

They Found The Secret

by V. Raymond Edman

Introduction

Every now and then we come across a life that is *radiant*, ...revealing a richness, a warmth, a triumph that intrigues and challenges us. We typically find these lives in biographies out of the past. But, just when we begin to think that such people lived only in *other* days, we meet one in *real life*! ...right in our *own* time!

The details of their experiences may vary greatly. As we listen to their stories and observe their lives, either in our reading or in our contact with them, we begin to see a pattern emerge that reveals their secret. Out of discouragement and defeat they have come into victory. Out of weakness and weariness they have been made strong. Out of ineffectiveness and apparent uselessness they have become efficient and enthusiastic.

The pattern seems to be: *self-centeredness*, ...*self-effort*, ...increasing *inner dissatisfaction* and *outer discouragement*,... a temptation to *give it all up*, because there *seems* to be no better way; ...and then, *finding the Spirit of God* to be their strength, their guide, their confidence and companion -- in a word, their *life*.

The crisis of the deeper life is the key that unlocks the secret of their transformation. It is the beginning of the *exchanged life*.

What is the exchanged life? Really, it is not some *thing*; it is some *One*. It is the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ made *real* and *rewarding* by the Holy Spirit.

There is no more glorious reality in all the world. It is life with a capital "L". It is *new* life in exchange for *old*. It is *rejoicing* for weariness, ...and *radiance* for dreariness. It is *strength* for weakness, and *steadiness* for uncertainty. It is *triumph*, even through tears. It is *tenderness of heart*, instead of touchiness. It is *humility*, instead of self-exaltation. It is *loveliness of life* because of the presence of the altogether Lovely One.

Adjectives can be *multiplied* to describe it: ...abundant, ...overflowing, ...overcoming, ...all-pervading, ...satisfying, ...joyous, ...victorious; and each describes only one aspect of a life that can be *experienced*, but not *fully-explained*.

The Savior said: "I have come that they might have *life*, and that they might have it *more abundantly*" (Jn. 10:10). We find newness of life in Christ by receiving *Him* as our own Savior from the penalty of sin. We can find *abundance* of that life by surrendering self and drawing on the unfailing resources of the Almighty. There is *life*; and then there is *life more abundant*. *This* is the exchanged life.

The expression, "the exchanged life," was first used, as far as I know, by J. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission. Out of striving and struggling, ...out of discouragement and defeat..., he came to the realization of life that is *more abundant in Christ*. I have found no better description than his: The Exchanged Life.

And I have not found a more concise contrast between the old and the new than that stated by the late Dr. A. B. Simpson in his poem entitled *Himself*.

Once it was the *blessing*, ...now it is *the Lord*;
Once it was the *feeling*, ...now it is *His Word*;
Once His *gifts* I wanted, ...now it is *the Giver* I own;
Once I sought for *healing*, ...now *Himself* alone,
Once 'twas *painful trying*, ...now 'tis *perfect trust*;
Once a *half-salvation*, ...now the *uttermost*;
Once 'twas *ceaseless holding*, ...now *He* holds *me* fast;
Once 'twas *constant drifting*, ...now my *anchor's cast*;
Once 'twas *busy planning*, ...now 'tis *trustful prayer*;
Once 'twas *anxious caring*, ...now, *He* has the care;
Once 'twas what *I* wanted, ...now what *Jesus* says;
Once 'twas *constant asking*, ...now 'tis *ceaseless praise*,
Once it was *my* working, ...*His* from now shall be;
Once I tried to *use Him*, ...now *He* uses *me*;
Once the *power* I wanted, ...now the *Mighty One*;
Once *for self* I labored, ...now *for Him* alone...

In this book are testimonies of men and women who have found the promise of life more abundant to be true. Much like a witness, they tell us *what happened to them*, ...rather than attempting to teach us in fine detail the doctrine of their experience. From a *multitude* of such witnesses throughout the centuries, I have chosen just a few by way of illustration. The *pattern* of their experiences is much the same. They *had believed* on the Savior, *yet* they were burdened and bewildered, ...unfaithful and unfruitful. They were always *yearning for a better way*, yet never *achieving a better life* by their efforts. Then they came to a *crisis of utter heart-surrender* to the Savior, ...a meeting with Him in the innermost depths of their spirit..., and they found the Holy Spirit to be an unfailing fountain of life and refreshment! From that time on, life was never the same again. In one way or another they had learned what the apostle Paul had testified: "I was crucified together-with Christ; but no longer do I live; rather Christ lives in me: but what life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). *New life* had been *exchanged* for *old*.

I have deliberately chosen witnesses of diverse personalities and backgrounds. God is no respecter of persons! There are those of yesteryear, like John Bunyan, ...and of recent times, like Richard C. Halverson and William P. Nicholson. There are clergymen, like A. J. Gordon, ...and laymen, like Dwight L. Moody. Some are well known, like Charles G. Finney, while others may be little known or even quite forgotten, like J. A. Wood. There are mystics, like Andrew Murray, and practical men, like Charles G. Trumbull and Robert E. Nicholas. There are women as well as men, Frances Ridley Havergal of England, Amy Carmichael of India, and Eugenia Price of contemporary America. The details of their individual experiences of the "crisis of the deeper life" are delightfully different; yet their testimony to the reality of the joy and power of the Spirit-filled life is unanimous. *Nowhere in Scripture are we taught to seek experience.* Rather, the Word says, "Seek ye the Lord." It is *He* who satisfies the longing soul. ***He is the secret of the exchanged life!***

J. Hudson Taylor: The Exchanged Life

"He was a joyous man *now*, a bright, happy Christian. He *had been* a toiling, burdened one before, with not much rest of soul in recent years. It was *resting in Jesus* now, and letting *Him* do the work -- which makes *all* the difference!" This was the assessment a fellow missionary made of Hudson Taylor.

The pioneer missionary in the interior of China had come to full realization of the Savior as the "Ever-present, Indwelling One". He testified: "My soul is *so* happy in the Lord! And as I think of the blessing He gave me on that happy day, ...I do not know how to sufficiently thank and praise Him. *Jesus* is truly the great need of our souls. And *He* is the great gift of our Father's love. It is He who *gave Himself for us*, and *makes us one with Him* in resurrection life and power."

The deep dealing of God with His children varies in detail, but the general pattern seems similar from case to case. Into each life there arises an *awareness of failure*, ...a falling short of all that one *should be* in the Lord. Then there is *a definite meeting with the risen Savior in utter surrender* of heart, which is indeed death to self. This is followed by *an appropriation by faith of His resurrection life* through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. As a result the person *begins to experience an overflow of life*, referred to by the Lord Jesus as "rivers of living water." (See John 7:37-39.)

Hudson Taylor had come to know the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior as a child. In his youth, he felt called to the mission field of China. He served earnestly and effectively in that land for fifteen years before he came into the experiential possession of "the exchanged life." When he was thirty-seven years old, he opened his heart to his mother in a long letter. There he expressed his innermost hunger and thirst:

"My own position becomes continually more and more responsible, and my need is greater than ever for special grace to fill it. But I have to continually mourn that *I follow at such a distance*, ...and *learn so slowly*..., to imitate my precious Master. I cannot tell you how I am buffeted sometimes by temptation! I never knew *how bad a heart I had!* Yet, I do know that *I love God*, and *love His work*, and *I desire to serve Him only* in all things. And I value our precious Savior above all things. In Him alone can I be accepted. Often I am tempted to think that someone so full of sin cannot be a child of God *at all!* But I try to throw back this thought, and rejoice all the more in the preciousness of Jesus, and in the riches of God's grace that has made us 'accepted in the Beloved.' He is beloved by God. He ought to be beloved by us. But oh, how short I fall here again! May God help me to love Him more, and serve Him better. Do pray for me. Pray that the Lord will keep me from sin, ...will sanctify me wholly, ... and will use me more largely in His service."

The human heart has no desires that God cannot satisfy. The Christian's greatest difficulty is to take literally the promises of the Savior. The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." We are told to come *to Him*, ...not to some friend, ...not to some *experience*, ...not to some *feeling or frame of mind*. We are not even to come to the Word of God as our final destination. Rather, we are to go *through* that Word to the person of the Lord Jesus *Himself*.

Hudson Taylor learned the way to satisfaction of heart and rest of spirit from a fellow missionary, John McCarthy. In a letter to Mr. Taylor he expresses:

"To let my loving Savior *work in me* His will, ...my sanctification..., is what I would live for. *Abiding*, not striving nor struggling; ...*looking off unto Him*; ...*trusting Him* for present power; ...*trusting Him* to subdue all inward corruption. By His grace, I am *resting* in the love of an *almighty* Savior, ...in the conscious joy of a *complete* salvation, ...a salvation 'from *all* sin' (this *is* His Word). Willing that His will should *truly* be supreme -- this is not new, and yet 'tis new *to me*. I feel as though the first dawning of a glorious day has risen upon me. I hail it with trembling, yet with trust. I seem to have got only to the *edge* of a sea which is *boundless!* ... to have sipped *only*, but of that which *fully satisfies*. Christ as literally 'All', now seems to me to be *the power*, ...the *only* power for service; ...the *only* ground for unchanging joy. May He lead us both into the realization of His unfathomable fullness."

The Lord used this letter literally to lead Mr. Taylor "into the realization of His unfathomable fullness." It was read in the little mission station at Chin-kiang on Saturday, September 4, 1869. The missionary was always reticent about telling details of his transforming experience; but he did say, "As I read, *I saw it all*. I looked *to Jesus*; and when I saw, oh how the joy flowed!"

His fellow missionaries said of him, "Mr. Taylor went out, a *new man* in a *new world*, to tell what the Lord had done for his soul."

Let the man of God speak for himself regarding *the life that is Christ*. Writing to his sister in England he said:

"As to work, mine was never so plentiful, so responsible, or so difficult; but the weight and strain are all gone. The last month or more has been perhaps, the happiest of my life; and I long to tell you a little of what the Lord has done for my soul. I do not know how far I may be able to make myself intelligible about it, for there is nothing new or strange or wonderful -- and yet, *all* is new! In a word, 'Whereas once I was blind, now I see . . .

"When my agony of soul was at its height, a sentence in a letter from dear McCarthy was used to remove the scales from my eyes, and the Spirit of God *revealed the truth of our oneness with Jesus* as I had never known it before. McCarthy, who had been much

exercised by the same sense of failure, but saw the light before I did, wrote (I quote from memory): 'But how to *get* faith strengthened? *Not by striving after faith*, but by *resting on the Faithful One*.'

"As I read, *I saw it all!* 'If we are unbelieving, He remains faithful.' (2 Tim. 2:13) I looked to Jesus and *saw* that He had said, 'I will never leave you' (and *when* I saw this, oh, how joy flowed!). 'Ah, *there* is rest!' I thought. 'I have striven in vain to rest in Him. *I'll strive no more*. For has not *He promised to abide with me -- never to leave me, ...never to fail me?*' And, dearie, *He never will!*

"But this was not *all* He showed me, ...not even one half! As I thought of the Vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured into my soul! How great seemed my mistake in having wished to get the sap, the fullness *out of* Him. I saw not only that *Jesus* would never leave *me*, ...but that *I was a member of His body*, of His flesh and of His bones. The Vine I now see, is not merely the root, but *all* -- root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit! And Jesus is not only *that*, He is soil and sunshine, air and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for, or needed! Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! I do pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ

"The sweetest part, if one may speak of one part being sweeter than another, is *the rest* which *full identification with Christ* brings. As I realize my oneness with Him, I am no longer anxious about *anything*; for I know He is able to carry out His will, and *His will is mine*! It does not matter *where* He places me, or *how*. That is for Him to consider, rather than for me. It is all the same, for in even the *easiest* positions He must give me His grace, ...and in the *most difficult*, His grace is sufficient."

God's grace is *indeed* sufficient, and the heart that has come to know *personally* and *intimately* the risen Lord Jesus by the outflow of His Spirit *experiences the reality* of "rivers of living water." With Isaiah, he knows that "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (26:3).

Many years after Hudson Taylor's meeting with the Lord Jesus in "the little crowded house in Chin-kiang," an Anglican clergyman, the Reverend H. B. Macartney of Melbourne, Australia, added this testimony to that of many others regarding the missionary's possession of the *life that is Christ*:

"He was an object lesson in *quietness*. He drew from the Bank of Heaven every farthing of his daily income -- 'My peace I give unto you.' Whatever did not agitate the Savior, or ruffle His Spirit was not to agitate him. The serenity of the Lord Jesus concerning *any* matter, ...even at its most critical moment..., this was his *ideal* and *practical possession*. He *knew nothing of rush* or *hurry*, of *quivering nerves* or *vexation of spirit*. He knew *there was a peace passing all understanding*, and that *he could not do without it*.

"Now *I* was altogether different. Mine is a peculiarly nervous disposition, and with a busy life I found myself in a tremor all day long. I did not enjoy the Lord as I knew I ought. Nervous agitation possessed me as long as there was anything to be done. The greatest loss of my life was the loss of the light of the Lord's presence and fellowship during writing hours. The daily mail robbed me of His delightful society.

"I am in the study, you are in the big spare room,' I said to Mr. Taylor at length. 'You are occupied with millions, I with tens. Your letters are pressingly important, mine of comparatively little moment. Yet *I* am worried and distressed, while *you* are always calm. Do tell me what makes the difference.'

"My dear, Macartney,' he replied, 'in my case the peace you speak of is more than a delightful privilege, it is *a necessity*.'

"He said most emphatically, 'I could not possibly get through the work I have to do without the peace of God "which passes all understanding" keeping my heart and mind.'

"Keswick teaching', as it is called, was not new to me at that time. I had received those glorious truths and was preaching them to others. But *here was the real thing* -- an embodiment of 'Keswick teaching' such as I had never hoped to see. This impressed me profoundly. Here is a man almost sixty years of age, bearing tremendous burdens, yet *absolutely calm and unruffled*. Oh, the pile of letters! ...any one of which might contain news of death, of shortness of funds, or riots or serious trouble. Yet all were opened, read and answered with the same tranquility. *Christ* was his *reason* for peace, his *power* for calm. Dwelling in Christ, he partook of His very being and resources, in the midst of and concerning the very matters in question. And he did this by an act of faith as simple as it was continuous.

"Yet he was delightfully free and natural. I can find no words to describe it, except the Scriptural expression 'in God.' *He was 'in God' all the time*, ...and *God was in him*. It was that true 'abiding' of John 15."

With good reason could the clergyman add the exhortation to all "Are you in a hurry, flurried, distressed? Look up! See the Man in the Glory! Let the face of Jesus shine upon *you* -- the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is *He* worried, troubled, distressed? There is no wrinkle on His brow, no least shade of anxiety. Yet the affairs are *His* as much as yours.'

It is the abiding life that is fruitful, ...just as it is the soul drinking deeply of the water of life that realizes "shall never thirst." The *life that is Christ* is abiding and abounding; it is satisfying and overflowing. Hudson Taylor could not find words more adequate to express the truth of the Scriptures he had discovered *by experience* than those in the little booklet by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *How to Live on Christ*, a copy of which he sent to every member of the mission. In part Mrs. Stowe stated:

"How does the branch bear fruit? *Not by incessant effort* for sunshine and air; *not by vain struggles* for those vivifying influences which give beauty to the blossom, and verdure to the leaf. *It simply abides in the vine*, in silent and undisturbed *union*, and blossoms and fruit appear as of *spontaneous growth*.

"*How, then, shall a Christian bear fruit?* By efforts and struggles to obtain that which is freely given? By meditations on watchfulness, on prayer, on action, on temptation, and on dangers? No. There must be a full concentration of the thoughts and affections on Christ; ...a complete surrender of the whole being to Him; ...a constant looking to Him for grace. Christians in whom these dispositions are once *firmly fixed* go on calmly, as the infant borne in the arms of its mother. Christ reminds them of every duty in its time and place, reproves them for every error, counsels them in every difficulty, excites them to every needful activity. In spiritual as in temporal matters they take no thought for the morrow; for they know that Christ will be as accessible tomorrow as today, and that

time imposes no barrier on His love. Their hope and trust rest solely on what He is willing and able to do for them; on nothing that they suppose themselves able and willing to do for Him. Their talisman for every temptation and sorrow is their oft-repeated child-like surrender of their whole being to Him.'

Such is the "exchanged life," the abiding, fruitful life, *the life that is Christ*, which should be the possession of every believer.

Galatians 2:20 should be, and *can be*, a glorious reality.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Observations from Hudson Taylor's life:

Conversion as a child.

Felt called to missions while a youth.

Serious about faith, struggled hard to "be good", experienced repeated frustration and failures over many years.

Kept crying out to God for answers; kept pursuing God.

God used a letter to give him spiritual insight to see that *he was One with Jesus*, and victory was *in Him*.

He was able to trust that Christ had exchanged Taylor's sinful life for His own; *Jesus' life lived inside him*, now.

Living out from the Indwelling Christ gave Taylor the freedom and fruitfulness he had been longing for.

The *quality* of his life, and the *effectiveness* of his service, were dramatically different after learning to live depending on *the Jesus who lived in him*, instead of depending upon *his own ability* to follow Him.

Beginning the God-Hunt:

Verses on "Seeking God":

I. The *need* to look for God:

Isaiah 45:15

Hosea 5:6,15

Amos 8:12

Acts 17:24-28

II. Promises and Encouragement for Those Who Would Pursue God:

Read and meditate on Deuteronomy 4:29 -- "...if from there you seek Yahweh your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

What does it mean to seek God? What are some synonyms for "seek"?

What about "look"? Be watchful for God to recognize His actions in your life.

How do you suppose you can "look for God with ...your heart and ...soul"?

I Chronicles 16:8-11

I Chronicles 22:19

I Chronicles 28:9

How does the spiritual principle from I Samuel 2:30b relate to the God Hunt?

This classic was out of print for a number of years, but has now been reissued! As I have tried to share this book with others, some have had difficulty with the language used, either by Dr. Edman or in the quotations he cites. Therefore, I have lightly edited and paraphrased some of the original writing by Dr. Edman, and even the quotations, for the purpose of clarity. I hope I accurately maintained the thought and intent of the original authors. The "God Hunt" portion is my own creation. I would encourage you to purchase Dr. Edman's book, [They Found The Secret](#). Zondervan Publishing House: Grand Rapids, MI 49530 for further study. – Dan Trygg.

