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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

J. H. COLLINS

I owe it to my brethren to testify to salvation from all sin. When nineteen years of age I was deeply convicted of my sins. I mourned over them at home, in the great congregations, and in the lonely forests. I hid myself from men, and supplicated help from God. I resolved that I never would give over the struggle until I found peace from on high. During the progress of a protracted meeting I presented myself again and again at the altar for prayer. Many friends came forward to instruct me in the way. Among others, the minister came; my mother came. They told me "to believe;" but their words seemed as idle tales. I found no comfort until at last I determined to throw myself upon the mercy of God despite any feeling of doubt or feeling of darkness or lack of feeling. It was the last resolve of a broken and subjugated heart. I was like a bird that had beaten its head against the netting of its cage until it was glad to find the open door. I swung off into the darkness saying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Here the light broke upon me. O what a peace! What a sweet, blessed rest came to my soul! The congregation was singing, "How happy are they who their Saviour obey." There was a glory upon everything. The faces of the people shone as with a heavenly light. I could see now as I had never seen before the fields, the trees, the stars praising him. "The whole earth was full of his glory."

After a few weeks these delightful feelings had subsided; but still there remained a sense of peace and the blessed conviction that God was my Father. It would require great space to relate all the religious scenes through which I passed. Sometimes in a measure backslidden in heart, and again brought into the triumphs of love; but in the main I was carried along with a good degree of fervency and zeal. I hungered after a higher state, but had no one professing perfect love to instruct me. I had commenced preaching about one year after my conversion. In the course of study prescribed for the ministry I came in contact with the doctrine of entire sanctification. I fully believed it -- believed that the blood of Jesus could cleanse from all sin; but was inclined to the opinion that the cleansing was made perfect in the hour of regeneration, and after conversion there could follow only a growth in grace. However, there were seasons when I would alternate, and for awhile believe that there was a second blessing or degree which I had never entered. I went so far in that direction that one day I bowed down in the woods behind a tree and prayed for entire sanctification. I there remembered the scriptural rule for prayer: "What things soever ye desire,

when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." I claimed to receive it; rose from my knees, but feeling no change, Satan began to tell me that this procedure of mine was fanatical. So I was induced to throw away my confidence.

Years went by. I read and thought much upon the subject; but finally settled down in the opinion that every true believer, if not backslidden, is free from sin. The argument in my mind shaped itself in this manner: First, when God forgives a person's sins, he forgives them all, and as yet the person has committed no more sin; hence he is free from sin. Second, perfect love must follow perfect faith. But God will pardon no sinner until there is a perfect surrender and perfect faith. Hence, wherever there is pardon at all, there must be perfect faith, and consequently perfect love. With these views I strengthened myself until I went to California in 1882. There I came in contact with some who professed entire sanctification. At first I felt that their testimony was repulsive, and was needlessly thrust before the people. I had been a slave to tobacco -- smoked and chewed from the age of ten. This vile habit had often troubled my conscience, and I had often resolved to quit its use. But the tobacco was stronger than my resolution, and I was brought back again and again into bondage. At last I made a desperate attempt, and broke away from my old master. I felt it was a great triumph. Still I was not entirely sanctified; but felt hungry for more grace. At last one evening I listened to a sermon upon the subject of sanctification. Under the living testimony the Holy Spirit flashed the truth upon my mind. I saw there was a second and distinct state which I had never entered. It was the crisis. I rose from my seat, regardless of the opinion of others, and made my confession of the need of entire sanctification, and humbly claimed to embrace it with all its consequences. I claimed the promise of God in relation to my own soul, and avowed, as he had declared that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," as God had said it, so I would say it, and I there planted myself upon the promise for full salvation, and affirmed it to be a fact. I expected to feel much better; but when I came to examine myself I felt worse. Rather there was a dearth or emptiness of feeling. It was a trying time. Still I avowed my sanctification as wrought according to the word of God. This trial of faith continued about three days, when, while one evening engaged in public prayer, the power of the Highest overshadowed me. There was the sweetest and most satisfying sense of the Divine presence. Glory to God! He had given the witness. My soul bathed in the delightful rest of the Holy Ghost. Every chamber of my being was filled with the cloud of glory. My soul was satisfied as never before. I now realized that whereas I had been walking along the road to heaven, often begrimed with sweat and dust, now the King's chariot had halted near me, and I had stepped in where I could career along the highway of holiness. As I looked upon my robes of white I felt satisfied with what God had done for me. I praised him for all. In short, I rejoiced evermore, prayed without ceasing, and in everything gave thanks. But I cannot tell it all. Since that time my peace has flowed as a river. I have felt the presence of the adorable Saviour as an everlasting reality.

O wondrous bliss! O joy sublime!
I've Jesus with me all the time.

I have felt a nearness of God in prayer, an absence of anxiety, and a conviction that he is guiding all things, a sense of security in his power. Communion with him whom my soul loveth is made easy and more delightful. The divine word is illuminated and made sweeter, and hence plainer, to my soul. I now have such a sense of the abiding presence and personality of the Holy

Ghost as I never had before. I have been kept in this gracious and satisfying state now for more than two years, assured each day that my God doeth all things well. In the pastor's study or in the pulpit, traveling through the lonely mountains or amidst the clouds of dust in the Sacramento Valley, I have tasted the sweetness of the Holy Ghost and breathed the smoke from the golden censer. My testimony today is that I throw my helpless soul upon the promise of my God, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son now cleanses me from all sin. All glory to God! Dear reader, may you and I walk together the plains of light in this world, and sing forever redemption's song: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion and power forever and ever."

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Source: "Sanctification -- What, When, How It is

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