

# GREAT RESOLUTIONS

Program Thirty One

## Preparation of a Useful Vessel – Hudson Taylor

### Consecrated

In Paul's letter to Timothy, he indicated that in a great house (the church) some vessels are honorable and others are not. He encouraged Timothy to cooperate with the Lord in order to become a vessel unto honor, sanctified, useful to the Master and prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:20-21). Hudson Taylor was surely a vessel unto honor. His usefulness to the Master did not just appear at the time he landed in China. Rather, the vessel was "prepared unto every good work" many years before.

Hudson Taylor's life began with a claim on it. While he was still in the womb, his parents were in fellowship regarding scriptures in Exodus and Numbers in which Jehovah declares "all the firstborn are mine." Impressed to take the Word of God in all simplicity and practicality, they knelt in prayer to set apart their coming firstborn to the Lord (Exodus 13:2, 12). Several months later James Hudson Taylor came into the world, on May 21, 1832.

**... all the  
firstborn  
are mine.  
Num. 3:13**

### Character Building

Hudson was raised in an environment that emphasized character building and education. His mother instilled in her children the necessity to be accurate and pay attention to details, and she trained them to be clean, neat and orderly. Under the tutelage of his mother, Hudson learned to love literature and history.

Hudson's father was a strict disciplinarian. His children well understood duties must be fulfilled properly and in a timely manner. Hudson's father cared deeply that his children would develop habits when they were young that would cause them to grow up to be responsible men and women. Hudson's father taught him to exercise self-control. "By and by,"

he told him, "you will have to say 'No' to yourself when we are not there to help you." The whole family practiced a daily time of Bible reading and the children were led by their father to each have a half an hour daily alone with God.

Christian workers were invited to the Taylor home on a regular basis. From these guests, Hudson and his sisters heard stories from distant lands and also learned of their father's spiritual burden for the people of China. Young Hudson seemed to take in much of this. At the age of five he declared, "When I am a man, I mean to be a missionary and go to China."

But there seemed little hope of this happening – Hudson was frequently sick and this caused him to lag behind in his education. He was 11 years old before he even made it to school, and then his attendance was often interrupted because of his poor health.

### Prayer, Spirit, and the Word

At age 17, Hudson started working as a junior clerk in a bank. Most of his fellow workers who were near his age lived a worldly life, and one in particular tried to influence Hudson to be as he was. In part he was successful. Rebellion and coolness of heart toward the Lord crept into Hudson's heart and the resulting inward conflict caused him much unhappiness. Though he tried to hide his struggles, his true condition was not hidden from his family. His mother and sister, especially, intensified their prayers for him. His sister Amelia, 13 at the time, noted in her journal that she would not cease praying for her brother until he was brought into the light.

Hudson's salvation experience was recounted in program two, but it is worth re-emphasizing that the prayers of his family, the scriptures and the convicting work of the Spirit worked together to bring him to a living knowledge of the Savior. When the light came,

he rejoiced to know that he was saved, not based on anything he had done, but only through what the Lord Jesus is and had done on his behalf.

The two matters he touched at the time of his salvation – the finished work of Christ as the basis of faith, and the vital importance of prayer – would shape his future life and service.



### Conviction

At the beginning of his salvation experience, Hudson gave himself to the Lord. He became active in Christian service. He and Amelia would together distribute gospel tracts. But his zeal eventually gave way to a coolness and indifference which alarmed him. He began to realize his need to be saved not only from the guilt of sin, but also from its power and enslavement. He yearned for an unbroken fellowship with the Lord, but it seemed to elude him. He hated his deadness, his weak prayer life and his lack of hunger for the word of God. In his struggles, he cried out to the Lord and made a covenant with Him. He told the Lord that if He would break the power of sin and save him spirit, soul, and body, he would renounce all and be utterly at His disposal. Of this experience, Hudson later said, “Something seemed to say, ‘Your prayer is answered, your conditions are accepted.’ And from that time the conviction never left me that I was called to go to China.” The verse in Acts 26:16 spoke to him as it did to Paul saying, “For to this end I have appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness.”

**For to this end I have appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness.**

His mother testified that “from that hour his mind was made up, . . . and from this purpose he never wavered.”

### Preparation

Now 18, Hudson began to pray for guidance and also began to take steps in order to learn all he could about China. It had only been 40 years since the labor and service of Robert Morrison, the first protestant missionary to China. Several societies had since risen up in an effort to evangelize that vast land and its people, but their work was confined to the seaport areas. Hudson’s burden was to go inland to reach the multitudes that lived beyond the seaports.

Hudson prepared himself by studying Chinese, as well as Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. He would often go to bed early in order that he could rise up at 5 am to study. Hudson also prepared himself by doing without many comforts and living as simply possible.

He became familiar with the stories of the gospel work in China through Dr. Charles Gutzlaff. This brother gave himself to the spreading of the kingdom of God. Hudson read in Christian journals of the splendid endeavors of Gutzlaff’s co-workers, but later he found out that, unbeknownst to Gutzlaff, some of his “coworkers” had made up or greatly exaggerated these stories for the sake of financial gain. Though disappointed by this news, Hudson and others were assured that



Gutzlaff himself was pure in his desire for the evangelization of China. Some have said that Gutzlaff is proof that the gospel of Christ can be announced by people with many defects. Later Hudson Taylor noted that “Dr. Gutzlaff, in a very real sense, was the grandfather of the work of the China Inland Mission.” Hudson Taylor also was influenced by George Muller, who supported hundreds of orphans by making their needs known to the living God alone. Muller’s testimony of living by faith was a precious pattern to the young Hudson Taylor.

### Trial of the Heart

“Must you go to China? How much nicer it would be to stay here and serve the Lord at home!” These words, uttered by the one he loved, tore at Hudson’s heart. He had consecrated himself to go to China, but now he

## References

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

Taylor, Dr. and Mrs. Howard. *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*. Philadelphia: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1932.

had to face the prospect of the one he loved being unwilling to follow him. Previously, he had been full of doubts about whether he should even show her his heart. He thought that it was “not reasonable to suppose that she would be willing to go and starve in a foreign land.” To his sister Amelia, he admitted that “to go without her would make the world a blank. But I cannot bring her to want.” The relationship caused him to have many considerations and dealings with the Lord. Over a period of two years he came to sense that the direction of their paths was not the same. Gradually he began to realize that the one he cared for was not “fully yielded to God.” When she asked him to serve the Lord at home, he felt he could not modify his calling from God. He knew he needed to settle this matter deep within. He did not want to be out of step in his communion with the Lord. For her part, she also realized she could not alter his purpose of heart. Eventually she made it clear to him that she was not willing (nor would her father allow her) to go with him to China.

Although this was a great blow to him and challenge to his faith, his troubled heart was melted by the Lord’s love and shepherding care. The following morning, he reluctantly assembled with the believers and the Lord revealed Himself to him afresh as the “very present help in time of trouble.” He was enabled to thank the Lord for all, “even the most painful experiences of the past, and trust Him without fear for all that is to come.” Later he wrote, “O Lord, how happy should we be if we would cast our care on Thee, if we from self would rest; and feel at heart that One above, in perfect wisdom, perfect love, is working for the best!” After passing through this trying experience, he went forward with a renewed heart full of resolve and with a clear mission in view.

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