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HOW THEY ENTERED CANAAN
(A Collection of Holiness Experience Accounts)
Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

PHOEBE (WORRALL) PALMER
1807 -- 1874
(Methodist)

Phoebe Palmer might well be designated "the mother of the holiness movement." After her passing, T. D. Talmage, in his tribute to her, stated that there were twenty-five thousand souls saved under the instrumentality of Phoebe Palmer. A perusal of "The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer" by Richard Wheatley seems to indicate that the number of those who were sanctified wholly through the work of Dr. and Mrs. Palmer may also have numbered in the tens of thousands.

Phoebe Worrall, later to become Phoebe Palmer, was born in New York City, December 18, 1807. Her mother was a Christian, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and "was remarkable for the good order and discipline she maintained in her large household.

Dr. Nathan Bangs was a sanctified early Methodist who was known for his own testimony to second blessing holiness and for his efforts to promote it. He wrote concerning Phoebe Palmer: "... I have known her from childhood, for she was a member of my catechetical class in 1817, when she was only eight or nine years of age. She was made partaker of pardoning mercy, at an early age, married soon after, and lived a pious, blameless life, for several years; when, about thirteen years since, she was enabled to rejoice in God's sanctifying grace..."

Phoebe Palmer pointed to August 10, 1837 as the time of her entire sanctification. We find the following words from her diary:

August 10th, 1837 -- This morning I was blessed in a peculiar manner. About four o'clock I awoke, with an intense breathing after God. I was assured by the way in which my soul seemed to grasp a signal blessing, that the Lord was about to seal me more fully His. For days previous, I had with unutterable desire, been pleading that the Holy Spirit might continuously urge me onward in the divine life; that I might not be permitted to rest short of any state of grace, made possible for me, through the death and present intercession of the Saviour; and that to the degree in which it

might consist with the will of God, might prove the full power of saving grace, to transform to the uttermost, in heart and in life...

My special prayer on this eventful occasion was as set forth, Ephes. 1:13 "In whom ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."

Now my prayer was, "Lord, seal me unto the day of redemption." There was a distinctiveness in the hallowed exercises of that hour which must ever preclude all questioning. The Divine Spirit that inspired those unutterable groanings sealed the truth on my heart, that the work was of God. During about two hours, I remained under those peculiarly hallowing influences, breathing forth in inexpressible longing, "O Lord, seal me! Seal me unto the day of redemption." The Spirit itself helped my infirmities, and I was enabled to ask in conscious faith, and **REALIZE THAT I HAD THE THING THAT I DESIRED OF GOD.** [caps mine, D.V.M.]

So sacred was the communion of that hour, so holy and inviolable the covenant entered upon...that I have not had a temptation to doubt. Glory be to the Father! Glory be to the Son! Glory be to the Holy Spirit ... Surely it was to me a day to be remembered through the untold ages of eternity...

Her method of leading saved souls into the experience of entire sanctification has been dubbed, perhaps by her critics at the "Altar Theology," and was thought by some to be erroneous and un-Wesleyan. Nonetheless, it appears to this writer that a fair and candid examination of the historical evidence of her ministry points to the fact that multitudes were genuinely sanctified through her influence. Dr. Nathan Bangs wrote:

...She felt it her duty, as every devoted Christian ought...to strive in every Scriptural way to promote this unspeakable blessing among her fellow Christians; and she was remarkably successful. Many have been raised up under her teachings and prayers as witnesses of the saving efficacy of Christ's blood and righteousness to save them from all sin.

And why should any one oppose another, even though a female, so eminently owned by the Head of the Church, in the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of believers? For my part, I dare not...Some object to her phraseology. I do not pledge myself to the correctness of every word she may utter, any more than I can expect every person to agree with me in all my words and phrases. But why should I dispute about words, so long as the substance is retained?...

Apart from the Judgment itself, the ultimate test of one's experience is whether or not it stands good in the hour of death. Was Phoebe Palmer's experience of entire sanctification good on her death bed? During the first part of her final illness she said: "I want to say that my teachings have been correct, and I am now testing them, in this hour of extreme suffering, and find that I **AM FULLY SAVED; NOT A SHADOW OF A DOUBT.** The altar is a beautiful type; it is a Scriptural figure, and I **AM RESTING UPON IT. AND THE ALTAR WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST SANCTIFIES THE GIFT. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST CLEANSSES ME FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.**" Then she exclaimed, "Glory, glory!" [caps mine, D.V.M.]

On her last morning on earth she awoke as from sleep and said, "I thought I saw a chariot, and it had come for me; and oh! it was so glorious, GLORIOUS!" Soon after this she said, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 'O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!' Finally, she slowly repeated the Doxology, "Glory be to the Father, glory be to the Son, and glory be to the Holy Ghost, Amen."

In the arms of her devoted husband, Phoebe Palmer sweetly breathed her last at 2:30 P.M., November 2, 1874.

Source: "The Life and Letters of Mrs. Phoebe Palmer"
by Richard Wheatley

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THE END