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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)**

On the first day of May, 1853, I connected myself with the Union M. E. Church of Philadelphia, and in a few months was assigned to the charge of the class which I at first entered. Sought Divine assistance and guidance, walked in the clear light of justification, felt the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost; never had any doubts as to my conversion. The Lord blessed me in my efforts as a class-leader, and in a year or two I was urged to prepare myself for position of greater usefulness in the Church, and in 1857 entered the Philadelphia Conference. My labors were owned of God, and during my first year of ministerial work, we rejoiced in an addition of over one hundred to the Church.--Greatly loved the work and labored with diligence and zeal, though my mind, at time, was greatly agitated on the subject of a deeper work, as described by the fathers of Methodism and professed by living witnesses. I felt that either these persons were mistaken in regard to the Spirit's operations, and the extent of the Gospel salvation in justification, or that there was a work of the Spirit, and an experience of the heart, that I had not realized in my religious life.

I became deeply interested in everything relating to this subject -- read, studied, listened, and argued much on the doctrine; prayed for direction, but all this with mind so prejudiced that I would only receive light that seemed to confirm the views I had already embraced. I had come to regard the work of regeneration as completed work of sanctification, and that the soul was then entirely holy and filled with the Holy Ghost. The arguments so commonly urged, "in regard to God doing an imperfect work," and many others, were constantly before my mind, and every effort was made to meet the claim constantly pressed by friends, and as I now believe, by the Holy Spirit, and by the remembrance of the solemn vows made at my ordination, that I expected to be made perfect in love in this life, and was groaning after that experience. My life was unsatisfactory; I could not confidently assert, "The blood of Jesus cleanseth me from all sin." I had seasons of great joy and love, followed by days of doubt and fear. My religious life was largely emotional, hence I had nothing settled -- yesterday, I was on the mountains of transfiguration; to-day, deep in the valley, with clouds and darkness surrounding.

Although I had supposed my mind fully settled on what I thought to be scriptural basis for a completed work in regeneration, yet I was not at rest. It was often suggested that I should plead with God for the blessing of heart purity and the fullness of the Spirit. The Father would persuade His rebellious child.

There were many texts from which I dared not preach, for although I could form very plausible arguments to subvert my theory, yet my heart protested; my experience could not confirm the doctrine as I argued it.

I felt within the moving of a spirit, which, though subdued and held under restraint to a great degree, was not in conformity to the Spirit of the blessed Master. I could control anger, so that it should not break forth in violent storm -- pride swelled the heart in an unconquerable, rest-disturbing ambition; self fought against the Christ spirit of humility.

For years I felt an intense longing of heart for a higher life -- a settled experience; would seek "more religion," and God would bless me with renewed evidences of mercy and favor, and yet I was not satisfied; rest I had not. There was a point clearly defined in the experience of others that I had not attained -- was not fully satisfied that I was right in my views, and certain that I was not in my experience. I was compelled to admit a higher style of religious life, in the example set by those who professed to enjoy entire sanctification as a distinct blessing from regeneration, that I beheld in those who with me maintained opposite views. Could I have that experience? The conviction came in response to the inquiry, "It is for all who are willing to receive it."

Instead of unhesitating and promptly following the leading of the Holy Spirit, and making a full surrender to Jesus, I conferred with flesh and blood. What will be the effect? Very humiliating to human nature. What will my friends think before whom I have so earnestly and publicly espoused the opposite views? Then it was suggested that this doctrine was unpopular. Now my very hesitancy, for these and other reasons no more worthy, convinced me more fully that I was not free, as I longed to be; I was in bondage to public opinion.

Then there stood in my way a needless indulgence, which I clung to tenaciously, because of its social character. I now look back with disgust to the enslavement of appetite in which I lived for years. It was more despicable than the apple of Eden, yet it came to occupy in my heart the same relation that the innocent fruit did to our first parents -- a test of obedience.

I often struggled for complete freedom. When urging sinners to give all to Jesus, and the cold and backslidden in the church to present themselves a "living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God," I would myself endeavor to get my offering completely on the altar of consecration, that I might be entirely the Lord's. In social and private prayer, when almost on the point of claiming the fulfillment of the promises, my innocent gratification would thrust itself in, and insist on being seen and heard. I flattered myself that I could relinquish the habit at any moment, but that it was such a little thing, that I was foolishly sensitive; besides, why should I be so punctilious, where so many better and more useful men had allowed themselves the same pleasure?

Thus I always presented a "lame" imperfect sacrifice. The Holy Spirit said yield that pleasure! "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord," "from all your filthiness and from all

your idols will I cleanse you," &c. With this ray of light falling upon mind and heart, my prayers after holiness became like the cold patter of the winter's rain. I lived thus for years with a ghost in my closet, I was afraid to meet it.

Yet in all these years the yearnings of my heart were for rest, liberty, a death to sin and a life hid with Christ in God, but my proud stubborn will would not yield. My mountain peak and dark valley experience did not suit me; I believe there was a better way; I often sang

"I cannot rest till pure within,  
Till I am wholly lost in thee."

I continued in this unsettled condition until attending, with my charge, the camp-meeting at Camden, Delaware, when God led me into clearer light, and give me deep convictions of the necessity of a greater work of the Holy Spirit in my own heart. By His assisting grace I was enabled to make a full surrender to Jesus; a consecration more specific, complete and thorough than I had ever previously known. My time, talent, reputation, friends, pleasures, appetites -- all, all! were placed on the altar of sacrifice. I desire to state most emphatically that I had at this time a sense of God's love, a consciousness of acceptance with God and frequent seasons of religious enjoyment. I brought "living powers" to Jesus, a soul alive unto God, loving and fearing him; I came to consecrate renewed powers fully to God.

Presenting myself thus to Him, I had expected the Lord would do some great thing in bestowing a baptism of unutterable joy; that was the proposed plan, on which I expected the Lord to appear. I held the offering consecrated to God -- reckoned that it was all His -- believed that He accepted, on the authority of His Word, and yet could not be satisfied that my soul was fully cleansed, until I had the distinct, clear witness of the blessed Spirit, that it was done.

I had an abiding conviction that the offering was made to God, and that He would give me unmistakable evidence of the work being performed. He gave me quiet, rest, peace, but not at that time a baptism of joy as I wanted. My faith apprehended Christ in His power, love and willingness, and I was enabled soon, to rejoice that the Holy ghost was shed abroad in my heart, performing its great sanctifying work. My convictions were clear and satisfactory that the blood of Jesus cleanseth. Since then I have enjoyed uninterrupted rest and quiet, with many seasons of rapture and glorious displays of God's love and favor.

My Christian life now seems so settled, so full of love; my communion with God so blessed; my triumphs over temptation so easy: my work so interesting, and the salvation that I am permitted to preach so full and "to the uttermost," that I seem to have entered upon a new platform of belief and labor. Every day I repeat the offering, living by faith in Jesus. Here my weary heart has at last found rest.

Source: "Pioneer Experiences" by Phoebe Palmer

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THE END

