

GREAT RESOLUTIONS

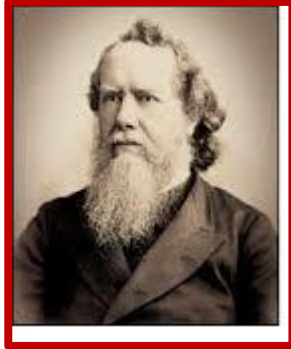
Program Thirty Five

The Highest Service at the Greatest Sacrifice **Part Five on the Life of Hudson Taylor**

Focused

“The Great Commission,” said Hudson Taylor,” is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed.”

Hudson Taylor was one who obeyed the command. Even in the midst of deep heartaches, severe illnesses, physical dangers, and other trials, the Lord’s word to “Go therefore and disciple all the nations” was never far from his heart and mind – or practice. Hudson believed that “the apostolic plan was not to raise ways and means, but to go and do the work.”



His clear gospel focus was tested many times in the early days of the China Inland Mission. Some Christians were critical of the fledgling mission because of its (what they considered to be) radical practices, such as accepting candidates from various denominational backgrounds, not requiring much formal education for its missionaries, sending out workers without a guaranteed salary, and having its missionaries adapt Chinese dress. These criticisms hurt, but more wounding to the soul was when some among their own began to resist Taylor’s leadership and stir up discord. These were unwilling to go along with Hudson’s directive that the missionaries dress as the Chinese in order to better reach the people and avoid political troubles. This matter had been made clear before the recruits sailed for China, but now a handful went back to wearing English dress. The result was that the Chinese authorities in the city where they were laboring, who had previously left the missionaries alone, expelled them from his city and also had a Chinese Christian beaten. Still, these discontented ones continued in their defiance and complained to others.

Consequentially, there was a lack of harmony within the mission as well as serious misunderstandings among its supporters back in England.

This was a great and protracted trial for Hudson and Maria. Though deeply affected, they were enabled to commit the situation to the Lord and did not seek to vindicate themselves. They pressed on in their daily duties of teaching and preaching and providing medical service, as well as caring for the training of the other new arrivals. The disgruntled ones returned to England, but only to stir up more problems there, which resulted in a lessening of support for the mission. Through all of this, Hudson’s vision remained. “It is no

small comfort to me, he said, “to know that God has called me to my work, putting me where I am and as I am. I have not sought the position, and I dare not leave it. He knows why He places me here, whether to do, or learn, or suffer.” Hudson

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and Maria and the now smaller group of missionaries devoted themselves afresh to reaching those in the interior of China with the gospel. And the Lord began to bless their work.

Suffering for the Sake of the Gospel

The saints who went to China for the sake of the gospel did not offer to the Lord that which cost them nothing. At times they suffered from loneliness and lack of funds. They suffered from poor living conditions, arduous travel, native illnesses, and the harsh climate. They suffered from famines and wars and robbers. They suffered the scorn of some fellow Christians who disapproved of their methods, and they suffered from the open hostility of some of the Chinese people.

Perhaps the most difficult sufferings were those that affected the loved ones of the missionaries. Hudson and his family often had to be separated for extended periods of time as he scouted out new stations and opportunities for the gospel. When not traveling, Hudson treasured the times he could be with his family. He especially delighted when he could take his oldest child, eight-year-old Grace, with him on some of his appointments.

One day while walking with her father, Grace saw a man making an idol. She was so taken aback that she asked her father to tell the idol maker about Jesus, and she herself prayed for the man. Hudson was deeply touched as he listened to his dear “Gracie” beseech the Lord on behalf of that man. Sadly, it was less than a week later that Grace became critically ill with malaria and quickly passed away.

Hudson and Maria had lost the ‘sunshine of their lives.’ In his grief Hudson could say, “It was no vain nor unintelligent act when, knowing this land, its people and climate, I laid my wife and children with myself on the altar for this service.” In a letter to his mother after Grace’s death, he wrote: “Pray for us. At times I seem almost overwhelmed . . . But He has said, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,’ and ‘My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ So be it.”

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More Trials

There were risks and hardships associated with opening new mission stations. After weeks of traveling over rough roads or living on uncomfortable boats, missionaries frequently had no place to lay their heads when they arrived in a new city. Often, they would be the first foreigners the local people had ever seen. Sometimes they were greeted with shy curiosity; at other times, with anger and contempt. Many Chinese were fearful and suspicious of “foreign devils,” and some considered all foreigners to be imperialists or opium dealers.

Hudson and his coworkers counted it all joy.

He wrote, “At home you can never know what it is to be alone – absolutely alone, amidst thousands, as you can in a Chinese city, without one friend, one companion, everyone looking on you with curiosity, with contempt, with suspicion or with dislike. Thus to learn what it is to be despised and rejected of men – of those you wish to benefit, your motives not understood . . . and then to have the love of Jesus applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit . . . this is worth coming for.”

In August of 1868 Hudson and Maria and their four children, along with six other China Inland missionaries, were living in the city of Yangzhou. The Lord was opening hearts there, but the enemy was also working. Some who hated foreigners stirred up trouble. The missionaries were accused of kidnapping children and other outlandish crimes. Placards warning the people about the foreigners were posted around the city. One night the unrest came to a head. A crowd of over a thousand people shouted threats and insults. Hudson and a fellow worker rushed to the governor of the province to ask for help. While they were gone, the situation escalated into a full-blown riot. The mission house was set on fire and its occupants had to flee for their lives. Some, including Maria, who was pregnant at the time, had to jump out of a second story window to escape. The house was looted, books were burned, but miraculously, there was no loss of life. After some months, the little band later returned and continued to bear the testimony of Christ in that city. Some from Yangzhou came to believe in the Lord and were baptized.

Of this experience, Hudson said, “Not infrequently our God brings His people into difficulties on purpose that they may come to know Him as they could not otherwise do. . . Wave after wave of trial rolled over us; but at the end of the year some of us were constrained to confess that we had learned more of the loving-kindness of the Lord than in any previous year of our lives.”

Provision in Times of Need

Hudson’s belief that “God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supplies” was often tried. As the work and the number of

workers grew, the need for funds increased. There was one point in particular when the small mission was in desperate need. They had but one recourse in this crisis, and that was to pray. Their heavenly Father heard and answered their prayer. At the same time, the Lord answered the prayer of a German brother who was praying for the gospel work in China. Most would have considered that George Muller would be the least likely to be able to render help to that far away group of missionaries. He already had the responsibility of taking care of hundreds of orphaned children in Bristol, England. But George Muller's supply was of God and not man and his heart was enlarged to care for the Lord's interests all over the earth. China was especially on his heart. He had been sending financial support to the China Inland Mission regularly, but it was at precisely the time when the mission was in desperate financial need that through prayer he felt led to significantly increase his gifts. In sending the gift, he wrote to Hudson: "My dear brother, the work of the Lord in China is more and more laid upon my heart, and hence I have been longing and praying to be able to assist it more and more with means, as well as with prayer. My chief objective is to tell you that I love you in the Lord; that I feel deeply interested about the Lord's work in China, and I pray daily for you." Hudson and the other missionaries were immensely encouraged, not only by the timely meeting of their urgent need, but also by the love, sympathy and prayers of George Muller.

A Flowing River Following Dry Times

As the outward burdens increased, Hudson was struggling within. People in China were being reached, and the gospel was advancing, but Hudson was discouraged with his spiritual state. He was distressed by his frequent failures and grieved that his heart was often cold toward the Lord and toward people. But it seemed the more he strove for a closer walk with the Lord, the more it evaded him. He wrote to his mother: "I have continually to mourn that I follow [the Lord] at such a distance and learn so slowly. ..." When in this dejected state, a friend who had recently passed through similar struggles, wrote to him of the spiritual help and renewal he was enjoying.

Hudson received much help from that letter. One sentence stood out in particular: "But how to get faith strengthened? Not by striving after faith, but by resting on the Faithful One." He wrote to his sister, "As I read I saw it all! 'If we believe not, He abideth faithful,' I looked to Jesus and saw that He had said, "I will never leave *you*..." 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 the left poor? Or your head be well fed while your body starves?The sweetest part . . . 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."

This revelation of his oneness with Christ was fresh to him through the end of his days. Hudson began to love, and not be condemned by, the Lord's command to "abide in Me and I in you." He wrote, "The branch of the vine does not worry, and toil and rush here to seek for sunshine, and there to find rain. No; it rests in union and communion with the vine; and at the right time, and in the right way, is the right fruit found on it. Let us so abide in the Lord Jesus."

Comforted Through Sorrows

Another, and very piercing, sorrow came to Hudson in the summer of 1870. That summer Maria gave birth to their seventh child, but at some point she was struck by cholera. Too sick to nurse her newborn, the baby died shortly after birth. Maria herself held on for a few more days, but Hudson, and eventually Maria, came to realize that she was dying. As Hudson witnessed her strength slipping away, he encouraged her through his tears, "You are going home, you will soon be

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with Jesus.” Maria responded that she was not sorry to go to the Lord since “for the last ten years past there has not been a cloud between me and my Savior.” She told Hudson it grieved her to leave him at such a time, but that the Lord would be with him and meet all his needs. Shortly thereafter Maria breathed her last and fell asleep in the Lord. She was 33. As recorded in his biography, “Hudson then knelt in prayer and committed her to the Lord, thanking Him for the years of happiness they had together and for taking her to His presence. Then he rededicated himself anew to His service.”

Now his wife and two of his children were gone, and his older children were far away in England. He wrote, “How I missed my dear wife and the voices of the children far away in England.” All he could do was cry out to the Lord. He testified that “whether I called by day or night, how quickly He came and satisfied my sorrowing heart!”

Surely Hudson was suffering the loss of all things on account of Christ. Yet the Lord’s presence was with him and bitterness was far from his being. He said, “It is in the path of obedience and self-denying service that God reveals Himself most intimately to His children. When it costs most we find the greatest joy. We find the darkest hour the brightest and the greatest loss the highest gain. While the sorrow is short-lived and will soon pass away, the joy is far more exceeding, and it is eternal.”

No doubt, Hudson Taylor could say with the Apostle Paul, “I now rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body, which is the church.” It is true that no one except Christ Himself could suffer for the accomplishing of redemption. Those

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Col. 1:24**

sufferings were completed by Him on the cross. But countless faithful ones throughout the centuries, including the apostle Paul and

Hudson Taylor, have shared in the sufferings of Christ for the producing and building up of the church.

Near the end of his life, Hudson Taylor could confidently affirm that “The highest service demands the greatest sacrifice, but it secures the fullest blessing and the greatest fruitfulness.”

Marty Robert and Bill Lawson

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