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(A Collection of Holiness Experience Accounts)

HOW THEY ENTERED CANAAN

Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

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At a camp-meeting, held at Northport, L. I., A.D. 1850, I was deeply under the power of the Holy Spirit. The past and the future were before me. My mind was marvelously illumined. I saw my position -- I saw what was duty, and what it would cost to do that duty, and this occasioned a wonderful struggle. Duty -- stern, inexorable duty, stood before me, like the angel of the Lord before the dumb best of the old prophet. And there was no more head-way in that direction, until I should yield to its high and imperious claims. On the other hand, I thought of my position, social, religious, and professional. Scheme of cherished ambition were before me. The loss of social status the opinions of men -- the humiliation -- the crucifixion.

I hesitated -- I struggled -- I wept -- I prayed. The word of God was ringing in my ears, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." New light, more effulgent than I had ever had before, was now shining upon my spirit; and, now, to recede, was to lose, even my evidence of justification. I as conscious that I could not retain my sense of adoption before God, unless I moved forward whither the pillar of fire would lead me.

But, still my timid nature stood palsied before the conviction, that, if I went forward, it would become my duty to preach, and this was the point of crucifixion. To do this was seeming death, to all my cherished plans, and I shrunk back from it, as from a frightful spectre. And, thus, my agonized spirit vibrated between these conflicting emotions. Those, only, who have passed through similar experiences, can imagine the fierceness of such conflict. In this state of unrest I continued for some hours, while a voice seemed to be speaking to me interrogatively, "Will you?" -- "will you?" Subsequently, while this struggle was pending, and before I could achieve a decision, my good friends, Dr. and Mrs. P____, whose sympathies were deeply enlisted in my behalf, were frequently present, affording me most valuable aid and assistance. But with a spiritual perception, which greatly astonished me at the time, Sister P____ seemed to comprehend the whole matter, and without any utterance on my part, as to the real difficulty in the case, she seemed to perceive it, and to my great astonishment, suggested her conviction, that I as contending against my duty to preach the Gospel. This seemed to me the more remarkable, as I as an entire stranger to

her, and she could not have known my previous history. Was it not an illustration of the words, "For the Spirit searcheth all thing, yea, the deep things of God."

That it was a time of great spiritual illumination with me, is true, beyond all question. For I felt that "the Spirit of the Lord God as upon me." Visions of God were open before me -- and I saw what subsequent experience has verified, as, in a dark and cloudy night a man sees the whole landscape before him in the light of a vivid flash of electricity. My soul was stirred to its profoundest depths. I as passing through agonizing throes preparatory to an entire crucifixion to the world, flesh and sin. And blessed be the Lord God of Israel, I was subsequently ushered into a new world, of light and beauty.

It was a memorable crisis in my religious history -- a new era was opening upon me. And I felt assured that my destiny, for the future, was swinging upon this strongly marked pivotal period of my life. I was to come forth from this furnace purged of the "old leaven," and enter upon a new, and more glorious phase of spiritual life, or lapse back under the displeasure of God, with the midnight of darkness upon my soul. And, thus, for hours I swung between these startling, alternations, unable to decide the case, or resolve the question, "Will you yield and preach the Gospel?"

After hours of fruitless struggling and most painful indecision, as if in marvelous condescension to my weakness, the blessed Christ seemed to speak to me thus, "Twenty-one years ago, you gave yourself to me, and I have kept you. Now, will you not consecrate yourself, in a higher sense, to be forever, and unconditionally, the Lord's; and I will keep you unto life eternal?" I recognized the voice of the Beloved -- my soul melted -- my opposition gave way -- tremblingly, and with a full heart, I responded, "Yes, Lord. I must have Thee at all hazards." And the great conflict was over.

In all this I saw no form -- but I knew that Jesus spoke to me. I felt that my commission was from Him, and that in due time, the Church would conform its action to these requirements, and such has been the fact. I arose from this agony with these words impressed upon my mind, "Henceforth reckon ye yourselves to be dead, indeed, unto sin, but alive unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." No joyous transport followed this struggle as an immediate result -- no absolute conviction filled my soul, that I had experienced the work of entire sanctification, save only in the sense of entire consecration. But I began to "reckon myself dead, indeed, unto sin, and alive unto God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And thus, to "know Him, and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable unto His death."

That such is the work of holiness, I have no doubt. The work of the Spirit upon individuals must needs be somewhat peculiar, as it does not destroy individuality. I am not therefore, disposed to doubt that this was a genuine work of holiness, because I was not carried away with unspeakable transports. My spirit was wonderfully chastened -- love -- divine, heavenly love, sweet, pure, God-like, -- seemed gradually to sweep my whole being.

Since that period, "purity" has been invested with a new and delightful significance. It has been to me, also, an endowment of power. Of this I have been as conscious, as of anything pertaining to my spiritual life. It has been "a place of broad rivers and streams," -- a "wealthy

place," -- an enlargement of soul, -- an expansion of all the moral powers -- clearer perception of God's wonderful revelation to mankind, and a deeper sympathy with Christ in His matchless mission of love to our lost and fallen race. A shrinking back from the touch of sin, and a real love of holiness has marked and characterized this experience. It seems more emphatically, the implantation in the heart of "the Spirit of Truth." Affording an instinctive appreciation of truth, wherever and however presented. And an ardent love for the truth, because it is truth.

Holiness brings the soul into light -- clear, beautiful, heavenly light, in which many dark shadows are chased away, and to the advancing one "it shineth more and more to the perfect day." It is not all transport, but it is peace, serene and heaven-born. It is not exemption from trial, sore, and sometimes perplexing, but it is power to overcome "through the blood of the Lamb." It is the "sufficient grace." I have not always retained a clear and satisfactory evidence of "entire sanctification," since the memorable period referred to, but in the main I have been marvelously sustained by the power of the indwelling Spirit. And still I am pressing forward, with a good hope, under the conscious smiles of my adorable Master.

Source: "Pioneer Experiences" by Phoebe Palmer

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THE END