

SUBJECT: God's Calling in the Present Age: Hudson Taylor

SCRIPTURE: Exo.13:2,12; Num.8:10; Isa.64:4; Psa.126:6; Ezek. 36:25-27

AIM: To encourage the children to cooperate with God's sovereign preparation work in their lives and to have a heart willing to respond to His call.

MEMORY VERSES: 1 Cor 10:31b, 33

CONTENT: James Hudson Taylor was born in 1832, to James and Amelia Taylor (Amelia's maiden name was Hudson). His father was both a chemist and a Methodist preacher. During the first winter together, James and Amelia prayed over a passage in Exodus 13 and the corresponding verses in Numbers: "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn..." "All the firstborn are mine..." "Set apart unto the Lord..." They realized that if the Lord would grant them a child, he must be consecrated to the Lord for His use.

The Taylor children learned under the gentle discipline of their mother not to clamor for their needs to be met, but to wait patiently to be taken care of. One day when guests were over for dinner, Hudson was overlooked and not served any dinner. Since he was not supposed to ask for things at the table, he said nothing. Eventually he thought it would be acceptable to ask for the salt. When the one sitting next to him saw his empty plate he said, "And what do you want the salt for?" Hudson answered, "Oh, I want to be ready. Mamma will give me something to eat by-and-by."

Mr. James Taylor, his father, had a real sense of duty in raising his children. He helped them acquire habits which would make them dependable men and women in the days to come. He taught his children to put work before pleasure and not waste time in doing anything, even dressing. Every task should begin promptly; loitering only makes the task more difficult. He also thought it most important to teach his children the power of self-control. "See if you can do without" was one of his maxims.

The family worshipped together every morning and afternoon. A passage was read and explained by the father in a practical way so that everyone could see the daily application. He explained to the children that the Bible was necessary to maintain the life of the soul, just as the body is maintained by food and exercise.

The Taylors cared for young people in their home early in their marriage and later often had fellow-workers, ministers and missionaries in their home. It was then that the children heard many stories from far off lands. Their father would speak of China and his sorrow and concern that the Methodists were sending no missionaries there. He felt this was an important country with a huge population and strong, intelligent, scholarly people.

It seems like Hudson made his father's burden his own and made up his mind to go to China early. He read and reread a little book called *China* until he knew it by heart. His parents must have given up any hope of his answering such a call because of his delicate constitution. During the two years that he went to school, he missed many days because of illness. He continued his education at home.

When he was seventeen he worked for a few months at a bank in Barnsley. There his companions were completely worldly and began to fill his head with skeptical views of religion and laughed at Hudson's "old fashioned notions." He began to long for the worldly distractions of his companions. He became indifferent and unhappy at home. His family saw the change and began to pray for him. Particularly, his sister Amelia determined to pray for him three times a

day until he was really converted. These prayers and those of his mother sustained him until he came to the day of his salvation.

Hudson's mother was away and he therefore found himself with time on his hands. He went to his father's library to find something to read in order to pass the time. He began to read a gospel tract thinking he would enjoy the story and ignore the sermon at the end. At the same time his mother, being away from home, found herself with more leisure time than usual and went to her room to pray. She was burdened to pray for her son's salvation and resolved not to leave the spot until her prayers were answered. After several hours of prayer she was constrained to praise God for that which the Holy Spirit had taught her was accomplished. When his mother returned home some days later and he greeted her with the glad news, she replied, "I know, my boy." Through this experience, Hudson became a firm believer in the power of prayer. He believed that prayer was really transacting business with God.

Almost immediately the boy had a desire to serve God. As he spent time alone with God in his room one afternoon, he had an experience of full surrender to the Lord. He felt the Lord take complete possession of him. After this definite consecration, he began to care about the welfare of others and began to preach the gospel regularly with his sister.

After that summer, however, coldness of heart, forgetfulness and indifference crept in. He found it hard to live the life of a Christian in his everyday life in the shop and at home. He desired to live a holy life, but often found Romans 7 his experience. He did not give up his ideal, but continued to pursue the Lord for a way to be freed from both the guilt and power of sin. The conflict continued throughout autumn into December. Outwardly things were very much as usual, but inwardly a despair and deadness began to affect him. He had little interest in praying or reading the Bible. Though he had little time to spend with God, he had even less desire. He was beginning to fear that he might miss God's purpose for his life. One afternoon he picked up the *Weslyan Magazine*. He was drawn by an article entitled, "The Beauty of Holiness." This stirred again the desire for victory over self and sin. A church revival further brought the word to him powerfully, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness... and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." (Ezek.36:25-27) Finally, he pleaded with God that if He would break the power of sin and save him spirit, soul and body for time and for eternity, he would forsake his future and make himself completely available for the Lord's use. It was then that the Lord clearly spoke to him to go to China. From that hour, the mother wrote, his mind was made up. His pursuits and studies were all engaged in with reference to this object, and whatever difficulties presented themselves his purpose never wavered.¹

Hudson began to search for information on China. It was not easy to find. He went to the founder and superintendent of the Sunday School. She gave him a copy of the gospel of Luke in Chinese (Mandarin). He used it along with an English Bible to create a dictionary using the following method:

We find a short verse in the English version, and then look up a dozen or more (also in English) that have one word in common with it. We then turn up the first verse in Chinese, and search through all the others for some character in common that seems to stand for the English word.²

In China at that time foreigners could live in only a few port cities. There were missionary societies working in most of those ports, but no one had attempted to go further inland. This became Hudson's desire—to reach the millions of people inland who had never had the

opportunity to hear about Christ. One missionary who had been to China upon meeting him discouraged Hudson because of his fair hair and eyes. Hudson was undaunted as he replied that it was the Lord who had called him, and He knew of his hair and eyes.

Though it was not yet the Lord's timing for Hudson to go to China, he continued to prepare himself to be useful to the Lord when he did go. He became a medical assistant in Hull having been trained as a chemist by his father. He knew that medical skills would be helpful in missionary work. He studied the scriptures, gave himself to prayer and preached the gospel. He moved to a small one-room shack, saving much on expenses so that he could give to the poor. He practiced living by faith by not reminding his boss about his salary, but praying and trusting in the Lord. The Lord proved to him time and again that He was well able to take care of him.

Hudson Taylor finally went to London to study medicine. Though he had sought to go to China earlier, through prayer and through fellowship with his family he saw that it was still not time. It was three years since the Lord had made the definite call for him to go to China and it must have seemed an eternity for a young man. But God was using the time in every way as a training and preparation for Hudson's future service.

By 1853, political developments in China seemed to leave it wide open for the gospel. As Christians in Europe heard the news, money began to pour in to missionary societies to evangelize China. The Chinese Evangelization Society sent a letter to Hudson Taylor inviting him to go to China to preach the gospel.

On March 1, 1854 he left for China pursue his life's work. All his preparation proved useful to the Lord: his learning to do without, his waiting upon God, his medical training, his knowledge of the Scripture and his experience in gospel preaching. In China he met with suffering, persecution and many dangers and hardships. He endured in the work, eventually establishing the China Inland Mission and laboring deep in the inland areas. At the time of his death, thirty thousand had become Christians through the ministry of the CIM.

APPLICATION:

1. Take every opportunity to be prepared by the Lord today. The Lord is using your parents to train you to be equipped to serve the Lord in the future. Cooperate with God's sovereignty by cooperating with your parents and doing your best in all your endeavors. Only the Lord knows in what ways you need to be prepared.
2. Use your youth to become equipped-with the Word of God.
3. Learn to care for others while you are young, so that you will have a caring heart towards others. When you care for people, eventually you will be burdened for their salvation.

¹The Biography of James Hudson Taylor, Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, 1965 Overseas Missionary Fellowship p. 23

²Ibid., p.27