

Charlotte -- or -- the Master Calleth for Thee

by Phoebe Palmer

The sermon is a tribute to Charlotte Grant's life of faith, obedience, and love, highlighting her growth in holiness and her impact on those around her.

Scripture: Philippians 1:21, Hebrews 12:1, Hebrews 12:14, James 4:4, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Christian Sanctification", "Gods Grace"

Description

Phoebe Palmer delivers a sermon reflecting on the life of Sister Charlotte Grant, a pure-hearted individual who exemplified grace through her love for Christ and dedication to the Salvation of souls. Charlotte's humility, faith, and unwavering commitment to living a holy life despite trials and worldly temptations serve as a powerful testimony to the transformative power of God's grace. Her deep understanding of Scripture and her constant gratitude and love towards God and others shine brightly even in the midst of severe physical suffering, showcasing a life fully surrendered to God's will and marked by a desire for holiness and Salvation.

Transcript

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

The above is the graphic inscription on a coffin-lid, enclosing the remains of one who was pure in heart. We speak confidently. None who knew the beloved Charlotte, will, on reading our sketch of her character, accuse us of having undertaken the work of the mere panegyrist. Grace needs no complimentary flourishes. It was by the grace of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that our beloved Charlotte was what she was. And such, through grace, may every one be, who will yield to God through Christ, and submit to the refining process, the moldings of the Holy Spirit.

Sister CHARLOTTE GRANT experienced religion about nine years since. At the time of her conversion she was kneeling as an humble seeker at the altar of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Allen Street. Her conversion was clear, and its fruits were early manifested in her love to Christ, and earnest desire for the Salvation of souls. As she received Christ Jesus the Lord, so was she enabled to walk in Him. Her course being steadily onward and upward, she gained rapid accessions in light and knowledge. From the first point in her religious career, she appeared to conscience tenderly." From this persuasion she acted.

The writer never remembers to have seen Charlotte indulge in frivolity of conversation or manner. Her spirit was prayerful and tender from the time of her conversion. She seemed desirous to know her duty

only that she might do it. She possessed an excellent understanding and a sweet docility of spirit; and perhaps if one grace shone more conspicuous than another, it was her humility.

When perplexities arose in her mind, she went to those who were older in experience than herself, and unburdened her spirit. An occasion of this sort occurred early in her religious career, which the writer loves to remember. She had been reproved (perhaps not with as much tenderness as should have been used toward a lamb of the fold) for an article of adornment which she wore. Her heart was not set on vanity, but, being young in religious experience, she had not yet duly considered the scriptural admonition, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." She was told that if she would exert a commanding persuasiveness in inducing her young friends to come out from the world and be separate, she must, by her outward appearance, as well as by her words, show that she had herself come out, and manifest her separation by renouncing whatever might stand in the way of her usefulness.

From this time she laid aside every weight, and daring to be singular for Christ's sake, God singled her out as an eminent example of Christian excellence, and has made the savour of her name as ointment poured forth. Let no Bible Christian say that there is nothing in dress. The Bible forbids conformity to the world as truly as it does any other sin. For want of compliance with the self-sacrificing principles of the Bible in this matter, many have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Could the voice of the lovely and beloved Charlotte speak from the unseen world, how would it reverberate to the inmost heart of every worldly-minded professor! -- "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

As the Israelites, by undeviating progression and obedience, would have speedily been brought up to the borders of the promised land, so will God's people, if obediently walking in Christ, as they have received Him, be speedily brought into possession of -

"The land of rest from inbred sin, The land of perfect holiness."

And thus it was with Charlotte The church intrusted her to the care of a Class-Leader, whose ultimate and most earnest aim was to present every member of her charge perfect in Christ Jesus. In nine months after Charlotte had been brought out of spiritual Egypt, she was brought into a state of pure blessedness -

"A rest where all her soul's desire Was fix'd on things above."

From this time she truly and eminently adorned the doctrine of God her Saviour in all things. She lived a life of faith in the Son of God. God gave her strong faith, and strongly did He test it. Few have had more thorough tests, and few have endured more valiantly. She was indeed strong in faith, giving glory to God. We speak thus confidently, because we know that our faithful God never tries grace that He has not given. Never will He suffer His confiding children to be tempted above that which they are able to bear. The measure of trial bespeaks the measure of grace. Those who knew Charlotte most intimately, best knew how truly the trial of her faith developed to the praise of God the grace He had given her. She was long and variously tried by reverses in estate and in health, and by the withholding of objects of long-cherished desire; yet in all she in patience possessed her soul, judging Him faithful who had promised. In all she was trustful and happy, breathing forth love, peace, and purity, and shedding hallowing influences in the various circles in which she moved.

Though she beheld many around her, who, professing to have put on Christ, seemed endeavoring almost unconsciously to ascertain the extent to which they might be like the world, and yet bear the name of

Christ, Charlotte felt it to be her privilege, as well as her duty, to cherish an aim wholly unlike this. Hers was not the unworthy endeavor to ascertain the nearest point of dangerous proximity to which she might get to the world, and yet not wholly displace Christ from the throne of her affections. No! she did not, with many young professors, insult her Saviour thus. She, through grace, looking away from earthly preferment, resolved at every hazard that the prince of this world should not have dominion over her, or even retain a foothold in her heart. "No compromise!" said her divinely inspired soul. "What concord hath Christ with Belial?"

Thus scripturally instructed, she did not attempt to engage in the inglorious endeavor to reconcile Christ and the world. She was therefore saved from the sad strife which induces so many professors to chant in sorrow -

'Tis worse than death my God to love, And not my God alone."

Hers was not the repulsiveness of the religious recluse. Her heart was expansive, and, filled with the love of Christ, she exerted a sweetly constraining influence on those who came within her circle. And this circle was not circumscribed; for such was the attractiveness of her piety, that she gathered around her many friends. And where is one of whom it may be more truly said? -

"None knew her but to love."

And yet more eminently was she in the house as a candle upon a candlestick, which giveth light to all. If, as a member of the church militant, and as one in the social circle, the force of her enlightened and fervent piety was felt, how much more was it felt in the domestic circle! What a chord do we touch, when we speak of the influence of home piety in the case of the beloved Charlotte! If it were only at home that we looked, we would, in the confidence of strong faith, say, Charlotte will not have a starless crown. One has already been gathered from the home circle, who, from the time of Charlotte's conversion, was with her an object of much prayerful solicitude. He stood at the head of the loved family group, and had been more than a brother. Who can portray in words the fervor and the absorption of her desires for the Salvation of this dear brother-in-law? He took knowledge of this; her ceaseless and winning exhibitions of the beauty of holiness in all the minutiae of Christian life captivated his heart; and, in his own familiar way, he would exclaim, "Look at our Lotty: there's a Christian for you!"

So intent was she on his Salvation, that she became willing that this dear brother, with his family, might be saved in any way, so that her prayers for their Salvation might be answered. The Lord has indeed taken His own way to answer the prayers of the beloved Charlotte. Bereavements of various sorts have been dispensed. The light of their dwelling has been put out, their treasures have been taken to Heaven, in order that their hearts might be there also. The prayers of the affectionate and self-sacrificing Charlotte are, we trust, being answered; she seemed herself to have been a victim to the bringing about of her desires. But, whether in prosperity or adversity, her faith was unyielding, and she steadily affirmed, "He doeth all things well." Yes, as a candle upon a candlestick, she gave light to all in the house; and every member of the beloved household who now so deeply mourn their loss, will to all eternity remember her precious counsels, her pious life.

She will never be forgotten by the little circle who met with her in the classroom. She was a growing Christian, and her experience was ever new and varied. Her Class-Leader, who took her when but a lamb of the fold, enjoyed unmingled satisfaction in beholding her growth in grace.

She was eminently a Bible Christian. On one occasion, she said to a friend, "Dear sister S., when I read the memoirs of very eminent and useful Christians, I sometimes feel discouraged, and I think I cannot come up to that; but when I take the Word of God, and read the requirements, and then turn to the promises, I find that I can. Oh, I can, through grace, meet them all!" The disease by which her earthly tabernacle was taken down, was long in progress. Patience had its perfect work; and, as far as we may know from outward manifestations, she exhibited, to the praise of grace, that she was perfect and entire, wanting nothing. The prayer of the poet seemed to be indeed answered in her experience. She possessed - "A heart where Christ alone might dwell; All praise, all meekness, and all love."

Though for months almost sleepless nights and wearisome days were appointed, her incessant cough and pain affording but a short respite at a time, and her extreme debility and difficult respiration rendering her physically a constant sufferer, yet she was cheerful, and endeavored to diffuse happiness on all around. Her sufferings were so obvious, and her being was so made up of tenderness and love toward others, that to be with her and not to feel deeply was impossible. It was on this account, doubtless, that she so frequently requested to be left alone; desiring that Christ alone, her infinite Sympathizer, and her divine Helper, should be the witness of her sufferings. So keenly had her own heart suffered in sympathy with others, that she did not desire that others should, on her behalf, drink more deeply of the bitter cup than was needful. On seeing another weep, she said, "Do not weep, but rejoice." She would often reiterate, "Satisfied! satisfied! thankful! happy! happy!" She possessed a living realization that Christ was ever present with her and mighty to save, and would often exultingly exclaim, "He saves me! He saves me to the uttermost!" Her rest was in the will of God:

"All her desires seem'd lost in one: 'Father, Thy only will be done.'"

We will not say that she did not at times, when in severe physical suffering, feel that it would be "better to depart and be with Christ;" but she ever, on these occasions, gave prominence to the will of God. "I do not murmur," she would add; "the will of the Lord be done, not mine."

Her heart seemed as an ever-gushing fountain, sending forth streams of gratitude to God and man. Every little attention or favor dictated by the love of her assiduous friends, would be made a fresh occasion for expressions of gratitude. However small in earthly estimation these tokens might be, none were deemed too small for a special recognition. When she could not speak, she would lift her eyes upward, which heavenly eloquence expressed more than words could utter to the Divine Giver, while every gesture seemed to say -

"O how can words with equal warmth

The gratitude declare,

That glows within my ravish'd heart?

But Thou canst read it there."

Yet while she ascribed all the glory to God, she was not wanting in expressions of gratitude to the beloved ones whom God commissioned to minister to her, but she received them and thanked them as messengers sent to dispense gifts to her from her Heavenly Father, and she would look upward and say, "He knoweth all my wants."

She was very desirous, as she was receding from earth, to say much more to the individual members of her sister's family in regard to the Salvation of their souls; but finding her inability, she said to her endeared sister Jane, "Sister, you must do it for me." She then exhorted her beloved sister to faithfulness in maintaining prayer in her family, and also admonished her to think far more about their heavenly inheritance than their worldly interests. Will each of the dear ones who were objects of so much prayerful interest to the beloved Charlotte meet her in Heaven?

A short time before she departed, the Class-Leader visited her, to whose care she had been committed when a youthful disciple, and during a large portion of her career as a Christian. She had often attempted to express the grateful emotions of her affectionate heart to this beloved friend, but tears had as often prevented her giving utterance to those emotions of grateful love. But now she seemed too much like a spirit from the other world to be hindered by these out-gushings of nature. She drew her Class-Leader down to her, and, holding the face of her friend between her fevered hands, she spoke such words of burning love as may never be forgotten: "My dearest, dearest earthly friend, how I have loved you! The Lord only knows how I have loved you; how you have led me on, and borne with my infirmities! how patiently have you endured! and how I have loved you, I have often wished to tell, but have not been able." The beloved Charlotte was tearless now; for she was too near Heaven, and her tears had ceased to flow. But her loved friend, the Class-Leader, wept and wept as though she would weep her life away; yet still the now almost sainted Charlotte continued to gaze, unmoved by emotion, in the face of her Class-Leader, which she still held between her emaciated hands.

At length her Class-Leader, amid her flowing tears, exclaimed, "Charlotte, dear, several of the friends dearest to my heart have gone to Heaven, but they seem nearer and dearer than ever. 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him!' 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of Salvation?' Death makes no change, except to disembody the spirit. It does not change the affections. I do not feel that you will love me less after you have passed through the veil of outward things than you love me now."

"Love you less! love you less! No! long as eternal ages roll, I shall love you more and more. I shall be a star, a star in your crown, in your crown!" Who can portray the affecting interest, the grief, the bliss of that eventful moment, to the heart of that Class-Leader?

Ever since has this Class-Leader felt that if she had lived but for the one purpose of being used in the hand of God in leading this one member of her flock in the way of holiness, she would have had ample compensation for being detained on earth threescore years and ten. In allusion to the absorbing zeal her Class-Leader had manifested in the promotion of holiness, she said, "Talk more than ever on this subject; you cannot talk too much. Labor while you may. Never did I see and feel the importance of it as now! Work while you can; 'for the night cometh, when no man can work.' The night is come with me, I cannot work; the grave, the grave cannot praise Him; but the living, they shall praise Him. Oh, talk, talk about holiness while you can! 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord!' Oh, the importance of testimony on this subject! Had I my life to live over again, I would more than ever tell about that Blood that cleanseth from all sin."

On the day of her release she intimated to her kind physician that she had something to communicate. He bent his ear closely, when she sweetly said, "Kiss me." He obeyed her dying request, when she whispered, "Satisfied! satisfied!"

"The chariot of Israel and the horsemen!" The parting hour came! It was preceded by more relief from physical suffering than she had for days or weeks enjoyed. A heavenly calmness rested upon those features where Christ had long since stamped His image, and she only now waited the summons, "Child, come home!" As she drew nearer the heavenly city, her face gathered brightness, and she most evidently recognized the heavenly visitants who had come to convey her to her long-sought rest:

"Angels now were hov'ring round her," and faith already seemed lost in open vision.

There were those who had passed on before who promised to meet her, and now she doubtless beheld them. As object after object, undiscovered by those whose eyes were still holden, met her vision, she started with a look of joyous recognition, till the waiting ones could almost hear "the whispering angels say, 'Sister, spirit, come away!'"

A short pause, and the silver cord was loosened, and the lovely and much-loved Charlotte

"Clapp'd the glad wing, and soar'd away, To mingle with the blaze of day!"

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