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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

R. KELSO CARTER
(Methodist)

From the very hour of my birth, in 1819, I was surrounded by the best Christian influence. My father has stood for nearly half a century in the foremost rank of aggressive Christian workers in the city of Baltimore, and by his side, I had ever the example of one of those sweet, gentle, patient, loving mothers, whose presence seems always to reflect a little of heaven's light upon the darkness of this world.

I cannot remember when I was not subject to deep convictions of sin and sensible of my duty toward God; yet, as a schoolboy, I wandered far from the path of truth until the age of fifteen, when, under the blessed influences of the cadet prayer-meeting in the Pennsylvania Military Academy, I made a profession of faith in Jesus and united with the Presbyterian Church -- My parents' denomination.

I was happy, but I made the common mistake of our day; I did not forsake my old companions and habits, and the inevitable result followed. For fourteen years I lived the up-and-down experience so bitterly familiar to the average church member. I attended church, went to the prayer-meeting, took part in it quite frequently, spoke on religious subjects and on temperance, always from a gospel standpoint; and unquestionably I grew in grace to some extent. I never enjoyed myself so much as when I was working in Mr. Moody's inquiry-meetings in Baltimore, in 1878-9; and yet, even up to that time, I was continually slipping and falling before tempers or desires, in some form or other. Confession and prayer brought forgiveness, and I was very sure that I was God's child, so that when asked, "Are you a Christian?" I never thought of answering in any other way than, "Yes, thank the Lord."

But all this time there was a tremendous conviction of a great inward need, a cry from my soul that God would take away from my heart these internal desires toward evil. I had never read a line on the subject; had never heard a sermon on the Holy Ghost or upon the subject of sanctification; had never been to a camp-meeting nor entered a Methodist Church more than three

times. But my soul cried out for complete deliverance, and God's unlimited promises stood out like stars above me. But I was not ready and willing to pay the price.

In the summer of 1879, my heart, which had been chronically diseased for seven years, resisting the remedies of the ablest physicians, and refusing to grow better even after three years spent in sheep ranching among the mountains of California, suddenly broke down so seriously as to bring me to the very verge of the grave. I had heard a little of the "prayer of faith" for healing, but I felt persuaded that it would border upon blasphemy to ask God for a strength which I did not propose to use wholly for Him; and hence, it was that this desire for health only increased the sense of the necessity for a great and entire consecration.

Kneeling alone in my mother's room in Baltimore, in the month of July, I made a consecration that covered everything. I have never been compelled to renew it, for it included all. To die at once a young man; to live and suffer; to live and recover; to be, to do, to suffer any thing for Jesus -- This was my consecration. All doubtful things were swept aside and a large margin left on God's side. I knew in my soul that I meant every word; and so I have never had any doubts about it since. A certain sense of peace and quietness gradually came over me. I never had any sudden overpowering manifestation; and I found the whole Bible wonderfully open to my vision and marvelously satisfying to my soul, as it had never been before. I seemed to live in a constant prayer; and in fact I have lived this way nearly all the time that has elapsed since then.

Feeling now all the more impressed with God's healing promises I sought to find Jehovah Rophi; and, in order to obey the Word like a little child, I concluded to go to Boston and ask prayer and anointing at the hands of Dr. Cullis. I was terribly weak, but I went. All this experience has been written and published at length elsewhere, and I will only add that I returned in three days, walking by faith, and not by feeling, resumed my college work in September, and at once engaged in all kinds of religious work. I was healed by the power of God alone. Praise the Lord!

Within two months I united with the Methodist Church, owing to certain providential circumstances; and here I began to encounter the terminology which was exceedingly unpleasant to my ear, trained among the Presbyterians. But I promptly settled all these difficulties by declaring that I accepted all the terms found in Scripture, joined in all scriptural prayer, and aimed at every scriptural target with the expectation of hitting it by the infinite grace of God.

Perhaps the crucial point was passed in this way: Undervaluing the deep peace in my soul and the great hunger for the Word which continually possessed me, not seeing that these were evidences of the Spirit's presence, I yearned and cried after some great manifestation. But one night, after lying in an agony of supplication upon my floor for hours, I rose up, and, lifting my hand to heaven, said, "O, Lord, if I never feel any more than I do now to the day of judgment I will believe on Thy Word that Jesus saves me now. If the children of Israel could shout over Jericho when not one stone in its walls had fallen, I can do the same." And I began saying aloud, "Jesus saves me now! Jesus saves me now!"

God, the angels, and the devil heard it. But my audience all understood that I meant "sanctified wholly"; so the Lord got the honor of a complete work even from ignorant lips, and gradually the conviction grew in my soul that it was really true. This inward conviction or

persuasion I soon recognized as the longed-for "witness of the Spirit," and then, for the first time, knew those thrills of heavenly joy which have been styled the "effusions of the Holy Ghost."

From this point in my life a most distinct experience began. All sense of duty service vanished, and a glad love service took its place. All those desperate conflicts with the will of God, which we are pleased to call our "crushing trials," "sore afflictions," resolved themselves into the dear Lord's wisely chosen methods for enlarging the vessel in order that He might pour into it more of His grace and love. Growth was marvelous and permanent a wonderful difference from the years when so much time was occupied in rebuilding. There was no desert life here; no despondency; no cloud of unbelief; no sense of condemnation. The most marked inward leanings toward sin which had bitterly cursed my Christian life were so conspicuous by their absence that in wonder and amazement I cried, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" and was greatly established by the thought that if God could take away one such besetting sin could He not remove two? And if two, why not all?

Here I wish to be very clear. Let not the reader suppose that during these years there has been no occasion for self-examination or of disappointment at my record. All along the line I was frequently surprised at new discoveries. Things which had seemed perfectly right and proper became objects of inward suspicion. Something suggested, "You ought not to do this or to speak so; it is not right." But whenever this occurred a prompt willingness to turn on the most searching light was always felt; and if, after a thorough examination in the light of the Word, the thing appeared to smell of evil, it was always cheerfully relinquished, no inward desire to go counter to the will of God being experienced. In fact, this has always been the great test question: Is it the will of God? His will, when known, is mine always; not from duty, but from free, spontaneous choice, Praise the Lord!

I have had some trouble with my body at times, for the body is very imperious, The necessity of "keeping the body under" has been always felt, Let none misunderstand me here. I do not mean the "body of sin," or the "carnal mind." That was burned up, and its desires against God's will eradicated, by the consuming fire of the Holy Ghost when God wholly sanctified my soul as related above. But this physical body, with its various appetites and nerves, must be kept under all the time. Not one of these appetites nor one of these nerves is in any degree sinful or impure in itself. It is only the wrong use of these which constitutes sin and brings condemnation. There is not a particle of sin in my feeling hunger, or thirst, or the sexual appetite, for God has made them all, and His work is good. But there is sin in indulging any of them in a wrong way or in entertaining or possess in the real desire to so indulge them. If my nerves are overtaxed I must and will feel nervous; there is no sin in that. But I must not experience irritation and anger in the heart as an accompaniment, for in this lies sin. I may be, and am, when such emergencies arise, tempted to think of such indulgences or tempers; but the temptation is not sin if the heart answers not again.

This lesson was rather difficult to learn; and while studying it I was at various times a little confused as to the exact power and shades of meaning in terminology of Bible holiness; but the blessed Spirit brought me through in safety; and now I see it as, perhaps, the most important lesson of my life thus far, and as the testing ground where so many sanctified Christians are led astray.

My experience is my own, and acknowledges no human master, and, therefore, I cannot stop in a certain rut, I must go father. From the very first I conceived a deep, and even desperate, determination to "follow on to know the Lord." No pen can emphasize these words as they were emphasized in my soul. Year by year passed away, and an almost infinite yearning for a deeper manifestation of my Lord filled my very being. Suffice it to say that at Mountain Lake Park Camp-meeting, in July, 1885, this prayer of years was answered. I can hardly tell how, except that my Saviour became so inexpressibly real to me that all language fails to describe it. It has seemed these two years as though my friends, my wife, even myself, are less real to me than my adorable Saviour, my living Father, my blessed Comforter.

After about eight months some small degree of this marvelous nearness to Jesus seemed to me to pass away, I think through a slowness to follow the Spirit with reference to a certain point. But in July, 1887, while again at Mountain Lake Park, the blessed, Holy Ghost wonderfully and entirely healed me of a very serious attack of brain prostration resulting from various causes, largely unavoidable; and with this restoration all seems to be regained.

Today I am a sinner saved by grace, a repentant rebel fully pardoned by my God, a lawbreaker justified freely by the "Judge of all the earth," the offspring of evil adopted into the family of the Lord, a trusting believer cleansed from inbred sin by the blood of Jesus Christ and sanctified wholly by the Holy Ghost, a child of the King healed of my diseases by the Great Physician. I am beset, yet full of hope; tempted and tried most sorely, yet strong in the Lord; tossed about by circumstances, yet on the Rock of Ages; enduring misrepresentation and slander and suspicion, yet praising God for the victory Jesus wins over all; daily realizing more and more my own nothingness and the wonderful ALLNESS of Jesus. Praise the Lord!

R. KELSO CARTER, YARDVILLE, N.J., August 11, 1887.

Source: "Forty Witnesses" S. Olin Garrison

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