

An Unsatisfied Life and Its Remedy

By Hudson Taylor

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It is well that it should be so; it marks a distinct stage in the development of the life of grace in the soul. And this recorded experience gives, as it were, a Divine warrant for the desire for sensible manifestations of His presence--sensible communications of His love. It was not always so with her. Once she was contented in His absence--other society and other occupations sufficed her; but now it can never be so again. The world can never be to her what it once was; the betrothed bride has learnt to love her LORD, and no other society than His can satisfy her. His visits may be occasional and may be brief; but they are precious times of enjoyment. Their memory is cherished in the intervals, and their repetition longed for. There is no real satisfaction in His absence, and yet, alas! He is not always with her: He comes and goes. Now her joy in Him is a heaven below; but again she is longing, and longing in vain, for His presence. Like the ever-changing tide, her experience is an ebbing and flowing one; it may even be that unrest is the rule, satisfaction the exception. Is there no help for this? Must it always continue so? Has He, can He have created these unquenchable longings only to tantalize them? Strange indeed it would be if this were the case. Yet are there not many of the LORD'S people whose habitual experience corresponds with hers? They know not the rest, the joy of abiding in CHRIST; and they know not how to attain to it, nor why it is not theirs. Are there not many who look back to the delightful times of their first espousals, who, so far from finding richer inheritance in CHRIST than they then had, are even conscious that they have lost their first love, and might express their experience in the sad lament: Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw the Lord?

Others, again, who may not have lost their first love, may yet be feeling that the occasional interruptions to communion are becoming more and more unbearable, as the world becomes less and He becomes more. His absence is an ever-increasing distress.

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine." Would that His love were strong and constant like mine, and that He never withdrew the light of His countenance!"

Poor mistaken one! There is a love far stronger than thine waiting, longing for satisfaction. The Bridegroom is waiting for thee all the time; the conditions that debar His approach are all of thine own making. Take the right place before Him, and He will be most ready, most glad, to "Satisfy thy deepest longings, to meet, supply thine every need." What should we think of a betrothed one whose conceit and self-will prevented not only the consummation of her own joy, but of his who had given her his heart?

Though never at rest in his absence, she cannot trust him fully; and she does not care to give up her own name, her own rights and possessions, her own will to him who has become necessary for her happiness. She would fain claim him fully, without giving up herself fully to him; but it can never be: while she retains her own name, she can never claim his. She may not promise to love and honour if she will not also promise to obey: and till her love reaches that point of surrender she must remain an unsatisfied lover--she cannot, as a satisfied bride, find rest in the home of her husband. While she retains her own will, and the control of her own possessions, she must be content to live on her own ame, she can never claim his. She may not promise to love and honour if she will not also promise to obey: and till her love reaches that point of surrender she must remain an unsatisfied lover--she cannot, as a satisfied bride, find rest in the home of her husband. While she retains her own will, and the control of her own possessions, she must be content to live on her own resources; she cannot claim his.

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Could there be a sadder proof of the extent and reality of the Fall than the deep seated distrust of our loving LORD and MASTER which makes us hesitate to give ourselves entirely up to Him, which fears that He might require something beyond our powers, or call for something that we should find it hard to give or to do? The real secret of an unsatisfied life lies too often in an unsurrendered will. And yet how foolish, as well as how wrong, this is! Do we fancy that we are wiser than He? Or that our love for ourselves is more tender and strong than His? Or that we know ourselves better than He does? How our distrust must grieve and wound afresh the tender heart of Him who was for us the Man of Sorrows!

What would be the feelings of an earthly bridegroom if he discovered that his bride-elect was dreading to marry him, lest, when he had the power, he should render her life insupportable? Yet how many of the Lord's redeemed ones treat Him just so! No wonder they are neither happy nor satisfied!

But true love cannot be stationary; it must either decline or grow. Despite all the unworthy fears of our poor hearts, Divine love is destined to conquer. The bride exclaims:

"Thine ointments have a goodly fragrance; Thy name is as ointment poured forth; Therefore do the virgins love Thee."

There was no such ointment as that with which the High Priest was anointed: our Bridegroom is a Priest as well as a King. The trembling bride cannot wholly dismiss her fears; but the unrest and the longing become unbearable, and she determines to surrender all, and come what may to follow fully. She will yield her very self to Him, heart and hand, influence and possessions. Nothing can be so insupportable as His absence! If He leads to another Moriah, or even to a Calvary, she will follow Him.

Draw me: we will run after Thee!

But ah! What follows? A wondrously glad surprise. No Moriah, no Calvary; on the contrary, a KING! When the heart submits, then JESUS reigns. And when JESUS reigns, there is rest. And where does He lead His bride?

"The King hath brought me into His chambers. Not first to the banqueting house--that will come in due season; but first to be alone with Himself."

How perfect! Could we be satisfied to meet a beloved one only in public? No; we want to take such an one aside - to have him all to ourselves. So with our Master: He takes His now fully consecrated bride aside, to taste and enjoy the sacred intimacies of His wondrous love.

The Bridegroom of His Church longs for communion with His people more than they long for fellowship with Him, and often has to cry: "Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

Are we not all too apt to seek Him rather because of our need than for His joy and pleasure? This should not be. We do not admire selfish children who only think of what they can get from their parents, and are unmindful of the pleasure that they may give or the service that they may render. But are not we in danger of forgetting that pleasing GOD means giving Him pleasure?

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Some of us look back to the time when the words "To please GOD" meant no more than not to sin against Him, not to grieve Him; but would the love of earthly parents be satisfied with the mere absence of disobedience? Or a bridegroom, if his bride only sought him for the supply of her own need?

A word about the morning watch may not be out of place here. There is no time so profitably spent as the early hour given to JESUS only. Do we give sufficient attention to this hour? If possible, it should be redeemed; nothing can make up for it. We must take time to be holy! One other thought. When we bring our questions to GOD, do we not sometimes either go on to offer some other petition, or leave the closet without waiting for replies? Does not this seem to show little expectation of an answer, and little desire for one? Should we like to be treated so? Quiet waiting before GOD would save from many a mistake and from many a sorrow.

We have found the bride making a glad discovery of a KING - her KING - and not a cross, as she expected; this is the first-fruit of her consecration.

"We will be glad and rejoice in Thee, We will make mention of Thy love more than of wine: Rightly do they love Thee."

Source: Herald of His Coming.

From "Union and Communion", J. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905).

Founder of the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor served in Chinas as a missionary, from 1854 until his death.