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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

### **HENRY BELDEN**

When I was converted, I had a very bright and satisfactory experience. So powerful were my exercises, and so great and thorough the change, both outward and inward, that I never could indulge in doubt as to the reality of the gracious work. I knew that I had passed from death unto life, by the various evidences which usually mark that change. But my course was unsteady, with frequent alternations of light and darkness, of faith and unbelief, of joy and depression.

After joining the church, and enjoying its privileges for, perhaps, three months, I went away from home to a distant town, to commence my preparatory studies for the ministry. Here, removed from home, Church, and pastoral influences, and surrounded by those who had much of the form, but little of the power of godliness, I began to lose my first love to Christ. Gradually I fell into a state of heart-backsliding.

In this state I remained shorn of my spiritual strength, under a sense of condemnation, and in darkness, for about seven or eight years. I retained my membership in the Church, continued my studies with the ministry in view, and in some measure kept up outward observances. I was often distressed about my condition, and deeply sensible of my backslidings; and occasionally I made spasmodic efforts to break away from my bondage and darkness, and get back to Christ. But I did not succeed, and I was quickly discouraged. It seems to me that my experience was precisely that delineated in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; I longed for deliverance, but knew not how to get it. I have since learned how any backslider may quickly escape and regain his first love, but then I knew not the steps to take.

In the Providence of God I became deeply afflicted, and was carried through man humbling process of trial for several months. Having a deep sympathy for the enslaved and oppressed free colored people in our land, I devoted myself, for a time, in making efforts to arouse the public mind in relation to their wrongs. In this I met an opposition, which every where covered me with obloquy and contempt. This and other trials made me feel the need of the Saviour's presence and help. I began to think of Christ as a sympathizing Saviour, as the High Priest who can be touched with the feelings of our infirmities. The declaration that He "was in all points tempted like as we

are," was soothing and precious to my troubled Spirit. About this time I became earnestly engaged in a revival of religion. My soul became burdened with unutterable desires for the salvation of sinners. I began, also, to study the Scriptures, which before I had greatly neglected. was now restored from my wanderings, and was living a life of earnest prayer. Sometimes I would rise in the night to pray for souls.

One day, after a special season of fasting and searching my own heart and life, and renouncing all that I saw to be contrary to the will of God, I was striving to prevail in prayer, when the Saviour was revealed to me in such a wonderful manner that I was enraptured, and filled with a heavenly ecstasy, which continued for about a week, and though the brightness of it was then obscured by a severe temptation, yet the effects and the savor of it, has remained through all the following years. That vision of Jesus had given my soul a heavenly relish, which impelled me to seek after God.

The summer and fall which followed, bore witness to frequent days of fasting, and prayer, with much searching the Scriptures. On a day specially set apart to seek the Lord, I was led to search my whole life from my earliest recollections, humbling myself with penitential confession to God, and promising him that I would make confessions and restitutions to others as far as possible, where I had injured them. I then covenanted to be wholly the Lord's, and to be faithful in all things. This solemn season of confession and consecration occurred about four hours, during which I lay most of the time on my face on the floor. This consecration had an immediate and powerful effect upon my life. I was filled with zeal, and labored earnestly for the welfare of souls. But I was not entirely at rest. I did not know the way of faith.

My consecration was entire to the full extent of all the light I had. My recollection is perfectly clear upon this matter. I had given myself fully, and without reserve to the Lord. I was wonderfully helped by the Holy Spirit, who gave me a clear discernment, and enabled me to make very thorough work of it. I not only made a general and comprehensive consecration of all to God, but I particularized all that I could think of. I prayed for light to see if there were any thing more, until I felt clearly conscious that every thing was laid on the altar.

This was nearly four years before I received the blessing of entire sanctification. I did not then believe there as any such state. My soul panted after God, and I sought Him at times with much earnestness, but I had no spiritual state before my mind as a definite object of pursuit. I labored much, and was permitted to see several revivals of religion. During this time, however, I was brought gradually to understand that it was the privilege of Christians to be sanctified wholly, and that their whole spirit and soul and body might be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I now had a definite object before me. I was assured that this blessed state was to be obtained by faith. I tried to have faith for it. As an illustration of my effort, I shall describe one of my attempts. I was on the haymow in my barn alone, and I was thinking of sanctification. I thought I would kneel down and pray for it. I did so; and cried very earnestly unto God for the blessing. I knew the difficulty must be that I did not believe. I was conscious that my feelings were much drawn out, and it seemed to me, while I as praying, that if I could only feel somewhat more, then perhaps my feelings would become faith. What a vain idea, and yet how common, that faith

consists in feelings. I knew no better then, and I tried to feel as much as I could. At length, thinking possibly I might have succeeded, I paused and looked into myself; but all was vague and uncertain. I needed further instruction. After a time God gave it to me.

In company with some others, I went to Newark, to attend a convention on the subject of sanctification. On the way there, sister, giving me an account of her experience, said that, when she sought and obtained the blessing of sanctification, she consecrated herself to God, and believed that He received her, but that she did not receive the inward witness of the spirit until seven days afterwards; yet during all that time she held on to her confidence of God's faithfulness to His promise, and then, after about seven days, the Spirit came upon her and filled her with a joyful sense of His love. This was very helpful to me, for I had supposed the baptism of the Holy Ghost was always given instantaneously if the offering was accepted of God. The meeting continued through the day. At the noon intermission I was conversing with a young lady who professed to have enjoyed the blessing but a short time. I put this inquiry to her, "Suppose I should believe for the blessing, how should I know that I believed?" Very properly, she answered, "Faith is its own evidence." I saw then, as I have ever since seen more clearly, that faith is a matter of consciousness, and not of reasoning, just as memory or perception is.

Among the experiences related that day, one by Rev. William Hill was especially interesting and instructive to me. Brother Hill was an intimate friend, and we had long studied and prayed over the subject together. He had received the blessing that morning in Dr. Palmer's house in New York. He related to me fully all the exercises through which he had passed the preceding twenty-four hours. He told of his child-like simplicity in seeking -- of the clear and faithful instructions given him, the full consecration, the long struggle to believe, which continued through the night, and the peaceful rest of soul which came in the morning. He scarcely needed to tell me the result. I read it in his subdued manner, his holy fervor, and in everything about him. I felt that he had outstripped me in the race, and I was glad of it, though I had started long before him.

After the meeting Brother Hill and I retired to a private house, where we resumed the conversation. He instructed and encouraged me to come to God at once. Among other things, he said, "If you cannot give yourself up to God with as much feeling as you desire, do not be discouraged on this account, but do it with what feeling you can, and God will accept the offering. He also insisted much upon the duty of believing God's word of promise, irrespective of our own feelings. He seemed to have the most profound convictions concerning the sin of hesitating to believe God's word, and quoted with great force the passage, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us, eternal life, and this life is in His Son." He said he had been so deeply convicted on this point during the past night that he had written down a solemn promise to God that henceforth he would, without hesitation and without having any regard to the state of his own feelings, believe any promise of God's word which applied to him.

These admonitions were very useful to me. They gave me light where I needed it. I had been accustomed to look with more confidence to the state of my own feelings than to the declarations of God's word. Now I was convinced that I must "let God be true, and every man a liar." God's word must be believed without questioning, and without comparing it with my own feelings, or bringing it to any other test. I saw that when, by grace, I fulfilled the required

conditions of a promise, it would be great sin in me to hesitate a moment in believing that the promise was fulfilled.

I was pointed to the promise, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty." It was now very clear to me that if I should, by a renewed consecration, come out and be separate unto God, and renounce the unclean thing, which is sin, that then it would be my duty immediately to believe that God received me. This would be no more than simply believing that God was as good as his word. I saw this to be the way of faith, and it appeared eminently reasonable and just. I now saw the simple path and I longed to enter immediately into the blessed state which I had so long sought. I said, "I am ready to give myself up and believe."

"Stop a moment," said Brother Hill, "there is one thing more. When you give yourself up to God, an begin to believe that He receives you, you must hold on believing, and if you are tempted to doubt whether God receives you, you must not for a moment entertain the doubt, but drive it away; and this you can do by repeating over the promises of the Scripture and clinging to them."

Such were substantially the teachings he gave me, though I may not have retained the precise form of expression. At any former period I should have regarded such instructions as leading directly to presumption and self-deception. But they were then, as they have been to me ever since, the light of true wisdom. In following them I was enabled to enter the way of holiness.

We bowed in prayer. With the simplicity of a child, I gave myself to the Lord, with all that pertained to me for time and eternity, to be wholly His. All was laid on the altar, -- time, talents, reputation, prospects, influence, wife, children, possessions, everything. I renounced sin, and gave myself wholly to God. Then I told the Lord that I believed He received me, and that I would continue to believe in view of His promise, even if He should not give me an inward witness for a week or month. I would believe His word alone, without regard to my feelings. I knew I was sincere, and I knew God's promise could not fail. On rising from my knees, I said to the two brethren with me, "I have done it; the Lord is mine, and I am His."

Immediately Satan suggested a most plausible temptation. It was so subtle it seemed to be the spontaneous reasoning of my own mind. I thought, "If I have done this with my whole heart, then, no doubt, God has received me. But am I sure that I have done it with my whole heart?" Had I entertained this question, I should have gone back into the wilderness. Thank God, I had been forewarned. Without giving the suggestion a moment's thought, I turned my mind toward the Scripture, and tried to drive it away. I walked back and forth in the room, and repeated these promises, "There is therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" and "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The effort was successful. God gave me the victory. The temptation to doubt and question was gone; and I rested in the beginning of a life of faith wherein Christ was apprehended as a present and full Saviour.

My sensibilities were not greatly moved at first. But after two or three days the Holy Comforter filled my heart with joy, and made me to realize a very sweet sense of inward purity

and uprightness. I set about my work in my parish with a peculiar delight, and with a conscious strength of faith unknown before. With the utmost simplicity, I told everywhere what the Lord had done for me, beginning with my own family and my own people, and going abroad wherever the way was opened. Fruits were abundant. Many received the blessing of sanctification, and among the first was my wife, then many of my church, and within a few months, in my parish, not far from a hundred were converted from the world.

It would take volumes to relate my experiences since that time. For some time I walked in clear blessed light and perfect love. My sense of inward purity was very clear and sweet. My joy was often full, at times ecstatic; my faith was firm, strong and increasing. My labors were abundant, and my success marked. After about two years, having changed my place of residence, and being unsettled for a time, and among those who were not much interested in sanctification, I became languid, and suffered my attention to be diverted, and spoke less on the subject; and thus the fine gold became dim, and the Spirit that had "wrought in me mightily" was in a measure quenched and grieved. On one occasion, I felt that I had lost the blessing, and in prayer I acknowledged it to God. Then the tempter was permitted to assail and overwhelm my soul. My faith had ceased to hold Jesus, and what was there to save me from the adversary? I was brought into great spiritual tribulation. For about twenty hours my soul was filled during much of the time with that seemed to be the horrors of despair. I went to two of God's dear children, who prayed for me, and while they were praying, I was delivered.

From that time the fear of God was upon me as never before. For a year I had so deep and awful fear of God, that all worldly concerns seemed of little moment, and yet all along through it, I had the peace and joy of the Lord. After about a year, this solemn awe in a measure subsided, and had less influence on my sensibilities, yet I most devoutly thank the Lord that in a good degree it has remained as an abiding principle, and so to speak, a permanent safe guard.

I have had many precious manifestations of grace to my soul, which have greatly quickened and strengthened me in the knowledge of God. At one time the Lord revealed himself to me by his dear name Emmanuel, "God with us." For a long season after this I had constantly a deep and precious faith in Jesus as being with me, and manifesting himself to me, and this realization increased and continued, greatly to my comfort and strength.

My experience at that time was expressed in the following language:

"It seems to me that I realize a special growth in grace every day. Oh, how near and how dear is Jesus to me! How he opens to me the beauties and graces and glories of his own character! He quickens and energizes my soul. He is quick, often instant to deliver me from sharp temptation, and brings me out with joy and triumph. He is my refuge. Oh, what a meaning in that word, refuge, as applied to him! Yes, I have learned how the name of the Lord is a strong tower; 'the righteous runneth into it and is safe.' As I go in and out, as I walk in the street, as I rise up and lie down, I speak to him as a familiar Friend. My words, either spoken or in the silence of my heart, are simple, direct, confident. His answers are loving, quick, and meeting the full demands of my faith, often exceeding abundantly above all that I ask or think."

Several times the Holy Spirit has baptized me into the deeper and more intimate knowledge of himself, each time refining me, and purifying away more of the dross. Just at the close of the last year, while humbling myself before him in a spirit of contrition, he began to pour upon me a deeper baptism of the Holy Ghost than I had ever received before. It has continued with increase much of the time from day to day, and from week to week. I never realized so sweetly the "fellowship of the Spirit." I have a great sense of my own nothingness, and with it a most precious confidence that I can commit all to the blessed Holy Ghost, and rely upon Him for all needed grace. Self-denial was never so easy to me as it is now. Indeed, it is a pleasure. The Holy Spirit seems to make everything easy. I am saved from the past, and I am kept from prying into the future, and the present is full of peace, and often of joy. I do everything, seeking to please him, and everything I do is pleasure. I am conscious of purity of heart and of his indwelling. To God be all the glory!

Source: "Pioneer Experiences" by Phoebe Palmer

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