

The White Robe

by Phoebe Palmer

The sermon tells the story of E____'s journey towards spiritual purity and her ultimate reward of a crown from the Saviour.

Scripture: Job 33:14, Matthew 16:24, Hebrews 12:14, James 4:8, 1 John 1:7, Revelation 3:5, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Holiness Movement", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

Phoebe Palmer preaches about the transformative power of surrendering to God and pursuing holiness with unwavering dedication. Through the story of E____, who faced a life-threatening illness that led her to a profound spiritual awakening, Palmer emphasizes the importance of wholehearted consecration to God and the journey towards unreserved devotion. E____'s experience of being guided by her Class-Leader in a vision symbolizes the need to constantly seek cleansing and renewal through Jesus' blood to maintain spiritual purity amidst worldly temptations. As E____ progresses on the narrow path of holiness, she learns to prioritize her relationship with Jesus above all else, experiencing a deep transformation that leads to a closer walk with the Savior and a profound encounter with His love and grace.

Transcript

"For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction." -- Job. xxxiii. 14-16.

E____ united in Church communion, having her mind as yet but little drawn toward holiness as a definite object of faith and persevering effort. She had been connected with a denomination where little was said about entire devotedness as a distinct object of pursuit; but she was now placed under a Class-Leader who believed it to be the duty of every member of the household of faith to mind this one thing.

E____'s Leader felt that the Church had committed to her guardianship the care of souls, and had solemnly resolved that she would not cease to warn and entreat every member of her precious charge, in order that when called to render an account of her stewardship, she might be able to present every one perfect in Christ Jesus. And now, on account of the position in which she had been placed, her heart was fixed to be ceaseless and unwearied in her endeavors to bring every beloved one committed to her charge to the definite point of unreserved consecration.

E____ generally spoke of a comfortable experience; and when her Leader replied to her weekly classroom testimony, the adversary would suggest, "Why not let good alone, and not try to make it better than good? By this continuous urging to higher attainments, you will dishearten and discourage and appear to undervalue present experience."

A few months elapsed, and He who doth not willingly grieve nor afflict the children of men, laid His chastening hand of love on dear E____, and for a few days she was threatened almost hourly with dissolution. E____ had not been insincere, but she had not with her whole heart sought to be fully conformed to the will of God. And now that severe illness was paralyzing her energies, how could she seek that grace with more diligence than when the capabilities of body and soul were in healthful vigor? so, as might have been expected, her mind continued in an unaltered position. Had E____ passed away from earth during the early part of her illness, her friends might have said she died happy, and in full view of a blissful immortality; and she would have gone into eternity self-deceived. But -

"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform."

In this hour of peril, and in an unlooked-for manner, the admonitions of E____'s Class-Leader were brought to bear upon her mind. In vision, she beheld herself in the light of eternity, passed over the boundaries of time. Most unexpectedly she found herself surrounded by gloom and loneliness. "I had thought that angels were in waiting to bear the spirits of the just to Heaven," said she; "and now who will guide my feet?" Presently her friend, the Class-Leader, who had been so desirous to guide her feet into the way of holiness, appeared, robed in white, and, extending her hand toward E____, said, "Come, E____, I have come to introduce you into the presence of the King."

E____ looked upon the white robe of her friend, and then upon her own spotted and soiled garments, and said, "I cannot go: I am not fit to be introduced to the presence of the King." Her friend continued to urge; but E____ resisted her entreaties, saying, "No! let me go to the place assigned me." Her friend then endeavored to direct her attention to a light in the sky, assuring her that if she would only look up, her robe would be made white; but E____ despairingly replied, "I thought that was to have been done in the other world." To this her friend did not reply, but only perseveringly urged her to look up, and at last succeeded in getting her to join in singing -

"My dying Saviour and my God, Fountain for guilt and sin, Sprinkle me ever with Thy blood, And cleanse, and keep me clean."

While singing the last two lines of the stanza, E____ gained courage, looked up, and, with joyful surprise, beheld her robe made white.

She then went on most rejoicingly to be introduced to the presence of the King. The road in which she progressed was a narrow, shining way, with a hedge thrown up on either side. Familiar faces were looking over this hedge, and, ever and anon, missiles were thrown, and various stratagems were used with the intention to perplex her, and soil her now spotless garments. "Only keep your eye upward," said E____'s friend, "and do not suffer yourself to be perplexed, and your garment will remain unsoiled; but if you look downward, your robe will again be polluted." Once, for a moment, E____ suffered herself to be perplexed, and in looking down beheld her beautiful robe again soiled, through the maliciousness of her adversaries; but, on being again urged to sing -

"Sprinkle me ever with Thy blood, And cleanse, and keep me clean,"

her robe was again cleansed from pollution. Her Class-Leader then put a golden book in E____s hand, and said, "I must now leave you." The only words she could remember on opening it were, written in gold letters, "IF ANY MAN WILL BE MY DISCIPLE, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF, TAKE UP HIS CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME."

E____'s friend, on hearing this recital from her lips, was amazed at the condescension of her Heavenly Father. She saw that God had in visions of the night opened the understanding of E____, and had given to her repeated admonitions a vitality in E____'s mind, not perceived before; and that she had only now to say "Dear E____, I need not tell you that this dream is intended for your present admonition. After death all will be past change. God will then say, 'Let him that is filthy be filthy still.' "And before E____'s health permitted her again to mingle with her beloved associates at the classroom, she had passed through the most memorable change that ever transpired in her history. It was brought about in so much simplicity and sweetness, that, in retracing it, one would think it no wonder an ancient seer should say, when referring to the walk of the redeemed one in the way of holiness, that "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Having observed that in former experience she had cherished attachments to the world and the creature, such as were not calculated to increase her love to the Saviour, but rather to divide her affections, so as to

"Leave but half for God,"

she now determined that He should no longer be insulted and grieved by merely sharing her heart, but that He should have the whole. She became true to the resolve -- gave the Saviour her undivided heart. He at once, without any hesitation, took it. It may be encouraging to some who would love to come at once, and, like E____, make an entire surrender, to know that the blessed Redeemer did not chide her with a long list of grievances. He did not say, "You have so long prevented Me from taking full possession, that you must now in turn wait and know My displeasure." No! He at once by His own almighty power turned out all the "buyers and sellers": in a word, everything unlovely in His sight was immediately dispossessed by His own powerful hand. He then took that heart, and laid it upon His own bosom of love so closely, that every pulsation of her heart seemed to beat in unison with His. And all this was accomplished without her doing anything worthy of mention, with the exception of just continuing in the act of giving her otherwise worthless heart to him, with a reliance on His faithfulness to keep and preserve it from the touch of pollution.

It were needless to say, that she did not now find it so hard to believe as formerly, because unbelief was among those unlovely traits of character which by the brightness of the Saviour's coming, had been destroyed. And then she was flow so near to the lips of the Altogether Lovely, that she could hear Him continually saying, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And assurances that she had been raised to entire newness of life were so obvious to herself and friends also, that neither could require fuller demonstration, that E____ was indeed a changed being. Love of the world, self, and other sinful creature loves were displaced, and the love of the Saviour became absorbing. Other objects were loved subordinately as gifts from Him, and valued for His sake.

From this eventful period, E____ ran on rapidly in the heavenly way. She seemed ever to aim more at holiness than happiness; yet found that happiness was the necessary result, or rather the concomitant of holiness, and thus in reality gained just the point at which every immortal spirit is ever grasping. Oh, with what deep feeling of soul did she now look upon those who -

"Mistake the mark,

And weary out life' hours

In chasing shadows!"

She had mingled in gay circles. With buoyant step she had joined in the festive dance. From these gay associations she was for a time exposed to many temptations from without. Many who were walking in the broader way of worldly-minded profession found leisure to stop and look over the hedge; and often those things were thrown in her way which would have been obstacles had she not kept her eye steadily looking unto Jesus. It was thus, through a continuous appropriation of His all-cleansing Blood, that her garments were kept unspotted from the world.

Once, for a moment, she ceased to look upward in the midst of these perplexities from without, and was quickly dismayed to see a soil fasten on her beautiful robe; but she remembered the admonition, "Looking unto Jesus," and was again cleansed.

At another time, when temptations from without abounded to an unusual degree, the Saviour again appeared for her deliverance, and spake in visions of the night for her comfort and instruction. It may be well to state, that E_____ for several days previous to this, had been unusually exercised relative to the example of some who professed much attachment to the Saviour, and yet indulged in more conformity to worldly usages than E_____ thought consistent with the Christian's high calling. The vision at this time seemed but a continuation of the former remarkable visitation. She was still walking onward in the same shining way; had made some progress; so that now she was quite in advance of a company of white-robed ones who had just entered the narrow way. A company preceded her in robes of white, who were also making steady advances. Above, voices, in tones sweeter than earthly music, were singing -

"What are these array'd in white,

Brighter than the noonday sun,

Foremost of the sons of light,

Nearest the eternal throne?

These are they that bore the cross,

Nobly for their Master stood,

Sufferers in His righteous cause,

Followers of the dying God:"

while a voice yet sweeter from One near at hand responded, "These are they which Thou gavest Me out of the world." Observing that those that followed, as also those that preceded her, were in companies, E_____ soliloquized thus: "How is it that I am alone, when both those that precede me and those that follow, are in company?"

Presently One fairer than the sons of men smilingly said, "Will you say you are alone when I am with you?" He directed her attention over the hedge, where she saw a broader road, and many travelers. Among

others were those professors who had spoken so much of attachment to the Saviour, and whose conformity to the world had rendered their example in relation to self-denial so perplexingly questionable.

These, she afterwards observed, though they seemed to be going in the same direction, and doubtless fancied they were progressing Heavenward, were at a distance from the Saviour.

"In which way will you walk -- in yon broader road, in friendship with the world, sharing its honors and pleasures, and at a distance from Me; or in this narrow way, close by My side, sharing My dishonor and reproach?" said E____'s pleasant companion, who had not yet fully discovered Himself. "I will walk in this narrow way," said E____, with a decision in tone and feeling never to be forgotten. The arms of everlasting love were now more closely thrown around her, and she felt that her whole being was encircled in the embrace, as her blessed companion, whom she now discovered to be the fairest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, looked upon her, and said," Then thou art Mine! and I am thy SAVIOUR! "

So memorable was that look of ineffable love that then penetrated her heart, and absorbed all her powers, that it left an ever-abiding blessedness. The arm of love that then encompassed her whole being, and drew her more closely than ever to the heart of the Saviour, seemed to leave an enduring impress.

She now made rapid advances, and found herself gaining upon the white-robed company who had preceded her, who, she observed, as they came to a point in their path, looking like a bridge in the distance, paused, and then passed over, and entered into a gate at the head of the way. On arriving at this point, she found a deep stream running below, over which dry leaves were strewn, presenting the semblance of a bridge; and E____ felt a shrinking that caused an involuntary pause, and, in the excitement of the moment, she exclaimed, "I shall surely sink!" "What! fear, when My arm doth sustain thee, and I am thy SAVIOUR?" And again He clasped her yet closer to His bosom, and, encircled by His strong arm, she was borne safely over.

She then went up to the gate at the head of the way, and began to knock. And now the same blessed Saviour, whose companionship had been so sweet to her through all her journey, looked over the battlements of the beautiful city, and said, "You need not knock here; you knocked in the other world, and you now have a right to enter."

E____ went in. We need not say that her raptured eyes now beheld the King in His beauty. And there, also, she beheld the company who had preceded her, receiving crowns from the hand of the Saviour. After handing one, beautifully set with stars, to one whom E____ well knew and much loved, He came bearing one to her. It was a golden crown, and valuable indeed; but it had no stars in it. E____ felt somewhat disappointed, and dared to breathe the thought into the ear of the Saviour, who had so graciously fulfilled all the desires of her heart, even as she had ever "told Him all," while blessed with His sweet communings by the way. With a beseeching look, she said, "But it has no stars in it!" "Be thou faithful unto death," said the compassionate Jesus," and thou shalt have a crown glittering with as many stars as the one thou hast just beheld."

'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,

Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home:

We'll praise Him for all that is past,

And trust Him for all that's to come."

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