

The Power of Prayer

by Samuel Chadwick

The power of prayer is a supernatural force that can change things and accomplish great things for God's kingdom.

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:24, Psalm 116:1, Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 21:22, Mark 11:24, John 14:13, Romans 12:12, Ephesians 6:18, James 5:16

Topics: "Prayer Power", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Samuel Chadwick preaches about Elijah being chosen in the New Testament as the example of prayer, highlighting his powerful ministry sustained by prayer. Elijah's praying was a demonstration of supernatural power, with his prayers being miracles of power that defied natural laws. The New Testament explains that Elijah's distinction among saints was due to his fervent and energized prayers. Chadwick emphasizes the importance of passionate and prevailing prayer, showcasing how Elijah's prayers brought about miracles and changed nations, emphasizing that the greatest force on earth is found in prevailing prayer.

Transcript

Elijah is chosen in the New Testament as the example of prayer. There were many others in the Old Testament Scriptures who prayed and prevailed, for they abound with stories of those who called upon God and were mightily delivered. Jacob so prayed that his name was changed from Jacob to Israel; Moses was pre-eminently a man of prayer; he was sustained, guided, and transformed by prayer. Daniel prayed habitually and continually; and his life was a romance of prayer. There were others from Abraham to the last of the Old Testament prophets, including kings and priests, soldiers and reformers, widows and sufferers. Why was Elijah chosen from among them all?

A Mighty Man

Elijah occupies a larger place in the New Testament than in the Old, and it is always an advantage when the New Testament gives the interpretation of an Old Testament theme. The Old Testament story offers no explanation of the prophet's power. His ministry consisted in a series of dramatic appearances, and the most sensational event in a sensational life was its dramatic end. For the most part he dwelt in solitary places, and he was always a solitary figure. "I alone," was a plaint often on his lips. The Old Testament closes with a promise of his return, and the New Testament opens with the record of its fulfillment. He championed God, defied kings, and held the destiny of nations in his hand.

The New Testament explanation of the man and his work is that he was a man of prayer. On the face of the Old Testament story, prayer was an outstanding feature of this man, but according to the New Testament, prayer was the entire explanation of the man and his marvelous doings. That he was a mountain of a man is plain for all men to see, but he was a man of like passions with other men, and whatever difference there was between him and others was due to prayer. Saint James says, "Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed" -- that is what made him different. Prayer accounts for the man, as it accounts for Abraham and Jacob, David and Daniel, but there was something in Elijah's praying that gave distinction even among saints mighty in prayer. What was it? Why did Jehovah come to be known as the Lord God of Elijah?

Miracles of Power

The praying of Elijah is a demonstration of the supernatural power of prayer. His prayers were miracles of power. That is what the New Testament says of them. There has always been difficulty with the translation of James 5: 16. The Authorized version reads, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The Revised Version -- "The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." Dr. Rendel Harris translates it, "The energized prayer of a righteous man is of great force."

Prayer with Elijah was force, supernatural power, miraculous in its working. He never discussed natural law, and he never doubted supernatural law, and he never doubted supernatural power. He prayed, and there was no rain, and when he prayed for rain, it came in floods. He prayed for life to come again to the dead child of the widow with whom he lodged, and the soul of the child returned. He prayed for fire from heaven, and it fell as he prayed. He did not argue about prayer. He prayed. Praying solves problems of prayer.

There always have been problems about prayer. In the wilderness they questioned God's power to transcend known laws of His world. Can God? The answer of faith turns the question into an affirmation and believes God can. These are hardly the days in which it is safe to say that anything is impossible. We stand on the threshold of unexplored worlds; and if so much that was incredible has become possible to man, who shall say that anything is impossible to God? If the thought of man can be spoken and heard thousands of miles away, who dare put limits to the thoughts and purpose of God? He who made the heavens and earth must be bigger than His worlds, and it is impossible He should be imprisoned within His own laws. The prayer of faith links man's petition to the power of God. All men believe in the power of prayer to influence mind, develop character, and sanctify motive and will; but that is not all. Prayer is force. Prayer changes things. The Lord God of Elijah had' sovereign and omnipotent power, and these were at the command of the prayer of faith. Every praying man knows of answers to prayer to which there is no explanation but in God. I am reluctant to quote examples, but in my own life they abound, and the language of Psalms 116 is often on my lips:

"I love the Lord, because he hath heard

My voice and my supplications.

Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,

Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

There is one remarkable instance that I cherish because of the way the story came to me. There are two buildings in the city of Bristol which are monuments of answered prayer. One is Muller's Orphanage, and of the other I am not at present at liberty to speak. Dr. A. T. Pierson was my friend, and he was the friend and biographer of Muller. It was from him I got the first half of the story. He told me of an occasion when he was the guest of Muller at the Orphanage. One night when all the house hold had retired he asked Pierson to join him in prayer. He told him that there was absolutely nothing in the house for next morning's breakfast. My friend tried to remonstrate with him and to remind him that all the stores were closed. Muller knew all that. He had prayed as he always prayed, and he never told anyone of his needs but God. They prayed. At least Muller did, and Pierson tried to. They went to bed and slept, and breakfast for two thousand children was there in abundance at the usual breakfast hour. Neither Muller nor Pierson ever knew how the answer came. The story was told next morning to Simon Short of Bristol, under pledge of secrecy till the benefactor died. The details of it are thrilling, but all that need to be told here is that the Lord called him out of bed in the middle of the night to send breakfast to Muller's Orphanage, and knowing nothing of the need, or of the two men at prayer, he sent provisions that would feed them for a month. That is like the Lord God of Elijah, and still more like the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Greatest Force On Earth

It is not every kind of praying that works such wonders. It takes a man of prayer to pray as Elijah and George Muller prayed. It is the energized prayer of the righteous man that is of great force. The widow knew that Elijah was a man of God when he prayed her boy back to life (I Kings 17:24). It is always the crowning proof and the ultimate test. Nothing would turn the nation back to God so surely and so quickly as a church that prayed and prevailed. The world will never believe in a religion in which there is no supernatural power. A rationalized faith, a socialized church, and a moralized gospel may gain applause, but they awaken no conviction and win no converts.

There is passion in the praying that prevails. Elijah was a man of passions all compact. There was passion in all he did. All there was of him went into everything he did. God loves a man aflame. The lukewarm he cannot abide. He never keeps hot hearts waiting. "When ye shall search for me with all your heart, ... I will be found of you" (Jeremiah 29:13-14). When he prayed, he prayed in his prayer. Is there not much praying in which there is no prayer? The praying man was in his petition. Listen to his praying in the death chamber. Watch him on Carmel. Hear him plead the honor of God and cry unto the Lord for the affliction of the people. It is always the same: Abraham pleading for Sodom, Jacob wrestling in the stillness of the night, Moses standing in the breach, Hannah intoxicated with sorrow, David heartbroken with remorse and grief -- Jesus in a sweat of blood. Add to the list from the records of the church, personal observation and experience, and always there is the cost of passion unto blood. It prevails. It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God. There is no power like that of prevailing prayer.

Recent correspondence has brought me many stories of answered prayer. I can quite understand why critical minds have misgivings as to their evidential value. The man who has not travailed through the supplication is always free to look for other explanations, but to the man who has prayed the explanation adds to the wonder of the answer. He had the answer before the answer came. Take one example. A man told me of a great anxiety in his business life. Like Jehoshaphat, he had no resources to meet the need, and he knew not what to do, but he continued earnestly in prayer and supplication to God until one day there came a great peace into his soul and he knew that he was heard. The conditions were unchanged, but he had an assurance of peace, and in a most unexpected way, and by a comparatively unknown

person, deliverance came. The explanation was obvious, but the answer was no less sure.

It always seems to me quite useless to argue about prayer; a challenge like that of Huxley is utterly futile. The proof that God answers prayer is in praying. I once answered a street-corner challenge to prove that God answers prayer by challenging the man to come and kneel down and pray, but the challenge was not accepted. I still hold that to be the only way, and that way is scientific and conclusive.

Another story that I may repeat comes from the Rev. T. A. Turney. He was a scholar in the school where the schoolmaster was both master and uncle. He was one of the old sort, who taught by making his scholars find out things for themselves. He was harder with his nephew than with the rest, lest he should be suspected of favoritism. The lad came to the deadlock that awaits us all at some stage of learning. There was a problem in mathematics he could not do. Day after day he brought it to the master, to be sent back to try again. When this had gone on for more than a week, the lad went one night to a mission service and gave his heart to God. At the communion rail he began to pray. When he got home he turned again to his problem, with the same old result. When he knelt down to pray he asked God to help him with this problem. In the night, asleep or awake he does not know, he saw the proposition worked out. He got up and wrote it down. Next morning he took it to the master, who answered sharply, "Right! Who showed you?" "God," answered the boy.

An Energized Intercessor

Have you ever heard of "Praying Hyde?" The fact that John Hyde came by the universal accord of his intimates to be called "Praying Hyde" dates back to the day when he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In that experience his amazing prayer life began. The recorded answers to prayer are the least part of his record. He prayed the Indian Keswick into existence. He prayed thousands into the kingdom of God and hundreds of laborers into the harvest fields of God. Above and beyond all this he prayed himself into the mystery of fellowship in our Lord's intercession. The secret of his prayer life is that it was a life of prayer.

He was in England in 1911. He went to a mission service where Wilbur Chapman and Charlie Alexander were having a hard time. He took the burden of the mission upon his heart and prayed till victory came. After a meeting of wonderful power, Doctor Chapman asked Mr. Hyde to pray for him, and this is his account of what happened:

"He came to my room, turned the key in the door, dropped on his knees, waited five minutes without a single syllable coming from his lips. I could hear my own heart thumping and his beating. I felt the hot tears running down my face. I knew I was with God. Then with upturned face, down which the tears were streaming, he said: 'Oh, God!' Then for five minutes at least he was still again, and then, when he knew he was talking with God, his arm went around my shoulder and there came up from the depth of his heart such petitions for men as I had never heard before. I rose from my knees to know what real prayer was. We believe that prayer is mighty, and we believe it as we never did before."

I am aware that such records of prayer life may discourage where they were meant to inspire. I am not asking that you and I should be fashioned after the pattern of exceptional men, but I do rejoice that whatever was given to one is available for all.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/samuel-chadwick/the-power-of-prayer/>

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