

How May We Enter Into the Enjoyment of Holiness?

by Phoebe Palmer

Phoebe Palmer emphasizes the necessity of a fixed intention and total surrender to God in order to enter into the enjoyment of holiness.

Scripture: Exodus 31:13, Leviticus 20:7, Psalm 118:27, Matthew 23:19, John 7:17, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 4:12, Hebrews 12:14, Hebrews 13:10, 1 Peter 1:15

Topics: "Holy Living", "Sanctification"

Description

Phoebe Palmer preaches about the necessity of fully fixing the intention to live a holy life, requiring deep searchings of the heart and surrendering any hindrances that may be prejudicial to the soul's best interests. She emphasizes the importance of resolutely fixing the mind on the intention to be holy, as a crucial step towards achieving holiness. Palmer urges believers to count the cost of living a life of entire devotion to God, emphasizing the need for a thorough foundation to withstand trials and temptations.

Transcript

Having become convinced that holiness is a state of soul which the Scriptures clearly set forth as an attainment which it is your duty and privilege to be living in the enjoyment of, it is necessary that the intention be fully fixed to live a holy life.

This will require deep searchings of heart, and will not admit of a secret reserve of this or the other thing, when there is a doubt that the object may be prejudicial to the soul's best interests. The matter must be brought to bear the scrutinizing eye of God; and must be decided upon faithfully, though the decision involve a surrender literally painful as that of parting with a right hand or right eye.

Some may be inclined to think this is narrowing the way too much, and with shrinking of heart may solicitously inquire, "Lord, are there few that be saved?," while the Saviour, beholding the many hindrances, replies, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." And why now able? Has the command gone forth, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation?" (1 Peter i. 15). And has a command with such an infinite weight of consequences (Heb. xii. 14) pending on its non-fulfillment, been issued from the throne where eternal love, power, and wisdom preside, and yet the ability for its performance not been given? No! it is the Almighty God, boundless in love, goodness, and power, that says, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect."

But the words of our Saviour will bring us yet more directly to the point, and will stamp the assertion with the signet of truth, that the intention to be holy, resolutely fixed in the mind, is a very necessary step toward insuring the object. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17). This, taken in connection with "For the word of the Lord is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv. 12), will yet more fully assure us of the necessity of subjecting ourselves to the deep searchings of the Spirit with the intention decidedly fixed to know nothing among men "save Christ and Him crucified."

We have frequent occasion to observe with the sinner, that the last point of extremity, previous to obtaining comfort, is the resolve that though he seek till the hour of his death, and never obtain forgiveness, he will not go back to the world and seek his pleasures there, but will endeavor to serve the Lord, and seek, in the use of all the appointed means, the knowledge of pardon. So with the believer; he must have all his energies concentrated in the one endeavor and intention of living a life of entire devotion to God.

If you would raise a superstructure that will endure the searching winds, storms, and rains, which will inevitably beat against it, it is absolutely necessary that you count the cost. Deem not that hand or that heart unfriendly that would assist you in this duty. How needful for the comfort of the soul, as also for the permanency of the work, that a thorough foundation be laid, so that the distressing temptations consequent upon the circumstance of this and the other sacrifice not having been before contemplated, may never successfully obtrude! Many are continually vacillating in their experience, and many more are falling through a failure in this particular. Through this the good way is evil spoken of.

Oh, if you would be holy, and have your name written in heaven with those "who have come out of great tribulation," and on earth with those "who adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things"; if you would be a living epistle, read and known of all men, count the cost! Say, with the Apostle, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." No less devotion of spirit will carry you unpolluted through the world, than carried the martyrs through the flames to Heaven. Though, from the present state of Christianity, its claims in many respects may not be of the same kind, yet the devotion of spirit required is precisely the same in nature and extent. And unless it leads you to an entire renunciation, a crucifixion to the world, you have reason to fear that it will not bring you to the same happy Heaven of which they are now in possession.

Be assured that unless you are decided on making the entire sacrifice of all your powers to God, and are willing to be sanctified on the terms specified in the Word, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," you have no proper foundation for your faith to rest upon, when you endeavor to believe that God will receive the offering at your hand. "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 8). "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that He regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good-will at your hand" (Mal. ii. 13). From these passages you may infer the reason why so many find it so exceedingly difficult to believe. The Faithful and True Witness hath said, as illustrative of the requirements of this way of holiness, and also of its simplicity, "The unclean shall not pass over it; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." May not, then, the defect in the experience of thousands, who have endeavored by merely believing, without having this essential preparation for their faith, be accounted for in this way, rather than that the truth of God should

be questioned?

The experience of a glorious number of living witnesses who have attested the excellency of the knowledge of this grace, proves that just so soon as they were willing in reality to count all things loss, just so soon they found it perfectly easy to believe. And as it is by believing that we are brought into this blessed state of soul, this is why the writer has spent so much time in what may seem merely preliminary. To prove the point, let me bring two or three out of the many living witnesses that have come under my observation. The first a divine, who has been, for two or three years past, publishing to thousands the blessedness of this way. He stated that he had been nine years interested in the subject of holiness, believing it to be the privilege of all believers to be holy. A considerable part of those nine years was spent in much anxiety and perplexity on the subject. "Why, brother," said I, "how can you account for the circumstances of your being so long seeking without obtaining the blessing, when you were such a sincere inquirer after truth?" "Why," said he, "I think I cannot reply to your question better than by using the words of our Saviour: 'How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?' For just as soon as I was willing to give up that honour that cometh from the world, willing to have my name literally cast out as evil, and to seek that honour that cometh from God only, I found it perfectly easy to believe."

Another had been more than a year earnestly seeking the blessing, and whenever the question was proposed to her mind, "Should the Lord give you the blessing, would you be willing to profess it?" as often as the question recurred, she replied, by her feelings, that she could not; and yet thought that she was willing to give up all for the attainment of the blessing. She at last felt the necessity of it so deeply, that she concluded no sacrifice would be too great. When the Spirit again applied the question, "Would you be willing to profess the blessing, should you receive it?" her heart replied, "Yes, Lord, confess it, or anything; only let me have it!" The way of faith was at once plain, and her mouth was filled with praises.

Two other cases, coming, as in the instances just mentioned, directly under my own observation, may be instrumental in solving the difficulties in the way of believing with some. Remote from each other resided two individuals, entirely unacquainted with each other's experience; both became deeply interested in the subject of holiness, the Spirit urging them powerfully to the present attainment of the blessing. Yet the way of faith seemed hard to understand, when it was suggested that something must be in the way of believing, as God had declared it easy. Both explained the difficulty by an allusion to such an attachment as is forbidden by the Word. (2 Cor. vi. 14.) They were told that they would find it utterly impossible to believe under such circumstances; that the object must be given up, and they would then find God true to His word. The surrender was made, and they were made the happy possessors of the perfect love of God. These are only transcripts of the experience of scores of living witnesses.

This is a work in which we must most emphatically be workers together with God; for though He saith, "I am the Lord that doth sanctify you" (Exod. xxxi. 13), He also says, "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy" (Lev. xx. 7). Though the blessing is received through faith, and not by the works of the law, yet it is impossible to exercise that faith which brings the blessing, until we are willing to bring the sacrifice of the body, soul, and spirit, and leave it there. Then shall we find that "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar" (Psalm cxviii. 27).

Then it is that this highway, cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in, becomes plain, so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err. In obedience to the requirement, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. xii. 1), the offering is

presented. And will not that God who hath required it at your hand accept it, when, in sincerity of heart, it is brought and laid upon the altar? Dare not to charge your faithful, promise-keeping God with such an inconsistency, as for a moment to doubt that He will be true. He cannot deny Himself.

Under the Levitical dispensation, which consisted mainly of outward rites and observances, the comers unto the altar were required to bring such sacrifices as were prescribed by the law, and originally specified by God, such as the firstlings of their flocks, first-fruits, etc. And when, according to the best of their ability, and their knowledge of the nature of the requirement, they brought them, to be presented through their officiating priest to God, have we reason to believe they ever doubted that God, who required, would accept, and not only would but did accept, at the time they were presented? What unwarrantable incredulity, and how dishonoring to God, would it have been, had they said to those around, or even indulged in heart the thought, "According to the ability which God hath given have I brought this oblation, yet I know not whether it will be accepted!" Would not this have been thinking and speaking of God as a hard Master?

Oh, how unlike the conduct induced by the faith of Abraham! God was about to make a covenant with him. A sacrifice is required. Abraham brings it. Yet the fire does not at once descend from Heaven and consume it. But does he with impatience remove the sacrifice from off the hallowed altar? No; he judges Him faithful who hath called him to it. With eager, prayerful intensity, he keeps his gaze heavenward, expecting doubtless, momentarily that the token will be given that will establish him for ever in the knowledge that the covenant is ratified in Heaven. The fowls watch to pollute. This he knows would mar the sacrifice, and render it unworthy the acceptance of his God. He watches their approach, and drives them away. The day passes, and the shades of evening begin to lower, yet still he waits. Imagine, for a moment, that at this juncture Abraham had become disheartened, and had begun to conclude he had mistaken the nature of the requirement in some way; or that the morrow, or some future period, might do as well: would that covenant which secured such important consequences to his posterity have been ratified? What you want is to enter into -

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

It is your Father's good pleasure to give it you. He will not permit one more pang or struggle in the attainment of it than will be for your good; for "He doth not afflict willingly." You will not be called to make one sacrifice but what will be for your permanent welfare, and such as you will praise God to all eternity that you were permitted to make. You may be called to some peculiar sacrifice of which you may not know the why and wherefore now, like as Abraham with his beloved Isaac. But the Lord may see some idol in your heart that you have scarcely been apprised of, till thus searched and proved; or He may have a special work in His vineyard, that He intends to fit you for; and your only safety is in leaving it all to Him, and with perfect submission to say -

"Mold as Thou wilt Thy passive clay."

Make no provision for future emergencies; give up all whether known or unknown. Resolve that, as duty shall be made plain, you will follow on, in obedience to the command, though death may await you.

If you are thus resolved to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" your Lord, there is no reason why you may not enter into the enjoyment of this state this hour. Jesus, your intercessor, stands at the right hand of the Majesty on high, pleading your cause. He -

"Points to His side, and lifts His hands, And shows that you are graven there."

Do you feel a fearful shrinking, which you would fain overcome? Look away from earth, from self and fix your eye upon your compassionate Jesus. Obey constantly the admonition, "Looking unto Jesus." "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us ... Herein is our love made perfect." Observe it is not enough to know, but we must also believe this love. Satan will with all his forces oppose you. Make up your mind to expect this. A door, great and effectual, is opened before you; but there are many adversaries. "The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Think of the many evidences your Saviour has given of His infinite willingness and ability to impart this Full Salvation to your soul. When He bowed His head upon the cross, and said, "It is finished," then a full and complete Salvation, a redemption from all iniquity, was made possible for every soul of man. And what shall hinder your now receiving it, if by faith you now lay hold on the terms of the covenant, as, in the hallowed presence, and through the Almighty strength, and in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you let this be the solemn hour when you enter into the bonds of an everlasting covenant to be wholly the Lord's for time and for eternity?

Perhaps you never felt a more piercing sense of your helplessness; but you are now to lay hold on almighty strength. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength."

Some desponding, longing one, who may read this communication, may, up to this time, have been an unfaithful, cold-hearted professor, so that coming out to profess this state of grace may cause many, whose companionship has before been courted, to say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" But you are now giving yourself wholly away to Christ, and in His great love He is now saying unto you, "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world," "and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit; and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you." Oh, is not this enough? Mr. Wesley says, "By this token you may know whether you seek the blessing by faith or by works. If by works, you want something to be done first before you are made holy. You think, 'I must first be, or do, thus or thus, before I am sanctified.' If you seek it by faith, seek it as you are, and if as you are, then expect it now!"

It is of great importance that you look at this great Salvation as a present Salvation, received momentarily from above. The blood of Jesus cleanseth not that it can or will cleanse at some future period, but it cleanseth now, while you lay your all upon that "altar that sanctifieth the gift." You keep your offering there, even all your redeemed powers -- body, soul, and spirit -mind, memory, and will -- time, talents, and influence. And as in devotion all these redeemed powers return ceaselessly to God, through Christ, it is your duty to believe. Do not imagine that you have something indefinite, you know not what, to believe. No; it is the truth just stated you are called implicitly to believe; and if you do not believe, you dishonor God, and grieve the Spirit of love. The inconsistency of your unbelief is here: in obedience to the requirement of God, you, through the assistance of His grace, have been enabled to come out and be separate, resolved to touch not, taste not, handle not the unclean thing. If you had enabled yourself to do this, then there might be a shadow of consistency in your unbelief; but now that you have done it through the power of God, assured that, apart from His grace, there dwelleth no good thing in you, how unreasonable the thought that He will not fulfill His part of the engagement! "I will receive you, "is His own declaration. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you." "Now is the accepted time, and now is the day of Salvation." Then venture upon the truth of His word; you cannot believe God in vain. "The faith SHALL bring the power; "but do not expect to feel the power before you have exercised the faith. This would be expecting the fruit before the

tree is planted; the power to live and dwell in God comes through believing.

Holiness is a state of soul in which all the powers of the body and mind are consciously given up to God; and the witness of holiness is that testimony which the Holy Spirit bears with our spirit that the offering is accepted through Christ. The work is accomplished the moment we lay our all upon the altar Under the old covenant dispensation it was ordained by God that whatsoever touched the altar should be holy: Seven days thou shalt make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever toucheth the altar shall be holy" (Exod. xxix. 37). And in allusion to this our Saviour says, "The altar that sanctifieth the gift" (Matt. xxiii. 19). As explanatory of this subject, Dr. Clarke says, "This may be understood as implying that whatsoever was laid on the altar became the Lord's property, and must be wholly devoted to sacred purposes." Under the new covenant dispensation, the Apostle to the Hebrews says, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Heb. xiii. 10). Dr. Clarke again says, "The Christian altar is the Christian sacrifice, which is CHRIST JESUS, with all the benefits of His passion and death." "Hallelujah! Glory be to God in the highest!" Will you come, dear disciple of Jesus, and venture even now to lay your all upon this blessed altar? He will not spurn you away. No; "His side an open fountain is;" "His nature and His name is love." Surely you will now begin to say --

"O Love, thou bottomless abyss!

My sins are swallowed up in Thee;

Cover'd is my unrighteousness,

Nor spot of guilt remains on me:

While Jesus' blood through earth and skies,

'Mercy, free, boundless mercy,' cries."

Rest here. Remember, "The just shall live by faith," not ecstasies. HOLINESS is the mark; that state of soul in which all the powers of soul and body are consciously given up to God. And here you have it. "Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward;" "for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Neither former unfaithfulness nor present unworthiness need hinder your coming just as you are. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin.

"If all the sins which men have done

In thought, in wilt, in word, or deed,

Since worlds were made or time begun,

Were laid on one poor sinner's head,

The stream of Jesus' precious blood

Could wash away the dreadful load."

Then rest confidently. Resolve that you will not make your feelings (as these may vary by the manner in which God sees most for your good to try your faith) a standard for your faith. True faith will produce feeling, but it may at first be little other than solid satisfaction, arising from an implicit reliance on God. As with Abraham, so the most glorious examples, attesting by their lives the excellency of the way of faith, are those whose faith has been most severely tried. A holy, unyielding violence is necessary in order to retain the ground. Let that described by the poet be yours:

"Fix'd on this ground will I remain,

Though my heart fail, and flesh decay;

This anchor shall my soul sustain,

When earth's foundations melt away;

Mercy's full power I then shall prove,

Loved with an everlasting love."

Rest now and for ever here, and you are NOW, and shall eternally be, the SAVED of the Lord.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/phoebe-palmer/how-may-we-enter-into-the-enjoyment-of-holiness/>

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