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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

NATHAN BANGS (Methodist)

In 1800, At Age 21, Shortly After His Conversion

A mind so profoundly imbibed with religious earnestness as that of young Bangs, could not fail to seize on a truth like this. "From reading the holy Scriptures," he writes, "Mr. Wesley's Plain Account of Christian Perfection, and Mr. Fletcher's writings on the subject, I clearly saw the necessity of a deeper piety than I had yet attained; of being sanctified throughout, soul, body, and spirit. As I went on in observance of Gods commands, divine light shone more brightly upon my understanding, disclosing to me the remaining impurities of my nature. This gave me a more and more acute sense of my native depravity than I had ever had, so much so, that doubts were sometimes excited in my inexperienced mind whether I had indeed been justified. And yet on mature reflection I could not question the reality of the change which the Spirit of God had wrought in my heart, for I felt no condemnation for past sins, and I was often blessed with great peace and joy in the holy Ghost. My experience verified St. Paul's description of the justified man: Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. My conscience also was extremely tender, so that I could not neglect any known duty, as fasting, secret prayer, social or public worship in class-meetings or the congregation or exhorting others to flee the wrath to come, in doing which I enjoyed much inward comfort, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. But notwithstanding all this, I felt such an exquisite sense of normal defect that I was led, like Job, to abhor myself as in dust and ashes. There was, however, a great difference between my present distress and my former sense of condemnation. Formerly I was condemned as a guilty sinner, and hardly dared to look up to God for mercy; now I felt reconciled to him, could pray in faith, and enjoyed peace, while a sweet compunction weighed me down at the footstool of divine mercy. I hated sin with a perfect hatred, and consequently felt an utter aversion to all its pleasures. Such confidence had I in the Christian purity and influence of Mr. Warner, who professed the blessing of sanctification, and, I doubt not, enjoyed it, that I loved his very presence, and in prayer-meetings I wished to kneel close by his side.

"In this temper I went struggling on for some time, until, on the 6th of February, 1801, being that evening on a visit to a pious family with some Christian friends, we conversed till quite late

on religious subjects, and then prayed, as was the Methodist custom; for Methodists in that day seldom parted from even their casual interviews without prayer. When we knelt, I felt an unusually earnest spirit of devotion. Mr. Warner first prayed, and, without rising, called upon me to pray. When I commenced, my emotions deepened, my desire for a pure heart became intense, and my faith grew stronger and stronger. My supplications were importunate, so that I know not how long I continued to pray. When I ceased, I sank down into an inexpressible calmness, as lying passive at the feet of God. I felt relieved and comforted, as though I had been cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. I had no extraordinary rapture, no more than I had often experienced before, but such a sense of my own littleness that I thought, 'What a wonder is it that God condescends to notice me at all! All my inward distress was gone. I could look up with a childlike composure and trust, and behold God as my heavenly Father.

"We stayed all night, and the next morning in family prayer I seemed surrounded with the divine glory. I certainly was filled at that time with the perfect love which casteth out fear, for I had no fear of death or judgment. I could trust all things to my merciful God, through my infinitely sufficient Redeemer. Such a sense of God's ineffable goodness pervaded my soul, that I seemed to sink, confounded by his very love, into nothingness before him. I felt that I was the least of all saints, but had an evidence bright as the noonday sun that all my sins were taken away, and that without fear I could depart and be with Christ at any moment he should see fit to call me.

"I here simply relate the facts as they occurred. The change in my nature was as evident to me as had been my justification. Whatever name others may attach to this gracious experience, I believe I was then sanctified by the Spirit of God mercifully given unto me.

1848 -- At Age 70

(While Presiding Elder of the New York, East Conference)

"I believe the Lord sanctified my soul about six months after he justified me; but I did not always retain an evidence of it, nor live in its enjoyment, though whenever I recurred to it, either in conversation, prayer, or preaching, my heart was inflamed with divine love. About ten years since the Lord pressed upon my heart the necessity of regaining this inestimable blessing, and inspired me with an ardent desire and determination to seek after it until I could say, O Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee with all my heart. He heard my prayer, though the restoration of the blessing was not in the manner in which I first received it; it was more gradual, less perceptible, yet equally strong and permanent. When I compare my present enjoyment, the inward tranquillity which pervades my soul, with what had been my experience for some years, I see the difference. I cannot, indeed, describe the peace, the love, the uninterrupted communion with God, and the fellowship with all God's people which I now daily enjoy.

"I would not say that I have such a happiness as excludes all temptations, trials, and afflictions. By no means. If Christ, who was 'holy, harmless, separate from sin,' was 'tempted on all points, like as we are,' surely we cannot expect to be exempt from temptations, much less from those afflictions which are inseparable from humanity. In addition to these, we have to contend with the infirmities which arise from the imperfection of our judgment and our inability always to distinguish between truth and error. All these things are sources of trial. But 'all things,' all things

-- good and bad, little and great, blessings from God or curses from men shall work together for good to them that love God.'

Source: "The Life and Times of Nathan Bangs, D.D."
by Abel Stevens

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THE END