

“I Need Thee Every Hour” **Hebrews 4:14-16**

Annie S. Hawks was a wife and mother living in New York City in the mid-1800s. One day, while at home caring for her three young children, she became deeply aware of the nearness of God. It wasn't a crisis. Nothing dramatic had happened. She was simply living an ordinary day. Yet in that ordinary moment, the thought came to her: **“I need Thee every hour.”** Weeks later, Hawks gave the poem to her pastor, Dr. Robert Lowry. Robert took to the piano and composed the music and added a refrain to create the hymn. The song was born and took off into the world (First introduced at the National Baptist Sunday School Convention). The Song was published in 1873 the following year.

Years later (16), after the death of her husband, Hawks reflected that the hymn took on a deeper meaning for her. What she had written in the ordinary became profoundly real in the midst of sorrow. Of all the hymns Annie wrote this one endures for it speaks to our basic need in the simplest of ideas. The Structure of the Song is built upon these 5 themes from 5 verses and Chorus:

- I. His Presence
- II. My inability
- III. Life's purpose - Abide in Christ
- IV. Desire to see God's will be done
- V. Receive me on behalf of your Son.

I Need Thee Every Hour (Hebrews 4:14–16)

Thesis: Our greatest need is not occasional help from Christ, but continual dependence upon Christ. **Introduction: A Hymn Born in the Ordinary We don't just need Christ when life falls apart. We need Him when life is completely ordinary.**

I. I Need Thee Every Hour Because He Is Present

The Christian life begins with the recognition that **Jesus is not distant**. Hebrews says we have a **great High Priest**. Jesus has passed through the heavens, but He has not abandoned us. He is present with His people. The world constantly tells us of what we need (the essence of worldliness):

- More money.
- More security.
- More success.
- More recognition.
- More control.

But the hymn reminds us of something much more fundamental: **I need Thee**. Not merely something Christ can give me. **I need Christ Himself**.

Application: We need Him when you wake up. We need Him when you go to work. We need Him when you're raising your children. We need Him when you're making decisions. We need Him when you're tired. We need Him when you're happy. We need Him when you're hurting. **There is not an hour of your life in which Christ becomes unnecessary.**

II. I Need Thee Every Hour Because I Am Unable

Hebrews 4:15 says: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses..." Notice the word **weaknesses**. The Bible doesn't pretend that Christians are naturally strong. We are weak. We struggle with temptation every hour. We become discouraged. We make foolish decisions. We become anxious. We grow tired. We fail and do bad all by ourselves. We think bad thoughts. We keep secrets. We hide behind lies. We have competing desires that war inside and create conflict in our relationships. And sometimes we don't even understand our own hearts.

The hymn says:

**"I need Thee every hour,
Stay Thou nearby;
Temptations lose their power
When Thou art nigh."**

The hymn doesn't say: "**I am strong enough to handle every temptation.**" It says: "**I need Thee every hour.**" Our weakness isn't an argument against Christianity. **It is the reason we need Christ.** Jesus understands our weakness because He entered into our humanity and was tempted as we are, yet without sin. He doesn't merely know **about** our struggles. He sympathizes with us because he has faced the dualities of being human. He has suffered in mind, body, and soul. He has faced every kind of evil. He has swallowed the last drop of injustice and bore our judgment in his body and died, yet, defeated all enemies with his death and resurrection.

Application: Sometimes our greatest spiritual problem is that we don't realize how much we need Jesus. We pray when we're desperate. We seek Him when we're afraid. We run to Him when something breaks. But the mature Christian eventually learns: "**I don't just need Jesus when I'm in trouble. I need Him because I am weak.**" I need him because I believe lies. I need him because I hurt others and myself. I need him because I like to fight and win and his word says, "love is patient, love is kind, love is not proud or divisive or harmful to others."

III. I Need Thee Every Hour Because My Purpose Is to Abide in Christ

The third verse says:

**“I need Thee every hour,
In joy or pain;
Come quickly and abide,
Or life is vain.”**

That's a remarkable word. **“Abide.”** The Christian life isn't simply about receiving enough help from Jesus to get through the day. It is about **living with Jesus**. Jesus doesn't merely want to be our emergency contact. He wants to be our life. The hymn says: **“Or life is vain.”**

Without Christ, even a successful life ultimately misses its purpose. We can accomplish things and still be empty. We can accumulate things and still be dissatisfied. We can be admired and still be lost. We can be busy doing good things and still fail to abide in Christ. Jesus said in John 15 that apart from Him we can do nothing (fruitful).

Application: The question isn't simply: **“How can Jesus help me get through my life?”** The better question is: **“How can I live my life with Jesus?”** That changes everything. My work becomes something I do with Him (co-creating with God). My family becomes something I steward with Him (**Together we create community communing with God**). My suffering becomes something I endure with Him. My joys become something I enjoy with Him. **I don't merely need Christ to improve my life. I need Christ to give my life its meaning and its good pleasure.**

IV. I Need Thee Every Hour Because I Desire His Will

The fourth verse says:

**“I need Thee every hour,
Teach me Thy will;
And Thy rich promises
In me fulfill.”**

This moves us from **dependence** to **submission**. It's easy to say: **“Jesus, I need You.”** But what do we mean? Do we mean: “Jesus, help me accomplish what I want”? Or: “Jesus, teach me what You want”? Those are very different prayers.

The hymn teaches us to pray: **“Teach me Thy will.”** I don't just need Jesus to strengthen me. **I need Him to redirect me.** I don't just need His power. **I need His wisdom.** I don't just need Him to bless my plans. **I need Him to change my plans when they aren't His.** And Hebrews tells us where we can go for that help:

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace...”

The throne of God is not merely a throne of authority. For those who belong to Christ, it is a **throne of grace** and grace is the power to act. We come to God not demanding our will but seeking His.

V. I Need Thee Every Hour Because I Must Be Received Through Christ

The final verse says:

**“I need Thee every hour,
Most Holy One;
O make me Thine indeed,
Thou blessed Son.”**

The hymn ends where the gospel ends: **Christ**. “Make me Thine indeed.” Our greatest need isn't simply that God makes our circumstances better. Our greatest need is **to belong to Christ**.

Hebrews 4:16 says:

“Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Why can we approach God? Because Jesus is our great High Priest. We don't approach God based on our goodness. We don't approach Him because we have had a good week. We don't approach Him because we've prayed enough, read enough Scripture, or performed well enough. **We approach because Christ has opened the way. It's FREE - no height restriction. No legal age limit. No purity test. No “good enough” questions. No “worthy” measurements.**

And notice what we find when we come: **Mercy**; For the failures of yesterday. **Grace**; For the needs of today. **Help**; For whatever tomorrow brings. That's why we can say: **“I need Thee every hour.”**

Conclusion: Every Hour

The five movements of the hymn give us a beautiful picture of the Christian life:

1. **His Presence** “I need Thee.”
2. **My Inability** “I cannot do this without Thee.”
3. **My Purpose**: “Abide with me.”
4. **His Will** “Teach me Thy will.”
5. **My Belonging** “Make me Thine indeed.”

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