

Short Sermon.

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THE POWER OF IMPORTUNITY.

St. Luke, xi. 8.—*'Because of his importunity.'*



THE possession of power, with all its opportunities for good or evil, has ever been, and ever will be, a very desirable thing. This is one reason why men wish to be rich, because they know that money is a great power in the world. The same may be said of rank, preferment, skill, wisdom, and other things, which are held to give power to their possessors. Yet there is one power different from all these, and far better than all, which can be obtained by any one who is the happy possessor of three things. The first is, an unswerving obedience to the law of God; the second is, faith in God; the third is, importunity in prayer to God. The possession of these three things will make the poor and needy man richer and mightier than an emperor, and infinitely more happy.

I propose to speak mainly on the third of these things, importunity; and the rather, because the lack of it often leaves the two others uncrowned by the success which they so well deserve. The holy life may be there, and the precious faith may be there, but if the importunity in prayer is not there the man will not be a power for good to himself or to other men. He is one who is content to hide his candle under a bushel. He has not what he might have, solely for the want of audacity. He does not come boldly to the throne of grace. He is tied and bound by a deep-rooted dread of failure; or, it may be, he lacks tenacity of purpose. This, as well as the other, arises from over-timidty. He may, and, we will suppose, he often does, ask for what he sorely needs; but he does not pursue the coveted object day after day, and hour after hour, with strong crying and tears, and with a resolution that no delay can impair, no silence chill. He forgets, in fact, or, perhaps, has never yet known, the unequalled importance of the mighty words, which are traced in the living rock of Holy Writ with a pen of iron—*'because of his importunity.'*

Had we no such inspired words as these on which to found our great principle—or were they words lightly spoken, or hazarded at a venture, as words that might by some possibility be true—we should, perhaps, have scouted the idea of wearying God out of His apparent inattention by ceaseless plaints; of dimming our selfish wants into His ears, so as to, as it were, tire Him into a compliance with our wishes. We should probably have held up such seemingly graceless conduct as being far more likely to rouse His anger than open His royal hand and heart.

For just consider how we should relish the continual, never-ceasing supplication of a miserable beggar, who was always knocking at our door for help, yea, and who sought every opportunity to waylay us, and thrust his dirty and tattered petition in our face. We should feel mortified, angry, annoyed by it. But yet, let us ask, should we not give the poor man what he wanted, if only that we might be freed from his importunity and see his face no more?

Well, this is the very point insisted on by our Blessed Lord in the two parables which He spake for the purpose of enforcing on