

January's hymn of the month 2019

by
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Not far from where I live is the birthplace and gravesite of Annie Sherwood Hawks. Born on May 28th, 1835, in Hoosick, New York, Annie Sherwood would, by the age of fourteen, have local newspapers putting her poems in print. In 1859, she married Charles Hawks, a member of a New York banking firm, and a resident of Hoosick, also. Because of his work, the couple moved to Brooklyn, far from her country home in upstate New York. The newlyweds would eventually have three children.

The couple placed their membership in the Hanson Place Baptist Church while living in Brooklyn. The pastor at that time was Robert Lowry, the writer and composer of hymns. He is best remembered for *Shall We Gather at the River*, *Nothing but the Blood*, *Christ Arose*, *Marching to Zion* and the song that his new parishioner would give him.

Annie Sherwood Hawks, in her own words, tells how the hymn came to be: "I remember well the morning many years ago, when in the midst of the daily cares of my home, I was so filled with the sense of nearness to the Master. While wondering how one could live without Him either in joy or pain for any period of time, these words, 'I need Thee every hour,' were ushered into my mind—the thought at once taking full possession of me. Seating myself by the open window in the balmy air of that bright June day, I took up my pencil and the words were soon committed to paper, almost as they are sung today."

A few months later, her pastor, Robert Lowry, set the words to music with the addition of a chorus. The new hymn would be sung for the first time at a Sunday School Convention in Cincinnati, Ohio. The year was 1872. In that same year, Dr. Lowry included the new hymn in his songbook, *The Royal Diadem*, which he compiled with William Doane. The hymn gained great popularity when Moody and Sankey used the hymn in their meetings both here in America and in Great Britain.

It is interesting to note that in 1888, Annie was greatly helped by the hymn she had written 16 years earlier, when her beloved Charlie passed away. In her own words, she tells us how the hymn took on new meaning for her: "I did not understand at first why this hymn had touched the great throbbing heart of humanity. It was not until long years after, when the shadow fell over my way, the shadow of a great loss, that I understood something of the comforting power in the words, which I had been permitted to give out to others in my hour of sweet serenity and peace."

Annie returned to her childhood home, spending her remaining years with her children in Bennington, Vermont, until her death in 1918. She would write over 400 hymns, but is best remembered for this one, *I Need Thee Every Hour*, our hymn of the month for January. Her gravesite is not far from where her journey on earth had begun 83 years before—a journey that would be remembered by only a few, except for one thing. She left behind a song.

I need thee every hour, most gracious Lord;
No tender voice like thine can peace afford.

I need thee every hour; stay thou nearby;
Temptations lose their power when thou art nigh.

I need thee every hour in joy or pain;
Come quickly and abide or life is vain.

I need thee every hour, teach me thy will,
And thy rich promises in me fulfill.

Chorus

I need thee every hour, O I need thee, every hour I need thee!
O bless me now my Savior, I come to thee.

The hymn of the month for January 2019: **I Need Thee Every Hour**

(See the A 1,000 Words page for pictures.)