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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)

H. M. Couchenour was a holiness evangelist, writer, and served as president of the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness.

It was my high honor to be born in a Christian home, second in a family of eight. My parents were genuine born-again Christians. They were faithful in their devotional life, both private and public. They had a family altar and said grace before each meal. They were also faithful in their church attendance. We had one family pew and attended every service, including the prayer meetings. Our little Methodist church believed in heart-felt religion and had old-time revivals. The preachers preached the Word, and God would bless the hearts of the listeners. Many of the things I heard and saw and felt in the early days of my boyhood mean so much to me today! If being born in a Christian home and living in this environment is all that is needed to make one a Christian, I certainly should have been one. While all of these spiritual influences made their contribution to my life, yet I did not know the joys of salvation until I was twenty-one years of age.

There were many things I did not understand, and my interest was not in the things of the Spirit. The world made its appeal, and I found my pleasure and satisfaction from what it offered. My father and mother would talk to me about the way I was living; but I would tell them I might as well be dead if I could not indulge in the pleasures of the world, for all my satisfaction came from that source. They would tell me of the satisfaction they enjoyed by serving the Lord. I could not understand this. How could one have a good time reading his Bible, praying, going to church, testifying, and always thinking about getting sinners converted? There would be times of refreshing and victory that they enjoyed so much! But what they enjoyed made me angry, and I would say many unkind things about them.

The day came, however, and in answer to their prayers, when deep Holy Ghost conviction took hold of me. I lived for two days and two nights under this terrible load of guilt. I thought I would die under this burden I yielded to the pleadings of the precious Holy Ghost, and one February night in 1921, when I was twenty-one-years of age, God forgave all my sins for Jesus'

sake. That was a blessed hour. The burden of guilt was taken away, and the Spirit witnessed very clearly. The joy of my heart was expressed in the words of Charles Wesley:

My God is reconciled;
His pardoning voice I hear.
He owns me for His child;
I need no longer fear.
With confidence I now draw nigh,
And, Father, Abba, Father, cry.

Romans 5:1 and I Peter 1:18, 19 became very precious to me. I, by God's grace, lived in constant victory for two weeks. Then one day I met with a trial and, for the first time since I was converted, became aware of an inward disposition so unlike Jesus! I did not say or do a thing, but I felt so mean and unclean inside. When this happened, my joy and assurance left me. The devil was on hand and tried to convince me that there was nothing in religion. I knew he was lying, for I had enjoyed it for two weeks. But what had happened and this inward defilement troubled me. I did not wait. I went immediately to the place of prayer. I talked to Jesus about His love and told Him how He had saved me and how I enjoyed His love and peace. But that since this had happened, the joy and peace were gone. I asked Him to forgive me for this inward disposition. He did, and the joy and peace returned. It was so sweet! I was aware, however, from that hour until the day it pleased Him to cleanse my heart, of an inward defilement unlike Jesus that I did not get delivered from when I was converted. I was grieved by this inner defilement, and I prayed much about it, for I wanted to be like Jesus in my heart. My good wife and I would often talk about this, and again and again we would say, "If this is all there is for us, there is something wrong." It was hard to believe that it was God's will for us to suffer this inward defilement all of our lives.

We prayed and searched the Word for light and help. I don't know why God never permitted a preacher or someone to cross my path who could help me in this spiritual need. I don't recall that I had ever heard a sermon, read a book, or heard anyone testify to a second work of grace. Being aware of my need, however, I prayed and earnestly sought the Lord for help.

Then one morning during our family devotions, the Lord opened Acts 15:8, 9 to me. He showed me I could have a pure heart, and that it was by faith through the baptism with the Holy Ghost. My heart was hungry, and I rejoiced in this new light. After my wife and I talked about it, I retired to my study, giving her instructions not to disturb me until I returned. This was six years after I was converted, and I had been preaching four years.

Oh, what a day that was! It was about 8:30 in the morning when I went to my study. I was overwhelmed with the joy and anticipation of having a pure heart. For two hours I could not control myself. I must have shared in the joy the disciples knew when they, in obedience to Jesus' command and in anticipation of the fulfillment of the promise, made their way to the Upper Room to wait for the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Luke 24:50-53).

Then came the time of searching. God kept revealing many things to me. The devil was there, too. He kept fighting, suggesting ruin and utter failure in everything if I dared obey God. I was hungry, however, and nothing he could do could divert my purpose. I wanted a clean heart. As

the Spirit searched my heart and pointed out the way, I walked in it; I entered what was truly a second epoch in my life. I was not a sinner under condemnation, seeking pardon and crying for mercy. I was a Christian with the witness of the Spirit in my heart and with no other desire than to please God in everything, especially in my heart life. The moment of a complete consecration came. I was entirely the Lord's. I felt so sure with everything in His hands! The witness of the cleansing did not come at this moment, however. Let me assure you, my dear reader, that there is a great difference between consecration and cleansing. Consecration is what we do. Cleansing is what God does. It was about 12:00 o'clock when my consecration was completed. I did not leave. I waited. How precious were those three and a half hours of waiting! What would He do when He came? How would I act? Then at 3:30 the Holy Ghost came in His sanctifying power. How sweet was this experience! It was like a warm liquid that entered my entire being and filled every part. There was no overwhelming joy, but there was a sweet witness of cleanness. He had cleansed the temple, and Acts 15: 8, 9 became real to my own heart. Hallelujah!

I want to testify, with no embarrassment and with no apology, but for God's glory, to two definite works of grace: the one, where God for Jesus' sake pardoned my sins, in February, 1921; the other when He purged my inbred sin and filled me with the precious Holy Ghost, in September, 1927.

This experience has not put me beyond the possibility of sinning or made me immune to temptation. It has not destroyed my human nature nor made me perfect in judgment. It has, however, cleansed my heart from inbred sin and given me a rest and quietness in God. It has shed the love of God abroad in my heart and made His will the chief desire and delight of my life. For the past twenty years this grace has been sufficient, and there has been power to do His will and grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

If I have meant anything to God and His kingdom, it is because I have received the precious Holy Ghost in His sanctifying power. Dear reader, there is complete deliverance from this inward defilement in this life. It is by faith through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Don't be frightened away from this experience by the teaching of a second work of grace. Confess your need, make your consecration, and trust God to do it now. Claim these promises--I John 1:7, Matthew 5:6, Luke 11:13, Acts 5: 32, and Acts 15:8, 9.

Source: "Living Flames of Fire" by Bernie Smith