

# GREAT RESOLUTIONS

Program Two

## The Importance of Interceding for Others

### Introduction

Welcome again to *Great Resolutions*. In this program we continue with the new series to consider the lives of saints who have gone before us.

Today we would like to learn from our predecessors, those who have gone before us in the Lord, something of the importance of interceding for others as we carry out our burden in the gospel.

### Our Burden Today

The Lord has burdened us in these days for the increase and spread of His testimony in His recovery. We know that for the Lord to gain His bride and to end this age, the gospel of the kingdom must be preached throughout the inhabited earth (Mt. 24:14). God wants His people to bear remaining fruit so that the church, the Body of Christ, can be built to consummate His ultimate goal of the building up of the New Jerusalem.

For this the Lord needs our cooperation; He needs us to respond to His call to serve Him as New Testament priests of the gospel (Rom. 15:16). This is why we have the burden to go forth to spread His word to other cities in North America and elsewhere. You also may be picking up this burden from the Lord to be a seed sower in your high school or on your college campus or place of work. As a student you and your companions may have more of a desire to share the gospel with your friends and classmates, colleagues and relatives, with those in your dorm and even with strangers that you meet in the course of your daily living. But we all may have this question; "How do we begin to carry out this burden from the Lord?"

### Beginning by Prayer

How do we begin our gospel work or

service? Let us look at how the early apostles and saints began. In Acts 1:14 we are told that after the Lord's death and resurrection, they gathered together and continued steadfastly with one accord in prayer. The apostles determined from the beginning to give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4).

### Prayer for Fellowship and for Intercession

We have learned in the church life that the true significance of prayer is to contact God in our spirit and to absorb Him. Brother Lee has shared with us that prayer is simply the human spirit contacting the Spirit of God. Prayer is our spiritual breathing. The more we touch the Lord in our spirit in simplicity, the more we enjoy the divine fellowship with the Triune God.

But as we touch the Lord for our enjoyment and supply, He also impresses us with some of the things that concern Him. Then we can return these matters to Him in our prayers. This is the prayer of intercession. This is the way we can let our requests be known to God (Phil. 4:6). Especially as we become burdened for those around us, we can begin our gospel service through prayer.

Watchman Nee said that we should go to God on man's behalf first, and then go to man. This prayer becomes the foundation of our leading people to Christ. He encouraged believers to open their mouths before God before opening them before people – first ask God and then talk to men.

At times we may all find it difficult to share the gospel with others. We cannot deal

We should go to God on man's behalf first, and then go to man.

with people's hearts or turn them to the Lord. This is why we must first go to the Lord to pray for people. We should first ask God to bind the strong man (Luke 11:21-22). It is true, as our Brother Nee has said, that those who are good at leading people to Christ are those who have learned to bring people to God in their prayer (*Leading Men to Christ* by Watchman Nee).

### **First of All, Prayer**

Prayer is our true service and should be given the utmost priority. Satan sometimes lies to us to cause us to think that prayer is the least important matter. Paul exhorted the believers that *first of all*, petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made on behalf of all men. This is because our Savior God desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth (*1 Tim. 2:1, 4*).

We know that the Lord is able to save, and that He is always living to intercede (Heb. 7:25). But He often waits for His saints to join with Him in this intercession. Therefore, we should aspire to be a praying person and aspire that our prayers would be pleasing to Him so that He would hear and answer them. It is a great blessing to have our prayers answered by God.

We have been encouraged by our Brother Lee over the years to pray daily for those around us – our relatives, friends, classmates, and neighbors. He charged us to ask the Lord to place one or two special persons in our heart so that we could continually bring them to the Lord through prayer.

### **The Impact of the Prayer of a Sister and Mother**

In the following story, we would like to see how such a specific prayer burden was discharged before the Lord by some saints back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, we will consider the impact of prayer on one who became a useful vessel to the Master in the proclaiming the gospel in all of China.

James Hudson Taylor was a Christian

missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission. He spent more than 50 years in China proclaiming the gospel. He brought over 800 saints into this gospel missionary work, which resulted in over 18,000 people being brought to Christ for salvation. He has been referred to as one of the most significant Europeans to visit China in the 19th Century. Some historians feel that possibly no other missionary since the time of Paul has had as great a vision and work and impact for the gospel as Hudson Taylor.

Although many believers are familiar with Hudson Taylor's gospel work in China, not many know how he himself came to the Lord. His conversion, like his life's work, is a testimony to the power of

prayer. Let us consider what happened at the beginning. In his own words, Hudson recounts:

*And now let me tell you how God answered the prayers of my mother and of my beloved sister . . . for my conversion.*

*On a day I can never forget, . . . my dear mother being absent from home, I had a holiday, and in the afternoon looked through my father's library to find some book with which to while away the unoccupied hours. Nothing attracting me, I turned over a basket of pamphlets and selected from amongst them a Gospel tract that looked interesting, saying to myself: There will be a story at the commencement and a sermon or moral at the close. I will take the former and leave the latter for those who like it.*

*I sat down to read the book in an utterly unconcerned state of mind, believing indeed at the time that if there were any salvation it*



**Hudson Taylor  
in Younger Years**

was not for me, and with a distinct intention to put away the tract as soon as it should seem prosy. I may say that it was not uncommon in those days to call conversion 'becoming serious'; and judging by the faces of some of its professors it appeared to be a very serious matter indeed! Would it not be well if the people of God had always tell-tale faces, evincing the blessings and gladness of salvation so clearly that unconverted people might have to call conversion 'becoming joyful' instead of 'becoming serious'?

Little did I know at the time what was going on in the heart of my dear mother, seventy or eighty miles away. She rose from the dinner table that afternoon with an intense yearning for the conversion of her boy; and feeling that, absent from home and having more leisure than she could otherwise secure, a special opportunity was afforded her of pleading with God on my behalf. She went to her room and turned the key in the door, and resolved not to leave the spot until her prayers were answered. Hour after hour that dear mother pleaded, until at length she could pray no longer, but was constrained to praise God for that which His Spirit taught her had already been accomplished, the conversion of her only son.

I in the meantime had been led in the way I have mentioned to take up this little tract, and while reading it was struck with the phrase: 'The finished work of Christ.'

Why does the author use this expression? I questioned. Why not say the atoning or propitiatory work of Christ?

Immediately the words 'It is finished' suggested themselves to my mind. What was finished?

And I at once replied, A full and perfect atonement and satisfaction for sin. The debt was paid for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Then came the further thought, If the whole work was finished and the whole debt paid, what is there left for me to do?

And with this dawned the joyful conviction, as light was flashed into my soul by the Holy Spirit, that there was nothing in

the world to be done but to fall down on one's knees and accepting this Saviour and His salvation praise Him for evermore.

Thus while my dear mother was praising God on her knees in her chamber, I was praising Him in the old warehouse to which I had gone alone to read at my leisure this little book.

Several days elapsed ere I ventured to make my beloved sister the confidante of my joy, and then only after she had promised not to tell any one of my soul-secret. When Mother returned a fortnight later I was the first to meet her at the door and to tell her I had such glad news to give. I can almost feel that dear mother's arms round my neck as she pressed me to her heart and said:

I know, my boy. I have been rejoicing for a fortnight in the glad tidings you have to tell.

Why, I asked in surprise, has Amelia [his sister] broken her promise? She said she would tell no one.

My dear mother assured me that it was not from any human source she

had learned the tidings, and went on to tell the incident mentioned above. You will agree with me that it would be strange indeed if I were not a believer in the power of prayer.

Nor was this all. Some time after, I picked up a pocket-book exactly like my own, and thinking it was mine, opened it. The lines that caught my eye were an entry in the little diary belonging to my sister, to the effect that she would give herself daily to prayer until God should answer in the conversion of her brother. One month later the Lord was pleased to turn me from darkness to light.

Brought up in such a circle and saved under such circumstances, it was perhaps natural that from the commencement of my Christian life I was led to feel that the promises were very real, and that prayer was in sober matter of fact transacting business



Amelia Taylor

*with God, whether on one's own behalf or on the behalf of those for whom one sought His blessing (J. Hudson Taylor by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor).*

### **Conclusion**

We can learn much from this account. Yes, our Savior God desired to save this young vessel, but He did not save him until his mother and sister willingly picked up the burden that the Lord laid upon their hearts to pray for him.

Our brother Watchman Nee confirms this testimony in his own experience when he was a college student. He struggled when he first attempted to bring his classmates to the Lord. He then consulted a missionary sister, Miss Groves, who told him he needed to speak to God first before speaking to people. She encouraged him to make a list of his classmates and to mention them daily in his prayers before God for their salvation. He began to practice this, and after a few months nearly all 70 of those on his list were saved (*Watchman Nee – A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age* by Witness Lee).

God needs His church on the earth to agree with Him for the carrying out of His will. It should be the experience of every child of God to have some God-given burden to discharge faithfully in prayer. Watchman Nee said that an open and willing spirit is the key condition for receiving burdens from God. Once we receive a burden, we should discharge it before God through prayer, and then He will be able to give us another one.

The prayer ministry of the church is God impressing the church with what He wants to do, and then the church on earth praying this burden back to God. We should learn not to quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19). We can cooperate with Him by going along with the sense we have within to pray specific burdens. The Lord said, "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be made full (John 16:24). Surely Hudson Taylor's mother and sister asked and their joy was made full.

We also can ask in the Lord's name. Then He will accomplish His will and the Father will be glorified (John 14:13).

May we allow the Lord to lay specific people on our hearts. Then we can release the burden for them in our prayer. May the Lord hear our prayers and grant us remaining fruit for the building up of the church the Body of Christ.

Marty Robert and Bill Lawson

### References:

Lee, Witness. *Lessons on Prayer*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1981.

Nee, Watchman. *Burden and Prayer*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, Online.

\_\_\_\_\_. *New Believers Series – Leading Men to Christ*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, Online.

Taylor, Dr. and Mrs. Howard. *J. Hudson Taylor*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1965.