



“You will know them by their fruits.” Mt. 7:16

PHOEBE (WORRALL) PALMER

1807 – 1874

(Methodist)

Phoebe Palmer might well be designated “the mother of the holiness movement.” After her passing, T. D. Talmage, in his tribute to her, stated that there were twenty-five thousand souls saved under the instrumentality of Phoebe Palmer. A perusal of “The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer” by Richard Wheatley seems to indicate that the number of those who were sanctified wholly through the work of Dr. and Mrs. Palmer may also have numbered in the tens of thousands.

Phoebe Worrall, later to become Phoebe Palmer, was born in New York City, December 18, 1807. Her mother was a Christian, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and “was remarkable for the good order and discipline she maintained in her large household.

Dr. Nathan Bangs was a sanctified early Methodist who was known for his own testimony to second blessing holiness and for his efforts to promote it. He wrote concerning Phoebe Palmer: “... I have known her from childhood, for she was a member of my catechetical class in 1817, when she was only eight or nine years of age. She was made partaker of pardoning mercy, at an early age, married soon after, and lived a pious, blameless life, for several years; when, about thirteen years since, she was enabled to rejoice in God’s sanctifying grace...”

Phoebe Palmer pointed to August 10, 1837 as the time of her entire sanctification. We find the following words from her diary:

August 10th, 1837 – This morning I was blessed in a peculiar manner. About four o’clock I awoke, with an intense breathing after God. I was assured by the way in which my soul seemed to grasp a signal blessing, that the Lord was about to seal me more fully His. For days previous, I had with unutterable desire, been pleading that the Holy Spirit might continuously urge me onward in the divine life; that I might not be permitted to rest short of any state of grace, made possible for me, through the death and present intercession of the Saviour; and that to the degree in which it might consist with the will of God, might prove the full power of saving grace, to transform to the uttermost, in heart and in life...

My special prayer on this eventful occasion was as set forth, Ephes. 1:13 “In whom ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.”

*Now my prayer was, “Lord, seal me unto the day of redemption.” There was a distinctiveness in the hallowed exercises of that hour which must ever preclude all questioning. The Divine Spirit that inspired those unutterable groanings sealed the truth on my heart, that the work was of God. During about two hours, I remained under those peculiarly hallowing influences, breathing forth in inexpressible longing, “O Lord, seal me! Seal me unto the day of redemption.” The Spirit itself helped my infirmities, and I was enabled to ask in conscious faith, **and realize that I had the thing that I desired of God.***

So sacred was the communion of that hour, so holy and inviolable the covenant entered upon...that I have not had a temptation to doubt. Glory be to the Father! Glory be to the Son! Glory be to the Holy Spirit ... Surely it was to me a day to be remembered through the untold ages of eternity...

Her method of leading saved souls into the experience of entire sanctification has been dubbed, perhaps by her critics at the “Altar Theology,” and was thought by some to be erroneous and un-Wesleyan. Nonetheless, it appears to this writer that a fair and candid examination of the historical evidence of her ministry points to the fact that multitudes were genuinely sanctified through her influence. Dr. Nathan Bangs wrote:

...She felt it her duty, as every devoted Christian ought...to strive in every Scriptural way to promote this unspeakable blessing among her fellow Christians; and she was remarkably successful. Many have been raised up under her teachings and prayers as witnesses of the saving efficacy of Christ’s blood and righteousness to save them from all sin.

And why should anyone oppose another, even though a female, so eminently owned by the Head of the Church, in the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of believers? For my part, I dare not...Some object to her phraseology. I do not pledge myself to the correctness of every word she may utter, any more than I can expect every person to agree with me in all my words and phrases. But why should I dispute about words, so long as the substance is retained?...

Apart from the Judgment itself, the ultimate test of one’s experience is whether or not it stands good in the hour of death. Was Phoebe Palmer’s experience of entire sanctification good on her death bed? During the first part of her final illness she said: “I want to say that my teachings have been correct, and I am now testing them, in this hour of extreme suffering, and find that I AM FULLY SAVED; NOT A SHADOW OF A DOUBT. The altar is a beautiful type; it is a Scriptural figure, and I AM RESTING UPON IT. AND THE ALTAR WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST SANCTIFIES THE GIFT. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST CLEANSSES ME FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.” Then she exclaimed, “Glory, glory!”

On her last morning on earth she awoke as from sleep and said, “I thought I saw a chariot, and it had come for me; and oh! It was so glorious, GLORIOUS!” Soon after this she said, “Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ‘O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!’ Finally, she slowly repeated the Doxology, “Glory be to the Father, glory be to the Son, and glory be to the Holy Ghost, Amen.”

In the arms of her devoted husband, Phoebe Palmer sweetly breathed her last at 2:30 P.M., November 2, 1874.

WALTER CLARKE PALMER

(Methodist – Husband of Phoebe Palmer)

Happy those who, with “the resolute few,” changing the phraseology of one of our familiar hymns, are ready to say,

“E’en now I will at once go up,
No more on this side Jordan stop,
But now the land possess!”

Those who thus resolve make a speedy passage of the Jordan, and become permanent dwellers in the goodly land -- “the land of corn and wine and oil.”

Walter C. Palmer was in the succession of Caleb and Joshua, who said, “We are well able to go up and possess the land.” By the communications of Divine strength he was enabled to claim his inheritance.

Providential circumstances favored his obtaining the grace of Christian holiness at a comparatively early period of his Christian life. On September 28, 1827, he was united in marriage to Phoebe, daughter of Henry Worrall of New York. One competent to judge has well said: "Never were hands joined where hearts and tastes were more perfectly one." Those who have been most conversant with the two lives thus so happily blended concur in this judgment. Thenceforward their hopes, their aims, their joys were one.

The beloved companion placed at his side at once entered upon her loving ministries. It was not, however, until about ten years after their marriage that she was brought to the experience of Christian holiness. Having entered definitely and joyously into this experience, she was speedily made a helper to her husband in this regard. Her fully consecrated life and glad testimonies deeply impressed his mind.

He saw his privilege, longed for its attainment, and entered earnestly upon its pursuit. With a willing heart he came to bring this new and richer oblation to Christ's altar. There was no severe or protracted struggle. Acting, as we have often heard him say, under the conviction that "entire consecration is no more than common honesty with God," he made the glad surrender of his body" (himself) as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service." It was not the offering of a dead body as in conversion, "dead in trespasses and sins," but a body quickened into life by regenerating grace. It was an intelligent response to the great command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

It was at a camp-meeting where this consecration of Dr. Palmer was made and accepted, confirmed by the fire descending upon the sacrifice. This may account for his love of camp-meetings so strongly shown in his later life. While there, pleading with great earnestness and using the words, "If thou wilt thou canst make me clean!" Jesus sweetly and authoritatively said, "I will; be thou clean!" Instantly healing virtue flowed to every part of his moral being. He was every whit made whole. His faith had brought him to the triumph-moment, and his "joy was unspeakable and full of glory."

From that auspicious period he was wholly the Lord's – body, soul, and spirit – time, talents, property – all the Lord's. The sacrifice thus made was made once for all: ever afterward, as Rev. William Taylor expresses it, he was ready "to stand to the main facts."

The change wrought was a radical one, affecting his entire being and laying its broad impress upon his whole life. It did not change his temperament, but it hallowed his natural peculiarities and made them a power in the King's service. The rapid currents of thought and will and affection which had sometimes, heretofore, been prone to flow in earthly channels were now all turned into heavenly channels. He had indeed "put off the old man with his deeds," and put on "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

It should be observed here, however, that this arrival at the point of Christian perfection did not make him perfect in judgment; hence he was liable to error and mistakes. Nor was he exempt from temptation, else he would have been above his Lord. Nor was he free from infirmities; infirmities are not sins, and the heart may be free from sin and yet we may be compassed with many infirmities. He was simply made perfect in love, and started under favorable auspices upon a career of Christian development.

The immediate effect of this fuller translation into the kingdom of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" was to constitute him a witness of the power of Christ's blood to cleanse from all sin. In this he followed the Pentecostal model having, like the disciples, had his endowment, he became a witness. This is the law of the spiritual kingdom. The first impulse of one newly converted is to tell the pleasing story – tell it in flowing tears, thrilling words, or triumphant songs.

So is it also when the second milestone is reached in the pilgrimage Zionward, when the all-cleansing blood is applied, the living Christ fully enthroned in the heart. Testimony is then the natural order. The joy of the Lord is too great to hold. For such a one to hold his peace would make the very stones cry out. We have no sympathy with the idea of a joyless or emotionless entrance into this kingdom; there is an "entrance ministered abundantly" into the Canaan of perfect love as well as into the heavenly Jerusalem.

Dr. Palmer became a true witness for his Lord, by a consistent life, and with joyful lips. When he opened his mouth in testimony, his words were well chosen and unctuous. No rash or fanatical expressions were littered by him. He had intelligently grasped the prize, and in speaking of it himself was debased and Christ exalted. He well understood that he had been fully saved, not by works, but by faith; hence boasting was excluded. The gift of Infinite Love had been placed in his hand, and he had simply closed his hand, saying, in childlike faith, "It is mine!" And, being the joyous possessor of the heavenly treasure, he was ready to declare, on all suitable occasions, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad."

In one of the interesting gatherings of the saints he said:

"Today I am thankful to say, in the words you have just been singing,
'All my trust on Thee is stayed;
All my help from Thee I bring!'
I am enabled to claim Jesus as my full Saviour.
I trust in Him now, and He saves me. The poet says,
'I hold Thee with a trembling hand.
And will not let Thee go.'

It is not of much consequence how much the little child's hand may tremble, so long as its father holds it in his strong hand while it is being led safely along. So I am being led, relying implicitly on my Father's own word of promise that He will direct my steps."

From the time of Dr. Palmer's experience of perfect love Jesus became peculiarly precious. His name, His character, and His work were thereafter his life-themes. The Scriptures which had most direct reference to Jesus, and the hymns which were most fully freighted with His dear name, were his favorites. In fact, Jesus was the Alpha and Omega of his whole being. So captivated was he with "the chiefest among ten thousand," and the one "altogether lovely," that it was his common custom, in writing to friends, to subscribe himself, "Yours In Jesus, W. C. Palmer."

Those who have listened to his public addresses know how richly they were perfumed with the name of Jesus.

On one occasion he said: "The name of Jesus never sounded sweeter to me than this afternoon, and my heart goes out in thanksgiving for the words of the lesson just read: 'I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.' That work was the deliverance of his people from all sin. He came 'that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.'"

He had strong faith in the power of Jesus' name to lay Heaven under contribution in behalf of God's dear children. At one time he beautifully illustrated this, saying, "The Father's love for Jesus is the measure of Jesus' love for us. God calls His children and ordains them for a special purpose, and in converting us creates a new power in the earth to win souls to Christ. We are not to go and bring forth fruit in our own strength, but Jesus says, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.' The president of one of our banks was on a visit to Buffalo at the time of some political gathering, and while out in the evening his pocket was picked. He was an entire stranger in the city, but the next morning he went to the bank and inquired for the cashier, and related the circumstances of the

robbery, and stated that he was president of a certain bank in this city and wished to borrow one hundred dollars. The cashier, not knowing but he was an impostor, eyed him very keenly, and then asked him to write his name as it was then customary for the president of a bank to sign its bills. When the cashier saw the signature, he said, 'Mr. A____, you may not only have one hundred dollars, but a thousand if you wish it.' May we not expect the name of Jesus to bring to us what God sees we have need of? May we not ask for the gift of a clean heart in the name of Jesus? The blood of Jesus does cleanse from all unrighteousness, and I have the witness within that the work is done."

Thus all the way along it was Jesus – Jesus the crucified; Jesus the risen Saviour; Jesus the all-prevalent Intercessor; Jesus the Prince of Peace, whose right it is to reign in every human heart. And O, how thrillingly he would often call for the singing of that hymn, "All hail the power of Jesus' Name!"

Another prominent characteristic after his entire sanctification was the spirit of praise. He lived in an atmosphere of praise. Doxologies were often "welling up in his heart," and he called for saints on earth to utter their loud-ringing hallelujahs to mingle with the anthems of the redeemed in glory. He would emphasize the Scripture declaration: "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show my salvation." In daily life he was ready to say with the poet,

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath--
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
My days of praise shall ne'er be past
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures."

And not alone when treading in sun-lit paths did he manifest this spirit, but also when dark clouds gathered in the heavens. Then, fully recognizing the fact of his Father's continued love, and that "Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face," he had still a song to sing in the dark and stormy night.

Another of the blessed fruits of holiness in the character of Dr. Palmer was the love-element. His highest conception of this state was love, perfect love; love to God as its supreme object, and a fervent love for all men. And, in its manward exercise, love not to friends only, but to those who despitefully used him or reviled his name.

The love-aspects of Christianity were the themes upon which he delighted to dwell – the love of the Eternal Father in giving his only-begotten Son for our redemption; the love of the beloved Son who, in response to the Father's will, joyfully said, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God;" the love of the Holy Spirit interblending with that of the Father and the Son, for the solution of the problem of human salvation. This triune manifestation of the love of the Deity engaged his profoundest thought and elicited his loudest hosannas.

And, subordinate to this, the love of each other, the "love of the brethren," as demonstrating the genuineness of professed love to Christ. Nothing bitter or censorious in spirit or utterance received any sympathy from him. Denunciations of the Church by misguided zealots were wholly at variance with his feelings. An incident will show his spirit in this regard:

Some years ago, in the Tuesday Meeting, a sister said, "The Lord had made her a sharp threshing-instrument having teeth." She verily thought that she had a commission from Heaven to scatter, tear, and slay. She had enlisted in the "Army of the Destructionists." Dr. Palmer, seeing the mischievous work that she was about to undertake, gave her a word of timely warning. "Sister," said he, "be careful; those who use such sharp instruments need to keep them well oiled!" Years afterward she testified that she had learned a good lesson from the doctor's excellent words.

Those who were ready with ruthless hands to tear down what the fathers had upraised with tears and

sweat and blood he regarded as “the enemies of the cross of Christ.” The poet well expresses the language of his heart concerning the Church:

“For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given.
Till toils and cares shall end.”

And this love was not with him a mere sentiment; it was an active principle, leading to becoming efforts.

He had an experience of what a certain writer thus beautifully expresses: “Love to Christ smoothes the path of duty, and wings the feet to travel it; it is the bow which impels the arrow of obedience; it is the mainspring moving the wheels of duty; it is the strong arm tugging the oar of diligence. Love is the marrow of the bones of fidelity, the blood in the veins of piety, the sinews of spiritual strength; yea, the life of sincere devotion. He that hath love can no more be motionless than the aspen in the gale, the dead leaf in the hurricane, or the spray in the tempest. As well may hearts cease to beat as love to labor. Love is instinct with activity; it cannot be idle; it is full of energy, it cannot content itself with littles; it is the well-spring of heroism, and great deeds are the gushings of its fountain; it is a giant, -- it heapeth mountains upon mountains, and thinks the pile but little; it is a mighty mystery, for it changes bitter into sweet; it calls death life, and life death; and it makes pain less painful than enjoyment.”

This principle of holy love shining so brightly in the character of the dear doctor was in constant exercise. An incident will show how he was led to sow the good seed of the kingdom, hoping for spiritual results:

When the life of William Carvosso was first published, he recommended it so highly to his father-in-law (Henry Worrall) that he was induced to present a copy to every member of his class. Soon after Dr. Palmer met with an old gentleman who began to load him with thanks, saying, “Doctor, you have made my fortune for time and eternity!” “Brother Scobie,” he replied, “I do not know that I have done you any special favor.” “Indeed you have,” said Brother Scobie. “You recommended the life of William Carvosso to your father-in-law, and he has given me a copy, and it has opened my eyes. I have found out that I am very rich, -- every promise in the Bible belongs to me, -- and I have taken possession of my estate!”

Though almost unknown before he took possession of his estate, the rich inheritance in Christ was at once claimed and made tributary to the great interests of Christ’s kingdom by this devoted Christian man “Father Scobie,” as he was afterward called, immediately became a most earnest Christian worker and instrumental in bringing many souls to God. His last years were spent in the city of St. Augustine; poor in this world’s goods, yet so highly respected as a Christian and for his blessed benevolent activities, that at his death it is said the whole city seemed to be in mourning, and every store was closed on the day of his funeral.

To this manhood-state of Christian life Dr. Palmer attained – the high estate Of pure love. And “being rooted and grounded in love,” he was “able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” He came “in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man” (perfect in love), “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” And upon this foundation of manly Christian character, so broadly and strongly laid, there was built a spiritual superstructure which remained undisturbed by life’s mutations, reflecting the glory of the master-builder, Christ.

Source: “The Beloved Physician, Walter Clarke Palmer” by F. G. Hibbard

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