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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

WILLIAM JONES
(Methodist)

I was converted when only twelve years of age, and, after one year on probation, by no fault of my own I found myself outside of the Church. My sensitive soul was wounded and I gave up my hope in Christ, and after years of moral darkness, the contemplation of which is yet painful, at the age of nineteen years I was graciously reclaimed. But I spent only a brief period in conscious fellowship with God.

Realizing fully that if I became a Christian indeed I should have to preach the Gospel, and conscious of my inability to meet the demands of the sacred office, I was disobedient to the heavenly calling.

I put away the conviction of duty from my mind, and sought by severe application to study to dissipate all sense of religious obligation. I passed through an academic course of study, took up the science of medicine, and in the excitement of professional life sought a respite from the convictions of duty. But there came a time when the Spirit of God came with great power to my heart, the whole tide of my life was turned, my entire being was arrested and held in suspense by the presence of God, my past failures and future possibilities possessed me by day and by night. At this time I realized in some degree the danger of further disobedience; it appeared to me that I must submit to God or utterly perish; and after a severe struggle that lasted many days I yielded, and at a late hour in the night of August 11, 1857, alone in my office, I bowed in prayer to God, gave myself to Him, and accepted Jesus as my personal Saviour.

There came into my soul a sense of peace, a calm, quiet assurance of the divine favor; but it was not like my former experience; there was no ebullition of joy. There was a cold, sullen sense of submission from necessity, a spirit of subjugation, and the Father seemed far off, as if I were received on probation, and it was not until the following November that I received by the Spirit the knowledge of complete reconciliation through Jesus Christ. Floods of light and joy came into my soul. I was possessed of a new manhood; "old things" had passed entirely away. I united with the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the path of ministerial duty was at once made plain; it

flashed with celestial brightness and glowed with a radiance almost inconceivable, and as soon as my probation expired I began to preach, but almost immediately renewed the controversy in my own mind, and for five years kept up my quarrel with God.

"Clouds and darkness were round about me," weak and undecided; I was vacillating and "unstable as water." But there came a crisis, and I united with the Conference, and after two successful pastorates of two years each, in which many were converted, in the fifth year of my ministry I became greatly interested in the subject of holiness. I sought earnestly for a clean heart. The fiery baptism came upon me and I was "made every whit whole."

For a little more than one year I enjoyed this precious experience, quietly and alone, but without interruption. No one preached on the subject that I knew of; no one testified to it in my hearing, and I cautiously kept still and remained quiescent until the brightness of it passed away, and I found myself without the witness of purity and not always clear in my experience of sonship.

About this time the first National Campmeeting at Urbana, Ohio, occurred, and the whole country was aroused on the subject of holiness. But both the doctrine and experience were misrepresented by its friends and caricatured by its foes.

The old heresy of the imputed holiness and the impeccability of the sanctified were vigorously advocated by a large class of adherents.

These and other forms of error were prevalent in my congregation, and I began a careful examination of the doctrinal and philosophical aspects of the subject. That I might have opportunity to hear their experiences and know their teachings I attended the special holiness meetings. I was also present at the second National Campmeeting at Urbana, and listened carefully to the sermons and teachings of the members of that association. I heard the thrilling testimonies of the newly sanctified and the enrapturing experiences of those who had been years in the way, and found the teachings of the association and the experience of the people to be in accord with my own former experiences and the standards of the Church. I there committed myself publicly to the cause of holiness, and declared my faith in the all-cleansing blood.

After my return home I began to study the different phases of the experience as manifested in the various temperaments and idiosyncrasies of those who enjoyed the blessing. I resolved not only to be correct theologically, but I was determined to be experimentally and practically so. I gave myself wholly to God; I utterly abandoned every thing that was doubtful; I put entirely away the very appearance of evil, and resolved to know and to please God.

I knew that I could not reason myself into a clean heart; but I also knew that my heavenly Father required me "To sanctify the Lord God in my heart, and be ready to give an answer to every man that asked, a reason for the hope that is in me, in meekness and in fear." I soon found that by a careful adjustment of myself to Christ, "the Vine," and a continuous exercise of my will to keep this relation unembarrassed, I grew in grace daily. My strength was enlarged, the witness of the Spirit to my cleansing became very distinct, and my soul was exceedingly sensitive to the approach of evil in any form. About ten months of this continuous life of obedience brought me out into a large place. And in April, 1874, while assisting Rev. I. N. Smith, of the Central Ohio Conference, in a

holiness meeting, I received a special manifestation of the Spirit that far exceeded all my former experiences. My whole being was permeated with the divine presence. My soul was sublimated, and Christ in His divine personality was revealed in wondrous power by the Holy Ghost. He appeared visibly before my consciousness, and for months He was "The man from glory standing by my right side."

Thirteen years have passed away since then, years of intense labor and glorious victory; years of severe trial and gracious deliverance. I have frequently encountered the same spirit that consigned John Huss to the flames; have gone over on my knees where "There was a sharp rock on that side and a sharp rock on this side"; but have been enabled to say with the apostle, "Now thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place."

There have been periods of fluctuation; there have been two periods of short duration of hesitancy, in which I swerved, in which I lost ground to some extent. I did not incur guilt, did not contract any moral pollution, but was conscious that I had in some degree lost my aggressive power.

The causes that led to these weaknesses may be all embraced in the term carelessness. My will lost something of its tenacity of purpose; my faith relinquished its positive grasp on Jesus, and selfhood, in one form or another, began to assume dominion. But these periods were of short duration. For nearly fifteen years I have been a loyal citizen of the "Land of Beulah." During these years my soul has grown strong in fellowship with Jesus. I am still in the land, far out toward the interior. I ascend the mountain heights of this wonderful land. I wander through its valleys; I breathe its perfumed and exhilarating atmosphere; I feed upon its grains and fruits; I inhale the fragrance that floats down from its "Mountain of Myrrh." And some day from one of its purple-clouded hills I shall step through the misty veil into the upper temple.

WILLIAM JONES, KANSAS CITY, MO., SEPT. 6, 1887.

Source: "Forty Witnesses" by S. Olin Garrison

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