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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

**JOHN WESLEY GOODWIN**  
**1869 -- 1945**  
**(Nazarene General Superintendent 1916-1945)**

Visualize a pioneer New England home in Maine, in a farming community of the early settlers. Note a small frame building sixteen by thirty feet on one acre of land, on a country road with the usual pine forest surrounding. Down the lane, one and a quarter miles, the small, country schoolhouse accommodated ten or a dozen pupils. A few miles in another direction stood the country village of Berwick. Here in this humble spot, typically early American, John Wesley Goodwin first saw the light of day on March 13, 1869...

While John W. Goodwin was at Dover attending business college, the Baptist Church began their January revival. His professor was a good Christian man and a member of that church. Through his invitation, John attended the opening service. The weather was rather stormy and it was snowing quite a little. Only a few people were out for the first service. The evangelist came to him and asked if he were a Christian. The reply was in the negative. Whereupon the evangelist said, "You want to be, I am sure." To which John replied, "Of course, and I expect to be some day."

This gave the evangelist courage, who pressed the question for a decision that night, but stubborn will flatly refused and becoming provoked at his insistency, John walked out of the church. The professor tried in vain to get him to attend the revival but John refused. The pastor, whom John esteemed very highly, came to see him and by every kind word, endeavored to persuade him to attend the meetings which were now drawing large crowds, and many were being converted. But there was no turning John's mind. The last Sunday came John decided to attend this last service. It was a service which he could never forget. At the close of the short message, the evangelist asked all who had been converted in the meetings to stand. He counted over two hundred who stood to their feet. As John sat there looking at that company of young men and women, in his heart he wished he also were among them. The evangelist, as he walked down the aisle, looked at John and with a nod of recognition, passed on. John walked home to his room at Laura's house under awful conviction. He tried in vain to sleep, but his thoughts were much too

serious for sleep. He rolled and tumbled, for his bed was like sticks and stones beneath him. At last John made a pledge with God, that, as soon as he got home he would give his heart to Christ. Strange as it may seem, he soon fell asleep. He had no more trouble the rest of the last term. He was happy and finished school in peace. He reached home on Friday night and passed the day Saturday, meeting and greeting old friends. Sunday morning found John at church, but he had no sooner entered the church than he was confronted with his pledge, and deep conviction gripped him with iron teeth.

At the evening service, he was in great trouble of mind and heart. Elder Briggs, the pastor, who was a very kind and thoughtful man, saw clearly the boy's trouble; and while John did not respond to the kind invitation to seek the Lord, after the closing of the service the pastor came to him and aid, "Johnny, you are under conviction. You must seek the Lord."

John replied, "You're right. I am under conviction and I really want to be a Christian."

The pastor said, so tenderly, "Let us go to the front now."

"No," said John, "when I make the start, I want to have courage enough to do so when the crowd of young people shall know my decision."

"Then," said the pastor, "we are to have a meeting in the schoolhouse Wednesday evening and the place will be filled. That will be a good time for you."

John agreed to the proposition and kept his promise. He did not remember the text or the words of the pastor's discourse, but was determined to go through with this proposition. When the call was made John was the first to stand to his feet. He was near the front and it did not take him long to reach the front and kneel at the bench. It was so dark within he seemed to be paralyzed with fear. He could not pray or make one step in advance. Elder Briggs dealt with him very kindly, but could not prevail in securing a word of prayer.

After some time he said, "The crowd will become impatient. I must close but wife is away. You come home with me and we will pray it out if it takes all night."

"That suits me," John replied, "but I want to know. I must have an experience that I know about. I want to know my sins are forgiven and when I am really converted."

On reaching his home and entering the front room, the pastor placed two chairs in the center and said, "Now, my boy, we are going to know." John could never forget his prayer and falling tears as the pastor placed one hand on John's back and the other on the chair, as they knelt together. It was so dark within that it seemed it must be dark in the room. The pastor talked and reasoned with John. Finally he said, "My boy, open your mouth, cry mightily for pardon." But John insisted that he did not know how to pray or what to say. "Pray the publican's prayer," he said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." As John opened his mouth and began to pray those words, the heavy burden rolled away. He felt at peace with God, but the light, the clear witness, did not seem sufficient. This man of God knew the way. He insisted that John must now believe and hold steady in faith, for the promise could not fail. "His Spirit witnesseth with our spirit," but our spirit must

be true to the promise in faith. John finally concluded to rest the witness with God, walk by faith, true to the promise. It was now in the early morning hours. The pastor then kindly took John home with his horse and buggy and as they reached the clearing, the Goodwin home was well in view. The pastor left him to finish the rest of the way home. Holding steadfast to the promise, as he stepped from the buggy to the ground, the light broke into his soul, the witness was clear. He was indeed a child of God. This was in June, 1887...

In the fall of 1892, he received a call from the Church at Acushnet. This was a small country church, paying only four or five dollars a week ... One day an unhappy experience came to his home when Mr. Goodwin spoke unkindly to his wife, for which, in great humility, he begged pardon. Mrs. Goodwin forgave and with a parting kiss said, "Just forget it." But he could not forget it. He went to his study and kneeling before an old chair, poured out his heart in sorrow. He had found something in his heart that was not sweet. After much prayer the smile of God came back, but the most serious question in his thought was, "Must I always live in danger of that thing breaking loose in my soul? Is there no way of deliverance?" He soon learned that this Rev. Mr. Burch of Providence, a few miles from Acushnet, was to speak on "Holiness Versus Fanaticism" in the great Boston Convention. He had been to a holiness camp meeting and professed the second blessing. Some had called it fanaticism and he was now to clear himself. He took for his text I Thessalonians 5:23. He said nothing about fanaticism but he did preach to prove and explain holiness and gave great emphasis on being filled with the Holy Spirit. Mr. Goodwin's heart was hungry and he opened it to receive every word. There he made a covenant with God that if God could find him worthy and would give him that blessing, he would face the storm and preach it, if need be in poverty with patches on his clothes. God instantly took him at his word and dropped into his soul in blessed sweetness.

At the close of that service, several preachers give Mr. Goodwin serious caution not to get mixed up with such doctrine, but they were too late. John Goodwin had the blessing ... later ... Mr. Goodwin united with the Church of the Nazarene...

Source: "John W. Goodwin -- A Biography"  
by Asa Everette Sanner

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