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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

J. H. McCARTY
(Methodist)

For more than five years I have been studying the question of entire sanctification. I have read upon the subject much. I have conversed freely with many who profess it. I have thought of it by day and by night; and I have desired to be wholly sanctified to God, -- soul, body, and spirit. At times I have been skeptical with regard to it; then, when I have taken the New Testament and examined into it, my skepticism has given way at once. Jesus taught with no ambiguous words perfection, holiness.

I have looked around me in the church to see if there were any whose "fruits" of that New Testament work were visible; for I did not forget that our dear Saviour said, "by their fruits ye shall know them." I have seen many whose professions would not admit of a doubt. I have also seen who, I thought, did not present the requisite "fruits." I remember, too, that these latter were not the standard by which to judge of the doctrine of Christian perfection. I must set my watch by the clock that I know keeps the true time, and not by those I know are always out of time.

The writings of Madame Guyon and Fenelon, and of Dr. Upham, and of Mrs. Palmer and others, presented a convincing argument, not only in a logical point of view, but what I hold to be better than logic, or which I might possibly style the higher logic; namely, Christian experience. All this rich experience cannot be denied; it challenges the belief at all; it is absolutely incontrovertible.

On the 1st of January, 1865, I solemnly resolved to renew my covenant with God. I said in my heart, "If there is anything I do not possess, I will have it by the grace of God." My language was continually, --

"Take my poor heart, and let it be
Forever closed to all but thee;
Seal thou my breast, and let me wear
That pledge of love forever there."

On watch-night I tried to preach from Psalms cxvi. 12: "What shall I render unto the Lord? etc. God gave me considerable liberty, and the meeting was a sweet one to me. It was blessed to many others. But all the time something said to me, "Seek for more power." A voice would seem to say within me, "Is not spirituality the law of the church, as much as gravitation is of the material universe?" There was a divine impulse in my heart to seek something higher, deeper, purer.

I would reason with myself thus: I have been converted, have had the witness in my heart of acceptance with God. I am firm in my belief of and adherence to the doctrines of Christ, my Saviour. Is that not all I have any right to claim? Is this not infinitely more than I deserve? How can I presume to ask of God for anything more? I felt a sense of extreme unworthiness. Then there came to mind this and kindred passage: Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not him freely give us all things?" "With him!" Yes, through Christ all things shall be mine. I will, I do, claim them in his name. Then, again, I often thought of that passage in John: "The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (iii. 8.) And here I stood on the edge of the pool, the angel troubled the waters, and I not stepping in with boldness. I believed, yet did not believe; I saw, but not with the clearness I desired; I loved God, and felt that I wanted to love him more. And from day to day I said to myself, "I will know all the fullness. I will dwell in the bosom of Love." I will not rest until I can drink in its power."

"I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know,
I may forever die."

I will "go on" from the "first principles of the doctrines of Christ" -- justification, baptism -- "unto perfection;" if I do not, I may, even lose what I have. "To him that hath not shall taken away even that which he hath."

For some time I felt a strange desire to go to New York. I had some business there, but none that could not have been transacted by letter. I frequently said to my wife that I had an impression on my mind that I ought to go to New York. Just then an item of business came up, in connection with the church, that required me to go there. I intended, when I went, to visit the Tuesday afternoon meeting, on the subject of holiness, thinking I might there receive the light I so much desired. I was one day too late for the meeting. After transacting my business, however, I called on Friday afternoon upon Dr. and Mrs. Palmer. In the course of my visit I told them my feelings, my desires. We seemed to become one; that expresses it. I felt God was in the room.

Dr. Palmer said, "Why not receive the blessing now?"

"Yes," I said, "if there is anything for me I want it. I desire it above all things."

There was much conversation upon the subject.

Mrs. Palmer said, "Do you not believe it to be God's will even your sanctification?"

I said, "Yes, I do; to doubt it would be wicked."

"Then why not have the faith in the promise now, 'the altar sanctifies the gift'?"

"Yes," I said, "I know it, and I have laid all on the altar, and will be the Lord's now and forever."

"Now, said Mrs. Palmer, "that you have laid all on the altar, why not say, 'I am the Lord's now and forever, -- wholly his, -- dead to the world, and alive to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?'"

I said it; I was moved by a divine impulse that seemed almost irresistible: "I am the Lord's, soul, body, mind, now and forever."

The feeling of my heart at that moment was like the flow of a might river. It was not rapturous, not exulting in its nature; it was profound. I felt lifted above the earth. The world seemed to recede from me, as when one looks through a telescope reversed, while heaven seemed to come nearer than ever before. My dear reader, I rested that moment in the bosom of love. We prayed together; we sung a hymn of praise to God. I felt, as I never felt before, I am the Lord's. And after my most delightful interview with these servants of God, I started for Brooklyn, to spend the Sabbath with the dear disciples of Fleet Street Church, on exchange with Brother Hatfield. As I walked through Bowery, I felt stronger in the Lord than I ever felt before. And oh, how often I said, "I am the Lord's now and forever His!" Day and night I say it and feel it.

I cannot close this paper without saying a word to my brethren in the ministry. Dear brethren, God has called us to save men from sin and death. We need all the gifts of the Spirit to fully qualify us for our work. Are we not guilty if we go into the battle without being fully armed? Remember, brethren, that the Holy Spirit is the only source of true ministerial power. Let us have all we can get of this. Let us preach Jesus constantly, relying on him for support and comfort. May God give us a Pentecost all over the land! Let us not spend our time in controversy about mere terms, -- words. Let us remember the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth, where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Seek the gift of the power, and let the Spirit write its own explanation on the heart, and we shall say with the blind man in the Scriptures (John ix. 25.), "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, I now see." To God be all the glory through Jesus Christ, his Son. Amen!

Source: "Pioneer Experiences" by Phoebe Palmer

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