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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

J. RUSSELL GARDNER
(Nazarene)

J Russell Gardner was a gifted preacher and served as Dean of the School of Religion at Olivet Nazarene College.

Reared in a Christian home, I was early led to the church of my parents' choice, namely the United Evangelical ... some years later, while reading a sermon by Charles H. Spurgeon ... the true method of salvation by faith only dawned upon me ... The secret of justification by faith alone, at long last, was now my own.

But a still deeper lesson in the school of faith was yet awaiting me. Up until that time, I had heard nothing of the doctrine of entire sanctification. Nor did I, until some years later, when in the autumn of 1910 a holiness evangelist by the name of Joseph B. Diehl began a revival meeting at our home Evangelical church. Upon my first hearing of this strange, new teaching, there was not only no resentment, but there was a positive, spontaneous conviction that here was something that I needed and wanted...

But I found that it took more than a tear-stained altar to meet my need. It took understanding; it took truth; it took grace; it took a new revelation of Christ to my heart. And this, for me, required time. I needed re-education in Scripture as well as reconstruction in theology. My difficulties seemed to be more intellectual than moral. It was not my unwillingness to let go that which was sinful so much as my inability to grasp that which was tangible. It was not so much a problem of detachment as one of attachment. I needed a reasonable foundation for my faith, a coherent account of the redemptive plan which would include my personal sanctification.

Assisting toward this new enlightenment was a volume I prize most highly to this present day, Wood's Perfect Love ... Just how and when was this divine baptism to be appropriated? And here Dr. S. A. Keen, with his lucid expositions in his Faith Papers and Pentecostal Paper, came to my relief. He showed me how to receive. Employing an analogy between natural and spiritual baptism, he said, "Now just as when you are baptized in water, you commit the whole undertaking

to the minister baptizing you, so now commit your soul into the hands of Jesus as you baptizer with the Holy Ghost, and you will see what will happen very soon." Having been immersed in water, I caught the point of the analogy at once, and looking up by faith once more I said, "Lord Jesus, I do receive You now as my Baptizer with the Holy Ghost."

No sooner had the faith latent in this confession ascended than the Spirit of God in sanctifying and illuminating power descended. Quietly, yet pungently, He went through my heart like a refiner's fire. And although there was neither "mighty rushing wind," earthquake, nor storm, I knew from a still, sweet voice within that the Comforter had come. And I may humbly add to the glory of His name that the lowly habitation which the Divine Occupant assumed that night has not been abandoned by Him for these thirty and six years. And it is my confident faith that He will remain with me, even "until the day break, and the shadows flee away."

Source: "Living Flames of Fire" by Bernie Smith

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THE END