Spurgeon, Charles
The Practice of Powerful and Effective Prayer

8. Order and Argument in Prayer

A sermon on Job 23:3-4, where Job, stripped of everything, longs most of all to find God and plead his case before Him. Spurgeon uses this to teach two disciplines of real prayer: ordering your cause (preparing and praying with focus and reverence) and filling your mouth with arguments (giving God reasons why He should answer). The promised result is a mouth filled with praise.

Key takeaways

- A godly soul's first instinct in trouble is to run home to God, not merely to escape the pain. Losing God's felt presence is worse than losing children or property.
- Prayer is a serious, prepared work, not words tossed off carelessly. 'Order your cause': come consciously into God's presence, ask for something definite, be fervent, and submit to His will.
- Ask plainly for one specific thing you actually need now ('say Ishmael if you mean Ishmael'), through Christ alone, not for the whole catalogue of possible blessings.

- Arguments in prayer are for our benefit, not God's — they show we value the mercy, teach us we receive only by grace, and stir our fervency.
- Prayer itself is a blessing apart from the answer; and the Holy Spirit alone teaches us to pray, so 'pray for prayer.'
- Spurgeon catalogues arguments the saints used: God's attributes (Abraham for Sodom), His promises ('Thou saidst'), His great name (Moses), the taunts of revilers (Hezekiah), His people's sorrows (Jeremiah), His past faithfulness (David), even our own unworthiness as a stage for great mercy, His Godhead (Elijah), and supremely the merits and name of Christ.
- Pleading Christ's name is like being handed a signed blank cheque — 'if ye ask anything in my name I will give it you.'

Passages worth keeping

> *"There are two things here set forth as necessary in prayer — ordering of our cause, and filling our mouth with arguments."*

The sermon's whole structure and its practical thesis on how to pray.

> *"Pray for prayer — pray till you can pray; pray to be helped to pray, and give not up praying because thou canst not pray."*

Answer to the sense that we cannot pray: the inability is itself prayer, and the Spirit gives the gift.

How it connects

The chapter frames prayer as a courtroom appeal: Job leaves the 'lower court' of his friends' false judgments for heaven's High Court. Its logic runs straight to Christ, whose merit and name give the believer standing to plead — turning Job's ancient cry into gospel confidence.

Scripture referenced

- **Job 23:3-4** -- The text: Job longs to find God and 'order my cause... fill my mouth with arguments.'
- **Genesis 18:23-25** -- Abraham pleading God's justice and mercy for Sodom — arguing from God's attributes.
- **Genesis 32:12** -- Jacob pleading 'Thou saidst, Surely I will do thee good' — arguing from God's promise.
- **Numbers 14:13-16** -- Moses pleading God's 'great name' before the watching Egyptians.
- **Isaiah 37:14** -- Hezekiah spreading Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord — pleading the revilers' taunts.
- **John 14:14** -- 'If ye ask anything in my name I will give it you' — the supreme Christian plea.