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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

PHINEAS F. BRESEE
(Nazarene)

While pastoring the Methodist church in Chariton, Iowa during the winter of 1866-67, P. F. Bresee became desperate for to have an experience of grace equal to his needs. He had been for some time suffering from doubts about the truth of the Bible, and he later recognized that his trouble had been spiritual, rather than intellectual. He describes his initial entry into spiritual Canaan as follows:

"There came one of those awful, snowy, windy nights, such as blow across the Western plains occasionally, with the thermometer twenty degrees below zero. Not many were out to church that night. I tried to preach a little, the best I could. I tried to rally the people to the altar, the few that were there, and went back to the stove, and tried to get somebody to the Lord. I did not find any one. I turned toward the altar; in some way it seemed to me that this was my time, and I threw myself down across the altar and began to pray for myself. I had come to the point where I seemingly could not go on. My religion did not meet my needs. It seemed as though I could not continue to preach with this awful question of doubt on me, and I prayed and cried to the Lord. I was ignorant of my own condition. I did not understand in reference to carnality. I did not understand in reference to the provisions of the atonement. I neither knew what was the matter with me, nor what would help me. But, in my ignorance, the Lord helped me, drew me and impelled me, and, as I cried to Him that night, He seemed to open heaven on me, and gave me, as I believe, the Baptism with the Holy Ghost, though I did not know either what I needed, or what I prayed for. But it not only took away my tendencies to worldliness, anger and pride, but it also removed the doubt. For the first time, I apprehended that the conditions of doubt were moral instead of intellectual, and that doubt was a part of carnality that could only be removed as the other works of the flesh are removed."

Apparently P. F. Bresee suffered somewhat of an eclipse in his experience of holiness, which may have been occasioned in part by the lack of clear preaching and teaching on the subject among many of the Methodists with whom he was working. Later in California, where he came

among those who were clear in their testimonies and teaching on the subject, Bresee experienced another remarkable baptism of the Spirit:

"I instinctively in spirit allied myself with them, and, while they must have known that I was not in the clear enjoyment of the blessing, they seemed to appreciate whatever efforts I could and did make, in assisting them in the work of holiness. They were very kind and gentle. They doubtless prayed much for me, but they did not pray at me, and they stood close by me, and sustained me in every way throughout my ministry...I passed through this meeting in general accord with both the teaching and spirit of the brethren and did what I could to help push the work of holiness. However, I did not come to any special realization of my own lack and need. But it was not very long after the meeting before I began to be awakened to the deep necessities of my own heart. The realization grew more and more intense, until my heart cry began to go out to God for the mighty grace that was adequate to all my needs.

"At this time there came to me in answer to prayer, a very striking experience. I had been for some time in almost constant prayer, and crying to God for something that would meet my needs, not clearly realizing what they were, or how they could be met. I sat alone in the parsonage, in the cool of evening, in the front parlor near the door. The door being opened, I looked up into the azure in earnest prayer, while the shades of evening gathered about. As I waited and waited, and continued in prayer, looking up, it seemed to me as if from the azure there came a meteor, an indescribable ball of condensed light, descending rapidly toward me. As I gazed upon it, it was soon within a few score feet, when I seemed distinctly to hear a voice saying, as my face was upturned towards it: 'Swallow it; swallow it,' and in an instant it fell upon my lips and face. I attempted to obey the injunction. It seemed to me, however, that I swallowed only a little of it, although it felt like fire on my lips, and the burning sensation did not leave them for several days. While all of this of itself would be nothing, there came with it into my heart and being, a transformed condition of life and blessing and unction and glory, which I had never known before. I felt that my need was supplied. I was always very reticent in reference to my own personal experience. I have never gotten over it, and I have said very little relative to this; but there came into my ministry a new element of spiritual life and power. People began to come into the blessing of full salvation; there were more persons converted; and the last year of my ministry in that church was more consecutively successful, being crowned by an almost constant revival. When the third year came to a close, the church had been nearly doubled in membership, and in every way built up."

Source: "Phineas F. Bresee -- A Prince In Israel"
by E. A. Girvin

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THE END