

Gather Up the Fragments, That Nothing Be Lost.

by Phoebe Palmer

Phoebe Palmer reflects on her spiritual journey, emphasizing the importance of God's faithfulness and the need to rely on Scripture rather than external comparisons for assurance and guidance.

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:2, Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 55:3, 2 Corinthians 10:12

Topics: "Faith Journey", "Spiritual Guidance"

Description

Phoebe Palmer preaches about the journey of faith and the struggles of uncertainty and spiritual depression along the way. She reflects on the importance of seeking God's guidance through His word and not comparing one's spiritual journey to others'. Despite moments of doubt and temptation, she emphasizes the need to believe in God's promises and trust in His faithfulness, even when faced with challenges and unanswered questions.

Transcript

"Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." -- The Savior.

"And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." -- Deut. viii, 2, 3.

On reviewing the entire way by which the Lord had brought her onward through the pilgrimage of life, she saw the faithfulness of God exhibited throughout, in manner calculated permanently to assure her heart that with him there is, in truth, "no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

At the dawn of life she had been intrusted to parents to whom the Father of spirits had said, "Take this child and bring it up for me." They felt the solemn responsibility, and endeavored to train her up for God.

God did not forget to encourage their efforts. He watered the seed sown with the dews of grace from her earliest recollections. When not four years old, powerful conviction for sin gave assurance that the Holy

Spirit was true to the performance of its promised aid.

Though for many happy years she was enabled to testify, with perfect assurance, that she had passed from death unto life, yet the precise time when that change took place she could never state. Not to have an experience like most others born into the kingdom of Christ, who are so fully able, from the overwhelming circumstances of the occasion, to state the precise moment, was a fruitful source of temptation, resulting in years of painful solicitude.

From a child it was her error to treasure up, in careful remembrance, those outward exhibitions, which are given by many sincere disciples, of the inward workings of the Spirit. Hence she was too often led to pronounce upon the magnitude of the work wrought in the heart, by the outward manifestations of feeling.

Not infrequently she felt like weeping because she could not weep, imagining if she could plunge herself into those overwhelming sorrows, and despairing views of relationship to God, spoken of by some, she could then come and throw herself upon his mercy with greater probability of success.

Over and again, after having had a long season in wrestling with God, she would, as a last resource, say, "If thou wilt but direct me by thy word, and permit me to open to some passage suited to my case, I will, through thy grace assisting me, abide by its decisions. And at several never-to-be-forgotten periods did the Lord condescend to give the most direct answers of peace in this manner. For a time she would rejoice in the consolation received, and glory in the assurances of the blessed word as in verity the voice of God to her soul; but as soon as the freshness of these visitations passed over, she would again give way to dissatisfaction with her experience.

This dissatisfaction did not generally arise from the consideration that her experience was unscriptural, but from the fact that it was so unlike what she conceived to be the manner of the Spirit's operation on the hearts of others, who, as she conjectured, had received the assurance of acceptance in some such luminous manner, independent, in part, from Scriptural demonstration, that they had been constrained irresistibly to believe.

Uncertainty and spiritual depression were the consequences resulting from these repeated turnings away from the word of the Lord to the feeble testimony of men. And it is not surprising while this course, which was so dishonoring to God, was, in any degree, persisted in, that she should be left to comparative desertion. Yet this was for years her course.

Sometimes, during this period, the adversary tried to urge upon her mind that the ways of the Lord were unequal; intimating that he bestowed a much larger share of spiritual illumination on some than on others, when the true state of the case was, that she was possessed of the spirit of a Naaman, or of the unbelieving Jews -- resolved that, unless she should see signs and wonders, she would not believe.

On reviewing this portion of her experience, she afterward saw that the ways of God could not have been justified, in imparting any other state of experience than that of uncertainty and spiritual depression, inasmuch as he hath said, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Yet, notwithstanding all this waywardness, she greatly desired God as the portion of her soul, and often felt as if she could say, that his favor was more desirable than life. With deep groaning of spirit, her heart gave utterance to its emotions in saying, -- ..

"Let me no more, in deep Complaint, 'My leanness! O, my leanness!" cry; Alone consumed with pining want,

Of all my Father's children I."

"Believe -- only believe," was the oft-repeated admonition of the friends of Jesus; and her heart would as frequently silently ejaculate, "But what and how, am I to believe?" till she became nearly wearied with what seemed to her an almost unmeaning admonition, unaccompanied, as it most generally was, with the necessary explanations.

When about thirteen she acknowledged herself, before the world, as a seeker of salvation, and united herself with the people of God. One night, about this time, after having wrestled with the Lord till about midnight, she sought the repose of her pillow with feelings expressed by the poet -

"I'll weary thee with my complaint,

Here, at thy feet, for ever lie,

With longing sick, with groaning faint --

O! give me love, or else I die."

She believed herself to have fallen asleep, when, with a power that aroused body and mind by its heavenly sweetness, these words were spoken to her inmost soul, -

"See Israel's gentle Shepherd stands,

With all-engaging charms;

See how he calls the tender lambs,

And folds them in his arms."

The place seemed to shine with the glory of God; and she felt that the blessed Savior indeed took her to the bosom of his love, and bade her "be of good cheer." All was light, joy, and peace. She had no recollection of ever having heard those sweet lines before, and regarded them as spoken directly from the lips of the good Shepherd to her heart; but on observing them some years afterward in a sabbath-school hymn book, she conjectured that the words might have been seed sown in her infant heart at a very early age, when cherished in one of these nurseries of the Lord.

The consolation at this time derived was of several days' duration, but she again yielded to her former unwise course, and began to measure herself by the standard of experience established by others, instead of going to the law and the testimony, as enjoined by the word; and it would, as before observed, have been inconsistent with the declarations of that word for her to enjoy an established state of experience, while indulging in such a course. Had she taken "the sword of the Spirit," it would have guarded the way of life and happiness, and have prevented this waywardness, by presenting the admonitory sentence of an inspired apostle, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves, but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." See 2 Cor. x, 12.

Had she only taken the word of the Lord as closely to the companionship of her heart during this part of her pilgrimage, as she did in the, pathway of after years, when she sought unto it, as the man of her counsel, under all circumstances of difficulty, she would have found

"Here light descending from above Directs the doubtful feet -Here promises of heavenly love Our ardent wishes meet.

Our num'rous wants are here redrest,

And all our wants supplied;

Naught we can ask to make us blest

Is in THIS BOOK denied."

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