# THE EXCHANGED LIFE

## A LETTER FROM J.HUDSON TAYLOR TO HIS SISTER, AMELIA

**Chinkiang**
October 17, 1869

My own dear Sister:

So many thanks for your long, dear letter. I do not think you have written me such a letter since we have been in China. I know it is with you as with me - you cannot, not you will not. Mind and body will not bear more than a certain amount of strain, or do more than a certain amount of work. 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 if, for there is nothing new or strange or wonderful - and yet, all is new! In a word: "Whereas I was blind, now I see".

Perhaps I shall make myself more clear if I go back a little. Well, dearie, my mind has been greatly exercised for six or eight months past, feeling the need personally, and for our Mission, or more holiness, life and 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, prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for retirement and meditation - but all was without avail. 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 that temptations to irritability, hard thoughts, and sometimes unkind words are all the more difficult to control. Each day brought its register of sin, failure, and lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not.

Then came the questions, "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" (i.e., God-like) when it was not so in my experience? 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"; but to rise to my privileges as a child, I was utterly powerless. I thought that holiness, practical holiness was to be gradually attained by a diligent use of the means of grace. I felt that there was nothing I so much desired in this world, nothing I so much needed. But so far from in any measure attaining it, the more I pursued and strove after it, the more it eluded my grasp; till hope itself almost died out, and I began to think that, perhaps to make heaven the sweeter, God would not give it down here. I do not think I was striving to attain it in my own strength. I knew I was powerless. I told the Lord so, and asked Him to give me help and strength; and sometimes I almost believed He would keep and uphold me. But on looking back in the evening, alas! There was but sin and failure to confess and mourn before God.

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 Saviour 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 has been 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 was strong, but I was 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, to laying hold of 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. Seeing more and more the wondrous supply of grace laid up in Jesus, the fullness of our precious Savior - my helplessness and guilt seemed to increase. Sins committed appeared but as trifles compared with the sin of unbelief which was their cause, which could not or would not take God at His word, but rather made Him a liar! Unbelief was, I felt, the damning sin of the world - yet I indulged in it. I prayed for faith but it came not. What was I to do?

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 (I quote from memory):

"But how to get faith strengthened? Not be 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 abide 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 direct 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.

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? 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 you hand, but only to yourself"? No more can your prayers, or mine, be discredited IF OFFERED IN THE NAME OF JESUS (i.e., 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 anything according to His will, He heareth us: and...we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him".

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 I the easiest position 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 articles. In either case he looks to me for the money, and he 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! I wish I could tell you instead of writing about it.

I am no better than before (may I not say, in a sense, I do not wish to be, nor am I striving to be); but I am dead and buried with Christ - aye, and risen too and ascended; and now Christ lives in me, and "the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me". I now BELIEVE I am dead to sin. God reckons me so, and tells me to reckon myself so. He knows best. All my past experiences may have shown that it was not so; but I dare not say it is not now, when He says it is. I feel and know that old things have passed away. I am as capable of sinning as ever, but Christ is realized as present as never before. He cannot sin; and He can keep me from sinning. I cannot say (I am sorry to have to confess it) that since I have seen this light I have not sinned; but I do feel there was no need to have done so. And further - walking more in the light, my conscience has been more tender; sin has been instantly seen, confessed, pardoned; and peace and joy (with humility) instantly restored; with one exception, when for several hours peace and joy did not return - from lack, as I had to learn, of full confession, and from some attempt to justify self.

Faith, I now see, is "the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for", and not mere shadow. It is not less than sight but MORE. Sight only shows the outward forms of things; faith gives the substance. You can rest on substance, FEED on substance. Christ dwelling in the heart by faith (i.e., His word of promise credited) is power indeed, is LIFE indeed. And Christ and sin will not dwell together; nor can we have His presence with love of the world or carefulness about "many things".

And now I must close. I have not said half I would nor as I would had I more time. May God give you to lay hold on these blessed truths. Do not let us continue to say, in EFFECT, "Who shall ascend into heaven? That is, to bring Christ down from above". In other words, do not let us consider Him as afar off, when God has made us one with Him, members of His very body. Nor should we look upon this experience, these truths, as for the few. They are the birthright of every child of God, and no one can dispense with them without dishonour to our Lord. The only power for deliverance from sin or for true service is Christ.

Your own affectionate brother,

J. HUDSON TAYLOR

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