

Would I Serve the Lord

By Janet S. Porter

The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook,
p. 12-14, using his own words.

CHARACTERS (6 – 4 males, 1 female, angel)

Phineas W. Cook (PWC)

Phineas Sr. (his father)

Irene Cook (his mother)

Priest

Dr. Upjohn

Angel

Narrator: Phineas W. Cook had been in Michigan for one year, working and helping his father make a farm from prairie land. On July 12, 1838 his mother and sisters came from Connecticut.

Irene: Here we are. We have come from Connecticut with Darius. Is anyone here?

PWC: Mother! I'm here making dinner for Pa's crew. What a relief you made it safely. Did you have a good trip from Goshen?

Irene: Never mind me. You look terrible, Phin. What has happened to you?

PWC: I've had ague ('ā,gyōō) off and on since I came here last year. And last month I cut my knee. I've had a bad month.

Irene: Well move over, boy, and let me finish dinner. You need to go to bed.

PWC: I'll just go outside and help Pa. I have labored with untiring diligence to help him make a permanent home here, and I'm not about to stop just because I don't feel well.

Irene: Fine, do what you want, but you look more like a skeleton than my son.

(PWC leaves, then returns and lies down on a blanket or some chairs)

PWC: I'm too sick to work. I think I really might die.

Irene: He's unconscious. Is there a doctor in this place?

Phineas Sr. Maybe we should call for the priest. I'm not sure he's going to be with us for long.

Irene: Then go get both the doctor and the priest.

(Irene and Phineas Sr. leave. The Priest comes into the room. Phin could be sitting or propped up by a pillow so he can speak)

Priest: My boy, are you ready to die?

PWC: I don't care. I had as soon die as not. Death is no terror to me for I am past fear.

Priest: Do you not feel concerned for your soul's salvation?

PWC: I don't know that I do at this moment.

(The doctor comes into the room and paces back and forth)

Priest: It looks like my time with you is over

Doctor: Yes, please don't doctor the soul while I am waiting to attend to the body.

Priest: Goodbye, boy. If you are not concerned for your salvation, I am. I'll pray for you.

Doctor: I heard you have been unconscious for many days, but many are sick and I couldn't come until now. Tell me how you feel.

PWC: This is only the second time in 9 days I have been in my right mind. Others have been attending to me. I'm very weak and have no appetite.

Doctor: It appears you really might die. This is a time of much sickness. Malaria will surely kill many. There, I've done what I could. I'll leave you to get well or die, whichever comes first.

(The doctor leaves and an angel comes in)

Angel: Phineas Wolcott Cook.

PWC: Who are you? You look like an angel. Maybe I really am going to die.

Angel: I have a question to ask: If you knew the right way, would you serve the Lord?

PWC: You speak in a still small voice which goes right to my soul. My answer is: I would serve the Lord if I knew the right way.

Angel: If you knew the right way, would you serve the Lord?

PWC: Yes. Yes, I would.

(The angel leaves. PWC sits up and his father comes in.)

PWC: (Standing up) It has been 3 days since the angel came to me, and I feel much better since then. I believe I've been healed. I think I'll go help Pa in the field. (He walks over to his father)

Phineas Sr. Son go back and get your coffin. You look as though you had come from the grave.

Narrator: It took Phineas W. Cook a full year to recover from his illness. At first he didn't comprehend what had happened to him, but in time he began to realize he must look for what the angel called "the right way." He began to seek out the churches in the area to find what the right way was.

PWC: Everything takes time. None of us thought to ascribe the glory to God at that time for my return to health. But now I know. God healed me so I could find the right way. There must be a church which will teach me that right way, and I'll search until I find it.

Family Discussion

Phineas Wolcott Cook knew he had been blessed. He almost died, and after the angel came to his bedroom he immediately began to get better.

But what was the blessing he received?

It was obvious Phineas was healed physically, beginning immediately after the angel appeared to him. Not so obvious is how his spirit was changed.

Many times we expect a blessing, and often receive it through the priesthood. But when the physical blessing is not obvious, we may feel as if we weren't healed. Perhaps the real miracle is the spiritual blessing. Never consider a blessing a failure because the physical blessing did not happen.

For Phineas, his greatest miracle was the desire to serve the Lord, and to find the right way. That focus was a driving force in his life for many years until he knew he had found the truth. Many of us receive that same blessing in our lives, but in a much more subtle way than the visitation of an angel.

How are you motivated to serve God?

How can we find "the right way"?