

## Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret

(This historic letter to his sister contains a personal testimony from the great missionary to China. Hudson Taylor described his spiritual breakthrough as "The Exchanged Life.")

So many thanks for your dear, long letter.... I do not think you have written me such a letter since our return to China. I know it is with you as with me--you cannot--not you will not. Mind and body will not bear more than a certain amount of strain, or do more than a certain amount of work.

As to work--mine was never so plentiful, so responsible or so difficult, but the weight and strain are all gone. The last month or more has been, perhaps, the happiest of my life, and I long to tell you a little of what the Lord has done for my soul. I do not know how far I may be able to make myself intelligible about it, for there is nothing new or strange or wonderful--and yet, all is new!...

Perhaps I may make myself more clear if I go back a little. Well, dear, my mind has been greatly exercised for six or eight months past, feeling the need personally and for our Mission of more holiness, life, power in our souls. But personal need stood first and was the greatest. I felt the ingratitude, the danger, the sin of not living nearer to God. I prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for meditation--but all without avail. Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me.

I knew that if only I could abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I would begin the day with prayer, determined not to take my eye off Him for a moment, but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, and constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, caused me to forget Him. Then one's nerves get so fretted in this climate that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed "present with me," but how to perform I found not.

Then came the question, is there no rescue? Must it be thus to the end--constant conflict, and too often defeat? How could I preach with sincerity that, to those who receive Jesus, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (i.e., Godlike) when it was not so in my own experience? Instead of growing stronger, I seemed to be getting weaker and to have less power against sin; and no wonder, for faith and even hope were getting low. I hated myself, I hated my sin, yet gained no strength against it. I felt I was a child of God. His Spirit in my heart would cry, in spite of all, "Abba, Father." But to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless.

I thought that holiness, practical holiness, was to be gradually attained by a diligent use of the means of grace. There was nothing I so much desired as holiness, nothing I so much needed; but far from in any measure attaining it, the more I strove after it, the more it eluded my grasp, until hope itself almost died out, and I began to think that--perhaps to make heaven the sweeter--God would not give it down here. I do not think that I was striving to attain it in my own strength. I

knew I was

powerless. I told the Lord so, and asked Him to give me help and strength. Sometimes I almost believed that He would keep and uphold me; but on looking back in the evening--alas! there was but sin and failure to confess and mourn before God.

I would not give you the impression that this was the only experience of those long, weary months. It was a too frequent state of soul, and that towards which I was tending, which almost ended in despair. And yet, never did Christ seem more precious; a Savior who could and would save such a sinner!... And sometimes there were seasons not only of peace but of joy in the Lord; but they were transitory, and at best there was a sad lack of power. Oh, how good the Lord has been in bringing this conflict to an end!

All the time I felt assured that there was in Christ all I needed, but the practical question was--how to get it out. He was rich truly, but I was poor; He was strong, but I weak. I knew full well that there was in the root, the stem, abundant fatness, but how to get it into my puny little branch was the question. As gradually light dawned, I saw that faith was the only requisite--was the hand to lay hold on His fullness and make it mine. But I had not this faith. I strove for faith, but it would not come; I tried to exercise it, but in vain. Seeing more and more the wondrous supply of grace laid up in Jesus, the fullness of our precious Savior, my guilt and helplessness seemed to increase. Sins committed appeared but as trifles compared with the sin of unbelief which was their cause, which could not or would not take God at His word, but rather made Him a liar! Unbelief was I felt the damning sin of the world; yet I indulged in it. I prayed for faith, but it came not. What was I to do?

When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God revealed to me the truth of our oneness with Jesus as I had never known it before. McCarthy, who had been much exercised by the same sense of failure but saw the light before I did, wrote (I quote from memory): "But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One."

As I read, I saw it all! "If we believe not, he abideth faithful." I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh, how joy flowed!) that He had said, "I will never leave thee." "Ah, there is rest!" I thought. "I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I'll strive no more. For has not He promised to abide with me--never to leave me, never to fail me?" And, dearie, He never will. Nor was this all He showed me, nor one half. As I thought of the Vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured direct into my soul!

How great seemed my mistake in wishing to get the sap, the fullness out of Him! I saw not only that Jesus will never leave me, but that I am a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The vine is not the root merely, but all--root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit. And Jesus is not that alone--He is soil and sunshine, air and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for or needed. Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! I do pray that the eyes of your understanding too may be enlightened, that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ.

Oh, my dear Sister, it is a wonderful thing to be really one with a risen and exalted Savior, to be a member of Christ! Think what it involves. Can Christ be rich and I poor? Can your right hand be

rich and your left poor? or your head be well fed while your body starves? Again, think of its bearing on prayer. Could a bank clerk say to a customer, "It was only your hand, not you that wrote that check"; or "I cannot pay this sum to your hand, but only to yourself"? No more can your prayers or mine be discredited if offered in the name of Jesus (i.e., not for the sake of Jesus merely, but on the ground that we are His, His members) so long as we keep within the limits of Christ's credit --a tolerably wide limit! If we ask for anything unscriptural, or not in accordance with the will of God, Christ Himself could not do that. But "if we ask any thing according to his will... we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him [1 John 5:14]."

The sweetest part, if one may speak of one part being sweeter than another, is the rest which full identification with Christ brings. I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realize this; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine. It makes no matter where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest position He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient. It little matters to my servant whether I send him to buy a few cash worth of things, or the most expensive articles. In either case he looks to me for the money and brings me his purchases. So, if God should place me in serious perplexity, must He not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? No fear that His resources will prove unequal to the emergency! And His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me.

And since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been! I wish I could tell you about it, instead of writing. I am no better than before. In a sense, I do not wish to be, nor am I striving to be. But I am dead and buried with Christ--ay, and risen too! And now Christ lives in me, and "the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

And now I must close. I have not said half I would, nor as I would, had I more time. May God give you to lay hold on these blessed truths.

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This classic letter is an excerpt of *The Life of Hudson Taylor*. It is online at

<http://www.truthnet.org/Christianity/biography/hudsonstaylor/chapter14.htm>

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) was the most widely used missionary in China's history. During his 51 years of service there, his China Inland Mission established 20 mission stations, brought 849 missionaries to the field (968 by 1911), trained some 700 Chinese workers, raised four million dollars by faith (following Mueller's example), and developed a witnessing Chinese church of 125,000. It has been said at least 35,000 were his own converts and that he baptized some 50,000. His gift for inspiring people to give themselves and their possessions to Christ was amazing.- [www.wholesomewords.org](http://www.wholesomewords.org)