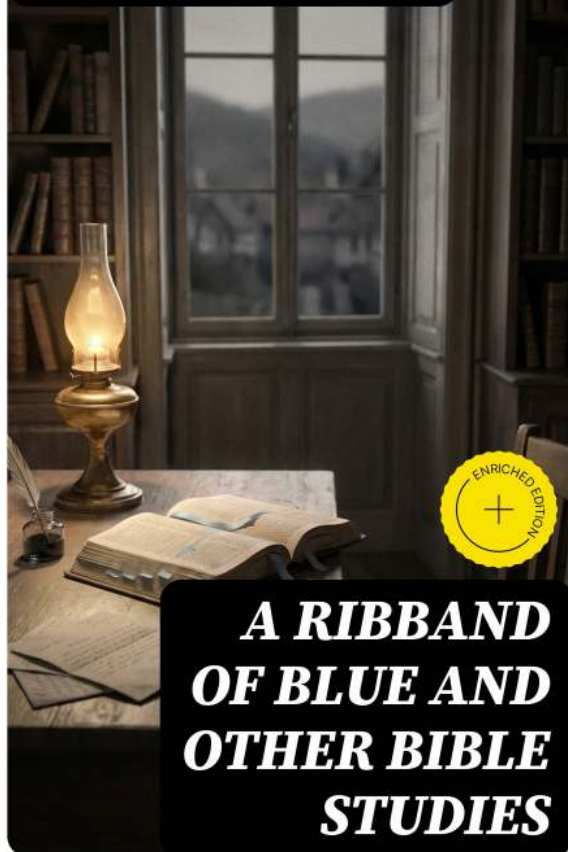


J. HUDSON TAYLOR

***A RIBBAND
OF BLUE AND
OTHER BIBLE
STUDIES***



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J. Hudson Taylor

A Ribband of Blue And Other Bible Studies

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Liam Oakley

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Introduction

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A Ribband of Blue And Other Bible Studies gathers a compact series of devotional expositions by J. Hudson Taylor, arranged to guide readers from first principles of obedience to the tested realities of faith. The scope is deliberately selective rather than exhaustive, presenting complete essays rather than fragments, and focusing on passages that illuminate the Christian life in ordinary and extreme conditions. Each chapter concentrates on a discrete biblical text, inviting reflective reading, prayer, and application. This is not a compendium of sermons, fiction, or academic commentary, but a curated set of Bible studies designed for personal devotion, small groups, and quiet, careful meditation.

Taylor, best known as a missionary to China and founder of the China Inland Mission, wrote extensively to encourage Bible-centered, practical discipleship. His prose is economical, earnest, and unadorned, aiming more at the conscience than the curiosity. In these studies he consistently privileges Scripture's authority and clarity, drawing spiritual conclusions that emphasize dependence on God, holiness in daily conduct, and persevering prayer. The collection reflects a writer who kept pastoral usefulness foremost: he explains, applies, and then presses for response. Readers will meet not a theorist but a guide who treats biblical promises and commands as living realities for ordinary believers.

The contents represent devotional essays and expository meditations rather than homiletic transcripts or academic

treatises. Several chapters exhibit an outline format that supports step-by-step engagement. Blessed Prosperity — Meditations on Psalm 1 unfolds through sections entitled Introductory, The Negative Conditions of Blessing, The Positive Conditions of Blessing, The Outcome in Blessing, and The Contrast, enabling focused attention to each movement of the psalm. Blessed Adversity — Job 1:21 proceeds with comparable care through its subsections, tracing the dynamics of trial and trust. Other studies— Coming to the King, A Full Reward, Under the Shepherd's Care, Self-Denial Versus Self-Assertion, and All-Sufficiency —offer complete, self-contained reflections on their chosen texts.

Despite varied passages, the studies cohere around a few steady themes: remembering God's commandments, trusting His providence, and walking in obedient love. The title chapter evokes the ancient blue ribbon on Israel's garments, a visible reminder to keep the Lord's statutes, and sets the tone for ethical fidelity joined to inward devotion. Across the collection, prosperity and adversity are not opposites to be chosen between, but contexts in which faith is proved. Taylor's approach is distinctly pastoral: he interprets Scripture with a view to conscience and conduct, preferring plain sense over speculation, and continually directing attention to God's character and promises.

Several essays consider emblematic biblical scenes as windows on divine generosity and human response. Coming to the King reflects on the Queen of Sheba's audience with Solomon as an image of reverent approach and receptive wisdom. A Full Reward looks at Ruth's faithful loyalty and the acknowledgment it receives. Under the Shepherd's Care meditates on the restoration and guidance promised to those who have strayed. Self-Denial Versus Self-

Assertion treats Jesus's call to follow Him with cross-bearing seriousness. All-Sufficiency gathers the threads into a confession of God's ample provision for the believer's need, encouraging steady reliance rather than self-reliance.

Stylistically, Taylor is marked by clarity, restraint, and an unwavering scriptural focus. He advances from text to principle to practice, eschewing ornamentation, rhetorical flourish, and speculative detours. His language favors short movements and lucid transitions, and his applications are deliberately concrete, inviting readers to examine habits, motives, and choices in light of the Word. A hallmark of his method is balance: the warnings of Scripture are presented alongside its consolations, and calls to obedience are entwined with assurances of grace. The resulting tone is searching yet hopeful, urging a faith that works through love without reducing devotion to mere exertion.

Taken together, these studies offer a portable theology of discipleship suited to daily use. Their enduring value lies in their accessibility and their insistence that Scripture governs both thought and practice. Readers new to Taylor will find a reliable entry point into his spiritual counsel; long-time readers will recognize the same emphasis on holiness, prayerful dependence, and cheerful endurance that pervades his better-known writings. The collection's organization—complete chapters with clear substructures—makes it apt for personal reading plans, family devotions, or group study. Its purpose is simply stated: to lead from the page to the living obedience the page commends.

Historical Context

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Composed and circulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *A Ribband of Blue and Other Bible Studies* emerged within the high tide of Victorian evangelicalism and global Protestant missions. Its author, J. Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), founded the China Inland Mission in 1865 and wrote pastoral expositions that linked close reading of Scripture to practical obedience. The titular “ribband of blue,” drawn from Numbers 15:38, evoked visible holiness in daily life, a hallmark of the era’s holiness and revival movements. Addressed to supporters, recruits, and ordinary believers, these studies translated missionary experience into devotional counsel during Britain’s imperial expansion and Christianity’s rapid internationalization.

Taylor’s perspective was forged in mid-Qing China amid upheavals that opened and unsettled the field he served. The Opium Wars (1839–42, 1856–60) and the Treaties of Tianjin and Peking created treaty ports and limited extraterritorial rights, enabling mission entry while inflaming anti-foreign sentiment. The Taiping Rebellion (1850–64) devastated interior provinces where Taylor later traveled after arriving at Shanghai in 1853. Founding the China Inland Mission in 1865 to reach unreached prefectures, he prized simplicity, identification with local people, and itinerant evangelism. These conditions imbued his studies with urgency about obedience and remembrance—themes captured by the blue cord’s call to distinct, covenantal living.