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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

J. PRESSLEY BARRETT
(Christian Church)

My father was never a church member. He was of good moral character and of stern integrity. He had great respect for real religion and was himself a regular attendant upon church services. I have heard mother tell of his efforts to become a Christian. Just a few months before my birth, she saw him in the old-fashioned protracted meeting go forward to the altar, seeking the forgiveness of sin. This step on his part made a profound impression upon her heart and mind. Her own soul was mightily moved in sympathy for him. She yearned for his salvation. At that time he did not find Christ, nor did he for many years. He was a close observer of conduct, and when conduct was highly Christian, it always impressed him most favorably. My oldest brother, Joseph, made a profession of faith in Christ, while a mere boy. I think it was in 1866. A few days afterward, I heard father say to my mother: "I believe Joe Alfred has been truly converted -- there is a great change in his life."

Mother was always a godly woman, ever filled with the spirit of reverence and devotion. She did much to encourage and help her children walk in the way of the Christian life.

From my earliest recollection I had felt deeply impressed as to religion. After Brother Joseph's conversion my heart hungered after a similar experience, but the way seemed shut up to me. In September, 1867, I think it was, in a meeting at Old Antioch, Isle of Wight County, Virginia, under the labors of the late Rev. William B. Wellons, I found Christ. I remember the occasion almost as if it were but yesterday. As I walked home that evening I now recall how everything seemed so changed. I distinctly remember how I felt. As I expressed myself, I felt "as light as a feather." It was a beautiful experience.

It is true I knew but very little of the Christian life. My thought was to do no wrong and hold on to what I had -- I did not understand it was both my duty and high privilege to go on to larger things in the divine life. Thus I kept along for years. I had commenced to preach. In 1875 I entered college. I remember on one occasion while in my room alone, I had a most unusual experience -- it was new to me. It was a great overflow of Christian joy. I had a dim idea that it

was a new spiritual experience. For hours I was in ecstasy, but said but little, perhaps nothing, to any one about it. Gradually, my experience came to be normal again, and then I went on for years without any marked impression in that direction.

About the year 1890, I read a book bearing on the fulness of the divine life. It impressed me deeply. I felt my exceeding need. Then I began to seek in a quiet way to possess my rightful possessions. My heart longed for this larger and richer experience. In some way I did not enter into the promised inheritance. I had glimpses of better things, but that was all. Then came the hand of affliction which carried me to the verge of eternity. For hours I felt I was almost looking into the world to come. Every moment I was expecting to depart, and yet I was spared. Since that day the Lord has graciously added more than twenty years to my life (1891-1914), and with it all the best opportunities of my earthly life for service.

I remember so well how it seemed to me that day I was expecting every moment to leave the earthly house of clay and go to see Jesus and the loved ones who had gone before. It was all so real to me, that When I found my life had been spared and with some hope of recovery, I felt a distinct loss in not seeing the dear ones on the other side. That was a sense of loss that I cannot explain, but it seemed real to me.

The effect of the illness remained a long time with me, but when I was able to resume my work, I found a heart hunger for a richer and larger experience in the Christian life, and I could not rest till I had found Him whom my soul loveth. It was in the Spring of 1892, when the blessed Spirit visited me in great power. After the incoming of His presence, I realized a decided change in my outlook as well as in my inlook. The next time I went into the pulpit, I found myself talking so easily and quietly, and then I found the message was having effects that I had never witnessed before in my ministry. Many in the audience seemed moved with tenderness. I had not made any had been at work in my heart.

There may be differences of opinion touching this matter, but I know that my life was greatly blessed in the seeking of the larger gifts of the Spirit, and I know it revolutionized my work as a minister of the gospel. Many a time since then I have felt, if I had to go back to the same kind of life and experience as before, then I could not preach.

People, who wish to do so, may stand against the blessed work of the Spirit in the matter of the sanctification of the heart and mind and life, but I know it has been a great blessing to me and to my service for God and my fellow men, and God helping me, I will never deny its mighty power. Never! No, never! For--

"I'm resting now in Jesus;
I've reached the Promised Land;
Where e'er He may lead, I can safely follow on,
For He lovingly holds my hand."

Source: "Forty Years on the Firing Line"
by J. Pressley Barrett

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THE END