

All Rights Reserved By HDM For This Digital Publication  
Copyright 2000 Holiness Data Ministry

Duplication of this CD by any means is forbidden, and  
copies of individual files must be made in accordance with  
the restrictions stated in the B4UCopy.txt file on this CD.

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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

**ALEXANDER MCLEAN**  
**(Methodist)**

As a member of the Methodist Church, yet with very little religion, I found myself, early in February, 1849, entering the "Golden Gate" of San Francisco harbor, intent on demonstrating my gold-finding qualities. A few hours' experience on shore satisfied me that I should have a better man, or else, with many others, give up, to drift resolved to seek, in the grace of God, security from the moral ruin into which multitudes were swept. During the first year of my residence there, Rev. William Taylor, then from the Baltimore Conference arrived; and he has especially endeared himself to me by pressing home to my conscience, in a kind manner, the subject of perfect love.

After a while, by the voice of the Church and my own sense of duty, I gave up fair worldly prospects, and was one of two who entered the ministry of the M. E. Church at the first session of the California Conference. While I was traveling my second circuit, -- which was principally in the Sierra-Nevada Mountains, and extended about two hundred and fifty miles, -- amid profanity, gambling, Sabbath-breaking, robbery, and murder, I believe I enjoyed this great blessing. Constant labor and exposure brought on sickness, which compelled me at last to give up my appointment. I had then been for four years in California: so I determined to seek both health and a better qualification for the ministry in the Eastern States. Both were attained in due time.

Then for seven months I took charge of an invalid minister, and God crowned the endeavor with the conversion of over a hundred precious souls. Yet I hesitated to commit my all to Him and the ministry. I loved to preach the gospel, but feared, when I might be disqualified through age or sickness for further ministerial service, I should find myself very dependent or impoverished. How I needed holiness then, to have saved two or three years, which were spent in occasional preaching, rather than consecutive effort and entire devotion to the Lord's work.

At last the "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel!" sounded so threateningly, that, by the grace of God, I was enabled to accept the attendant risks, and gave myself exclusively to the work of the ministry. When once fully engaged thus, the great need of holiness, as a power in my life and preaching frequently claimed my deepest regard. Indeed, I groaned after it so fervently, that more than once my faith claimed it; but, for some reason known or unknown at the time, I would not retain it more than a few weeks together.

The fluctuation in the way of holiness, which I had never discovered in myself in regard to any thing else, humbled me deeply. By inheritance from family and race, and the chidings of conscience I believed myself pertinacious rather than vacillating. Why, then, could I not endure as seeing Him who is invisible, and follow him very closely? But I could not. I seemed to fall as frequently as a child just learning to walk. The consciousness of stability in justification only intensified the sorrow of instability in sanctification. Notwithstanding these discouragements, my convictions of the truthfulness and desirability of the blessing continued. I followed that in its absence there remained a recollection of the love and zeal that formerly inflamed me: of course I had strong desires to repossess it, and these influences tended to new consecrations of myself to God.

"Ye fearful souls, fresh courage take;"

for there is a residuum of good to those who inadvertently lose, but do not disown, the great salvation. A prince, though far away from courtly circles, would evince his training. Is it possible to have so much light, and such intimate converse with Jesus, without bearing princely ways and views with us even into the "wilderness state?" Oh! it is best not to lose it; but who refuses any other good thing whatever from a mere dread of losing it? And how well we know that God is able to keep that which we commit to His hand!

On the second day of July 1865, being Sunday, I arose early in the morning, and briefly reviewed my dozen years of fluctuation in the midst of the deepest contrition of soul. The Holy Spirit showed me then, as never before, that it was not optional with me to live in the strength of holiness, but that I must possess and keep it, or lose my soul. That was an alarming view, and one which I was satisfied the Holy Spirit presented. I said to myself, "This vacillation shall end."

"When?" was my mental inquiry.

"Now."

"Forever?"

"Forever!"

"How?"

"By immediately and without reserve giving all to God."

I prostrated myself, and said, "Lord, thus lowly shall I be when I die; and, as then I shall be divested of every thing earthly, so now do I divest myself of every thing thou wouldst not have me hold, including any thing shown me hereafter; and now, without waiting one moment, or asking any sign of feeling, I steadfastly believe thou dost receive me." A little thrill of peace came; no more. I said, "It's done! My wavering is o'er, and my goings are established in the Lord."

I went forth to do for the God just as though I had the most indubitable witness of full acceptance. In the absence of any special emotion, I had to walk for several days insisting that the work was done. My lips or heart were almost constantly repeating, "I am thine: thou dost receive me."

The light gradually increased; my peace became like a river; the word of God had altogether new interest; my soul was made very happy during preaching, which was a new experience; I could laugh at my previous fear of want in old age; and oh, what an intensified love for all God's children! Revelation after revelation of light and joy, peace and power, were made to me; and I beheld in sanctification a way of wondrous growth.

Now the mistakes of the past are very apparent. I used to struggle for joy as the requisite evidence of my acceptance; the joy gone, I sank into darkness and despondency. How cold were the waves of unbelief rolled over me as I yielded up "the jewel of my trust!" I was off and on, off and on, from year to year. But feeling is no longer a criterion. So, before, if I felt the least departure from God, I gave up all as gone, and fell back into justification. Then came defeats and flights, and the banner of the Lord would be sullied with earthy contact for weeks and months. Now, if I suffer a check on my onward march, it is but for a moment; and, looking immediately to the Captain of my salvation, what would otherwise prove a defeat and rout, with long-continued shame, he turns into a signal victory. then my soul is filled with joy at the Lord's triumph over my strong foe. I see now that a defective experience comes from a defective faith, indefiniteness is the parent of defectiveness.

Now I labor in a different way, and with more success. In business, reading, meditating, conversation, testimony, prayer, and preaching, I saturate my mind with the thought of holiness; and then, if something demands my attention calculated to absorb my whole thought, my mind is so imbued with grace, I do not suffer from abstraction, but I work through these things toward the glory of God. Is not this the way we are to keep ourselves in the love of God? In public labors, I look for a definite blessing; and God has signally owned it.

Now my emotions are different and better. I do not find it necessary to pray for joy. For weeks together, each day has seemed like a bright Sabbath day in June, when the birds are singing, and the mild, balmy air was fragrant with flowers, and the churchgoing bell calls you to duties that are as pleasant as pastime sports. the sweet and quiet state of my mind is so abiding, it seems the millennium morn has dawned on me. I do not know how long it may be before it comes to all; but, as Simeon rejoiced for the Messiah in his arms, so do I for the millennium in my heart! Praise the Lord, O my soul! Christ enables me to do all things to his glory; for, if I conferred with flesh and blood, this my testimony would be so explicit of my years of moral desolation: but he has taught me to "count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." It is my sincere prayer that this experience may aid some desponding child of Jesus to so consecrate all, and believe for all, that henceforth he may say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Source: "Pioneer Experiences" by Phoebe Palmer

\* \* \* \* \*

THE END