

The Advantages, to Ourselves and Others, of Living in the Enjoyment of the Witness of Holiness

by Phoebe Palmer

Living in the enjoyment of the witness of holiness inspires faith, constrains us to live a life surrendered to God, and brings numerous advantages to ourselves and others.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3:16, Philippians 4:13, 1 Thessalonians 4:7, Hebrews 10:19, 1 Peter 1:15

Topics: "Holy Living", "Christian Perseverance"

Description

Phoebe Palmer preaches about the infinite advantages of living in the enjoyment of holiness, emphasizing the eternal weight of glory awaiting those who lead a holy life. She highlights the importance of having boldness to enter the holiest by the Blood of Jesus and the necessity of purity of intention in all our works. Palmer urges believers to persevere in seeking holiness, as it not only benefits themselves but also impacts the world around them, leading to the spread of sacred influence and the advancement of God's kingdom.

Transcript

Had I the powers of those immortal spirits that blaze around the throne, catching their inspiration direct from Heaven's altar, I should still feel my incompetency to portray fully the advantages, to ourselves and others, of living in the enjoyment of the witness of holiness.

The benefits extend far, far into the impenetrable future. The Eternal Mind alone can fully know them. It is an ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY, which awaits that blissful one who has lived a holy life.

But let us, with the ability that God hath given, endeavor to grasp what we may; and Oh, I am sure it will be enough to cause us to "thank God and take courage."

In the first place, "having boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us," our works, while we abide here, shall all "be wrought in God," We shall enjoy the witness, that in the devotion of all the powers of our bodies and minds, they ascend a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable: they become holy by being presented to God through Christ, and are therefore acceptable. In this conclusion we are warranted by the Word: "For we are unto God a sweet

savour of Christ." And then there is another advantage expressed in the encouraging and persuasive words: "Therefore be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

How much labour is comparatively fruitless, on account of the absence of the definite witness of purity of intention! With the knowledge that our labour is in the Lord, we labour in faith. Who has not had a powerful conviction of the necessity of holiness in this particular? However well-intentioned the effort, yet "the accuser of the brethren," whose work it is to perplex and hinder, if he cannot destroy, often has greatly the advantage of the most wholly sanctified soul here. Oh, how often the suggestion that some sinister motive has influenced in the performance of duty, has hindered faith from laying hold on the assurance that the labour performed was "labour in the Lord!" And, for want of this faith, we have been unable to obtain the encouraging assurance that our labors shall be blessed.

The witness of holiness involves the witness of purity of intention. And who can conceive the infinite advantage of living in the enjoyment of the witness of holiness, in view of this particular? Think how inspiring to the faith; how calculated to urge onward to greater and still greater efforts! Surely it must have been the constraining influence of this faith that caused the Psalmist to say, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up." Paul must have felt its impelling power when he said, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things." "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." Yes: this was the hallowing, constraining influence that inspired those ancient worthies, so honorably mentioned in Hebrews xi., of whom the world was not worthy; "who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." And the reason why more such glorious examples in faith and practice are not coming up before us continually, in every professor, is not because the grace of God is less potent to bring about these results, or that His requirements have become, in the least iota, less obligatory.

But the question, Why is it that these examples are not more frequent? will bring us to the statement of another very important advantage arising from our living in the enjoyment of holiness.

God says, "Ye are My witnesses." At an infinite price, Salvation from all sin, "a redemption from all iniquity," has been made possible for us; and if we are not living in the enjoyment of it, how can we say with the Apostle, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen," when we would urge the attainment of Full Salvation on others? How necessary, in the administration of civil jurisprudence, that a witness have these prerequisites! Without a personal knowledge of the facts in the case, testimony is not received as valid.

How little advantage has the witness for Jesus, that would testify of the excellence of this great Salvation, without the same sanctification of the spirit that the Apostles had! Oh, it was a personal knowledge of that whereof they spake, that gave them that holy boldness, alike before the Jewish Sanhedrin, the noble Festus, and the ignoble multitude. It is no wonder that those who were in fear for their craft, that their idol-worship might be brought to nought, should solicitously complain "that these men that turn the world upside down have come hither also." For it is such instruments as these, feeling that they have no might of their own, and having placed themselves on the Lord's altar, to be used entirely at His disposal, that God condescends to empower with the might of His Spirit; and, conscious of its holy energy, we hear them

triumphantly exclaim, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me;" "Through God we shall do valiantly: for He it is that shall tread down our enemies;" while, in their example of burning zeal, we behold the truth of God verified, "One shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight."

And why is it that there are not many more such witnesses in the Christian world? Is it not because one is waiting for another, and making the standard of another's experience a criterion for his own, instead of making the requirements of the Word the only standard? The soul, newly born into the kingdom, sees presented before him the more excellent way. The Spirit urges him onward to the prize of his high calling; but soon he observes that this is a higher state of grace than the general standard of experience in the church will warrant him in the expectation of attaining.

He sees those who have been years in the way, professing a comfortable state of mind, and yet not professing to enjoy the witness of holiness; and he gradually settles down into the belief, that it is a state of grace quite beyond what should be his present expectation. And according to his faith it is done unto him. His spiritual energies become paralyzed; the mark for the prize of his high calling becomes less perceptible, and, the urgings of the Spirit enforcing the necessity of holiness being thus less regarded through the influence of the example of older Christians, the mind gradually becomes habituated to the belief, that it is not absolutely necessary for the safety of the soul to be living in the enjoyment of holiness. And thus by a gradual process, and almost unconsciously, the commandments, "Be ye holy," and "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength," are made of comparatively little effect; and most emphatically also by the same process that the commandment became of none effect in the days of our Saviour, that is, by tradition; the opinion being transmitted from one to another, though unauthorized by the Scriptures.

Where are the humble disciples of the Lord Jesus who cannot see how, beyond all computation, the cause they so much love would be advantaged in this respect, were the mass of professors to fix their eye perseveringly on the prize of their high calling on their first setting out in the Christian course? And who can tell, should a band of skillful nursing fathers and mothers in Israel undertake carefully to direct the course of those newly born into the kingdom, how soon the mind might become enlightened on this subject, and the object, being distinctly ascertained, be grasped at once?

One example, illustrating the blessedness of this early training, came directly under my own observation. The individual was powerfully converted to God on the Sabbath. On Tuesday she went to a meeting of Christian friends, where there were several witnesses of holiness, and her whole soul became absorbed in the subject. "Oh!" said she, with much intensity of manner, at the close of the meeting, "I want to be wholly the Lord's!" She was told that the blessing was for her, and that these longing desires for it were sure intimations that the Lord intended to impart the blessing, if she would only perseveringly seek it. She returned home, spent most of the time until about nine o'clock the next morning in pleading with God, when the witness, "indubitably clear," was given; and she ran, like the woman in the Gospel, to spread the news abroad. And then the effect! Would that it could be sounded abroad, to the praise of God, through the world of professing Christians! It was not the irresistible tide of joy, other than the joy of Christ which was to bring many sons to glory, that impelled her forward. No:

"'Twas love that moved her chariot wheels."

It was the constraining influence of the love of Christ, filling her soul, that caused her often to know the meaning of the significant words, "the fellowship with His sufferings." The burden of souls was so laid

upon her, that she was continually devising expedients for their rescue; and at times, like her Master, her hours of repose were broken in upon in wrestling with God for them, until one and another were born into the kingdom through her instrumentality; and then her joy was of that solid, holy order, that the inactive professor can scarcely apprehend.

And who can compute the advantages of having the multitudes that are brought in during our continuous revivals, urged on by example and precept also towards the attainment of holiness? Those who themselves live in the enjoyment of the direct witness cannot forbear urging it upon others. It is as a fire shut up in their bones, which must have vent; and must spread, by its own Divine energy, till others will catch the sacred influence.

As holiness is a state of soul in which all the powers of the body and mind are constantly and consciously given up to God, think of the variety of advantages in every possible way, that must necessarily result from our living in this state, not only to ourselves, but to the world at large. He that understandingly enjoys this blessing holds nothing as his own. Assured that he holds nothing but what he has received, he glories not in his possession as though he had not received it -- as if he had a right to appropriate any portion of his Lord's goods to his own purposes. He hears the voice of God continually saying to him, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and spirit which are His." His body being given up as a temple for the Holy Spirit to dwell in, he sustains and adorns it in the manner that will best fit it for this purpose. "Holiness to the Lord" is written upon all his adornments; all his members are given up to obey the dictates of the Holy Spirit. His spirit is continually ascending in converse with God; and, with all the ardor of absorbing love, is continually saying, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth;" "What wouldst Thou have me to do?" And then

"Love makes his willing feet In swift obedience move."

He feels that he has not one moment of time at his own disposal, and he dares not spend it in any pursuit but what will bear the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord." His talents are all devoted to holy purposes, and in the manner that will best help forward the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom; for he has no personal interest to serve apart from this. If the Lord would arrest a sinner whose ways are about to take hold on death, or comfort a weeping penitent, or call back one of His wandering children, or would have a testimony of His power to save unto the uttermost, or any other message of grace faithfully delivered, He ever finds the soul wholly sanctified ready to speak at His bidding. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" but the will of the sanctified and the will of the Sanctifier being ever in unison, the Sanctifier is ever saying to him, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

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