CONSUMED IN Christ

THE EXCHANGED LIFE

J. Hudson Taylor

From "They Found the Secret"

"He was a joyous man now, a bright, happy Christian. He had been a toiling, burdened one before, with latterly not much rest of soul. It was resting in Jesus now, and letting Him do the work – which makes all the difference!" Thus spoke a fellow missionary of Hudson Taylor.

The pioneer missionary in the interior of China who had come to full realization of the Savior as the ever-present, indwelling One, testified: "My soul is so happy in the Lord! And as I think of the blessing He gave me on the happy day . . . I know not how sufficiently to thank and praise Him. Truly Jesus is the great need of our souls . And He is the great gift of our Father's love – who gave Himself *for us*, and makes us one *with* Him in resurrection life and power."

The deep dealing of God with His children varies in detail but the general pattern seems much alike for individual cases. Into each life there arises an awareness of failure, a falling short of all that one should be in the Lord; then there is a definite meeting with the risen Savior in utter surrender of heart, which is indeed death to self. There follows an appropriation by faith of His resurrection life through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. As a result there is realized an overflow of life likened by the Lord Jesus to "rivers of water." (see John 7:37-39).

As a lad Hudson Taylor had come to know the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior. In his youth he had been called to the mission field of China. For fifteen years he had served earnestly and effectively in that land before he came into experiential possession of "the exchanged life." At the age of thirty-seven he opened his heart to his mother in a long letter which expressed his inner-most hunger and thirst:

"My own position becomes continually more and more responsible, and my need greater of special grace to fill it; but I have continually to mourn that I follow at such a distance and learn so slowly to imitate my precious Master. I cannot tell you how I am buffeted sometimes by temptation. I never knew how bad a heart I had. Yet I do know that I love God and love His work, and desire to serve Him only in all things. And I value above all things that precious Savior in Whom alone I can be accepted. Often I am tempted to think that one so full of sin cannot be a child of God at all; but I try to throw it back, and rejoice all the more in the preciousness of Jesus, and in the riches of that grace that has made us 'accepted in the Beloved.' Beloved He is of God; beloved He ought to be of us. But oh, how short I fall here again! May God help me to love Him more and serve Him better. Do pray for me. Pray that the Lord will keep me from sin, will sanctify me wholly, will use me more largely in His service."

The human heart has no desires which God cannot satisfy. The Christian's greatest difficulty it to take literally the promises of the Savior. Said the Lord Jesus: "If any man thirst, let him come unto M<u>e</u> and drink." We are told to come to <u>Him</u>, not to some friend, not to some experience, not to some feeling or frame of mind. We are

not even to come just to the Word of God; rather, we are to go through that Word to the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself.

The way to heart satisfaction and rest of spirit for Hudson Taylor was learned from a fellow missionary, John McCarthy. In a letter to Mr. Taylor he wrote:

"To let my loving Savior work in me His will, my sanctification is what I would live for by His grace. Abiding, not striving not struggling; looking off unto Him; trusting Him for present power; trusting Him to subdue all inward corruption; resting in the love of an almighty Savior, in the conscious joy of a complete salvation, a salvation 'from all sin' (this is His Word); willing that His will should truly be supreme – this I not new, and yet 'tis new to me. I feel as though the first dawning of a glorious day had risen upon me. I hail it with trembling, yet with trust. I seem to have got to the edge only, but of a sea which is boundless; to have sipped only, but of that which fully satisfies. Christ literally all seems to me now the power, the only power for service; the only ground for unchanging joy. May He lead us into the realization of his unfathomable fullness."

The Lord used this letter literally to lead Mr. Taylor "into the realization of His unfathomable fullness." It was read in the little mission station at Chin-kiang on Saturday, September 4, 1869. The missionary was always reticent about telling details of his transforming experience; but he did say, "As I read, I saw it all. I looked to Jesus; and when I saw, oh how the joy flowed!"

His fellow missionaries said of him, "Mr. Taylor went out, a new man in a new world, to tell what the Lord had done for his soul."

Let the man of God speak for himself regarding *the life that is Christ*. Writing to his sister in England he said:

"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! In a word, 'Whereas once I was blind, now I see..."

"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 <u>oneness</u> 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 you.' '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 <u>abide</u> with me — never to leave me, never to fail me? And, dearie, 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 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. 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. 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....

'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.

God's grace is indeed sufficient, and the heart that has come to know personally and intimately, the risen Lord Jesus by the outflow of His spirit experiences the reality of "rivers of living water." With Isaiah he knows that "thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind Is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

Many years after Hudson Taylor's meeting with the Lord Jesus in "the little crowded house in Chin-kiang." an Anglican clergyman, the Reverend H. B. Macartney of Melbourne. Australia added this testimony to that of many others regarding the missionary's possession of the *life that is Christ*:

"He was an object lesson in quietness. He drew from the Bank of Heaven every farthing of his daily income — 'My peace I give unto you." Whatever did not agitate the Savior, or ruffle His spirit was not to agitate him. The serenity of the Lord Jesus concerning any matter and at its most critical moment, this was his ideal and practical possession. He knew nothing of rush or hurry, of quivering nerves or vexation of spirit. He knew there was a peace passing all understanding, and that and that he could not do without it.

"Now I was altogether different. Mine is a peculiarly nervous disposition, and with a busy life I found myself in a tremor all day long. I did not enjoy the Lord as I knew I ought. Nervous agitation possessed me as long as there was anything to be done. The greatest loss of my life was the loss of the light of the Lord's presence and fellowship during writing hours. The daily mail robbed me of His delightful society.

"I am in the study, you are in the big spare room" I said to Mr. Taylor at length. "You are occupied with millions, I with tens. Your letters are pressingly important, mine of comparatively little moment. Yet I am worried and distressed, while you are always calm. Do tell me what makes the difference."

"My dear Macartney," he replied, "the peace you speak of is in my case more than a delightful privilege, it is a necessity."

"He said most emphatically, "I could not possibly get through the work I have to do without the peace of God 'which passeth all understanding' keeping my heart and mind.

"'Keswick teaching' as it is called was not new to me at that time. I had received those glorious truths and was preaching them to others. But here was the

real thing – an embodiment of 'Keswick teaching' such as I had never hoped to see. This impressed me profoundly: -- here is a man almost sixty years of age, bearing tremendous burdens, yet absolutely calm and unruffled. Oh, the pile lf letters! Any one of which might contain news of death, of shortness of funds, or riots or serious trouble. Yet all were opened, read and answered with the same tranquility – Christ his reason for peace, his power for calm. Dwelling in Christ he partook of His very being and resources, in the midst of and concerning the very matters in question. And he did this by an act of faith as simple as it was continuous.

"Yet he was delightful free and natural. I can find no words to describe it save the Scriptural expression 'in God'. He was 'in God' all the time, and God in him. It was that true 'abiding' of John 15."

With good reason could the clergyman add the exhortation to all: "Are you in a hurry, flurried, distressed? Look up! See the Man in the Glory! Let the face of Jesus shine upon you – the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is He worried, troubled, distressed? There is no wrinkle on His brow, no least shade of anxiety. Yet the affairs are His as much as yours."

It is the abiding life that is fruitful, just as it is the soul drinking deeply of the water of life that realizes "shall never thirst." The *life that is Christ* is abiding and abounding. It is satisfying and overflowing. Hudson Taylor could not find words more adequate to express the truth of the Scriptures he had proved by experience than those in the little booklet by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *How to Live on Christ*, a copy of which he sent to every member of the mission. In part, Mrs. Stowe stated:

"How does the branch bear fruit? Not by incessant effort for sunshine and air; not by vain struggles for those vivifying influences which give beauty to the blossom, and verdure to the leaf: it simply abides in the vine, in silent and undisturbed union, and blossoms and fruit appear as of spontaneous growth.

"How then, shall a Christian bear fruit? By efforts and struggles to obtain that which is freely given; by meditations on watchfulness, on prayer, on action, on temptation, and on dangers? No; there must be a full concentration of the thoughts and affections on Christ; a complete surrender of the whole being to Him; a constant looking to Him for grace. Christians in whom these dispositions are once firmly fixed go on calmly as the infant borne in the arms of its mother. Christ reminds them of every duty in its time and place, reproves them for every error, counsels them in every difficulty, excites them to every needful activity. In spiritual as in temporal matters they take no thought for the morrow; for they know that Christ will be as accessible tomorrow as today, and that time imposes no barrier on His love. Their hope and trust rest solely on what He is willing and able to do for them; on nothing that they suppose themselves able and willing to do for Him. Their talisman for every temptation and sorrow is their oft-repeated child-like surrender of their whole being to Him."

Such is the "exchanged life" the abiding, fruitful life, *the life that is Christ*, which should be the possession of every believer. Galatians 2:20 should be, and can be, a glorious reality.

I am, crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.

PARADOXES OF PRAYER

I asked God for strength – that I might achieve.
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.
I asked for riches – that I might be happy.
I was given poverty in spirit (humility) that I might be wise…
I asked for power – that I might have the praise of men.
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God…
I asked for all things – that I might enjoy life.
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things…
I got nothing that I asked for … but everything I had hoped for.
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am among all, most richly blessed!