

My Mission to China

The memoirs of Hudson Taylor remind us of the risks and rewards of obeying the call.

Shortly after my conversion, I retired to my own chamber to spend time in communion with God, pouring out my soul before Him. I was a child under the age of 16, but I remember the occasion well.

As an outlet for my love and gratitude for God, I sought for Him to give me a self-denying service, no matter what it might be.

I put myself, my life, my friends—my all—upon the altar. A deep solemnity came over my soul with the assurance that my offering was accepted.

Then the presence of God became real. I stretched myself on the ground, lying silent before Him with unspeakable awe and joy.

Within a few months the impression was wrought into my soul that the Lord wanted me in China. I knew this work might cost my life.

I told my minister that God had called me to spend my life in missionary service to China.

“And how do you propose to go there?” he inquired.

I answered that I did not know, but it seemed probable that I should go as the 12 disciples had—without money or documents, relying only on God.

Kindly placing his hand upon my shoulder, the minister replied: “Ah, my boy, as you grow older you will get wiser

than that. Such an idea would do well in the days when Christ was on earth, but not now."

I have grown older since then, but not wiser. I am more than ever convinced that if we were to take the directions of our Master and the assurances He gave to His first disciples more fully as our guide, we should find them to be just as suited to our times as to those in which they were originally given.

The Ocean's Challenge

On September 19, 1853, at the age of 21, my time arrived to leave for China. My beloved mother came to see me off from England.

We knelt down and she prayed. For my sake, she restrained her feelings as much as possible. Then we parted.

My mother followed the ship as it moved toward the dock gates. When we passed through the gates, the separation really began.

I shall never forget the cry of anguish wrung from my mother's heart. It went through me like a knife.

Until then, I had never known what "for God so loved the world" really meant.

The voyage was tedious. On one occasion, a four-knot current carried us rapidly toward some sunken reefs. All hands endeavored, without success, to turn the ship's head from the reefs.

"Well," said the captain, "we have done everything that we can."

"No," I replied, "there is one thing we have not done yet. Let us each retire to our cabins and pray the Lord to give us immediately a breeze."

The captain complied. I had a good, but brief, season in

prayer and felt satisfied that our request was granted. I could not continue asking God, so I went up again on deck.

Sure enough, the corner of the mainsail began to tremble in the coming breeze.

"Don't you see the wind is coming?" I exclaimed to the first officer. "Let down the mainsail and let us have the benefit!"

In a few minutes we were plowing our way through the water.

Thus, God encouraged me before landing on China's shores to bring every variety of need to Him in prayer. He gives the help that each emergency requires.

A New Mission Field

On landing in Shanghai on March 1, 1854, I found myself surrounded with difficulties that were wholly unexpected. A band of rebels had taken possession of the native city.

One night a battle appeared near, so I climbed up to a little observatory I had arranged on the roof.

While there, a cannonball struck the ridge of the roof, showering pieces of broken tile all around me. The ball itself rolled down into the court below. Had it come a few inches higher, it would have spent its force on me instead of on the building.

Those sleepless nights brought feelings of isolation and helplessness. But what circumstances could have rendered the Word of God so sweet, the presence of God so real and the help of God so precious?

They were times, indeed, of emptying and humbling. But the experiences strengthened this proven promise: "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Josh. 1:5, KJV).

One dull and wet day a year later, I felt assured that it was

the will of God to preach in Taizhou, a city on the Yangtze River.

Our native teachers did their best to persuade my companion, the Rev. J.S. Burdon, and I not to go. But, we determined that, by God's help, nothing should hinder us.

On our way, we passed through one small town of 1,000 inhabitants. Here, in the Mandarin dialect, I preached.

Afterward, I heard one of the natives repeating these truths in his Chinese dialect!

How thankful to hear a Chinese man, of his own accord, telling his fellow countrymen that God loved them! That one moment repaid me for all my trials. If the Lord could grant His Holy Spirit to change the heart of that man, we had not come in vain.

We approached Taizhou, but before reaching the city gate, a tall, powerful man seized Burdon by the shoulders. At once 12 or more brutal men surrounded us, then hurried us into the city at a fearful pace.

I was soon in a profuse perspiration, scarcely able to keep pace with them. The tall man knocked me down, seized me by the hair, took hold of my collar so as to choke me, and grasped my arms and shoulders, making them black-and-blue.

There was nothing else to do but quietly submit and go along with our captors.

Quarrels arose as to how we should be dealt with. The more mild of our conductors said we ought to be taken to the magistrate's office. Others wished to kill us.

Having succeeded in getting my hand in my pocket, I produced my Chinese identification card. After this, we were treated with more respect. I demanded the card be given to the chief official of the place and that we be led to his office.

Oh, the long weary streets that we were dragged through! We finally stopped at the magistrate's house.

I leaned against the wall, bathed in perspiration, with my tongue cleaving to the roof of my mouth. Around the doorway a large crowd had gathered. Burdon collected his remaining strength and preached Christ to them.

The magistrate promised us respectful treatment and a safe return to our ship. We then finished distributing our books quickly and left the city in quite a state. Early in the evening we got back to the boats safely, thankful to our heavenly Father for His gracious protection.

What Took So Long?

On another occasion, I was preaching the glad tidings of salvation when a middle-aged man stood up in the crowd.

"I have long sought for the truth," he said earnestly, "as my fathers did before me, but I have never found it. I have traveled far and near, but without obtaining it. I have found no rest in Confucianism, Buddhism or Taoism, but I do find rest in what I have heard here tonight. Henceforth, I am a believer in Jesus."

This man was one of the leading officers of a sect of reformed Buddhists in Ningpo.

A short time after, I accompanied him to a meeting of his former sect. There, to his former co-religionists, he testified of the peace he obtained in believing.

Soon after, one of his former companions was converted and baptized. A few nights after his conversion he asked how long this gospel had been known in England. He was told that we had known it for some hundreds of years.

"What!" said he, amazed. "Is it possible that for hundreds of years you have had the knowledge of these glad tidings in your

possession, and yet have only now come to preach it to us? Oh, why did you not come sooner?"

A whole generation has passed away since that mournful inquiry was made, but how many, alas, might repeat the same question today? In the meanwhile, countless millions have been swept into eternity without an offer of salvation. How long shall this continue and the Master's words "to all nations" remain unheeded?

Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) was born in Liverpool, England. His ambition as a teen was "to evangelize all China." At the age of 33, he founded the China Inland Mission. Today, there are an estimated 13 million Christians living in China.