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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

MRS. JONNIE JERNIGAN
(Wife of C. B. Jernigan)

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From childhood's days, I have always felt the call of God on me to preach his everlasting gospel and to work among the low and the fallen of earth; but, being born a woman [Obviously, the writer means "female."] and in a Methodist family, I was taught that it was masculine and unladylike for a woman to preach. So I tried to crush the call of God that was on me, and hide it from the world; but, as the days went by, that strange longing often became almost unbearable, for me to tell the lost world of a Christ that can save; but, as I was a girl, and timid, I kept all this hid away in my childish heart.

While in school, I met a girl who was a Catholic, and who became my playmate, who often told me of the Sisters of Charity who spent their lives in waiting on the sick and looking after the poor. This stirred me all over, and I decided at once to take the veil as soon as I got grown, if mama would let me, -- as this seemed to be my calling. Soon after this, the same girl put into my hands a book relating the stories of self-sacrifice and suffering of Catholic nuns and Sisters of Charity, in the awful scourges of cholera and yellow fever that had so lately swept through our fair land. As I read these stories of devotion, I said, "Surely, these are God's chosen people." I decided to give my heart to God and obey the call that had gotten such a hold on me. So I went and told mother about the book, but was promptly informed that Catholicism was a delusion and a snare to catch silly women, and to shun them as I would a viper.

This broke my girlish heart, and I went off to my playhouse to cry. I was discouraged; my heart was bleeding; life looked dark to me then. The Methodists, my father's people, had no place for a preacher who happened to be born a woman; and to become a Catholic would disgrace my family name, of which I was proud. So I went away to meditate and cry. I tried to crush this call of God, until my heart was steeped in pride. Although I was raised in a poor family, I was proud-hearted and tried to dress in the very latest style.

I became a milliner as soon as I was old enough to learn to blend colors, and worked in a fashionable millinery and dress-making establishment. In this position, I always took special pride in my work, and I always tried to please my customers. Often, as some well pleased customer would walk away with a well fitting dress, I would look at her and wish that I could polish her poor soul and make it shine as I had done her body.

This state of things kept me from giving my heart to God until I was grown. Shortly after I was converted, I read a romantic story of a woman missionary in some foreign field, who had done some deeds of daring for God. This awakened that same old struggle in my heart against the call of God to preach his gospel. As I read this story of the missionary, I said, "How strange it is that the Methodists (my people) will let a woman preach in China, but will not at all tolerate it in America!" Then I said, "I will preach to the lost and the low if I have to go to China to do it." I wondered why they would give such grand missionary rallies for a returned missionary, who is a woman preacher in a foreign field, and not allow her the pulpits at home.

When I gave my heart to God, the call became more keenly felt than before, and life seemed to me to be one long, bitter blank, and my heart was filled with a longing that nothing could satisfy, and life seemed a failure to me, and its struggles and trials set in that almost wrecked my life, until one glad day I met the idol of my heart, who became my husband. Strange to say, I found myself married to a man who, like Jonah, was running from the same call that I was under, with the delusion that he was soon to take a course of lectures in a medical college and be turned out a full-fledged M. D.

Like most unsanctified people, I at once began to look away down the road and see myself a doctor's wife. Then, I said, I'll get rich and drive a span of high-stepping bays to a carriage, and help husband at the sick-bed, and look after the poor, and that will settle this call to the ministry, and then I will be happy. But, alas, God swept one prospect after another away, and no money was ever accumulated with which husband could complete his education.

One afternoon in August, 1895, as I was sweeping the yard, husband came in with his face all aglow from his work, with a brand new experience that he called entire sanctification. His face shone with the love of God, till I knew that something out of the ordinary had happened to him. And among the first things that he said, was, "Wife, I promised God that I would preach and I am now ready to go at it."

I said, down in my heart: "There it is; all my prospect of being a fashionable doctor's wife is gone, and I will be troubled with that call to be a woman preacher again."

I turned away with a heavy heart, and for two weeks I fasted and prayed and struggled with that awful pride in my heart, until I was almost too weak to walk. Then, I yielded to God and said, "Here am I: send me," and in an instant the Holy Ghost came and sanctified me wholly.

Since then, I have wanted to tell the lost world of Jesus my Savior. I wanted to go to the low and the outcast, to those that no one else cared for, and tell them of a Savior that died for them. I wanted to tell the harlot of the Magdalene who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears of penitence, and in return he washed her and made her every whit whole, and commissioned her to

preach the first sermon of the resurrection. I wanted to go into the hovels of poverty and tell them of the Man of Sorrows, who had no place to lay his head, nor money to pay his tax, who was born in a stable and cradled in an ox trough, who through his poverty made many rich. I wanted to tell the brokenhearted of the Man of Sorrows, who was acquainted with grief, and of his promise to give them garments of praise for a spirit of heaviness. I wanted to tell the poor nameless children of earth, of one who made himself of no reputation and was the friend of publicans and sinners. O, glory to God! How my heart burns, as I write these lines, to go and carry this gospel of peace to the despised and neglected of earth!

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Source: "Redeemed Through The Blood" by Mrs. Jonnie Jernigan

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THE END