



Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret: Chapter 4

Extended Quotation continued (pp.32-42)

It will scarcely seem strange that I was unable to say much to comfort these poor people. I needed comfort myself. I began to tell them, however, that they must not be cast down; that though their circumstances were very distressing there was a kind and loving Father in heaven. But something within me cried, "You hypocrite! telling these unconverted people about a kind and loving Father in heaven, and not prepared yourself to trust Him without half-a-crown."

I nearly choked. How gladly would I have compromised with conscience, if I had had a florin and a sixpence! I would have given the florin thankfully and kept the rest. But I was not yet prepared to trust in God alone, without the sixpence.

To talk was impossible under these circumstances, yet strange to say I thought I should have no difficulty in praying. Prayer was a delightful occupation in those days. Time thus spent never seemed wearisome and I knew no lack of words. I seemed to think that all I should have to do would be to kneel down and pray, and that relief would come to them and to myself together.

"You asked me to come and pray with your wife," I said to the man; "let us pray." And I knelt down.

But no sooner had I opened my lips with, "Our Father who art in heaven," than conscience said within, "Dare you mock God? Dare you kneel down and call Him 'Father' with that half-crown in your pocket?"

Such a time of conflict then came upon me as I had never experienced before. How I got through that form of prayer I know not, and whether the words uttered were connected or disconnected. But I arose from my knees in great distress of mind.

The poor father turned to me and said, "You see what a terrible state we are in, sir. If you can help us, for God's sake do!"

At that moment the word flashed into my mind, "Give to him that asketh of thee," and in the word of a King there is power.

I put my hand into my pocket and slowly drawing out the half-crown gave it to the man, telling him that it might seem a small matter for me to relieve them, seeing that I was comparatively well off, but that in parting with that coin I was giving him my all; but that what I had been trying to tell them was indeed true, God really was a Father and might be trusted. And how the joy came back in full flood tide to my heart! I could say anything and feel it then, and the hindrance to blessing was gone—gone,



I trust, forever.

Not only was the poor woman's life saved, but my life as I fully realized had been saved too. It might have been a wreck—would have been, probably, as a Christian life—had not grace at that time conquered and the striving of God's Spirit been obeyed.

I well remember that night as I went home to my lodgings how my heart was as light as my pocket. The dark, deserted streets resounded with a hymn of praise that I could not restrain. When I took my basin of gruel before retiring, I would not have exchanged it for a prince's feast. Reminding the Lord as I knelt at my bedside of His own Word, "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," I asked Him not to let my loan be a long one, or I should have no dinner the next day. And with peace within and peace without, I spent a happy, restful night.

Next morning, my plate of porridge remained for breakfast, and before it was finished the postman's knock was heard at the door. I was not in the habit of receiving letters on Monday, as my parents and most of my friends refrained from posting on Saturday, so that I was somewhat surprised when the landlady came in holding a letter or packet in her wet hand covered by her apron. I looked at the letter, but could not make out the handwriting. It was either a strange hand or a feigned one, and the postmark was blurred. Where it came from I could not tell. On opening the envelope I found nothing written within, but inside a sheet of blank paper was folded a pair of kid gloves from which, as I opened them in astonishment, half-a-sovereign fell to the ground.

"Praise the Lord," I exclaimed, "four hundred per cent for a twelve hours' investment! How glad the merchants of Hull would be if they could lend their money at such a rate of interest!" Then and there I determined that a bank that could not break should have my savings or earnings as the case might be, a determination I have not yet learned to regret.

I cannot tell you how often my mind has recurred to this incident, or all the help it has been to me in circumstances of difficulty. If we are faithful to God in little things, we shall gain experience and strength that will be helpful to us in the more serious trials of life.

[This was not the end of the story, however...]

This remarkable and gracious deliverance was a great joy to me as well as a strong confirmation of faith. But of course ten shillings, however economically used, will not go very far, and it was none the less necessary to continue in prayer, asking that the larger supply which was still due might be remembered and paid. All my petitions, however, appeared to remain unanswered, and before a fortnight elapsed I found myself pretty much in the same position that I had occupied on the Sunday



night already made so memorable. Meanwhile I continued pleading with God, more and more earnestly, that He would Himself remind Dr. Hardey that my salary was due.

Of course it was not want of money that distressed me. That could have been had at any time for the asking. The question uppermost in my mind was, "Can I go to China, or will my want of faith and power with God prove so serious an obstacle as to preclude my entering upon this much-prized service?"

As the week drew to a close I felt exceedingly embarrassed. There was not only myself to consider. On Saturday night a payment would be due to my Christian landlady, which I knew she could not well dispense with. Ought I not, for her sake, to speak about the matter of the salary? Yet to do so would be, to myself at any rate, the admission that I was not fitted to undertake a missionary enterprise. I gave nearly the whole of Thursday and Friday, all the time not occupied in my necessary employment, to earnest wrestling with God in prayer. But still on Saturday morning I was in the same position as before. And now my earnest cry was for guidance as to whether I should still continue to wait the Father's time. As far as I could judge, I received the assurance that to wait His time was best, and that God in some way or other would interpose on my behalf. So I waited, my heart being now at rest and the burden gone.

About five o'clock that Saturday afternoon, when Dr. Hardey had finished writing his prescriptions, his last circuit for the day being done, he threw himself back in his armchair as he was wont and began to speak of the things of God. He was a truly Christian man, and many seasons of happy fellowship we had together. I was busily watching at the time a pan in which a decoction was boiling that required a good deal of attention. It was indeed fortunate for me that it was so, for without any obvious connection with what had been going on, all at once he said:

"By the by, Taylor, is not your salary due again?"

My emotion may be imagined. I had to swallow two or three times before I could answer. With my eye fixed on the pan and my back to the doctor, I told him as quietly as I could that it was overdue some little time. How thankful I felt at that moment! God surely had heard my prayer and caused him in this time of my great need to remember the salary, without any word or suggestion from me.

"Oh, I am so sorry you did not remind me," he replied. "You know how busy I am. I wish I had thought of it a little sooner, for only this afternoon I sent all the money I had to the bank. Otherwise I would pay you at once."



It was impossible to describe the revulsion of feeling caused by this unexpected statement. I knew not what to do. Fortunately for me the pan boiled up and I had a good reason for rushing with it from the room. Glad indeed I was to keep out of sight until after Dr. Hardey had returned to his house, and most thankful that he had not perceived my emotion.

As soon as he was gone, I had to seek my little sanctum and pour out my heart before the Lord before calmness, and more than calmness, thankfulness and joy were restored. I felt that God had His own way and was not going to fail me. I had sought to know His will early in the day, and as far as I could judge had received guidance to wait patiently. And now God was going to work for me in some other way.

That evening was spent, as my Saturday evenings usually were, in reading the Word and preparing the subject on which I expected to speak in the various lodging-houses on the morrow. I waited perhaps a little longer than usual. At last about ten o'clock, there being no interruption of any kind, I put on my overcoat and was preparing to leave for home, rather thankful to know that by that time I should have to let myself in with the latchkey, as my landlady retired early. There was certainly no help for that night. But perhaps God would interpose for me by Monday, and I might be able to pay my landlady early in the week the money I would have given her before, had it been possible.

Just as I was about to turn down the gas, I heard the doctor's step in the garden that lay between the dwelling-house and surgery. He was laughing to himself heartily, as though greatly amused. Entering the surgery he asked for the ledger, and told me that, strange to say, one of his richest patients had just come to pay his doctor's bill. Was it not an odd thing to do! It never struck me that it might have any bearing on my own case, or I might have felt embarrassed. Looking at it simply from the position of an uninterested spectator, I also was highly amused that a man rolling in wealth should come after ten o'clock at night to pay a bill which he could any day have met by a check with the greatest ease. It appeared that, somehow or other, he could not rest with this on his mind, and had been constrained to come at that unusual hour to discharge his liability.

The account was duly receipted in the ledger and Dr. Hardey was about to leave, when suddenly he turned and handing me some of the banknotes just received, said to my surprise and thankfulness:

"By the by, Taylor, you might as well take these notes. I have no change, but can give you the balance next week."



Again I was left, my feelings undiscovered, to go back to my little closet and praise the Lord with a joyful heart that after all I might go to China.

This entire document is a direct quotation from Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor's Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret (Taylor, Dr. & Mrs. Howard. Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret. Chicago: Moody Press. 1987, pp. 32-42).