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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 born January 4, 1828. When just turned ten years of age I realized clearly and satisfactorily the converting grace of God. I shall never forget the 12th of February, 1838, the birthday of my eternal life. Connecting myself immediately with the church of my fathers I laid down a rule always to attend my class meeting. To a rigid observance of this rule during my boyhood and youth I gratefully attribute the fact that I have always retained my place in the Church of God.

At the age of eighteen I took up the silver trumpet that had fallen from the hand of my faithful father, and began to preach, in my humble way, the everlasting Gospel. Quitting, about this time, one of the happiest of homes to enter the itinerant work, my excellent mother remarked, just upon the threshold of my departure, "My son, if you would be supremely happy, or extensively useful in your ministry, you must be an entirely sanctified servant of Jesus." It was a cursory suggestion, perhaps forgotten almost as soon as expressed; nevertheless, applied by the Divine Spirit, it made the profoundest impression upon my mind and heart.

My mother's passing but pointed remark followed me like a good angel as I moved to and fro in my first sphere of itinerant duty, namely, Attleborough Circuit, Philadelphia Conference. Frequently I felt that I should yield myself to God and pray for the grace of entire sanctification; but then the experience would lift itself in my view as a mountain of glory, and I would say, "It is not for me. I could not possibly scale that shining summit, and, if I might, my besetments and trials are such I could not successfully maintain so lofty a position."

While thus exercised in mind, Bishop Hamline, accompanied by his devoted and useful wife, came to Newtown, one of the principal appointments on the circuit, that he might dedicate a neat church which we had been erecting for the worship of God. Remaining about a week, he not only preached again and again, and always with the unction of the Holy One, but took occasion to converse with me pointedly respecting my religious experience. His gentle and yet dignified bearing, devotional spirit, beautiful Christian example, divinely illuminated face, apostolic labors,

and fatherly counsels, made the profoundest impression on my mind and heart. I heard him as one sent from God; and certainly he was.

One weekday afternoon, after a most delightful discourse, he urged us to seize the opportunity and do what we had often desired, resolved, and promised to do; namely, as believers, yield ourselves to God as those who were alive from the dead, and from that hour trust constantly in Jesus as our Saviour from all sin. I said, "I will; with the help of the Almighty Spirit, I will." Kneeling by myself I brought an entire consecration to the altar -- that is, Christ.

But someone will say, "Had you not dedicated yourself to God at the time of your conversion?" I answer, "Yes; but with this difference; then I brought to the Lord Jesus powers dead in trespasses and sins; now I brought powers permeated with the new life of regeneration. I presented myself 'a living sacrifice.' Then I gave myself away; but, now, with the increased illumination of the Spirit, I felt that my surrender was more intelligent, specific and careful -- it was my hands, my feet, my hours, my energies, my reputation, my kindred, my worldly substance, my everything. Then I was anxious respecting pardon; but now my desire and faith compassed something more; I wanted the conscious presence of the Sanctifier in my heart."

Carefully consecrating every thing, I covenanted with my own heart and with my heavenly Father that this entire but unworthy offering should remain upon the altar, and that henceforth I would please God by believing that the altar (Christ) sanctifieth the gift. Do you ask what was the immediate effect? I answer, peace -- a broad, deep, full, satisfying, and sacred peace. This proceeded not only from the testimony of a good conscience before God, but likewise from the presence and operation of the Spirit in my heart. Still I could not say that I was entirely sanctified, except as I had sanctified or set apart myself unto God.

The following day, finding Bishop and Mrs. Hamline, I ventured to tell them of my consecration and faith in Jesus, and in the confession realized increasing light and strength. A little while after it was proposed by Mrs. Hamline that we spend a little season in prayer. Prostrated before God, one and another prayed, and while thus engaged God for Christ's sake gave me the holy Spirit as I had never received it before, so that I was constrained to conclude, and confess,

"'Tis done! Thou dost this moment save,
-- With full salvation bless;
Redemption through Thy blood I have,
And spotless love and peace."

The great work of sanctification that I had so often prayed and hoped for was wrought in me -- even in me. I could not doubt it. The evidence in my case was as direct and indubitable as the witness of sonship received at the time of my adoption into the family of heaven. O it was glorious, divinely glorious!

Need I say that the experience of sanctification inaugurated a new epoch in my religious life? O, what blessed rest in Jesus! -- what an abiding experience of purity through the blood of the Lamb! -- what a conscious union and constant communion with God! -- what increased power to do or suffer the will of my Father in heaven! -- what delight in the Master's service! -- what fear to

grieve the infinitely Holy Spirit! -- what love for, and desire to be with, the entirely sanctified! -- what joy in religious conversation! -- what confidence in prayer! -- what illumination in the perusal of the sacred word! -- what increased unction in the performance of public duties!

O, that I could conclude just here these allusions to personal experience with the simple addendum that my life to the present has answered to the description of "endless progression, steadied by endless peace!" Fidelity to truth, however, with a solicitude that others may profit by my errors, constrains me to add another page of personal testimony. Have you never known a sky full of sunshine, the promise of a beautiful day, subsequently obscured by lowering clouds?

Have you never known a jewel of incalculable value to its owner lost through culpable carelessness? Alas! that so bright a morning in my spiritual history should not have shone more and more unto the perfect day; that I should under any circumstances have carelessly parted with this pearl of personal experience.

Eight weeks transpired -- weeks of light, strength, love and blessing. Conference came on. I found myself in the midst of beloved brethren. Forgetting how easily the infinitely Holy Spirit might be grieved, I allowed myself to drift into the spirit of the hour, and after an indulgence in foolish joking and story telling realized that I had suffered serious loss. To my next field of labor I proceeded with consciously diminished spiritual power.

Perhaps to satisfy my conscience I began to favor the arguments of those who insisted that sanctification as a work of the Holy Spirit could not involve an experience distinct from regeneration. O, how many precious years I wasted in quibbling and debating respecting theological differences, not seeing that I was antagonizing a doctrine that must be "spiritually discerned," and the tendency of which is manifestly to bring people nearer to God!

Meanwhile I had foolishly fallen into the habit of chewing tobacco -- an indulgence which, besides the palatable gratification, seemed to minister both to my nervous and my social nature. Years elapsed. When I would confront the obligation of entire consecration the sacrifice of my foolish habit would be presented as a test of obedience. I would consent. Light, strength, and blessing were the result. Afterward temptation would be presented. I would listen to suggestions like these, "This is one of the good things of God." "Your religion does not require a course of asceticism." "This indulgence is not specially forbidden on the New Testament page." "Some good people whom you know are addicted to this practice." Thus seeking to quiet an uneasy conscience I would drift back into the old habit again. After awhile I began to see that the indulgence at best was doubtful for me, and that I was giving my carnality rather than my Christian experience the benefit of the doubt. It could not really harm me to give it up, while to persist in the practice was costing me too much in my religious enjoyments.

I found that after all my objections to sanctification as a distinct work of grace, there was, nevertheless, a conscious lack in my own religious experience. It was not strong, round, full, or abiding. I frequently asked myself, "What is that I need and desire in comparison with what I have and profess?"

I looked at the three steps insisted upon by the friends of holiness; namely:

1. Entire consecration;

2. Acceptance of Jesus moment by moment as a perfect Saviour;

3. A meek but definite confession of the grace received; and I said, "These are scriptural and reasonable duties." The remembrance of my experience in Newtown supplied an overwhelming confirmation of all this, and at the same time a powerful stimulus in the direction of duty.

"What then?" I said, "I will cast aside all preconceived theories, doubtful indulgences, culpable unbelief, and retrace my steps."

Alas! that I should have wandered from the light at all and afterward wasted so many years in vacillating between self and God. Can I ever forgive myself? O, what a bitter, bitter memory! The acknowledgment that I here make, constrained by candor and a concern for others, is among the greatest humiliations of my life. If I had the ear of those who have entered into the clear light of Christian purity, I would beseech, entreat, supplicate, and charge them, with a brother's interest and earnestness, that they be warned by my folly. O! let such consent to die, if it were possible, a hundred deaths, before they willfully depart from the path of holiness; for if they retrace their steps there will still be the remembrance of original purity tarnished, and that will prove a drop of bitterness in the cup of their sweetest comfort.

Eternal praise to my long-suffering Lord! Nearly ten years have elapsed since, as the pastor of Greene Street Church, in the city of Philadelphia, I again dedicated my all carefully and fully to God; the consecration of course included the doubtful indulgence. I said "I will try and abstain for Christ's sake. I would do any thing for His sake; and certainly I can consent to this self-denial that Jesus may be glorified." Again I accepted Christ as my Saviour from all sin; realized the witness of the sanctifying Spirit; and since then I have been walking "in the light as God is in the light," have fellowship with the saints and humbly testify that "the blood of Jesus cleanseth me from all sin."

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him" -- that is as I understand, continually repeat those exercises or duties you performed when you accepted Christ as your all-sufficient Saviour. I received Him in a spirit of entire consecration, implicit faith, and humble confession. The constant repetition of these three steps enables me to "walk in him." I cannot afford even for a single moment to remove my offering, to fail in looking unto Jesus, or to part with the spirit of confession.

Thus I have honestly unfolded some personal experiences in connection with the doctrine and grace of sanctification. The recital humbles me in the dust as it calls up the memory of years of vacillating and unsatisfactory religious life; but it also fills me with the profoundest gratitude for that abounding mercy which not only bore with me but brought me to see again my privilege in the Gospel, and now for more than ten years has been preserving me in the experience, and blessing me in the profession, of this great grace. Precious reader, I now offer you this testimony; but,

remember, before it meets your eyes it has been carefully placed upon the altar that sanctifieth the gift, and an earnest prayer offered that it may be blessed to your spiritual profit.

Source: "Forty Witnesses" by S. Olin Garrison

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