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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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(Baptist)

Early in life, I was the subject of religious impressions. A Christian parentage blessed me, and pious friends sought to instill divine truth into my heart. From my earliest remembrance, family prayer had a most potent influence upon my mind. The effect of those early influences is deep and salutary still. The death of my father, when I was but nine years of age, placed me in a family of strangers, where, for several years, my advantages for religious training were limited.

At times, my mind was exercised about accountability to God, and my need of salvation through the blood of Christ. At length, my soul was deeply wrought upon by the preaching of a Methodist minister of the Wesleyan connection. I professed conversion, and united with the class, and was baptized in the form of that church. For a few months, I maintained a nominal profession of religion with a degree of satisfaction, yet was conscious of a leanness. The heart was not tender: it had not been resurrected into a new life. About five months from my public confession of Christ, I was seized with the deepest conviction of guilt in my soul. I felt that I was lost. I read the Bible, and prayed, but all to no purpose. The wrath of God was abiding upon me: I was under condemnation. My profession had been an empty show: I was self-deceived.

God in infinite mercy now showed me my state of heart in sin and guilt. It was Sunday, a beautiful day of sunshine; but all was dark to me. I felt that I was undone: but I said once more, "I will go to Jesus; He is my only hope,

I can but perish if I go;
'Tis I'm resolved to try."

I again fell prostrate at the feet of Jesus, and out of the bitter depths of my heart, cried, --

"Here, Lord, I give myself away:
'Tis all that I can do."

And just then Jesus accepted the offering, and spoke peace to my soul. The unspeakable joy I experienced no tongue can tell. I endeavored to tell to the Church, to my friends, and the world, what a Saviour I had found. The change I could not mistake. It was the pardoning love of Jesus in the soul; and, although my pathway has been crooked and varied from that time until now, I have never, to the present moment, been left to doubt my conversion. In a few months, by yielding to temptation in an unguarded moment, I fell into a difficulty with one of the brethren of the Church, which grieved the Spirit.

My heart became sad, fainted, and wandered from Christ. I began to live prayerlessly, and to neglect religious meetings. Now began a most wretched experience, which continued nearly three years. I plunged into various schemes of wickedness, chose bad associates for my companions, and often fell into habits of profanity, intemperance, and Sabbath-breaking. But, while I inclined to give up Christ, He did not give me up. Frequently did I feel that I was wounding Christ in the house of his friends, and that I was "beating with many stripes."

At length, I was glad to return to my Father's house. The journey was indeed dark and tedious. Oh the bitterness, the wrestlings, and the agony of my soul in coming back to God! But, blessed be His name, He met me in the way, and threw His arms around my neck, and kissed me. And now for more than fifteen years I have taken great delight in the service of Jesus; but not until recently have I believed there was such attainment by faith and love as are proffered to every Christian who will, by simple "trust" in Jesus, receive the "sealing of the Spirit."

I said I had taken great delight in the service of Christ. Soon after I was reclaimed from my backslidings, I felt that I was called of God to preach the gospel; and such was my burning love for Jesus, and anxiety for the souls for whom He died, that I cheerfully said, "I will go." I entered a course of study preparatory to the work. Soon my soul seemed to be impressed with the idea that the inclination of the students was to give too much attention to the "letter," and too little to the "spirit;" that too little care was given to have every literary attainment consecrated and sanctified to the great life-work of winning sinners to Christ.

I resolved, that, whatever acquisition in knowledge I made, all should be laid on the altar. This blessed resolution and sweet experience I was enabled to carry out as long as I remained in study; and I have felt most deeply its influence upon my ministry. God has been pleased to crown my labors with constant showers of blessing. But how unworthy I have felt! and, most of all, a deep impression that I had not that confidence in God which it was my privilege to enjoy, and duty to exercise.

In the spring of 1865, after having enjoyed a spiritual refreshing in revivals through the winter, I was impressed as never before that there was something in Christ for me which I had never received, and that He was proffering me the blessing. This conviction was attended with deep searching of the heart; and, the more I examined my heart, the more I saw its vileness. My soul was panting for the fullness of Christ's love.

The words of Jesus, "Come unto me, all that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," came fresh to my mind. "Well," said I, "He spoke them for the sinner; and I have been giving them to the sinner these dozen years: they are not for me." But a voice continually whispered,

"They are for you." These feelings of desire and trail to do something to satisfy my thirsting soul continued for months. At length, the words above referred to pressed my heart so much that I began to make a personal application of them. I said, "What is this idea of rest as presented by Jesus?"

It was thus illustrated to me: Suppose I, wearied from toil, return home, and say to my friends, "I am very weary, and will retire to rest: "I professedly take my bed for this purpose, but spend the night agitated in feeling, with disquiet and tossings. Now, can I rise in morning, and say I have had rest? So it seemed in my soul I had professed to be a Christian, and no doubt had possessed a good hope which has been as an anchor of the soul for many years, but had not rest. Like Martha, I was cumbered about much serving. The waves were rippled: I did not rest by simple trust in Jesus.

I felt deeply conscious that greater heights in spiritual things were attainable; but to reach them was my difficulty. It seemed I would give all the world, did I possess it, or do anything if I could but enjoy the fullness of that peace that passeth all understanding.

I tried again and again, with heart, lips, and pens, to consecrate my all to Jesus and His service; and for months my daily cry was, "Oh for a subdued heart!" But, with all my doing, something would frequently whisper, --

"Cast your deadly doing down, --
Down at Jesus' feet:
Stand in him, in him alone,
All glorious and complete."

The labor of my hands, at this time, greatly increased. Inquiring sinners and rejoicing converts multiplied daily. Never did my ministry seem more responsible and important, and never did I feel so unfit to perform it. I dare not tell any one the state of my own heart. But Oh, what trials as I felt the sad want of faith, that weighed down my soul! When I directed sinners to believe in Christ, some still voice within would say, "Why don't you believe yourself?" Again, and again, did I try to "cast my deadly doing down." I wrote out a full consecration of all to Jesus, and in solemn prayer signed it upon my knees.

I tried over and over again to examine my heart as with a "lighted candle." but all to no purpose; and I daily found that I was "trying many things of many physicians," and was nothing better, but rather grew worse.

"Oh!" said I, "is it so hard for a Christian to let go, and simple trust Jesus?" After spending several months in deep searchings of heart, a friend put the little tract, "The Living Christ," into my hand. The reading of each line awakened increased interest and anxiety in the matter of believing, trusting. The way appeared plain; but to do the thing was a seeming impossibility. "Oh, for a subdued heart!" was the constant language of my soul. Daily I felt that I could not go and preach to my dear people again; that is was almost wicked to stand up as a public teacher with such a hard, unbroken state of heart.

I determined to appoint a day of fasting and prayer, hoping that by this means I might obtain liberty to my captive soul. I did appoint it; but thank God, when the time arrived I compelled to turn it into a day of thanksgiving.

Before my soul deeply panted for the "baptism of the Spirit," I had heard through kind friends of the meeting at Dr. Palmer's, and was invited to attend. I concluded to do so before the day appointed for fasting arrived. I went. The experiences related somewhat illustrated my case. I felt interested, and measured every word. I stated my exercises of mind to the meeting and was told to try and "trust in Jesus." I said, "I have been trying a long time to believe; but the thing is to do it." Again I fell upon my knees, and endeavored to give up all "trust," but to no purpose. Still my heart was hard and unrelenting; and again I cried, "Oh for secret rest in Jesus! I felt so unworthy and so rebellious, that I tempted to conclude that I should never enjoy this blessed experience. But a voice sweetly whispered, "Jesus has promised you the blessing: trust him, accept it."

Wearied, anxious, and still unbelieving, I returned home. While on the way something seemed to say to me in a most signal tone, "Cast thy burden on the Lord." This precious passage never appeared so to me before. It came as the healing balm. I quickly said, "I will. Lord, if it be selfishness, unholy ambition, worldly pride, the will of man, any thing, every thing, whatever may hinder my simple 'trust in Jesus,' I surrender all to thee." Still the passage was like a "bright light" before me; and I felt a consciousness that I had cast all at Jesus' feet, and that in His own way and time He would emancipate my burdened soul.

I retired to rest, leaving all to Him. At an unusually early hour, I awoke. The room was silent and dark; but in an instant the darkness passed away, and a bright light filled the room. The light of life seemed to be all around me, and Jesus appeared, not altogether in the form of a person, but as filling immensity with his presence.

I never had such a view of Christ, or experienced such feeling before. All the hardness of my heart was broken up instantly, and my soul launched out into Christ like launching a boat upon the bosom of a smooth lake. Just now that blessed Scripture, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of host, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it," appeared to me in all its fullness.

I said, "I cannot surely contain this." Oh, how my soul -- as filled with the fullness of Christ's love! The tears freely flowed, and my pillow was wet as with the dew of the morning. Christ was "all in all." "I was filled with the Spirit," and I felt, that, after traveling a long and tedious journey over pathless wastes and through burning sands, I had not arrived at the golden gates of the city; yea, had entered and now dwelt in the bright mansions of love. All was peace.

I arose and made a record of gratitude to God for this infinite and unspeakable blessing. Immediately I found every thing changed concerning my faith in Christ, and my relations to him as a full and complete Saviour.

Never did he appear so much the unchangeable One -- "the same, yesterday, today, and forever." "His yoke became easy and his burden light;" and, on reflection, I could hardly believe that I had lived and toiled so long, without this precious blessing of "sweet rest in Jesus."

I have been led to believe, judging somewhat from appearance, as also from my own experience, that this blessing is the great want of the Church now; that all alike, ministers and laymen, imperatively need the baptism of the Spirit "of fire," and of power from on high, that they may convincingly and with conquering, power witness for Jesus.

Source: "Pioneer Experiences" by Phoebe Palmer

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THE END