

The Exchanged Life

By J. Hudson Taylor (1832 – 1905)

*J. Hudson Taylor was founder of the China Inland Mission (present-day OMF International). **This article is from a letter written to his sister in Britain in 1869 (he would have been 37 yrs old)***

The last month or more has been the happiest of my life. Perhaps I shall make myself more clear if I go back a little. 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 retirement and meditation, but all was without effect.

Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if I could only abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I began the day with prayer, determined not to take my eye from Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, often caused me to forget Him. Then one's nerves get so fretted in this climate (in China) that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Every 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 instead of victory, too often defeat?" How, too, could I preach with sincerity that to those who receive Jesus, "*to them gave He power to become the sons of God*" (that is, be Godlike) when it was not so in my own experience? (John 1:12).

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 very low. I hated myself; I hated my sin; and yet I 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*" (Rom. 8:15-16): but to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless.

A Sad Lack of Power

...I would not give you the impression that this was the daily experience of all those long weary months. It was a too frequent state of soul; that toward which I was tending, and 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 was 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 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 the light was dawning on me, I saw that faith was the only prerequisite, was the hand to lay hold on His fullness and make it my own. But I had not this faith. I strove for it, but it would not come; tried to exercise it, but in vain.

Our Oneness with Christ

...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 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:

“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, yet He abideth faithful”* (2 Tim. 2:13). I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh how joy flowed!) that He has said, *“I will never leave thee”* (Heb. 13:5). “Ah, there is rest!” I thought. “I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I’ll strive no more. For has He not promised to abide with me, never to leave me, never to fail me?” And He never will!

But this was not all He showed me, nor one-half. As I thought of the Vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured directly into my soul! How great seemed my mistake in having wished to get **the sap**, the fullness *out* of Him. I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, but that I was a member *“of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones”* (Eph. 5:30).

The vine now I see is not the root merely, but all – root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit: and Jesus is not only that: He is soil and sunshine, air and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for, or needed. (Read John 15:1ff.) Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! I do pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened; that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ (Eph. 1:18).

Oh, 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 the 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 wrote that cheque, not you,” 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 (that is, not in our own name, or for the sake of Jesus merely, but on the ground that we are His, His members) so long as we keep within the extent of Christ’s credit – a tolerably wide limit!

If we ask 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, He heareth us: and...we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him”* (1 John 5:14-15).

Full Identification with Christ

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 positions 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 article. In either case he looks to me for the money, and brings me his purchases. So if God places me in great 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 be unequal to the emergency!

And His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me. All this springs from the believer’s oneness with Christ, and since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been!