Spurgeon, Charles
The Practice of Powerful and Effective Prayer

4. True Prayer, True Power

A sermon on Mark 11:24 arguing that real prayer is not a dull duty but the greatest power God has given his people. Spurgeon lays out four qualities that make prayer prevail, then turns to examine how believers actually pray, and calls them to repent of neglect and take up the weapon God has given.

Key takeaways

- Many Christians pray only from duty and rise unrefreshed; Spurgeon wants them to see prayer as a delight and a real power, not a chore.
- Prevailing prayer has four marks: a definite object, earnest desire, firm faith, and a realizing expectation that the answer is already on the way.
- Pray for definite things and name specific people; don't ramble. Like an archer with a target, come knowing exactly what you ask for.
- Desire must be fervent. 'Cold prayers ask for a denial.' Stay on one petition until you have truly pleaded it before moving to the next.

- Faith is essential: God has promised to hear, and he cannot deny himself. The believer's Spirit-led prayers are as sure as God's own decrees.
- Expect the answer. As in Daniel 10, God begins to answer before the words leave our lips; count the mercy as already coming.
- Pray for everyday, temporal needs too — bread, sickness, poverty — as George Müller trusted God to feed his orphans.
- 'Look about you': public and private prayers are often mere form — memorized texts, long-winded eloquence, no real asking. God measures prayer by its 'divinity' (pleading Christ, moved by the Spirit), not its arithmetic, rhetoric, or length.
- 'Look above': weep over neglected prayer, then rejoice — God still invites us, the Master is awake at midnight even when servants and children sleep.
- A closing word to the unconverted: the awakened sinner's cry is heard, but you must come pleading Christ's blood and casting away your sin, not clinging to it.

Passages worth keeping

> *"Cold prayers ask for a denial."*

Sums up the demand for fervent, whole-hearted desire in prayer.

> *"We shall never triumph till our image is struck kneeling."*

Constantine image: spiritual victory comes only through prayer.

How it connects

The sermon ties Mark 11:24 to the wrestling faith of Jacob and Elijah: prayer that names its object, burns with desire, and holds God to his promise is not presumption but taking God at his word.

Scripture referenced

- **Mark 11:24** -- The text: desire, believe you receive, and you shall have.
- **Daniel 10** -- The angel delayed by the Prince of Persia — shows God answers as soon as we begin to pray.
- **1 John 5:15** -- 'We know that we have the petitions we desired of him' — assurance of answered prayer.
- **Luke 11:5-8** -- Friend at midnight — the Master is always awake to hear.
- **Psalm 51:2-4** -- 'Pardon my iniquity, for it is great' — the sinner's plea.