

Full Surrender By James Gilchrist Lawson

Classic Christian Writings:

One of the most consecrated Christians as well as one of the greatest of gospel singers and hymn writers was Philip Paul Bliss (1838-1876). He was taken away early in life, but before his departure wrote some of our best hymns, among them being, "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning," "Hold the Fort," "The Light of the World is Jesus," "Almost Persuaded," "I Am So Glad that Jesus Loves Me," "Hallelujah! What a Saviour," "Wonderful Words of Life," and many others.

P. P. Bliss was born in Pennsylvania in 1838, and was a poor country boy, but very fond of music. He was religiously inclined from his earliest youth, and made a public confession of Christ at a Baptist revival in 1850. After his marriage, and a short service in the Civil War, and a number of years spent in holding secular concerts, he became acquainted with Mr. Moody. Several years after this he was led to consecrate his entire life and services to God for the purpose of spreading the gospel in song.

In the memoirs of Bliss, by Major D. W. Whittle, we learn the story of how he was led to make the full consecration of his services. During the winters of 1873-4, Mr. Bliss received many letters from Mr. Moody, who was then in Scotland, urging him to give up his business, drop everything, and sing the gospel. Similar letters came to Major Whittle, urging him to go out with Bliss and hold meetings. Mr. and Mrs. Bliss were ready for this if they could see it as the Lord's will. But there was much prayer and hesitation on the part of Mr. Bliss before he reached a decision in the matter. He doubted his ability, and doubted whether the inclination he felt to go was from the Lord.

But Mr. Moody continued to write, and Mr. H. G. Spafford, a mutual friend, also joined in urging Major Whittle and Mr. Bliss to go into the evangelistic work. Finally a door opened for them. Rev. C. M. Saunders, of Waukegan, Illinois, invited them to his church for three or four evenings as an experiment. Major Cole accompanied them on this trip.

The first meeting was not an encouraging one in point of attendance, and there were no marked results except a powerful impression on the minds of the evangelists that the Lord was with them. The next day it rained and they looked for a small attendance, but the congregation was twice as large as the first, and a number of souls were led to Christ.

"Our hearts were very full," says Major Whittle, "and a great responsibility was upon us. The next afternoon we all three met in the study of the Congregational Church, where our meetings were held, and spent some hours in prayer. Bliss made a formal surrender of everything to the Lord; gave up his musical conventions; gave up his writing of secular music; gave up everything, and in a simple, childlike, trusting prayer, placed himself, with any talent, any power God has given him, at the disposal of the Lord, for any use He could make of him in the spreading of His gospel.

"Dear Cole united with us in this consecration. It was a wonderful afternoon. As I think back upon the scene in that little study, and recall Bliss' prayer, and the emotions that filled us all in the sense of God's presence, the room seems lit up in my memory with a halo of glory."

By James Gilchrist Lawson. Reprinted from *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*.