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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

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(Methodist)

I was converted at the age of eleven, and united with the M. E. Church. Soon after my conversion I became deeply impressed with the necessity of "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." By reading the memoirs of the most prominent among the early Methodists in the old country, together with the works of Messrs. Wesley and Fletcher on the subject, I became acquainted with the doctrine of sanctification, and in theory learned the power of Jesus' blood to "cleanse from all unrighteousness." At this early period of my Christian life, I became fully settled in my views of sanctification as a distinct blessing to be sought, experienced and enjoyed. The Memoir of William Bramwell, especially, which I read over and over again, convinced me that the sanctifying grace of God is an absolute pre-requisite to usefulness, both in the ministry and laity.

At the age of twenty I commenced to travel under the Presiding Elder as a Methodist itinerant preacher. And, oh! how much I suffered during that first year, from my convictions of the necessity of purity, and a consciousness that I was not all that God would have me to be. Oh! how my conscience smote me when I tried to urge believers to "go on to perfection in Christ Jesus!"

Still I had many happy seasons, and saw many souls converted, and at times was surprised to hear Christians tell what a blessing some of my feeble efforts had been to them. But to my shame be it known, that my labors had only aroused them from their slumbers, convinced them of the necessity of sanctification, but left them in the dark as to how it could be attained.

Thus it was for years. There had been, and still was, one reserve in my consecration. Immediately after my conversion I was troubled with convictions of duty relative to the ministry. The older I became, the more pungent were my convictions that at some time I must preach the Gospel, and, although, I had been constrained to give myself up to the work, and had preached for years with a great degree of success, by the grace of God, so far as the conversion of sinners was concerned, yet I had never as yet consented to devote myself wholly to God and his work unreservedly. The truth was this:-- "at the age of ten I made up my mind to be a sailor. And if a person ever worked hard to accomplish any thing, I did to enter upon my cherished vocation. I left

no means untried; I did all in my power; several times 'I secured a berth,' but before the vessel sailed, Providence hedged up my convictions and entered the ministry, I still desired

"A life on the ocean wave
And a home on the rolling deep."

I was determined to be a Christian, and get to heaven, I loved to preach, and felt a deep anxiety to see souls saved. But, still I would think, I will preach in the conference awhile, then I will settle in some seaport town, preach occasionally, (just enough to still my conscience), but the most of my time shall be spent in sailing, or in some way I will be identified with the shipping and commerce of our country. Thus you see my consecration was not a unreserved one.

Things passed in this way until July, 1849. I had been absent from home several days. Returning on Saturday evening about dark, Mrs. B. met me at the gate, and exclaimed, "Oh my husband! Elder Brakeman is dead and buried!" The shock of an earthquake could not have been more startling. He was my Presiding Elder. I loved him as I have loved any other man, and he had been more than a father to me. He was thrown from a horse and was killed. His death made a deep impression upon my mind, and I felt at once to pray, "Oh, that his mantle might fall on me."

The next day I had three appointments, and at each of them was obliged to announce the death of their P. E., Rev. Josiah Brakeman. I was much affected, and so was all the people; and if ever I prayed in good earnest for any thing, it was during that day -- that his death might be blessed to me. While on the way to my third appointment I was earnestly pleading with God to bless this heavy stroke to my good, and to make me a better and more useful man, when all at once something seemed to say, "What you need is entire sanctification." I responded, "I believe that, but how can I obtain it?" The answer came, "You might have had it long ago if you had been willing to give up your cherished pursuit, leave the world -- leave all -- and live and die a devoted, self-sacrificing, minister of the Lord Jesus." I then solemnly vowed that I would not rest, until I should obtain the witness that I was fully sanctified. I seemed then to lose sight in part of Brother Brakeman's death, and soon was actually groaning for full redemption. Arriving at my appointment, I felt I could do nothing but pray for myself. If the service consisted of any thing else, I don't know what, for I never had any recollection of it. I was in the struggle for three days. Those three days are never to be forgotten. How I was tempted! Satan assailed with all his power. Sometimes the world with all its charms, its riches, honor, and pleasures were presented to me, and I was bid to choose them. Then the toils, trials, responsibilities, and sufferings of an itinerant minister's life was presented, and I was urged to shun these. Then my solemn vows would stare me in the face. Then the horrible punishment that would follow if I should not pay those vows, would pass before me. Then, again, the suggestion, you are converted, and you know it; you see sinners converted under your labors, and why not be satisfied with that, would be urged. Still at heart I felt to say, "Victory or Death!"

At length I reached this point. I must now choose between the world and hell, Jesus and Heaven; which shall it be? Oh, how earnestly for a few moments, did I struggle, then through grace I Triumphantly said with all my heart, "Give me Jesus." Oh, how the world with its beauties passed from my view, and no sooner had I loosed my hold of the world, than I felt to cry out, "I cannot rest till pure within." Till I am wholly lost in thee."

"Believe and it shall be done," was the answer. My heart responded, "I do believe with all my heart." And, Oh! what a change. I did not feel like shouting, I was in no excitement. But, O! how calm and beautiful! I then asked, "Is the work wrought? Am I wholly the Lord's, and he mine?" The more I prayed over it the better satisfied I was, and have been ever since.

From that time until now I have never doubted my acceptance, and have never had the least desire to abandon the ministry for any thing and every thing the world can give. And, strange as it may seem to others, it is nevertheless true that all my desires to sail on the ocean were taken away, and I now have a perfect dread and detestation of it.

After I obtained the great blessing, I saw the vast difference between preaching about a thing that we know nothing of, and preaching what we have experience ourselves. And one strong evidence to me is the fact that never since July, 1849, have I preached or talked on the subject, or even testified that "I know the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all unrighteousness, but I have been blessed in so doing, and it has proved a blessing to others." Yes, the "blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin." I know it. And thanks be to His name that I Have ever been able to preach this truth to others, and that I am spared to place my testimony on paper.

Since the first Sabbath in November, 1866, I have been laid aside from my labors, my voice having been reduced to a mere whisper, and having suffered constantly and exceedingly with a chronic disease of the throat. It is evident that my effective work as a preacher is done. During these three months last passed I have been taking new lessons in what is called, "Bearing the Cross." This has been a great trial to me, but still I can say, never in my life has Jesus been so precious as during these months of suffering and trial. Oh, what sweet abiding peace I enjoy! what a sinking out of self into God! what resignation to the will of God! The Providence that laid me aside amid my abundant labors is to me very mysterious; still I feel all the time that it is all for the best in some way, although I cannot see how. Oh, how full of hope and joy is the sweet witness, that I dwell in God, and that He dwelleth in me!

I rejoice that for nearly thirty-two years I have been able to testify that Jesus hath power on earth to forgive sins; and that for almost eighteen years I have been able to testify that His "blood cleanseth from all sin." Glory be to God for a present, full salvation. Kind reader, let me exhort you to seek it, obtain it, live it.

Source: "Pioneer Experiences" by Phoebe Palmer

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THE END