

SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER #473

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Dear Christian:

I must write to tell you today about that mighty link between man and God, that building stone that develops true Christian character, that fountainhead of the knowledge of God. I must write to you today about the mirror of the soul, the cleansing stream of the thoughts, the classroom of the heart kept by the power of God: the sweet hour of prayer.

First of all, KEEP IT!

Do not excuse yourself from it. It is the time with your Beloved, the Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon. It is a time where He and you alone shall exchange sweet whispers of love. It is a time during which the bridegroom covets to love His church, the bride. But He cannot love it only in the corporate, in the abstract. He also loves the church in each one of you alone and separate from the rest. So keep this hour of romance. Remember, each morning your Beloved is waiting for YOU.

Second, BUILD THE HABITS OF YOUR LIFE AROUND THIS SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER.

Do not fit it into your schedule; make your schedule fit around it. SINCE GOD, who prepares the course of Jupiter, shades the beasts of the field, clotheth the ground with herbs and quenqueth the thirst of the deer, CAN MAKE TIME FOR YOU, you can make time for Him. You must make that sweet hour of prayer the centerpiece of every day and let its spirit hold you until the setting of the sun.

Your sweet hour of prayer will build you into a saint. It is the regularity of spring, summer, fall and winter that in time turns a sapling into a mighty oak. In their sweet hour of prayer, men of God are born, tempered, tried, broken and braced against impending storms. In your sweet hour of prayer, you will be helped and healed. From there, you will be able to go forth into battle and it will make you a conqueror.

Third, CONSIDER THE HEALTH IT GIVES YOU.

As your body needs daily sustenance and healing rest, so does your soul. A wounded soul can be as dangerous and irritable as a wounded animal. A wounded and stressed animal is hard to work with and that also holds true of

man. The biting remark to a wife, the snapping at eager children, the balking and impatience at church meetings are only reflections of a wounded soul that has not experienced the healing balm of Gilead at the break of day. All those who will meet with the Master will be healed: *...And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all* (Matt. 12:15).

Fourth, THE HOUR OF PRAYER IS A TIME OF LISTENING AND SPEAKING.

Consider your hour of prayer as two segments. Call one listening and the other speaking. Call one waiting on God, the other praying to God. Many sincere Christians have bombarded heaven with requests and burdens for decades—but there is no knowledge of God in their souls. You learn nothing by talking. One segment of the hour of prayer is to listen and wait on God. The other segment is to praise and intercede. Waiting on God is scriptural and vital. *Truly my soul silently waits for God... My soul, wait silently for God alone...* (Ps. 62:1,5).

I begin my hour of prayer with a little time of praise (sometimes a LOT). I ask the Holy Spirit to search me, correct me and instruct me. I may or may not read a few verses of Scripture. I wait on God! I let Him talk, teach, correct, direct, convict, comfort—whatever He chooses. I am quiet; the program is His and not mine. Occasionally, I may ask Him a question or give Him a word of praise or love. Sometimes He lays a need upon my heart that requires immediate intercession. But we will not be taught by the Spirit unless we listen and meditate so that He can guide us into all truth (John 16:13, 1 John 2:27).

We must be taught by God. Each one of us is a unique individual. We all may hear the same truth in a certain sermon. But unless we let the Holy Spirit minister that truth to us in an individualized, tailor-made form to meet our unique circumstances, we will not get the best of it. Sometimes the same anointed sermon will bless one Christian, anger another, discourage a third and confuse a fourth. Only those who wait upon God and make time to let the Holy Spirit teach and illuminate will be helped and lifted by every anointed message. We must be taught of God. We must learn to be silent so He can make all truth meet all our needs redemptively.

Those who refuse to regularly wait upon God in prayer will often inadvertently become truth twisters. They will, in time, use God's truth unto their own destruction. LEARN TO BE QUIET! Now this does not mean that you are to stay speechlessly upon your knees for hours. NO. Again, the Holy Spirit will teach you how YOU can best wait on Him. For me, it is to be a walker, not a kneeler. I walk to and fro in my office, waiting and greeting the Lord at times,

as I wait. Do not copy this. Do not ever copy anyone's ways. Find out what the Holy Spirit has for you. Be YOU in CHRIST.

I also warn you that if you do not wait on God regularly, the man of God whom you esteem highly will not have your love very long! Please hear me. You cannot follow a man of God who waits upon God very long without waiting upon God yourself! Have your 'sweet hour of prayer' for it will prevent you from becoming like a Judas (silver became more important to him than servanthood). I plead with you again; WAIT UPON THE LORD!

Again, if you do not wait upon God, if you do not learn to listen to the Holy Spirit in your closet of prayer, the sermons you hear—you will not hear them right! You will hear them out of context; you will hear them partially; you will hear them critically. If you are not taught by the Holy Spirit, you will not only hear the preaching incorrectly, you will hear a lot of other things in a lot of places where you should not be in the first place. WAIT UPON THE LORD!

Fifth, KEEP YOUR PRAYERS FRAMED IN A QUEST FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

The only truly representative prayer we have of our Lord is that found in John 17. Study that and see how God's glory framed Christ's prayer. Glory, yes! Christ was praying for glory at the cross; He thanked God for having been able to show His glory; He looked forward to the glory to come and He imparted glory into His disciples. Glory!

Well, what does 'glory' mean? Glory consists simply of the elements of the divine economy that elicit a HALLELUJAH from the heart of man. Rather than getting lost in introspection, self-analyzation or self-incrimination, find in your prayers that which will stir your soul to say, "Hallelujah!" There is enough of it in the Godhead if you search for it just a minute. There is enough of it in His creation; there is enough of it in His walk with men throughout history; there is enough of it in what He has done for you, in what He is doing now and in what He is going to do. Hallelujah!

Do not make SELF the central object of your 'sweet hour of prayer' lest it become sour. Be GOD-CENTERED. He is your life. He is your hope. He is your strength. Look to Him if you want life. Look to Him if you want encouragement. Look to Him if you want another chance.

Sixth, DO NOT LEAVE THE PRAYER ROOM UNTIL YOU COME OUT CLEAN.

You must not leave your place of prayer with any resentment towards anyone. You must not leave it without a heart of love and without obedience to

all that God requires. You must not leave the prayer closet without a humble, servant heart. You must not leave it without a vision of the cross and the cognizance that the kingdom of God operates in those committed to the store house of little things. *Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart...* (Ps. 24:3-4). The Holy Spirit will not dwell in sin-stained vessels. He is looking for clean hearts. Avail yourself of the cleansing graces offered in the Word of God.

Seventh, DO NOT FORGET TO INTERCEDE FOR THOSE NEEDING INTERCESSION.

Pray for those in government, those in bonds, those who serve Christ and those lost souls who need to be brought into the kingdom of God. The word of God commands you to pray for these, and there may be others. As you wait upon the Lord, He will give you additional petitions that He is ready to act upon immediately or in the future if He can only find someone to pray those petitions. The Holy Spirit will lead you to those concerns and you will have great joy when you get to them. Also, your priestly office is not to insist on your way in church, not to tell the preacher where he is failing but rather to pray to God. It is to intercede as the Holy Spirit leads you and to reconcile man with God. This is the SWEET HOUR OF PRAYER. It is sweet because it produces sweet spirits. Have that hour. Have it regularly without ever becoming its slave. Let it become your slave. It will serve you well.