

Pastor Hsi by Mrs. Howard Taylor, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Singapore, 1989. (80 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

One man's struggle for a truly Chinese experience of Christianity in the face of the social evils of the nineteenth century.

1. David Hill:

The face that always bore such radiance of the light and love of God. David Hill [Page 5.]

2. Obedience Laid Down by Confucius: for Women

“Woman is subject to man. She cannot herself direct any affairs. At home, before marriage, she must obey her father. When married she must obey her husband. After her husband's death she must obey her son. She may not presume to follow her own judgment.” [Page 8]

3. The Effect of Opium

“It is not the man that eats the opium, but the opium that eats the man. [Page17]

4. Famine-Stricken of Northern China. David Hill

The *London Times*, early in 1878, wrote as follows:

“It is stated on authority which cannot be questioned, that seventy millions of human beings are now starving in the famine-stricken provinces of Northern China. The imagination fails to cope with with a calamity so gigantic. The inhabitation of the United Kingdom and the United States combined hardly number seventy millions. To think of the teeming population of these lands, all crowded into an area very little greater than that of France, starving and eating earth, with no food to be had, and with no hope of succor, is enough to freeze the mind with horror.” [Page 26 footnote]

5. Wolf Attack during Famine

Many lives were lost in these dreadful days through the attacks of wolves, growing desperate with famine. Scarcely a village was without experiences of their ferocity. In open daylight they would spring upon children, and even grown-up people, and devour them within sight of horrified onlookers. Mr. Hill was one day passing through a village and notice traces of blood that seemed quite recent. Upon inquiring the cause, he was told that a girl of eighteen, walking down the street with an older women, had just been dragged away and torn to pieces by a wolf in the presence of her neighbors,

who could do nothing to save her. Sad comment upon the enfeebled condition of whole communities. [Page 29]

6. China's Saving Shower Finally Fell

Already the drought had lasted three, and in some places four years, and it almost seemed as though it never could rain again. But as summer wore on, great clouds began to gather, and at length all over Northern China the saving showers fell. Then the despairing survivors of those terrible years began to pluck up heart once more, and the missionaries redoubled their efforts, encouraging the people, and providing them with money for grain, that they might sow their fields and take advantage of the promise of better days.

But in many places even when the rain did come, it brought little or no relief, for men were too feeble to put seed into the ground; ploughs were no use without animals to draw them; and sometimes whole families had died out entirely, leaving the land without owners, and the villages without inhabitants. In one hamlet on fewer than seventeen families had become extinct, and out of fourteen hundred (Chinese) acres belonging to the village, only a little over a hundred could be put under cultivation when the rain came. For the rest of the people had no seed, and no strength to sow it even if it had been given them. The rain, however, saved the province. Wealthier people put in their crops, and the poor had wild herbs, grass, and weeds to mix with the bark and roots they were able to gather. They were a long way still from the edge of the wood; but the worst of the famine was over; and gradually hope returned to many a broken spirit. [Page 31]

7. Carry the Gospel to Every Nation of Shansi

Uppermost in all their thoughts that Christmastide was one supreme question: how to accomplish the task they had undertaken; how to carry the gospel to every creature in Shansi? They were a little company for so great a work. Eighty populous countries, with as many governing cities and numberless towns and villages, lay around them, waiting for the light. How were they to reach the millions of so large a district, and make known everywhere the message they had come to bring? [Page 32]

8. Distributing the Word of God as They Could

The missionaries were few, and could not possibly go everywhere, but they could visit the important cities, the governing centers of all the eighty districts, and leave in them these permanent witnesses for the truth. So Mr. Richards took the district north of the capital, and the China Inland Mission went south, and in every county town throughout the province they distributed Christian literature from house to house, each pamphlet with the address of the nearest place at which further information could be gained.

The blessing of God rested upon this systematic effort to spread a knowledge of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit, in many instances, followed the Word with His own life-giving power, and the missionaries were cheered by finding fruit after many days. [Page 33]

9. God's Clock Keep Perfect Time

Hsi at length look up to take him in with one swift, searching glance.

How much may be compress into a moment. A whole lifetime of prejudice and suspicion melted away from that proud, cold heart, like snow before the sunshine, with just one look into the quiet, radiant face of David Hill. Years afterwards, Hsi said of that moment:

“One look, one word, it was enough. As daylight banished darkness, so did Mr. Hill's presence dissipate all the idle rumours I had heard. All sense of fear was gone; my mind was at rest. I beheld his kindly eye, and remember the words of Mencius: ‘If a man's heart is not right, his eye will certainly bespeak it.’ That face told me I was in the presence of a true, good man.”

So after weary years, those two were brought to meet. Side by side they sat at last: the Confucianist, disarmed of all antagonism, friendly and satisfied; the missionary, his whole heart filled with sympathy and longing for the soul he had come so far to bless. “God's clocks keep perfect time.” Through all the years, the moment had been fixed, for that hopeless, opium-smoking Chinese, life would never be the same again; and for David Hill, to all eternity a star of singular brightness lit up the crown that he should lay at the Master's feet. [Page 43]

10. Don't Trust Opium, Trust Only God.

“Truly,” he would say “the opposition of evil spirits can only be met by the power of the Holy Ghost. Sooner or later, the man who is trusting in medicine is certain to go back, because the devil has not been driven out. If you would break off opium, don't rely on medical help, don't lean on man, but trust only in God.” [Page 53]

11. Called to Life of Service

From the time of the first prayer for the gift of the Spirit, Hsi made sure and rapid progress in the heavenly way. The power of opium was completely conquered, never again to return. But more than this, he seemed to be specially taught of God, and his growth in spiritual things was remarkable.

The Divine method of working in the soul, as in other realms, is often slow and gradual up to a certain point, and then extremely rapid. One day is sometimes with the Lord as a thousand years; and then a thousand years as one day. The day of the Lord has come in this man's life; and where a slow, negative process had been unfolding, a positive work now proceeded with great rapidity. Through all his early exercise of soul, his sense of vanity of life, his fear of death, and consciousness of sin, through all his searching for truth, his failure and disappointment, self-condemnation, and despair, a preparatory work has been accomplished. He had been more and more cut off from hope in himself or others, shut up to the light that was to dawn. And when at length that great Light rose upon him, his whole being responded, transfigured in a moment. Suddenly the man was caught up into the sphere of the kingdom and instantly and truly born into the family of God. [Page 54]

12. God Can Make Christians Out of Anyone

Too often there is a conventional sort of idea that because a man has been brought up in the midst of heathenism, with centuries of darkness and idolatry behind him, therefore, in the nature of things, it must take years before he can apprehend much of spiritual truth. We do not expect him to grasp what we can grasp, or rise so rapidly into the experience of divine things. As well one might argue that because Christianity has been in Europe now many centuries longer than the days of Paul, therefore, we are on a higher level and realize loftier spiritual attainment than he. Few mistakes can be more foolish and pernicious, and few more calculated to hinder the work of the Spirit of Truth. We need to be often reminded that all spiritual illumination is of God, and He is not limited in His working. He can make a Christian out of an unconverted Chinese just as easily and rapidly as of an unconverted European, moving directly on the spirit of the man. Did we but adequately realize this fact, we should pray more, while not preaching less; we should depend more, and with larger expectation, upon the Holy Spirit, and reverence more the mystery of the divine life in the soul of even the youngest child. [Page 54-55]

13. Hsi Wanted to Hasten Home With the Good News

Overflowing with new love and joy Hsi's first desire now was to hasten back to his own people with the glad tidings of the power of Christ to save. [Page 56]

14. A Big Change in Hsi's Life

And yet his wife was conscious of the great improvement that had taken place in her husband's appearance and temper. She had never seen him so bright and loving, quite and kind, before. Certainly something very strange had taken place. So for the time being the storm lulled, though it was far from over. Hsi took down all his idols and

burned them before returning to the city, and committed his house and family to the care of the living God. [Page 57]

15. The Princely Man

His appreciation of the character of *David Hill* deepened as the days went on. There was a gravity and dignity about Mr. Hill that entirely satisfied the scholarly instincts of his companion. For the first time in his life Hsi felt that he had found a living embodiment of the high Confucian ideal of “the Princely Man.” All that had seemed to him most excellent, though unattainable, he felt was realized in the life of his friend. And this gave Mr. Hill an unusual influence over him for good. [Page 57]

16. Conqueror of Demons

Never for a moment relying on his own sufficiency, but hidden in Christ, he went forth to real conflict, and real victory, and in faith in Him who overcame, he wished henceforth to be known as “Conqueror of demons.” [Page 58]

17. Mr. Hill Departing With Flowing Tears

“We dwelt together rather more than two months,” he records. “When Mr. Hill was taking his departure he could not restrain his flowing tears. I, also weeping, accompanied him outside the city to the north of the great bridge, and we parted. Returning, my heart was straitened as I thought of the people round in great darkness, like sheep without a shepherd; and I feared it would be extremely difficult to find another pastor like him.” [Page 60]

18. Hsi at Menial Pursuits

If the missionaries had bought his allegiance with large sums of money, as everyone believed, he at any rate managed to conceal the fact. Far from living in greater luxury or the idleness that became his position, Hsi had suddenly developed quite the opposite tenderness, and, forgetting the dignity of a scholar, was now frequently engaged in menial pursuits. Reasoned with, he simply replied that he was learning farming with a view to the better care of his estate. But whoever heard of a literary man hoeing in the fields, herding cattle, winning grain, or gathering fuel with his own hands? No doubt his home and farm were improving under the process, but what compensation could that offer for loss of social standing and the angry alienation of equals and friends? [Page 63]

19. Hsi's New Gentleness & Self-control

In the seclusion of their ancestral dwelling, the women of his household were first to appreciate the change. Though fully as prejudiced as the other circle of his acquaintance, they had better opportunities for judging as to the results of his new faith. "The mean one of the inner apartments," his gentle little wife, saw and felt most of all. Life had brought her grievous disappointments. To have no son, in China, is a calamity beyond thought; a cause for which many a woman is divorced or sold into slavery. And her only child, a boy, had died in infancy.

For long years her life had been shadowed with this sorrow and shame. But her husband was different from other man. He did not sell her, or take a second wife. Of course he was free to do so at any moment, and her heart often trembled at the thought. Quick-tempered and imperious even in his kindest moods, he was a man to be feared, and his outbursts of passion were terrible. But how wonderful the change coming over him: new gentleness, now, in all he said and did; new self-control and thoughtfulness for others; and toward herself unwonted affection, and strange solicitude that she should enter into his faith. [Page 63-64]

20. Little by Little Faith Won Its Way

Thus, little by little, the new faith won its way. A Chinese knows how to appreciate a good thing when he sees it, though it usually takes some time to open his eyes. And all the while Hsi was preaching as well as practicing the Gospel. Daily worship in his household grew into a little service, often attended by outsiders. Among his relatives not a few interested, and his wife and stepmother were almost ready to declare themselves Christians. [Page 68]

21. Persecution & Suffering Strengthen the True Believer

But as time wore on Hsi was distress to find that somehow these believers did not develop as he expected and desired. They were all right as long as everything went well, but as soon as trouble arose their faith seemed to waver and their hearts to grow cold. Nurture and care for them as he would, the little church never really flourished, and as years went by there came sad backslidings and deterioration. This was a keen sorrow to their ardent friends, and grew into one of the deepest lessons of his life.

At first he did not see it, and only very gradually the truth became clear to his mind. Not until after repeated occurrences of the same kind did the conviction come to him that persecution and trouble are allowed as a necessary test to prove whether people are willing to suffer for Christ's sake and walk in His ways when sacrifice is involved. Then he began to value such experiences at their true worth, as sifting and strengthening process that nothing can replace. In a word, he came to understand that

God knows how best to care for His own, and that what He allows of trial, we cannot afford to be without.

It was an important development, and, like many others, grew out of painful experiences overruled of God. With so much to learn as well as unlearn, he made many mistake at the beginning. But he was following on. And never heart responded more loyally to fuller knowledge of divine will. [Page 74]

22. Sharing the Sufferings of Christ

Another great truth that began to influence him early in his Christian experience, was one of the deepest yet was one of the simplest of all: the necessity and privilege of sharing the sufferings of Christ, if we would follow in His footsteps. To deny self and endure hardness for Jesus' sake, and in the service of others, seemed to him only the right and natural thing. And he was very practical about it. [Page 77]

23. Hsi's Deliverance from the Wolves on the Mountain Road

The service over, he was resting a little while before the homeward journey, when a poor man sought him out and begged him to go at once to the village of the White Mountain, to pray for a woman, dangerously ill, who wanted to hear of Jesus. The village was seventeen miles further on. No cart or animal had been provided. The road was lonely and somewhat dangerous. And no one was going home that way with whom he could travel.

But it never even occurred to him not to go.

Hour after hour, faint and solitary, he pressed on. At length evening fell, and he had only reached the rushing torrent three miles from the village. Very soon it was dark, and neither moon nor stars could be seen. Belated on that mountain road, he knew that travelers were exposed to the attack of hungry wolves grown fearless since the famine. And sure enough, as he stumbled on, he heard sounds that too plainly indicated their approach.

Yes, they were on his track. Nearer and nearer came the howling, until he knew that they were all around him in the darkness. But there was a Presence nearer still.

Falling on his knees in that moment of peril, Hsi cried out aloud to the Unseen Friend. He never knew what happened, or how he was delivered; but the next thing he was conscious of was silence, and that he was alone.

“Everything,” he records “grew strangely still. I know not where the wolves disappeared, or where they went. But they returned no more. Truly the Lord was my shield and my protector.”

A little later he reached the village, and had the joy of telling the glad tidings to the sick women and her friends, who probably had never seen a Christian before. What the result was in their lives we are not told. But the preacher himself never forgot that remarkable deliverance, nor the blessing that came to him in a service that involved some suffering. [Page 78]

24. A Lesson Learn From a Bad Fall

In his brief chronicle of these early days some incidents are recorded that to us may seem trivial, until we understand the intense sincerity of the man, and how all life, to him, was of one piece—no difference of secular, great or small, but God in all circumstances, and purpose of blessing in everything that affects His people. In the faith he saw deeper significance, in the details of life, and took little account of second causes, tracing everything to the will, or the permission, of the Father with whom alone he had to deal.

One evening, in the gloaming, he had gone to bring the cattle home. Passing along a steep hillside, probably absorbed in thought, his foot slipped and he was thrown down an embankment of considerable height. The accident was one that might easily have proved fatal, but strange to say he was little hurt. Climbing painfully up to the road again, instead of being annoyed by what had happened, he began to think over the circumstance and wonder what lesson it was meant to teach. There must be some purpose in it. “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” Why should his steps have been permitted to slide in so unexpected a way?

And then it came to him that he had not been watching the path as he walked along. He had been careless, and so fell into trouble. And how much more serious would spiritual declension be; the fall that would certainly result from carelessness in his walk with God. His heart was thoroughly awakened, and more that ever he sought to watch and pray as he travelled the heaven-ward road. [Page 78-79]

25. Seeking to Do God’s Will Always in All Things

On account of my onslaughts of Satan of wife and I for the space of three years seldom put off our clothing to go to sleep, in order that we might be the more ready to watch and pray. Sometimes in a solitary place, I spent whole nights in prayer: and the Holy Spirit descended. Frequently my mother noticed a light in our bedroom toward midnight, by which she knew that we were still waiting before our Heavenly Father.

We had always endeavored in our thoughts, words, and actions to be well pleasing to the Lord, but now we realized more than ever our own weakness; that we were indeed nothing; and that only in seeking to do God's will, whether in work or in resting, whether in peace or peril, in abundance or in want, everywhere and at all times relying on the Holy Spirit, we might accomplish the work the Lord had appointed us to do. If we had good success, we gave all the glory to our Heavenly Father; if bad success, we took all the blame ourselves. This was the attitude of our hearts continually. [Page 80]

26. Boy Killed & Eaten by Wolves. Parents Receive Comfort From Above

Then it was the blow fell, a sorrow so overwhelming that it seemed as if it must uproot their faith. How often such mysterious assaults are experienced by converts emerging from heathenism in lands "where Satan's seat is." The great enemy does not readily relinquish his hold. But, thank God, there is a place of refuge: "He that was begotten of God keepeth him, *and the evil one toucheth him not.*"

Fan was away from home. He had gone down a second time to visit the missionaries in Pingyang. His two remaining children were playing in the village, without a thought of danger, when suddenly a hungry wolf appeared as before, and carried off the boy, a little fellow of only five years old, killing and devouring him within sight of his father's door. The villagers were horror-stricken. His second son to meet a death so terrible! The drought truly had been averted, but the offender was again singled out as a mark for the vengeance of the gods.

Heart-broken, the parents wept together—both their boys taken from them, within six months of each other, by a tragedy so mysterious. To be without a son in China is the worst of all calamities, and added to this were the cruel reproaches of neighbors and friends. But they were not left alone in their sorrow. The cry of their hearts "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief," brought divine comfort to their aid.

Fan especially was lifted above the trial. "Let the devil harass if he will: *I know that Jesus saves,*" became his motto. [Page 96]

27. Hsi Takes up the Burden with Fan

By degree the missionaries in the city were less able to give personal supervision, and Fan came to count increasingly upon Hsi, who took up the burden with him, entering into every detail with keenest interest. He would talk and pray for hours with patients and inquirers, conduct serves, entertain visitors, comfort the suffering, and be ready with wise counsel in case of difficulty. Yet neither he nor Fan had any idea to what end all this was tending. [Page 99]

28. Hsi Develops a Pill to Aid in Opium Recovery

“The work is of God,” he replied. “Do not fear. Give the men what medicine you have left. I will go home and see what can be done.”

It was a long twenty miles that day, and most of the time was spent in prayer. For Hsi, too, it was a life crisis, though at the moment he did not know it. These men must be helped, and helped at once—that was the burden.

And God surely would give him light, for there seemed no one else to help them.

Already, in his suspense, the thought had come that possibly the Lord would use his knowledge of native drugs to enable him to compound a medicine that might take the place of the supply that had failed. It seemed a bold idea, but the more he considered it the more he felt encouraged. Thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, and by the time he reached home he was ready to make the attempt.

“With prayer and fasting,” he writes, “I waited upon the Lord, and besought Him to point out to me the proper ingredients, and to strengthen and help me, that I might prepare the pills quickly and carry them to the Refuge, that those who were breaking off opium might partake thereof and be at peace.

And them very simply, it all came to him just how those pills were to be made. The drugs were at hand in his store, and, still fasting, he took the prescription, compounded the medicine, and hastened back to the Refuge.

Then he and Fan together, assured that this remedy was of God, administered it to the patients. It proved an entire success, and with grateful hearts they gave Him all the praise.

The pills were just what was needed. Inexpensive and easily made, they could be produced in large quantities and at short notice. This entirely changed the aspect of opium refuge work. No longer dependent upon foreign supplies, why should not such effort be systematically developed and self-supporting? And to Hsi’s mind it raised the further question:

“Have we not here light upon the problem we have been pondering so long—How best to bring people everywhere under the influence of the Gospel, and provide employment for Christian men needing some means of subsistence?”

It all unfolded and developed in the most natural way. The key fitted the lock, opened the door, and gave access to a wide beyond of opportunity and promise. [Page 99-100]

29. Eleven Out of Every Ten Smoked Opium! Hsi's Pill Was Famous

Before long the anti-opium medicine prepared for the Refuge became deservedly famous. Fan was in difficulty to know how to accommodate all the patients seeking treatment. Hsi came over more often, staying days at a time to help in various ways. The work was financially and spiritually successful, and developed the men whose hearts were in it for larger efforts in days to come.

As to the need for such enterprise there could be no divergence of opinion in Shansi, where, according to common report, *eleven out of every ten smoked opium!*

For almost a century the fatal habit had been gaining ground in China. Fostered by foreign merchants, it had laid hold upon that immense population with astonishing rapidity. Every effort to prohibit the trade had proved unavailing, supported as it was by the strength of European arms. Compelled against their will to admit vast quantities of imported opium, the Government, in self-defense, at last relaxed the stringent laws forbidding the cultivation of the poppy on Chinese soil; with the result that everywhere rich tracts of wheat-producing land had been given up to the growth of opium. [Page 101]

30. Not Medicine Alone, But the Divine Deliverer.

For Hsi had no confidence in medical treatment alone to accomplish a permanent cure. From his own experience he was sure that a power more terrible than opium lay behind the fascination of the drug. Sin was to him the grip of the devil, and the opium-habit one of the strongest chains with which he binds the soul. Men of iron will might break even those fetters, but that would not free them from tyranny of Satan, and in nine cases out of ten they would return to the vice before long. Medicine was good: help and sympathy in the hour of need invaluable; but Hsi knew only one Deliverer, and He never failed. [Page 103]

31. Jesus Answered Prayer Immediately for That Old Man

It was indeed wonderful to see how immediate was the response that often followed those simple, childlike prayers. But to Hsi and his associates it seemed most natural, for—was it not prayer *in the name of Jesus?*

On one occasion, for example, three men came together from a neighboring village, begging to be taken into the Refuge. Hsi was there at the time as it happened, and was doubtful about receiving them on account of age. They were all advanced in years, the youngest being over sixty, and opium-smokers of long standing. But they were so eager to be curried that, finally, they were admitted, the principle of the Refuge having been made especially plain.

For the first day or two all went well, and the old men became much interested in the Gospel. But by the third evening one of them was feeling desperate, and during the night he called the others, begging them to rouse Hsi or Fan, and get something to relieve his agony.

“Why should we wait for that?” cried his friends. “It is not medicine you need. Kneel down, and let us pray.”

Only a poor room in that little village, far away in the heart of China, and three old men kneeling alone at midnight. Was He there, that wonderful Savior? Would He respond with ready succor as of old?

Tremblingly the cry went up in the darkness: “O Jesus, help me. Save me. Save me now.”

A few minutes later the sufferer was lying quietly wrapped in his wadded coverlet again. His groans ceased. His distress passed away. And in a little while he was fast asleep.

“Jesus truly is there,” whispered the others. And they too sleep till morning.

Then bright and early they were up, eager to tell their story, and with smiling faces accosted everyone they met:

“True? Why, of course it’s true! We know all about it. Your Jesus does indeed hear and answer prayer.”

They were overflowing with joy and confidence that proved contagious. And faith in many hearts was strengthened. For such testimony cannot be gainsaid.

[Page 103-104]

32. Miraculous Definite Prayer Answered

It was a time of progress and development in missionary work all over inland China. Seven years before, in September, 1876, the signing of the Chefoo Convention had thrown open the whole interior to the Gospel. Members of the China Inland Mission, ready and willing for this opportunity, set off at once for the far interior; travelling within three years thirty thousand miles on pioneer journeys, and preaching Christ for the first time in regions the most remote and inaccessible. Their work had been attended with blessing, and in Shansi, settled stations were beginning to spring up and little churches to be established in provinces hitherto wholly unevangelised.

So rapid had been the growth of the work that in all the new stations thus established by the Inland Mission reinforcements were sorely needed to enter widely-open doors.

Thus, early in 1882, definite prayer was commenced throughout the Mission for at least seventy new workers to be sent out within the next three years. "Other seventy also." They were needed, and they were given. And the prayer went up from all stations, and was so remarkably answered, did not a little to deepen the spiritual life of the missionaries in their isolation, and of the converts by whom they had come to be surrounded. [Page 111-112]

33. Baptism A Severe Ordeal for Chinese Christians

To the ladies themselves it involved no little self-denial. Accustomed to the secluded life of women of their position, whose only contact with the outside world is through the men to whom they belong, a journey of only ten miles to the city was serious undertaking. And then, there is no denying it, the ceremony of baptism by immersion is to the Chinese Christian, man or woman, a severe ordeal. For that very reason it had added value.

It makes confession of faith in Christ so much more real and definite, and draws a clear line of demarcation between inquirers and members of the Church. It costs something; but "for Jesus' sake" makes it well worthwhile. [Page 113]

34. Mrs. Han. "Doing What She Could."

Among the Christians up there at the time of Hsi's visit was one old lady with whom he would feel thoroughly at home. As in the case of his wife and mother, her baptism had been long delayed, and from a cause that must have specially appealed to him.

Converted a year or two before, her love and faith and the consistency of her Christian life were undoubted. And yet she never asked to be received into the Church, and seemed distressed when the subject of baptism was mentioned. This puzzled the missionary ladies, who could not think of any reason why Mrs. Han should hold back.

At length in a quiet talk one day the old lady unburdened her heart.

"Alas," she said wistfully, "if only I could be a true follower of Jesus, and be baptized."

"And why not?" questioned the missionary, much interested. "Is there anything to hold you back?"

"Me? Why of course there is," exclaimed the visitor sadly. "How could I be His true disciple? I could never accomplish the work."

“But what work,” said her friend kindly. “Did not Jesus do it all?”

“Oh yes! and I do love Him, and am trusting Him alone for salvation. But I know that the Lord Jesus said that His disciples were to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. Alas, I am not able to do that.

“I do love to tell of Him,” she went on as her missionary friend seemed for the moment unable to reply. “I have told my son and his wife, and all our neighbors, and in the summer time I can go to several villages near at hand. Oh, I am not afraid to tell of Jesus! It is not that.

“But I am old and feeble. I cannot read. My eyes are growing dim. And I can only walk a little way. You see it is impossible for me to go to foreign countries and preach the Gospel. If you had come earlier, when I was young—but now it is too late. I cannot be His disciple.”

With a full heart the missionary explained the meaning of the Savior’s words, and spoke of His perfect sympathy and keen appreciation of every act prompted by love to Him. He knew about the widow’s offering; and of another who was not able to serve Him much. “She hath done what she could.”

“*What she could.*” Was that what it meant? Oh, then, it might be after all! And the dear old lady could hardly wait till the following Sunday to be baptized. Full of joy in her privilege, she was one of the brightest members of the little church, and her earnestness in doing what she could was a frequent incentive to others. [Page 115-116]

35. Preaching the Gospel Is Like Sowing Seed

“The work the Lord has given me to do,” he said, “is not so much that of a sower casting forth his seed, as that of a fisherman drawing in his net. Preaching the Gospel far and wide is like seed-sowing. Helping men, one by one, to break off opium and believe in Jesus is like catching fish.” And this enterprise with skill and patience he devoted himself. [Page 119]

36. Backsliding & Division among the Christians

Thus, very early, men with mixed motives began to give trouble, supposing they could make a gain of godliness. But even the anxiety that came upon him in this way was secondary to the sorrow cause by backsliding and division among the Christians. For these things Hsi had hardly been prepared. Difficulties of all sorts from without he expected, as part of the natural opposition of the devil; but grievous failure and

dissensions within were heart-breaking indeed. Already he was learning to bear, in some measure, the apostolic burden: “the care of all the churches.” [Page 120]

37. Some Follow, Some Fall Away. No Need for Disquietude and Alarm

Has it not always been so, not excepting the life-experience of our Lord Himself?—at first many followers, eager attention, enthusiasm kindled by wonderful doings, bringing benefit of a material character apparent to all; a time of general ingathering: then, as the conditions of discipleship are better understood, a period of trial and elimination; “Many went back and walked no more with him”: but always a precious residuum left, the gold shining more brightly for the fires; “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations.”

This principle, so clearly taught in our Lord’s own parable, if rightly apprehended, will prove of great value in missionary service; steadying the soul against overwhelming discouragement, as one and another are found to be unstable, and the suggestion comes: “Alas! this cannot have been the work of God, or it would never have ended in failure such as this.”

But is it really failure, or only a necessary stage in progress? No strength of Christian character can be obtained without discipline. For every man who will really follow Jesus, there is a cross. Some of whom we have had the brightest hope are sure to fall away under these searching tests. But “He shall not fail nor be discouraged.” There is no need for disquietude and alarm. [Page 120-121]

38. A Fresh Advance

With increasing responsibilities Hsi felt increasingly the need for prayer. From the first he had been prayerful. But now the customary hour, morning and evening, and daily seasons of public worship, he found to be insufficient. Longer, more quiet times were needed for waiting upon God, that His mind might be made known and His fullness received. Indeed, therefore, of allowing his work to drive him, and absorb his time and thoughts, he deliberately set everything aside for hours and sometimes days or nights of prayer—often with fasting. At these times it was he usually obtained new thoughts and plans for the work, and fresh visions of God’s faithfulness, as well as a deeper consciousness of his own insufficiency. [Page 139]

39. Mrs. Hsi Gave Her Jewellery So Hochow Could Have the Gospel

For months Hsi had wished to open a Refuge in this city [Hochow], but his hands were full of other work and his funds taxed to the uttermost.

Still he prayed for Hochow, not less burdened about its needs because for the time being he could do nothing else to help. Every morning at family worship he remembered the city, definitely asking that God would send workers there.

At length Mrs. Hsi full of sympathy, came to him and said:

“We have prayed a long while for Hochow. Is it not time to *do* something? Why not send men and open a Refuge there as at Chaocheng and other places?”

“Gladly would I,” replied her husband. “But such work is costly, and we have no money in hand.”

“How would be needed?” inquired the little lady. “Thirty thousand cash? That is indeed a large sum.” And she forthwith went her way.

But Mrs. Hsi could not forget the need of Hochow, and all day long she kept wondering there were not something she could do to send glad to that city. But thirty strings of cash! At one time she might have managed it. But now she had so little of any value remaining. And yet she did long that those people might hear of Jesus .

Next morning Hsi prayed again for Hochow, pleading its need before the Lord, and asking that soon it might be possible to open a Refuge there. The little service ended, Mrs. Hsi instead of leaving the room as usual, walked up to the table, and laying a little package before her husband, said quietly:

“I think perhaps the Lord has answered our prayers.

Wondering what she could mean, Hsi lifted the parcel. It was heavy, and folded in several wrappings. At length, inside a colored handkerchief, he found to his surprise a complete set of all the jewellery a Chinese woman value most—the gold and silver ring and bracelets, the handsome hairpins, ear-rings, and other ornaments from her husband’s wedding-gift.

With tear-dimmed eyes he looked at his wife, understanding now the change in her appearance. The adornment of a married woman in her position were all gone. No rings were on her fingers, no silver hairpins showed below the dark braids of her hair which was simply tied with cord and fastened with a strip of bamboo.

“It’s all right,” she answered gladly, to his half remonstrance, *“I can do without these. Let Hochow have the Gospel.”*

Hsi took the gift that meant so much, and with it a Refuge was opened that soon became a center of light and blessing in the city. Numbers of patients were successfully treated, and before long a work was established that grew into a regular mission station which continues to this day. [Page 143-144]

40 Difficulties Increase Faith

The very stress of circumstances kept him much cast upon God; and difficulties of which there were many, served but to strengthen faith. [Page 144]

41. Hsi Tended To Be Too Masterful At Times

Yet it must be supposed that he was perfect, or without the defects of his valuable qualities. On the contrary, with all his faith and devotion, he was intensely human. Through the Divine Spirit was manifestly working his heart, there had not yet been time for him to recognize all his failings, much less to overcome them. And those failings, as with most strongly marked character, were very apparent.

For one thing, Hsi was a **born leader**, and could not but feel it. Others felt it also, and in spite of his tendency to be too masterful at times, were ready to follow him anywhere. This weakness, however gave rise to a good deal of friction that might have been avoided. But he deeply felt his need of more humanity, the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and prayer for it accordingly. [Page 144-145]

42. He Is Able—God Can—

“What strong consolation we find,” wrote Stanley Smith, “in the three little words, ‘He is able.’ It is grand to change the unbelieving question ‘Can God?’ into a triumphant ‘*God can,*’ and so lay hold on His might. Strong thus in the Lord, we are ready for the conflict; able to stand against all the wiles of the devil; able to withstand in the evil day, able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. [Page 155]

43. A Man of Purpose, Not Wasting Time on Side Issues

Years later, in a conversation with the writer, Mr. Stevenson recalled the impressions made in contact with Hsi during those summer days at Pingyang.

“No, he was not much to look at. But one could not be in his presence an hour without knowing that he was a man with a purpose, a message, living for eternity. Something about his eyes made you feel—here is clearness of conviction and tremendous intensity.

“There was nothing dull or slow-going about him. He was bright in manner; always busy; seeing everything; and punctilious in his courtesy. But there was no trifling in presence, no wasting time on side questions. He was a man of one idea, and that the greatest that can absorb the soul. To him God was a reality. In everything and always, he dealt with God. The passion of his life was—saving souls.”

“Did you see much of him?”

“Yes, although it was wheat harvest. He came over several times, and stayed for days together at Pingyang. We had many long conversations. I heard him preach also, repeatedly, for we had meetings every night, as well as daily Bible study with the Christians. Where he was there was no letting the grass grow under one’s feet. I watched him too in the management of practical affairs, and the more I saw of him the more I was impressed by his grace, wisdom, and ability.” [Page 163-164]

44. Hsi and His Power in Prayer

“And you had prayer together?”

“It was impossible to be with Hsi without having prayer. His first instinct in everything was to turn to God. Long before daylight, those summer mornings, I used to hear him in his room across the courtyard, praying and singing by the hour together. Prayer seemed to be the very atmosphere of his life, and he expected and received the most evident answers.

Traveling with him on one occasion, we reached a little inn, and I remember a poor woman coming to him with a child in her arms who was ill and in great suffering. The people used to come to him like that everywhere. They knew he was a man of God and could help them. It was most remarkable how naturally they gathered around him with their troubles, taking it for granted that his time and sympathy were at his disposal. This mother, for example, came in great distress, as soon as she knew that he was in the inn.

“Hsi rose at once to meet her. ‘It is all right,’ he said, ‘don’t be troubled. The little one will be better directly.’ There and then he took the child in his arms and prayed for his recovery. The woman, greatly comforted, went away. And a few hours later I saw the little fellow running about, apparently quite well and happy. One got accustomed to such things, with Hsi.

“One scene I will never forget. It was after the conference at Pingyang. Hsi was still there, and a number of Christians. Late at night, Mr. Cassels called me out to see what was going on. I went with him, quietly, to the front courtyard. As we drew near we heard the sound of weeping, and voices pleading in low tones. There they were, dear fellows, a whole lot of them, down upon their knees, with Hsi in the midst, crying to God for the conversion of loved ones, relatives and friends at home. Many were weeping. And the earnestness and simplicity of those prayers in the power of the Holy Spirit was most remarkable and touching.

“They believed in prayer, intercessory prayer. It would have been very little use to try and convince them that such prayer was only a sort of spiritual athletics, the benefit of

which was purely subjective. They knew too well its power in the lives of those for whom they prayed, as well as in their own. [Page 164-165]

45. Hsi Was a Natural Shepherd

“As a preacher, what were his chief characteristics?”

“He was fearless and convincing, preaching even on the street with great boldness. His style was cultured, and most interesting. He always used plenty of good Chinese illustrations; but even in addressing heathen audiences, he rarely referred to the classics. His one weapon was the Word of God. The people loved to hear him, heathens as well as Christians; he could hold them for hours. His sermons were chiefly expository, and I was often surprised at the way he unfolded the truth, bringing new meanings to light. I heard him give one address on temptation that was most remarkable—the temptations of Christ. The solemn impression remains with me to this day.

“But it was as a pastor he excelled, he was so naturally the shepherd. People opened their hearts to him; and he was so vigilant in his solicitude for their spiritual welfare. I was specially struck with this. He had everybody’s burdens to bear. [Page165-166]

46. Hsi Appointed Superintending Pastor of the Three Districts

But the question still remained of the appointment of a pastor for Hungtung and the surrounding district. No one of course was thought of but the man whom God had used to found and carry on the work. But though only an elder, nominally, of the Pingyang church, Hsi was already occupying a far wider sphere. To ordain him pastor of Hungtung only, would have been to curtail his influence rather than increase it. For, as a matter of fact, he was serving the Christians in very much that relation, all over both districts, and to some extent west of the river as well. He occupied quite a unique position: “Our Shepherd,” as the people loved to call him. After prayer and consideration, therefore, it was decided to recognize this and appoint him officially as *Superintending Pastor* of the three districts, that all the church might have benefit of his ministry and supervision. This would leave him free to go where he was needed, and allow the widest scope for future developments.

But no sooner was this decided on, than an unexpected difficulty arose. For Hsi himself, when informed of the appointment, drew back, and repeatedly declined to accept the position.

“Full of weakness and failing myself,” he persisted, “how should I assume oversight of all the churches? Better leave to experienced foreign teachers duties so responsible as this.”

Requested to consider the matter, he gave himself, as usual in time of perplexity, to prayer and fasting. But still he could not get beyond the thought of his unfitness for the post. At length Mr. Stevenson came to him and said:

“Brother Hsi, how can you decline this position? God Himself has called you to it, and used you already for years in the very work you shrink from now. It is not a question of a new departure, but simply the open recognition of what He is doing, and has already done.”

This way of putting it carried conviction. “Why,” thought Hsi, “what the Senior Pastor says is certainly true. The Lord has enabled me to care for these little churches from the very beginning. If He pleased to work through me still, and more widely, how can I refuse?”

Thus the difficulty was conquered, and throwing himself upon divine enablement, Hsi accepted the position that he knew must involve so much. Experience had already taught him that true leadership in the Church of God means eminence in cross-bearing, in service, in self-denial. “The signs of an Apostle” repeatedly adduced by Paul in proof of his call to the ministry, had acquired for him too not a little reality and meaning. But to the heart cry, “Who is sufficient for these things?” he was learning the answer, “Our sufficiency is of God.” [Page 170-171]

47. Pray & Receiving Young Unmarried Ladies for Mission Work in Hochow

Many matters had to be discussed during these busy days; questions of self-support for the church with its newly ordained pastor; of the financial basis and the extension of the Refuge work; and the best way of spreading far and wide the knowledge of the Gospel. Uppermost in Hsi’s mind was a desire he now expressed to Mr. Taylor for a new development in one important direction. At the capital he had seen on his recent visit a phase of missionary work that interested him deeply. For there, not only the wives of missionaries were laboring among the women and children of the city, but also young unmarried ladies, free to devote all their time to schools and evangelistic work. This was just what we needed, and ever since had longed and prayed for such workers in his own district. But so far none had been forthcoming.

“They are so badly needed. Now at Hochow for example—“

“Ah, tell me all about Hochow,” interposed Mr. Taylor, “Was not the station opened by a special gift in answer to prayer?”

“Yes,” responded Hsi. “Did the circumstance come to your knowledge, so far away?”

Assuredly it did. And I praise God for the love that prompted the offering.

Then turning to his gentle host, “Did you not find it difficult,” he added, “to part with all your jewelry, even the things that had been a marriage dower?”

“Oh, no, not difficult,” was the immediate answer; “It was for Jesus’ sake.”

“And the work of the station,” continued her husband, “has been most encouraging. Already there are twenty men converted there. But also no women. Our hearts are often sad as we think of the suffering and darkness of homes all around us, and we long for missionary ladies to reach the women there, and in every city, with the love of Jesus.”

“But how can this be done?” asked Mr. Taylor. “The married missionaries are few, and all occupied in other stations.”

“Yes we have thought of that. We could not ask that they should leave their labors. But if you, honored sir, would trust us with the care of two or more single ladies, the problem for Hochow would be solved in the happiest manner.”

“We would love and look after them,” interposed Mrs. Hsi. “And among the women of that district they would have such an opportunity for telling of the Savior!”

“But it is hard for young, unmarried women to leave home, and the love of their parents and friends, to live alone in a Chinese city like that—contrary to the prejudices of your people as well as our own.”

“Our women would soon understand,” eagerly replied Mrs. Hsi. “Of course it would be difficult; more perhaps than we realize. But do you not think there might be found one, or even two, who for the love of Jesus would be willing; that the women of Hochow might have the Gospel?”

Much moved, Mr. Taylor promised to see what could be done; and special prayer was made that the Lord would Himself choose and send before long at least two missionary ladies for that city. This prayer was graciously answered in the closing months of the year. [Page 176-177]

48. The Long Journey Back to the Coast

Then came the final preparation for the long journey, ten weeks or more, back to the coast. It was late in the afternoon when Mr. Taylor and his party set out, choosing to travel at night rather than in the dust and heat of the day. Quite a company left the

village with them, reluctant to say farewell. And it was not until the “Venerable Chief Pastor” would let them go no farther, that they could be persuaded to turn back. But even then Hsi would not leave him. Many thoughts were in his heart; many questions; many longings: and together, mile after mile over the silent plain, they went on. [Page 178]

49. Jesus Is the Same, For Us as For Them

As the moon rose over the mountains he could see village after village, wrapt in silence, where men and women were living, dying, in the dark. And just out of sight lay scores of towns and cities, and beyond them hundreds more, full of suffering, and sin. Never had he felt so much before, the need, the opportunities. Never had he been so conscious of his own need—of God.

“Remember them that had the rule over you (*or that are the guides*) which spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, *imitate their faith*. Jesus Christ is the same; yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

“Jesus Christ is the same.” The same for us as for them. They pass: but He remains. What matter then the unutterable need; the loneliness; the longing? Launch out into the deep. “*Jesus Christ is the same.*” [Page 179]

50. Rather Would We Die Than Part with Jesus

And in that lovely hamlet the missionaries were deeply touched to find such faith and love. Many of the inquirers were anxious to be baptized, and their answers to the questions were put by Mr. Stevenson were most interesting. When it was pointed out to them that faithfulness to Christ would surely involve persecution, and might even mean laying down life itself, one and another eagerly responded, “Rather would we die than part with Jesus.” And, as time was to prove, it was no empty boast. [Page 182]

51. People Who Loved the Lord Preached the Gospel

There was much in outward circumstances to encourage. Everything opened brightly. Full of hope and enthusiasm, Mr. Stanley Smith and Mr. Hoste threw themselves into the work of their new station, ably reinforced by the native Christians. It was no question of “employment”; so much work for so much pay. There were no salaries. People who loved the Lord preached the Gospel just because they could not help it. And the earnestness and devotion of the young missionaries did much to encourage this spirit. [Page 184]

52. The Plea for Foreign Shepherds from the Cities

Someone was needed to take up the work and carry it forward; to follow the Spirit's leading, seeking to strengthen and develop the workers. He was using and deepen in all the life He had begun to impart. Hsi had keenly felt this need, rejoiced in the coming of missionary colleagues able to supply the lack of service. And the people most cordially joined in the welcome.

“Oh, foreign shepherds, do come and live with us,” was everywhere the cry. “Stay in our village and teach us. We need you more than they do in the city.” [Page 184-185]

53. Heathen People Began Singing the Spiritual Songs

The Christians of the district were intensely found of singing, a happy proclivity that the young missionaries turned to good account. In their own quarters at Hungtung, on their journeys in all directions, and in homes wherever they went, they kept the people singing. Hsi had done a good deal on these lines already, and his hymns were deservedly popular. To the best of these Mr. Stanley Smith added others from various sources, with songs and choruses of his own. The collection grew into a nice little volume, and met a long-felt need. So much was it appreciated that fully a thousand copies were purchased that winter, and the hymns were sung everywhere with enthusiasm, until outside heathen people began to pick them up. [Page 186]

54. Many Aims Native and Others European Extraction Put in Chinese Dress

The tunes were in many cases as original as the hymns. Pastor Hsi was himself always singing. Many of the aims he adopted were of native origin; and others, European by extraction, “had their heads shaved like the missionaries and were put in Chinese dress.” These naturalized melodies took wonderfully with the people. Hsi had also his own way of leading. He loved to pitch the tune as high as possible, and keep them up to a good swinging pace. There was nothing dull or drowsy about the Hungtung services when he was present. And the same tune of cheerfulness pervaded the message in the Refuge and elsewhere. [Page 187]

55. God Gives the Increase

“Truly,” said Hsi at length, “it is God that gives the increase. While we are ready to faint through many afflictions, He is working out in new and unexpected places His purposes of grace. The Lord is never weary and never discouraged. Oh, that we may more closely walk with Him. [Page 217-218]

56. The Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven:

We open our own doors or shut them. And the solemn word, “I give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,” is more true for all of us, in daily life, than we sometimes realize. We make our new opportunities. And Christlike deeds, prompted by His own Spirit, open closed hearts to Christ. [Page 224]

57. God Directs All Things Well

Many difficulties beset Hsi’s pathway during these busy years in which he was bearing the burden and the heat of the day. But what are difficulties? Are they not, to the man who prays, simply occasions for proving afresh the faithfulness of God? “I never feel burdened,” said Hudson Taylor, when he was carrying the care of a Mission numbering hundreds of workers mainly dependent upon him, under God, for guidance and supplies.

“Here I set in my little room” wrote John Evangelist Gossner, under similar circumstances: “I cannot go hither and dither to arrange and order everything; and if I could, who knows if it would be well done? But the Lord is there, who knows and can do everything; and I will give it over to Him, and beg Him to direct it all, and order it after His holy will. And then my heart is light and joyful, and I believe and trust that He will carry it all nobly out.” [Page 225]

58. Hsi Made Sure of His Standing, Never Going Back

Hsi went steadfastly forward; laying each difficulty before the Lord, as it arose; seeking His guidance at every step, and then counting unwaveringly upon it; daily and hourly cast upon God by needs he had no power to meet, but always finding His grace, His power sufficient.

The steadfastness of conviction and conduct was one of Hsi’s strong characteristics. He was cautious, unusually so. He made very sure of his ground to begin with. But when once he was satisfied as to the guidance of God, he was prompt in action and unfaltering in spirit. He moved carefully, but one may almost say he never went back. [Page 226]

59. His Habits Were the Simplest

With the most careful management and economy, it was not easy to make ends meet; and as in the early years, Hsi had now and then to part with personal possessions to provide for some pressing need. His own habits were of the simplest. The silks and furs of former days had long since disappeared. He now wore plain, blue cotton

garments; cotton, instead of satin shoes; and wadding did duty for comfortable fur lining in winter. [Page 231]

60. He Traveled and Witnessed Ten of Twelve Month a Year

“In labors more abundant” he was now often away from home for weeks or months together, visiting the Refuges and superintending church affairs throughout his wide district. On the cover of his cart, as he traveled from place to place, he had the sentence, “Holy Religion of Jesus” in large, red characters, to draw attention and afford an opening for conversation on spiritual things. For the same reason he often wore across the front of his outer garment the six characters, *Je-su chiang shi chiu ren*: “Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Wherever he went he embraced every opportunity for talking with fellow-travelers and preaching Christ in the town and villages he pass through. Many a Christian in Shansi was first led to an interest in the Gospel through a word thus spoken by the wayside, in some tea-shop, or in an inn at night, by the tired, travel-strained man who was never too weary to tell of the love of Jesus.

During later years he was away from home as much as ten months out of twelve, traveling and working thus. He used his own conveyance less then than formerly, and on long journeys, to save expense, travelled like any poor man of the district, walking half the time, and engaging a donkey for a stretch here and there, wherever one was available. Some of his Refuges were in remote places, and many of the hamlets he visited were hidden away among the mountains. Thus his journeys were often difficult and lonely, and he had to carry his own belongings many a weary mile. On these out-of-the-way roads there were often no inns, or only those of roughest description. But he was content to be “as the Master,” and put up cheerfully with poor accommodation and still poorer fare. Many a half-sleepless night he had to spend amid crowding, discomfort, and dirt. He was never a strong man physically, but it was wonderful how the Lord sustained him amid great and constant hardship.

At home, between his journeys, he was always busy; teaching and training his men; attending to correspondence, accounts, medicine-making, and all the business details that had to be kept right; discharging his pastoral duties in the Hungtung district; conducting weddings and funerals, or visiting the sick and dying.

“You are always hard at work,” said a visitor.

“Yes,” he replied. “One cannot be diligent overmuch in the Lord’s harvest field. But my heart is always at leisure.” [Page 234-235]

61. Hsi Seemed to Have a Bodily Strength Not His Own

One remarkable feature of his life, during these busy years, was the energy and endurance he manifested under long-continued strain, both mental and physical. “I always felt,” said Mr. Hoste, who was with him constantly, “that Hsi had a bodily strength not his own. He was a man whom God specially sustained for the work He had given him to do. I have known him walk thirty miles at a stretch, in case of need; quite a remarkable feat for a man of his age and training; and after fasting entirely for two days, he was able to baptize by immersion as many as fifty men at one time.”
[Page 240]

62. Hsi Fasted to be Able to Pray More Effectively in the Spirit.

This was partly due to a well-balanced temperament. For Hsi was an unusual combination of faith and practical wisdom; intense devotion and common sense. There was nothing of the ascetic about him, and yet he constantly resorted to fasting. This was not of any idea of mortifying the flesh, but simply with a view to the furtherance of the gospel. He found that in times of difficulty, his prayers were more in the power of the Spirit, and more effectual, when he was fasting than otherwise. But under ordinary circumstances, he could enjoy a good dinner and would take it gladly. In the same way he appreciated nice clothing and comfortable surroundings. He recognized that God has given these and many other beautiful things, richly to be enjoyed, and that there is no virtue in going without them for its own sake. But with him the supreme question was:

“How can I make the very most of myself, my time, my resources, for the extension of the Kingdom of God?”

With unfaltering determination he subordinated everything to this end, and shaped his whole life in view of eternity—his own, and that of other souls. [Page 240-241]

63. Hsi Knew When Special Temptation Was At Hand & Prayer Was Needed

“I often know,” Hsi would say, “when special trials or temptation is at hand. I become so weak in the body, that it is necessary to stop whatever I am doing, and cry to the Lord.”

This was no unusual experience. In the midst of the day’s work, even when absorbingly engaged in business matters, his strength seemed unaccountably to ebb away. It was not faintness exactly; but overpowering weakness, with a sense of great apprehension. There was nothing to be done. Rest and food did not relieve it.

But prayer always did. And usually it transpired that prayer had been especially needed just at that time, to prepare for some exigency in the work. So often was this case that Hsi came to regard the experience as a call to prayer, and always gave himself to waiting upon God until it passed away. Sometimes no indication followed of what the danger had been; but more often it came to light, and he was able to praise God for deliverance. [Page 242]

64. Mrs. Hsi Grew & Became His Faithful Counterpart Things

It had not always been so. In earlier years, when he was an opium-smoking Confucianist, the usual wrangling and bitterness prevailed. Mrs. Hsi, though bright and attractive, was narrowed down to the ordinary routine of a Chinese woman's life. She could not read, much less write, and was in no sense the equal of her lord and master. But when the great change came, the reality of his conversion was attested by earnest desire for her enlightenment. And when she too was brought to Christ, a new home-life began. Eager to understand the Bible, she soon learned to read. Other books followed. Her mind matured rapidly, and before long she was her husband's efficient colleague behind the scenes.

It was a wonderful development, just one of the countless, priceless blessings enfolded in the Gospel. But even then, and for many years during which they were growing in grace, Hsi was tried and humiliated by a tendency to jarring that it seemed nothing could conquer. He could keep his temper and control his natural irritability with almost anyone else. But with her—! How was it? Why could he not overcome? It seemed all the more strange because he truly loved her, and she was devoted to him. Few things are more humbling to a Christian who really seeks to live near the Lord, than failure in this direction; and certainly had one good effect, in keeping Hsi from pride of his heart in a very practical way. He prayed about it constantly. Alone and together they cried to God for grace; and by degrees the difficulty was so completely conquered that their lives became a consistent testimony to the power of God in this respect.

As time went on Mrs. Hsi grew in faith and devotion, and came to take her place more and more independently in his work. From superintending domestic affairs, she rose to the full charge of everything, indoors and out, during her husband's absences from home. With a household of fifty or sixty people, patients to care for, medicines to compound, Sundays services to be kept up, as well as daily instruction of workers in training for the Refuge, it was no small responsibility. But she was a calm, clearheaded little woman, with a quiet way of managing people and things that was effective. And she was a woman of prayer. While intensely loyal to her husband's wishes, she was by no means pliable in his hands. And he came increasingly to value her judgment in important matters. As they drew nearer to the Lord, they became more dear to one

another; and absorbed in living for His service, they lost sight of little things that had been trying between themselves. [Page 245-246]

65. Hsi's Judgment Was Wise & Timely

And just there Hsi's wise judgment, under the guidance of God, came to prevent what might have been a serious mistake. It is no use pushing people beyond their capacity, or hurrying them into responsibilities for which they are not prepared. [Page 248]

66. Hsi Was a Practical Man

Hsi was practical and thorough, and was concerned about doing well, as well as doing much. [Page 248]

67. Dear Old Pastor Sung, Spiritual of Many

Here from the doorway of the women's room we can see to better advantage, and it is not quite so hot as in the kitchen. What a bright, interesting scene it is. Such greetings, laughter, friendly conversation; such busy preparations for the meal! Mats are spread under the awning, upon which, grouped around little tables, the older men are seated; and the rest, supplied with basins and chopsticks like ourselves, sit comfortably on the ground, or perch on the steps of the side house. And there, in the midst of them all, under the spreading vine, is *dear old Pastor Sung*, manager of the Refuge, and spiritual father of almost everyone in this company.

What a picture he makes, surrounded as with a halo by their loving reverence, seated on that low wooden bench, with the flowers behind him and the cool green leaves overhead, his face all aglow as he looks from one to another of his large, happy family. Dear old man, small, spare, and stooping, with a little whitey-brown queue, and strongly marked, benevolent face: dear old wonderful man, who, without learning or special gifts, simply by the power of the Holy Spirit in his loving heart, has drawn all these to Jesus—he is worth coming to China to see. [Page 252-253]

68. Hsu's Praise for Hsi, the Old Pastor

“Let me tell you,” Hsu continues. “For I was saved here and I know. It is all his love that does it, by the grace of God”; and the young man put his arms around the old Pastor, to whose eyes the tears have come. “He not only preached for us, He lives it. He cares for his patients with a mother's tenderness, night and day. He cheers them when they are sick and troubled; reading, talking, singing to them; never leaving them till they are better.

And best of all he prays for them, often with long fasting: and his prayer have real power. The more miserable and degraded the sufferer, the more his heart goes out to him with the very love of God. Do you wonder we poor hopeless, helpless opium-smokers respond with all our hearts—“this Gospel truly is good: we too would believe.” [Page 256]

69. Everything Has a Great Truth Underlying It

All this reads quaintly to our Western ears, but it illustrates the way in which Hsi carried his Christianity into daily life. There were no unimportant matters with him. “Everything has a great truth underlying it,” was one of his characteristic sayings. He believed that the highest principle should be applied on the smallest details of everyday affairs, and that the true state of the heart shows itself in just these little things. It is a deeply earnest view of life, and means, “whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Thus it is possible to be *filled* with the Spirit; because nothing is kept back from His control. Hsi was remarkable for discernment in the matter of character, that amounted almost to intuition; and his judgment of those with whom he had to deal was largely based upon such indications. [Page 261]

70. The Middle Eden, Christianity at Work

It was the genuine consistency in little things that gave his own life its practical power. For he was more strict with himself than with anyone else; and strove, unremittingly, to attain the ideals he set for others. At the same time there was nothing forbidding about his presence. Children loved him. He had a genuine sense of humor, and a pleasant laugh. Genial and bright at all times, he was specially so at home, and to none did he give himself freely than to the members of his own household. In later years he adopted the precaution of receiving those who wished to come to him, for a probationary three months to begin with. This conquered many difficulties, and made matters work more smoothly all around. But though his requirements were rigorous—no fairs, theatricals, wine, smoking, gossip, or resting in the daytime—few, if any, desired to leave The Middle Eden at the close of that period. They had found practical Christianity at work in a Chinese home, and were glad to be under its loving, wholesome influence. [Page 261-262]

71. Hsi Prayed About Everything Day By Day

Hsi prayed about everything; seeking the help of God in business matters and family life just as simple and confidently as in spiritual things. He believed, for example, that the Lord understood farming much better than he did, and was truly interested in the care of his land and crops as in ordering of the spheres. Just as the greatest ruler on earth, if he were a father, would be sure to care for the needs of his little one no less than for affairs of state. And our Father is infinite: that is, without any limitations. So Hsi

prayed “without ceasing,” because he prayed about all things, from moment to moment, day by day. [Page 263]

72. Pastor Hsi Was Multi-Talented, Godly Man Much in Demand

It was a busy life he led, especially at The Middle Eden. His many-sided ability made him always in requisition. Whatever was going on, if he was anywhere within reach, “Our Pastor” was sure to be wanted. He could cook a good dinner; cut a coat nicely, set to the making of a complete suit of garments, inner and outer; or a pair of shoes that would fit without pinching. To eminent capacity for directing large operations, he added an unusual mastery of detail. And all that he was, or by the grace of God would be, was at the disposal of every one he could help.

It was a great change, most noticeable to those who had known him from the beginning. Not to override others, but to bear their burdens; not to rule, but to serve, had become his ideal. For had not his Master said: “I am among you as he that serveth.” In later years he was much impressed with the thought that just as God in Christ had laid down His life for us, “we ought,” not we may, but *ought* “to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

And this seemed to him to apply to little things as well as great. Was not the Lord Jesus always laying down His life for others, long before He came to the cross?

In the matter of time, for example, the way in which he patiently submitted to the most trying interruptions, was just part of the spirit. Burdened though he was with serious responsibilities, he was always to the disposal of those who came to him with even the smallest need. His time was thus constantly broken in upon, and he had to make it a matter of prayer that the Lord would save him from unnecessary distractions. But when the call came, he would respond at once; not with remonstrance, but in a loving, sympathetic spirit; even if it were some needless question of a blundering helper, or the outpouring of a mother’s anxious care. Of course he tried, as far as possible, to organize the work so that each department should be carried on by its own responsible head.

But there were all the extra things that could not be foreseen and provided for, and all the personal difficulties that could be brought to no one else. [Page 266-267]

73. Hsi Longed For Prayer Time & His Testimony

“It was really wonderful,” said Mrs. Hoste, after the close observation of years. “He used often to remind me of Mr. Hudson Taylor in this respect. Amid all the press of work that was upon him, really important affairs claiming attention, his patience and courtesy toward even the most unreasonable intruder, seemed unflinching. He was

deeply imbued with the spirit, the conviction, that he really was their servant for Christ's sake, and that so it ought to be.

At the same time, he felt these interruptions keenly, and longed for more leisure that he might give himself to prayer and spiritual ministry. Toward the close of 1894, he wrote:

During the fifteen years that have elapsed since I first believed in the Lord Jesus, I have sometimes been engaged in leading the Christian of our Middle Eden in farming, sometimes in helping to cook in the kitchen, in preparation for a feast; sometimes in assisting with manufacture of our medicines; sometimes even in domestic work; as well as traveling from province to province arranging for the Refuges, preaching and healing diseases, or assisting to govern the affairs of the Church. All the year round I am exceeding busy: and in consequence of this have come very far short of my duties toward the churches at Pingyang and in the Taning district, so that I am not worthy to be called their pastor.

I humbly beg all the foreign missionaries and native pastors to pray for me, beseeching the Lord to grant me more helpers, who will be able to undertake the response of my household and Refuge matters, in order that I may give myself unremittingly to prayer and the preaching of the Gospel. This is what my heart truly longs for. Amen.

[Page 268]

74. Old Li, A Great Man & Preacher For the Lord

Numbers were healed of all sorts of troubles, among whom not a few gave their hearts to the Lord. Later on a Refuge was opened under Hsi's direction, which became a center for the Christians and inquirers. Old Li was put in charge, and many a man saved from opium-smoking bears witness to his loving, skilful service. It was so characteristic of his spirit that he would receive no payment even for this exacting work. At first, in connection with the Refuge, he did draw a small salary. But one Sunday at Hungtung, he heard Hsi preach a sermon on the sin of "covetousness, which is idolatry" in the sight of God. This greatly disquieted the old man; and rather than run any risk of even appearing to serve the Lord for money, he refused from that time forward to take a single cash in the way of remuneration. He could afford to trust his Heavenly Father for daily bread; but not at any price could he afford to grieve Him.

When it became necessary to organize a little church in that district, there was no question as to who should be put in charge as deacon. Li felt very keenly the responsibility of this new office, and more than ever devoted himself to the welfare of his flock. When a "worship hall" was needed, in a village where the Christians were too poor to meet the entire expense, he rejoiced even to sell his wadded gown and suffer the lack of it all winter, that he might make up the sum. "As poor yet making many

rich,” he often went short of what most people would consider necessities, that he might minister to the wants of others. On his journeys round the district, he carried no money or provisions. He felt it better and more Scriptural, that the Christians should have the opportunity of entertaining as he labored in their service. And in places where there were no Christians, he just went as guided of God, doing His work, and trusting for needed supplies. Sometimes on evangelistic tours of this sort he would plan to be absent three or four days; but not until a half a month had passed would he turn up again at the Refuge, weary and travel-stained, but radiant with joy, explaining that the Holy Spirit had not permitted him to return before.

The chief inspiration of his life, and his strongest reason for faith, was the fact of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior from the dead. This comforted him under all circumstances, and seemed a truth especially his own.

Whatever happened, he returned to it again and again, with perfect confidence: “Jesus lives, He rose from the dead. Therefore nothing is impossible.” [Page 274-275]

75. You Can't Make a Man's Nature Better

“You can never go against facts. Try as you may, it is impossible to add to a man's nature. You may put him a on a pedestal, but it does not really make him any bigger. [Page 275]

76. Hsi's Zeal Reminded One of Paul's Fervent Cry

But not only in these matters of Church order and witness-bearing in the midst of persecution, was progress made. Hsi came to see more and more, as time went on, the importance of keeping the Lord's Day, and of brining the Christians to understand that they must live for God and with God in everything. Heart and soul he threw himself into all that concerned their well-being. He was with them constantly in their homes; conducting weddings and funerals, visiting the sick, inquiring after the children, praying with and helping them in times of difficulty. He knew all that was going on, and had as quick eye for all the good points and blemishes of his flock, as any Eastern shepherd. This familiarity with their needs gave him great power in praying for them, and made his preaching and private exhortations very practical. His zeal on their behalf reminded one of Paul's fervent cry:

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be found in you.”

“I am jealous over you with great jealousy . . . that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

To this end he sought in every way to bring the Word of God to bear upon their lives, in the light of the Holy Spirit's teaching. He had a most searching, helpful way of

unfolding Scripture. In public meetings he did not merely take a text and preach an eloquent sermon; though it would have been easy for him to excel in that line of things. His heart was far too conscious of the needs of the people before him, and of the Master's need of them. With simple directness he endeavored to bring home to his hearers a realization of the claims of God upon their lives, and the possibilities open to them in Christ Jesus. He would take a passage of Scripture, a dozen or twenty verses and expound the leading thoughts, sentence by sentence. He did not refer much to other passages; for he found that turning from one to another was apt to distract attention. But he frequently took some Old Testament story, to illustrate the point he was making, and related it with a graphic interest that made it live before the people. [Page 281-282]

77. The Truth of Doctrine—God Will Test You

“The *tao-li* (truth of doctrine) must have full play,” he insisted, “in your lives. God will always be putting you into circumstances in which His principles will test you. The path that Jesus follows, leads to the cross. And the question, right along, will be: Are you going to take that road with Him? It means death to self, daily. Are you willing to let Him live it out? There is no other way of bringing life and blessing to others.” [Page 283]

78. No Confidence in the Flesh

“I never knew a man,” said Mr. Hoste, speaking of this occurrence, “who trusted less in his own power in any direction. It was a constant lesson to one who was much with him. For if anyone had reason for ‘confidence in the flesh,’ it was dear Hsi. But he was entirely weaned from that spirit. He placed no reliance on his own judgment even, from the guidance of God. One might ask him about quite simple matter, and he would say:

“Let me pray about it. I do not know just yet.’ Or, ‘I will call you later, when I have asked the Lord.”

“He realized so clearly that no human power can accomplish spiritual ends: and that our Lord's word is literally true—“**WITHOUT ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.**” [Page 288]

79. My Work Must Be Done

“The Lord in taking away my strength,” he said. “It must be because my work is done.” [Page 291]

80. Hsi Dies February 19, 1896

And so on the morning of February 19, 1896, he was translated to higher service.

One cannot think of him as dead; rather incomparably more living—in that land where His servant serves Him, seeing His face. Down here amid the darkness, he gave all. Nothing was too precious, if it could be used for Jesus; no labor too toilsome, if it could save a soul for whom He died. No cross seemed heavy if carried for the Master; no pathway difficult that His blessed feet had trod.

If any man serve me, let him follow me;
And where I am, there shall also my servant be:
If any man serve me, him will my Father honor. [Page 292]