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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

WILLIAM CARVOSSO (*2 Items)
(Methodist)

*ITEM 1

Born March 11, 1750, and died Oct. 13, 1834. Converted May 7, 1771, and sanctified March 13, 1772. This sanctified layman was a striking example of the triumphs of Divine Grace. Saved in his twenty-second year, he lingered in the wilderness less than twelve months, crossing over into the Canaan of Perfect Love shortly after his conversion. He was called of God to be a class-leader. "I am a teacher," he said, "but not a preacher, that is a work to which God has not called me." He traveled from circuit to circuit strengthening the feeble churches, and ministering everywhere he journeyed to the edification of all.

He was sixty-five years of age before he learned to write; but his knowledge of human nature was so acute, his mental and physical powers so happily adjusted, and his soul so filled with God he was a veritable flame of fire.

Our dear Brother, O. P. Fitzgerald, in writing of him, says:

"But it was perhaps in visiting from house to house that his peculiar gifts were called into fullest exercise, and the richest results of his labors realized. He was the apostle of the household, the angel of the sick-chamber and death-bed, the consoler of sorrow, the guide of the perplexed soul, the counsellor an exemplar of a great company of persons who regarded him as the messenger of God, and who aspired to follow him as he followed Christ. He had the gift of saying the right word at the right time. The clouds of spiritual darkness were dispelled, sick -chambers were brightened with heavenly light, and dying-pillows made easy when he came and talked and prayed. He was full of faith and the Holy Ghost. The letter of the word of God seemed to be vitalized and was clothed with a peculiar energy as it fell from the lips of this simple, old class-leader. A single remark from him in passing on the highway has been known to lodge an arrow of conviction in a sinner's heart, and a single prayer bring such answer as to fill the

burdened soul with the peace of God. As we follow him in the rounds, we feel the throb and thrill of New Testament life and power.

There was a tinge of poetry in his soul -- a poetic fire that blended with his Spiritual fervor and intensified it. He had gotten by heart many of Charles Wesley's burning and melodious lyrics, and his use of them was singularly ready and felicitous. By an apt passage of Scripture he would flash light upon the inquiring mind; and then at the happy moment he would, by repeating a well-chosen stanza, touch the sensibilities in such a way as to make the sin-sick, burdened heart receptive of help and healing from the Great Physician. But we miss the secret of his power if we look no farther nor deeper than this. It was not merely that he had stored his mind with the letter of the Sacred Text, and that the words came promptly at his call; it was not merely that he had naturally a sympathetic heart, a magnetic presence, and a voice that strangely filled the hearer. Behind all these natural gifts, if they may be so called, was that greatest gift -- a mighty faith in God, the living God. All that God promised he claimed. He took him at his word. The wonders wrought by him were the victories of faith -- wonders that might well give him a place among the illustrious saints whose names make the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews a gallery of divinely painted pictures warm with the colors of life, and bright with the reflected glory of the Sun of righteousness."

His experience was rapturous, he said "my peace has flowed as a river and my joys have abounded like Jordan's swelling streams."

The secret of his wonderful life is found in his powerful conversion and Pentecostal sanctification. In speaking of how he obtained "Perfect Love," he says:

"In the same happy frame of mind, which God brought me into at my conversion I went on for the space of three months, not expecting any more conflicts: but O, how greatly was I mistaken! I was a young recruit and knew not of the warfare in which I was to engage. But I was soon taught that I had only enlisted as a soldier to fight for King Jesus; and that I had not only to contend with Satan and the world from without, but with inward enemies also; which now began to make no small stir. Having never conversed with any one who enjoyed purity of heart, nor read any of Mr. Wesley's works, I was at a loss both with respect to the nature and the way to obtain the blessing of full salvation. From my first setting out in the way to heaven, I determined to be a Bible Christian, and though I had not much time for reading any books, yet I blessed God, I had his own word, the Bible, and could look into it.

"This gave me a very clear map of the way to heaven and told me that 'without holiness no man could see the Lord.' It is impossible for me to describe what I suffered from an 'evil heart of unbelief.' My heart appeared to me a small garden with a large stump of a tree in it, which had recently been cut down level with the ground, and a little loose earth strewed over it. Seeing something shoot up I did not like, on attempting to pluck it up, I discovered the deadly remains of the carnal mind, and what a work must be done before I could be 'meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.' My inward nature appeared so black and sinful that I felt it impossible to rest in that state.

"Some, perhaps, will imagine that this may have arisen from the want of the knowledge of forgiveness. That could not be the case, for I never had one doubt of my acceptance. The witness was so clear that Satan himself knew it was in vain to attack me from that quarter. I had ever kept in remembrance--

" ' The blessed hour when from above
I first received the pledge of love.'

"What I now wanted was 'inward holiness'; and for this I prayed and searched; in a prayer-meeting the great deliverance came. I began to exercise faith by believing 'I shall have the blessing now.' Just at that moment a heavenly influence filled the room, and no sooner had I uttered or spoken the word from my heart, 'I shall have the blessing now,' than refining fire went through my heart, illuminated my soul, scattered its life through every part, and sanctified the whole. I then received the full witness of the Spirit that the blood of Jesus had cleansed me from all sin. I cried out, 'This is what I wanted! I have now got a new heart.' I was emptied of self and sin and filled with God. I felt I was nothing and Christ was all in all. Him I now cheerfully received in all his offices; my Prophet to teach me, my Priest to atone for me, my King to reign over me.

" 'Amazing love! how can it be
That thou, my Lord, shouldst die for me!'

"Oh what boundless, boundless happiness there is in Christ, and all for such a poor sinner as I am!

"This happy change took place in my soul March 13, 1772."

He died in 1834, in the eighty-fifth year of his age, and in the sixty-fourth of his Christian service. His faith was undimmed to the last moment. The day before his death he said: "I have this morning been looking about for my sins, but I cannot find any of them -- they are all gone." With an indescribable expression of joy and triumph in his countenance, he repeated the line, "Praise God, from whom all blessing flow," and with his dying breath assayed to raise the tune -- and then fell asleep in Jesus, to awake and be satisfied with his likeness, and to resume the theme in a nobler, sweeter song in glory.

Source: "Chosen Vessels" by J. O. McClurkan (July, 1901)

*ITEM 2

William Carvosso was converted at the age of 21, and became one of the greatest soul-winners of the early Methodist Church. He served as a class leader for over sixty years.

Some, perhaps, will imagine this may have arisen from the want of the knowledge of forgiveness. That could not be the case, for I never had one doubt of my acceptance; the witness was so clear, that Satan himself knew it was in vain to attack me from that quarter. I had ever kept in remembrance

"The blessed hour when from above
I first received the pledge of love."

What I now wanted was "inward holiness;" and for this I prayed and searched the Scriptures. Among the number of promises, which I found in the Bible, that gave me to see it was my privilege to be saved from all sin, my mind was particularly directed to Ezek. xxxvi, 25-27:

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." This is the great and precious promise of the eternal Jehovah, and I laid hold of it, determined not to stop short of my privilege, for I saw clearly the will of God was my sanctification. The more I examined the Scriptures, the more I was convinced that without holiness there could be no heaven. Many were the hard struggles which I had with unbelief, and Satan told me that if I ever should get it, I should never be able to retain it; but keeping close to the word of God, with earnest prayer and supplication, the Lord gave me to see that nothing short of it would do in a dying hour and the judgment day. Seeing this, it was my constant cry to God that he would cleanse my heart from all sin, and make me holy, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

I well remember returning one night from a meeting, with my mind greatly distressed from a want of the blessing: I turned into a lonely barn to wrestle with God in secret prayer. While kneeling on the threshing floor, agonizing for the great salvation, this promise was applied to my mind, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." But, like poor Thomas, I was afraid to believe, lest I should deceive myself. O what a dreadful enemy is unbelief! Thomas was under its wretched influence only eight days before Jesus appeared to him; but I was a fortnight after this groaning for deliverance, and saying, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I yielded to unbelief, instead of looking to Jesus, and believing on Him for the blessing; not having then clearly discovered that the witness of the Spirit is God's gift, not my act, but given to all who exercise faith in Jesus and the promise made through him. At length, one evening, when engaged in a prayer meeting, the great deliverance came. I began to exercise faith, by believing "I shall have the blessing now." Just at that moment a heavenly influence filled the room; and no sooner had I uttered or spoken the words from my heart, "I shall have the blessing now," than refining fire went "through my heart, --illuminated my soul, --scattered its life through every part, and sanctified the whole." I then received the full witness of the Spirit that the blood of Jesus had cleansed me from all sin. I cried out, "This is what I wanted! I have now got a new heart." I was emptied of self and sin, and filled with God. I felt I was nothing, and Christ was all in all. Him I now cheerfully received in all his offices, my Prophet to teach me, my Priest to atone for me, my King to reign over me.

Amazing love! how can it be
That thou, my Lord, shouldst die for me!"

O what boundless, bondless happiness there is in Christ, and all for such a poor sinner as I am! This happy change took place in my soul March 13, 1772.

Soon after this, Mr. Wesley's pamphlet on Christian Perfection was put into my hand. I do not know that I had ever seen any of his works before. On reading this little work, I was filled with amazement, to think that a man I had never seen could read my heart in such a manner. This tended greatly to establish me in the truth of the gospel.

About three years after I became a member of the society, I was requested to take the charge of a little class; to the which I submitted in the fear of God. I had been a leader about four-or five years, when I was convinced it was my duty to alter my condition in life, by exchanging the single state for that of a married man. In this matter I ever believed I was divinely directed; for God gave me a wife who proved a help-meet for me all the days of her life. In matters temporal and spiritual, I always found her a lasting blessing to me.

Sources: "Memoirs of Carvosso"
and "Deeper Experiences of Famous
Christians" by James G. Lawson

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THE END