



# HOW JESUS CHRIST PRAYED

Luke 6:12

- Introduction – This crazy week impinging on prayer
- Read Luke 6:12-16
- Pray

In my mind, there are few preachers who have written on the subject of prayer more passionately and compellingly than the great British Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon. In his archives are dozens of sermons on the subject of prayer, and each one is mighty in its call to live a life of prayer. As I contemplated our text for this morning, Spurgeon's expatiation of it echoed in my heart so impressively that I have chosen to approach the message a bit differently this morning. The message this morning is heavily inspired by a sermon of Spurgeon's entitled, "Special Protracted Prayer." Although I have modified His words for our modern understanding, it is my prayer this morning that you will be as blessed to hear his thoughts on this passage as I have been to read them and reassemble them for you this morning.

As I encounter verse 12, which says, "*One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God,*" I am struck by its powerful peculiarity. What I mean by that is this: If any person ever born might have lived without prayer it was surely the Lord Jesus Christ. To us poor, weak, and erring mortals, prayer is an absolute necessity. But it does not at first sight seem to be so for our Lord, who was, as Hebrews 7:26 declares, "*holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*"

In some parts of our prayer, our Lord Jesus Christ could take no share. As, for instance, in that most important department, namely, personal confession of sin, He could take no portion. You see, there were no slips in His outward life. There was no decay in His inward heart. "*Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin*

*against us*” is a very suitable prayer for Him to teach us, but it is certainly not a prayer He could have used Himself.

Similarly, our Lord had no need to pray against inward corruptions, seeing He was uniquely born without them. Whereas you and I wrestle must hard each day against original sin, Jesus knew no such adversary. Even when we are earnestly engaged in the battle, it is as much as we can do, with all the weapons of our holy war employed, to keep down the foes within our own souls. Our Lord, on the other hand, had no sinful nature to subdue. In fact, the inner life is such a daily struggle with some of us that Paul’s exclamation in Romans 7, “*O wretched man that I am!*” is exceedingly familiar to our lips. But our Lord said truly of Himself, in John 14:30, “*The prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me.*”

Moreover, our Lord had no need not to seek after many of the things which we desperately need. One desire which I trust is ever present with us, is that we might grow in the likeness of Christ and in the power to please Him in all that we say and do. Our Lord, conversely, was always and ever perfect in holiness and love. I cannot imagine how there could have been any advancement in purity in Him—He has always been and will forever remain the pristine epitome of innocence—incomparable, faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other blemish.

On top of all this, unlike us, our Lord had no necessity to make self-examination. When He retired for prayer, He had no need to scan the actions of the day or to contemplate His shortcomings and flaws. He wouldn’t have been compelled to investigate His secret motives or wonder if His actions might not have been inspired by sinister principles. His intentions were never worldly; they were always altogether Divine. Thus, when He bowed His knee in the morning, He had no need to pray for protection from sin during the day. He went forth to His daily activities free from the infirmities of soul which we bear within us. He was entirely free from the tendencies to evil which we carry around. Although He was tempted in all points just as we are, the darts of Satan which so often wound us glanced harmlessly from Him.

Yet—and here is the main point—even though our glorious Master did not need to pray for many things that are absolutely essential to us, there has still never been a man more abundant in prayer and in supplication than Him. Even though He seems to have needed prayer less than anyone ever to live, there has, at the same time, never been anyone in whom prayer was voiced with greater vehemence and resolution than Him!

And His praying left a powerful impression, for, although Christ was the greatest of preachers, His prayers seem to have made an even deeper impression on His disciples than His sermons—for, as far as we know from Scripture, His disciples did not say, “Lord, teach us to preach,” but, in Luke 11, they did exclaim, “*Lord, teach us to pray.*” They understood Jesus to be the Master of the heavenly art of prayer, and they desired to sit at His feet so that they might learn how to move Heaven and earth with sacred supplication.

Now, please hear this friends: Since our sinless Lord was this devoted to prayer, does not His example cry out to us with the irresistibly persuasive words of Matthew 26:41, “*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.*” Since we have been created to become like Christ, should we not become like Him in prayer as well? Ought we not be wholeheartedly devoted to prayerfulness?

Do we desire to know the secret of His power with men? Then, let us seek to emulate His powerful lifestyle of prayer. Do we wish to obtain the blessings which were so abundantly bestowed upon Him? Then, let us seek these blessings exactly where He sought them, and find them exactly where He found them—in prayer. Do we wish to walk in God’s Word and be used of Him to increase His kingdom. Then let us use that most mighty of weapons that Christ Himself so masterfully wielded—Let us pray! Let us pray! Let us be unreservedly committed to prayer!

Such a high calling cannot be made complete on rare occasions alone. You see, not only did our Lord Jesus Christ pray through the night from time to time, such as the example in our verses today, but, as we have already seen in the book of Luke, He was extraordinarily consistent in continuous devotion as well. Indeed, devout men have often been used by God to set apart extraordinary times for extraordinary supplication. Yet, must it not be said that a person who does not pray regularly, is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray specially? Which of us would want to live in a the house of a miser who starves you all the year round, except for an occasional feast day upon which he attempts to stuff you full with a infrequent feast? In the same way, we must not be miserly in prayer. We should not go on neglecting prayer by habit and then abound in it only on particular occasions when a desire to be noticed, rather than a sincere longing for God, inspires us.

On the other hand, even the one who keeps a bountiful dinner table must at times prepare a more luxurious feast than usual. Similarly, even those of us who regularly dwell near to the throne of grace are blessed to engage in extraordinary feasts of prayer. We are richly blessed to arrange seasons of supplication in which

our thirsty souls may drink their fill of fellowship with God. Our Lord Jesus Christ has set for us an example of such an extraordinary feast of devotion, and in our text, I believe He supplies us with at least three necessary details of this heavenly exercise.

First, notice the place that Christ selected for this protracted prayer. He sought the solitude of a mountain. As we have seen, Jesus was so popular that He could scarcely find solitude in any city or village. So great were the acts of His ministry that Jesus could rarely be without sick people seeking the healing of His redemptive hands. Therefore, to obtain a little reprieve, He sought the solitude of some lofty hill where the intrusions of the crowds could not profane His loneliness. Through this, I think we learn from Christ's example that drawing near to God in an extraordinary manner requires us to take care that we are entirely undisturbed.

I know not exactly how it happens, but most often when we desire to approach very near to God it seems we are certain to hear a knock at the door, or the call of some matter of urgent business, or the din of some troublesome circumstance that tempts us from our knees. Could it be that Satan knows how soul-fattening retirement and devotion are, and, therefore, if he can find any method that will stir up friend or foe to call us out of our closets, he will surely do so?

Yet, there on the mountain, our Lord was beyond call. The mountain was better than a closet with bolted doors. Far off were the din of the city and the noise of those who clamored with their merchandise, and neither shouts of triumph nor wails of sorrow could reach Him there. Dear friends, I pray that this image of Christ's solitude will take residence in all of our minds, and urge us to carefully seek, as best as we can, as perfectly peaceful a solitude as we can muster. Inasmuch as we are able, let us find a place of prayer free from the thoughts, sounds, and distractions of the outer world.

Second, Jesus has further instructed us in the art of special devotion by the aim of His prayer. Notice that He spent the night praying *to God*. Let us hear that again: He continued all night in prayer that was not directed to people; it was not aimed at self; it was not offered to insidious idols. No, Jesus spent the night praying directly *to God!* I highlight that point because, when we truly think about it, it is quite enlightening to realize how much of our prayer is not really prayer to God at all! Of course, it may appear to be so: We may say "in Jesus name" at the close of our prayers. However, too often those prayers are a mere muttering to the wind, a talking to the air. Such is the bound to be case when the essence of true

faith is lacking. As Hebrews 11:6 says, “*Anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*”

You see, when we desire to pray to God—and I mean *to God*—we are most blessed when we come to Him with hearts prepared to talk to Him with the same sense of reality as we would talk to a dear friend whose very hand we are holding. How heavenly an exercise it is to speak directly into God’s ear, and to pour our hearts directly into God’s heart! How blessed we are to be acquainted with the feeling that we live and move and breathe in Him like the fish live and move and breathe in the sea. What unparalleled joy there is in realizing that our every thought and our words are intimately and thoroughly known by Him! True pleading to God happens when the Lord is present to our hearts and minds. Prayer is most powerful when we realize God’s abiding company and speak under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit within us. How often do you experience such exhilarating communion as this? The more you have, the more certain I am that you understand this truth: To pray from such a perspective is follow the model of Christ and pray *to God*, indeed.

Having said that, however, I must admit that to continue all night in such a heavenly frame of mind seems almost too wonderful to me. I must confess, and I suppose it is your confession, too, that, if for awhile I claim the grace to draw remarkably near to God in prayer, interruption is not far away. That is, distracting thoughts will soon intrude, and the ravenous birds of diversion will quickly pounce down upon the sacrifice. The noise of Satan’s archers will do their best to shoot down any sweet songs of supplication. How quickly we tend to forget that in our prayers we are speaking directly *to God*. Consequently, we go on mechanically reciting our desires, and, although we may utter them honestly, we lose power in our prayers when we forfeit our focus upon the One to Whom they are addressed!

You know, if our God were not such a gracious God, I imagine that the imperfection of our prayers would prevent any one of them from ever reaching His ear! Yet He knows our frailty and, through Jesus Christ, He accepts our prayers as they are. Better yet, He accepts them not only as what they are, but, knowing our hearts perfectly, He accepts our prayers as we mean them to be! And, receiving our prayers through the atonement of our Savior, He accepts both them and us in Jesus name.

Let us, then, learn from the example of Christ to voice our prayers distinctly and directly as appeals to our merciful Father in Heaven. In other words, let us be precise in prayer, for the gunner who does not take any particular aim, but is

content so long as he is merely firing at something, provides no great service to the army. Similarly, the ship that is not steered for any particular port, but is, rather, satisfied to sail aimlessly here and there is a ship that makes an especially unprofitable voyage. In the same way, we must level our prayers directly to God through Jesus Christ. Let us maintain close fellowship with Him so that our devotion will not prove aimless and of little use to our longing spirits.

Finally, take note of one more detail of this verse. Notice the uncommon duration of Christ's praying in our text. Verse twelve tells us that "*He spent the night praying to God.*" He prayed all through the night.

With that description in mind, let me first say that I do not think we are required to make lengthy prayers as a general rule. In fact, with the help of the Holy Spirit, it is altogether possible to throw, by holy energy and sacred zeal, as much prayer into a few minutes as into many hours. You see, God certainly does not measure the potency of our prayers by the yard or by the hour. // Force, rather than length, seems to be the divine standard of prayer. Whenever the entire soul genuinely groans itself out in half-a-dozen sentences there may be more real devotion in those few words than in hours of word spinning and unfeeling eloquence. True prayer is presenting our entire soul mounting before God, and the more that prayer rides upon the wings of true and holy desires, so much the better is our communion with God.

I am afraid, however, there is really very little need to argue that times of intense praying do not always need to be long, for it often seems that most Christians have no difficulty being brief—if not far too brief—in their private worship. But, in extraordinary seasons of prayer, when the soul is thoroughly worked up to a profound intensity of devotion, would we not do well to continue in that prayer for a prolonged season. However, how many of us have followed the example of our Lord and spent a whole night in prayer? Can we even begin to imagine what gifts we would receive if we would do so? How little regard we must have for what a night of prayer would do for us! Though we know little of it, I am certain that such a night of prayer would render an divine effect that we scarcely calculate.

One night alone in prayer to our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ could very well make us new people, recreated in the likeness of Christ. It could transform us from utter poverty of soul to spiritual wealth beyond measure. It could take us from trembling to triumph! Indeed, we have an example of this very thing in the life of Jacob, do we not? Before his night of wrestling with God,

recorded in Genesis 32, Jacob was the quintessential con artist—always bargaining, always calculating, and utterly unlovely in almost every respect. Yet, as you may recall, one night in prayer turned this crooked thief into a prevailing prince and God clothed him with heavenly glory! From that one night, Jacob lives on in God’s Word among the nobility of Heaven. In the brilliant light of that biblical truth, why don’t we—at least every now and then, in the midst of these weary earthbound years—why don’t we devote prolonged times to such enriching communion with God?

How can this be? Have we not discovered any sacred ambition? Have we become deaf to the yearnings of God’s matchless love? Every day, we see men and women abandoning their warm couches in pursuit of wealth and fame and a whole host of worldly treasures. Cannot we, then, do the same, every now and then, for the love of God and the good of our souls? Can we take the mantle and assume the responsibility we have been given for the growth of our church and the mission for which Christ calls us together? Let me ask you: Where is our zeal? Where is our gratitude? Where is our sincerity? Does it lead us to the mountainside or to a private chamber of prayer? Even as I offer this rebuke, I am ashamed of myself for my failure in the matter, and, as you now listen to the Spirit of God within you, I pray you are as convicted as I am by this same admonition. Oh that we might follow the example of Jacob! Oh that we would linger long at Jabbok, and cry with him, as he grasps the Angel of the Lord and pronounces, “With You all night I mean to stay, and wrestle here until the break of day.”

Surely, Brothers and Sisters, if we have given entire days to amusement or to folly—which we assuredly have—then we can certainly afford the same allotment of time in pursuit of heavenly wisdom! Quite likely, there was a time before coming to Christ was when we gave whole nights to all sorts of uselessness, depravity, and the revelry of the world. We did not tire, then, did we? Rather, we could probably have been found scolding the sun for rising so soon and wishing that the hours of the night would wait awhile longer so that we might delight in wilder merriment, and perhaps deeper sin. Why, then, should we weary in heavenly employments? Why do we grow weary when asked by our Lord to watch with Him through the night, as His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane the night on which He was betrayed? Wake up, sluggish Hearts, Jesus calls to you! Rise up and go forth to meet the Lord in earnest prayer!

(Application)

It is my prayer that each of us here today will faithfully choose to set apart times for both daily devotion and extraordinary seasons of prayer. If you have not

already, will you resolve with me to establish within your life seasons of silence—when all around you is still and the awe of the Spirit may hush your heart into reverent subjection and lift your soul to captivated devotion? For some, it may be at night. For others it may be best to choose the early morning or even the middle of the day. The particular time of day is of little consequence. However, the time to begin a life of wholehearted devotion to prayerfulness is imperative. Let it begin with you, and let it begin today!