day for three months he would pray in secret, for every boy. Every boy in the class was saved, and four of them became ministers of great usefulness and power.

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