

Wendy's August Prayer Thoughts

After attending a Church service in Coimbatore, Southern India, I was invited in the afternoon to visit the home of the Paul family. I was told beforehand of how Mary Paul took her discipleship seriously seeking to engage with others as she handed out tracts. As soon as I had been welcomed and introduced to the family, to Henry her husband and Harshala their daughter, I was shown into the room where she prayed.

In one corner was a small table on which was a cross, a picture of Christ, her Bible, and a vase of flowers. This was her 'secret place' for prayer where she quietly spent time with God. Jesus tells us, as His disciples, to be disciplined in prayer. He gives us clear instruction in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew: 6:6. **"Whenever you pray, go into your room, shut the door and pray, and your father who sees in secret will reward you."**

Jesus expects us to pray in private. Notice, He says, "Whenever you pray." He does not specify times, but that does not undermine the necessity of having an intimate time with God, the very purpose of prayer. Jesus needed to set apart such time for engagement and encouragement, and so do we. Our time with God is personal and meant to be done in secret, so no one else sees or hears. "Go into your room and shut the door" is a quotation from Isaiah 26:20.

"Come my people, enter your chambers and shut the doors behind you" **We are to shut the door and enter the inner room.** It requires a deliberate act on our part to retire from the world with all its noises and distractions, in order to afford God all of our attention. He is waiting for us in the secret place, There, focusing on Him alone; we experience the immediate comfort of His presence... Jesus gave us His promise, "Come to me...and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

The word He used for "room" *tameion* was that of a storeroom, which had no windows looking out. It was a place seldom used and often locked, because it was the hiding place for valuable possessions. Jesus was giving a word picture, which His listeners would readily recognise, so that they might grasp its spiritual significance. **When we pray we enter into our private abiding room where we open our heart and communicate with God our Father. He is present in us and with us.** I came across this significant thought... "Every man can build a chapel in his breast."

St Ambrose, living in the fourth century, wrote: 'The apostle teaches us to pray anywhere while the Saviour says Go into your room - but you must understand that this "room" is not the room with four walls that confines your body when you are in it, but the secret place within you in which your thoughts are enclosed, and where your sensations arrive. That is your prayer room, always with you where you are, always secret wherever you are, with your only witness being God.' Accepting such a privilege, we should shut the door more often, and talk from the heart to our Father God.

It's in His presence that we have the blessed assurance that He is waiting to hear us and reward us, to heal and restore us, to help us and guide us, to fill us more and more with His grace. Through our spending time in prayer, may we reflect that God given grace in our lives, especially in our relationships.

"But when you pray go into your own room, shut the door and pray to your father privately. Your father who sees all private things will reward you." J.B Phillips