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

Vol. II -- Unnamed Accounts

ACCOUNT #001

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There was a man of our acquaintance who had been for thirteen years a professor of religion, and during much of that time an official member of the church. Like most of his brethren, he had been attentive to the means of grace in the closet and in the sanctuary. Yet his devotions had sometimes been formal, not exerting a vital influence on his life. At four different times he had been roused from his lukewarmness, and under the warnings of the Spirit, and new impulses of grace, he had regained the comforts of religion.

Once in night visions he stood on a snow-drift near to a village of thirty or forty old tenements. The street was on his right hand, some fifty rods distant; and about as far from him in the opposite direction he saw in his dream a lion of the largest size, and of a most ferocious aspect, making toward him. He made for the nearest house, thinking that possibly he might run half the distance that his pursuing foe must accomplish in order to overtake him before he reached it.

As he entered the house, and closed the door, his savage pursuer reached it. Scarcely had he time to congratulate himself on his escape, when he perceived that the door was broken, and its panels loose, and that a slight pressure upon it from without would expose him, unprotected, to the fury of the lion. He saw, too, that the house was uninhabited, and open at various points; so that, after all his efforts, he was not protected, and would probably soon be torn in pieces. In the agitation which ensued he awoke, with these words sounding, it seemed, in his ears, and through his soul, "Who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

None can conjecture the effect of this dream. The words of Scripture seemed for days to be ringing all through him; and the supposed escape from the lion, with a vivid recollection of the agony experienced in the exposed condition here described, made an impression so deep and abiding, that it proved, for a time, a salutary warning. It was probably the means of restraining him from a farther relapse, or perhaps an entire falling away; for, doubtless, without supernatural checks and aids, Christ's disciples would all forsake him.

At another time, when his faith had declined, and, of course; all the graces of the Spirit languished, he awoke from undreaming slumber, with these words impressed upon him in a most solemn yet consoling manner, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his root as Lebanon;" and blessed results again followed, for a season, this merciful visitation.

On another occasion, when his heart had begun to turn aside like a deceitful bow, he dreamed that his Savior came and spoke with him face to face, warning him of his unfaithfulness, and reminding him of all that had been done for him -- of the agony it had cost the blessed Redeemer to bring him from darkness to light through the cross, and of the ingratitude and the peril of forsaking Jesus and going back to sin. Under the influence of this dream, or rather of the waking impression which followed it, he was again recalled to Christian fidelity and watchfulness.

Again, in a relapsed state of his affections, he dreamed that he was worshipping in a Baptist church, and that, the Eucharist being administered, he was denied the privilege of communion. But he seemed to be in the altar, on his knees, in a posture to receive the elements, and that there the love of God was diffused through his soul, wonderfully, as at his conversion. He thought that he began to proclaim the Savior's love, and walked on his knees to the door as he did so. He awoke, and was so affected to find it was a dream, and not a sweet and saving reality, that he wept much.

Meanwhile, it was the case that this disciple, so variable in his states of mind, and so visited in his slumbers, had generally no faith in dreams. He seldom recollected the imaginations of his sleeping hours, and scarcely ever spoke of them; yet, at the times above mentioned, his dreams were somehow connected with deep and solemn religious impressions; which served, in a measure, to check his backslidings, and restore his soul.

In 184_ this unfaithful follower of the Lamb became deeply affected at the recollection of his frequent relapses. It was no dream that then drew his attention to the sad condition of a backslider. Realities, which crowded upon him in fearful array, and burdened his soul in a manner indescribable, impelled him to seek the Savior's face, and re-assure himself of an interest in the atoning blood. As his heart-wanderings at this time had been more than usually aggravated; so his return was with deeper penitence -- with much self-accusation and self-abasement.

It commenced in the closet. Its earliest stage was a clear discovery -- aided by circumstances extremely reproofing of his lukewarm, fallen state. He was brought to feel that, though born again, he had lost much of his confidence to claim freedom from present condemnation, and to enter into communion with God. A sense of the captivity which oppressed him became very deep and affecting. In this state he betook himself more diligently to prayer. At first, it was a mere duty, almost joyless, and even burdensome -- discharged not for present comfort, but in regard to resulting advantages. He resolved, however, to practice it night and day, as the means of return to his abused Savior. He anticipated that, for a long time, devotion would be a mere travail of soul; that it would be a severely protracted penance, to which might succeed the recovery of peace. For a few days it was as he expected; but instead of months of agony, he soon felt the softening influence of the Spirit. His sore conviction of long and aggravated

heart-wanderings soon turned into "godly sorrow," which all who have experienced know to be grateful to the soul -- a pleasing rather than a painful state of mind.

Within three weeks from the commencement of these efforts, he felt that his peace was restored; and so powerful was the work of God in his heart, that his tongue was almost constantly employed in prayer or praise. Now it was that he saw more clearly than he ever had how earnestly and perseveringly he must seek wisdom and strength from God, if he would be saved from backsliding, and escape an endless hell. He began to inquire yet further what safety there could be in one so prone to wander, while he carried about with him so many unsubdued tempers. He saw that in his heart were the roots of many evils, which, though they could not grow while under the reign of grace, yet were ever ready to spring up under the least declinings of faith and love. He felt that there was no safety in this state, and that he could never hope, without presumption, to persevere in the ways of the Lord, without the entire destruction of these roots of evil. Moved by this single motive, therefore, namely, his own safety, he began to cry unto the Lord to deliver him from the remains of the carnal mind.

The reader may say, "this motive was very selfish." Doubtless it was. But can an unsanctified heart act from motives entirely pure? To say yes, would be a contradiction in terms. An unsanctified heart is a defiled fountain. Its motives are streams from that fountain; and how then can they be without defilement? Can a corrupt fountain send forth pure waters?

Day after day he besought the Lord to purify him from all sin. It might be said of him that he lived upon his knees; for, indeed, he became so used to this posture, and so intent on the blessing which he sought, that he grudged the time devoted to his sleep and meals. Meanwhile, he was more and more blessed. He felt that he grew in grace from day to day. His was emphatically a wrestling spirit. Bowed before the Lord, he had strength given him from above to take hold on God with an unyielding grasp. What fervors were then kindled in his bosom! What joys immortal overflowed his soul! He dwelt in the land of Beulah, and discerned the glories of his distant home. But with these joys he was not satisfied, and in them he determined not to rest. He persevered in almost unremitted cries for holiness.

And now he had come to love holiness; so that he desired it not only for safety, but for its own sake. It appeared to him infinitely beautiful and desirable. He thirsted for it as the hunted roe "pants for the water brooks." He could meditate, converse, read and pray of little else. Everything in the universe besides had become to him, as it were, a blank. All that was lovely in earth or in heaven seemed so merely on account of holiness. God was lovely because he was intensely holy. And his creatures were lovely or unlovely in proportion as they did or did not partake of this attribute.

Besides praying night and day for purity of heart, he read and studied on this, to the exclusion of almost every other theme. The Bible was his textbook. He examined, also, Wesley, Fletcher, Watson, Benson, and other Wesleyan authors, with Merritt's Manual, Mahan, and the Guide to Christian Perfection. One or another of those works was almost his constant companion. He also resorted to the society of the sanctified, questioned them, joined with them in prayer, and by every possible means sought knowledge and understanding. Thus his struggles daily increased. And finally he began to feel that he "had a baptism to be baptized with" -- that he must be pure or

die -- that he could not endure life unless he might fulfill that language of the apostle, "as He is so are we in this world." O, how his heart and his flesh then cried out for the living God -- that the image of the heavenly might be restored to him -- fully restored! He was straitened beyond measure, until this, even this should be accomplished in him.

Yet, with such vehement desires burning in his heart, and glowing, as it were, through all his being, he was not unhappy. In the strength of these desires, and in putting forth these struggles, he rejoiced. In them he had hope. He saw that they were not from nature; and if from the Spirit, which he could not doubt, this great and precious promise was suited to his case -- "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." And in this hungering there was even fruition as well as hope. The bread and the water of life were so given him as not instantly to fill his large desires, but (with much present comfort in partaking them) so as to sharpen his appetite for their exceeding sweetness.

It must not be inferred that his state of mind was uniform -- that no seasons of relapse or coldness broke in upon this life of quickening ardors and vigorous devotion. Far from it. In the midst of these journeyings he was often much discouraged. Like the ship beating into port, whose pilot misses his expectation to enter the harbor on the present tack, so was this spiritual mariner more than once thrown back, to be tempest-tossed and almost wrecked ere he entered into rest.

The work of grace in the human soul is progressive. Yet it has several distinct stages. Conviction of sin is one state, regeneration is another, and entire consecration a third. Each of these is, for the most part, feeble in its beginning, and strengthens by slow degrees.

Conviction of sin may now and then be sudden and overpowering, as it was in Paul and Gardner. But in such cases the work is extraordinary. The history of the Church affords comparatively few such scenes as that of Pentecost. Revivals of religion are generally under forms more gentle, in which the Spirit is distilled "like the dew," rather than sent forth like a "mighty rushing wind." In a large majority of instances, the election of the soul to life has been through a "strait gate and a narrow way" -- a way which cost the earnest struggles of several days or weeks of agony.

And what is true of conviction holds also in respect to regeneration. This is a distinct form of grace, radically differing from conviction of sin, as it involves spiritual life, and not merely a struggle after life. But this life is first feeble. Yet by laying aside "all malice and guile," and "as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word," it becomes a growing life, in which all the graces of the Spirit advance toward maturity.

Somewhere in this progress the third state obtains, which, though it is gradually approached, is instantaneously bestowed. This is known to some as the "assurance of hope," and to others as "perfect love," or "entire sanctification." The last two are the Scriptural designations of the state. The former, "perfect love," is used by the "beloved disciple," in his first general epistle -- "perfect love casteth out fear." "Entire sanctification" is a phrase authorized by this language of Paul, in Thessalonians, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;" that is, "entirely." That this perfect love, or entire sanctification, is specifically a new state, and not the mere improvement of a former state or of regeneration, is plainly inferred from the Bible. Regeneration is like

breaking up the fallow ground, and sowing it with wheat, in the growth of which there spring up tares. It is a mixed moral state. Sanctification is like weeding the soil, or gathering the tares and burning them, so that nothing remains to grow there but the good seed. Connected with this illustration, the growth of the soul in the graces of regeneration and of sanctification will be easily understood. In regeneration a spiritual growth is like the slow progress of the wheat, choked and made sickly by the intermingling weeds. The wheat represents the graces of religion, and the weeds our remaining corruptions. These, while they remain, are always in the way of the former. Entire sanctification removes them -- roots them out of the heart, and leaves it a pure moral soil. Then the graces of the Spirit have an uninterrupted growth, except as the violence of Satan's temptations, like a tempest on a desolated field, may interpose.

Growth in sanctification maybe illustrated thus. The weeds being uprooted from the field, there still remain certain methods of improvement. One is by enriching the soil. This is the privilege of the moral husbandman. When the Holy Ghost has cleansed the heart, or crucified its unholy affections we may enrich the soil by the acquisition of knowledge. The heart is cleansed by faith in the blood of Christ; but we are exhorted to add to our faith virtue, or strength, and knowledge. Another method of growth is to mature the spiritual crop. The field may be cleared of weeds while the tender blade is springing up, and months will yet be necessary to grow the grain. So the heart may be cleansed from sin, while our graces are immature, and the cleansing is a preparation for their unembarrassed and rapid growth. These hints may not interest some of our readers; but in illustration of a doctrine involved in this narrative, they will be read by those whose attention we are chiefly anxious to secure.

In 18___, the town of A___ was favored with a stationed minister, who was deeply experienced in sanctifying grace, having for six years walked in its light. In March of that year, he whose history we are relating visited that place, to enjoy the privilege of a religious meeting. He reached the town on Saturday, and in the evening heard a sermon on "perfect love," which was followed by inviting believers to approach the altar and pray for that blessing. He with many others bowed before the Lord for more than an hour. To him it seemed almost a fruitless waiting, though, as he afterward learned, it was a blessed season to several souls. Through the Sabbath which followed, he had power with God, and much of the time was in a deep struggle for holiness of heart.

On Monday morning he rose early, and wrapping his cloak about him, continued, until breakfast time, to plead for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Hastily partaking of a slight repast, he returned to his chamber and fell upon his knees. While entreating God for a clean heart, his mind was led to contemplate "the image of Christ" as the single object of desire. To be Christ-like -- to possess "all the mind that was in" the blessed Savior, seemed to embrace all good; and this became the burden of his earnest prayer.

"And why do you not take his image?" was suggested to him; "for he has taken yours. Look at the crucified Lamb. From his bleeding feet, and hands, and heart -- from his pale features, and from every convulsed member, as from a thousand mirrors, do you not catch the reflection of your own vile image destroyed by the fall? Why does the blessed Jesus there hang and bleed, 'his visage so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men?' Is it for himself? No -- O no! He is innocent -- immaculate. It is for me. There, on the cross, he bears my sin, and shame, and

weakness, and misery, and death. And why does he bear them? To give me, in their stead, his purity, and honor, and strength, and bliss, and life. Why then not take his image? Give him your sin, and take his purity. Give him your shame, and take his honor. Give him your helplessness, and take his strength. Give him your misery, and take his bliss. Give him your death, and take his life everlasting. Nay, yours he already has. There they are, bruising him and putting him to grief! Nothing remains but that you take his in exchange. Make haste! Now -- just now, he freely offers you all, and urges all upon your instant acceptance."

All at once he felt as though a hand, not feeble but omnipotent -- not of wrath but of love, were laid on his brow. He felt it not only outwardly but inwardly. It seemed to press upon his whole being, and to diffuse all through and through it a holy sin-consuming energy. As it passed downward, his heart as well as his head was conscious of the presence of this soul-cleansing energy, under the influence of which he fell to the floor, and in the joyful surprise of the moment cried out in a loud voice. Still that hand of power wrought without and within, and wherever it moved it seemed to leave the glorious impress of the Savior's image. For a few minutes the deep of God's love swallowed him up -- all its waves and billows rolled over him.

But Satan was there. Quick and subtle in his stratagem -- "Shame," said he, "that you should make this ado, to the disgrace of religion, and to the mortification of those whose hospitalities you share." He saw that it was an evil thought, and strove against it; but after a sore conflict it prevailed. He became silent, his feelings subsided, and he arose and proceeded to the meeting-house, where the pious were gathered for the worship of God. His heart still burned within him, and his Savior whispered words of holy comfort to his soul.

Source: "The Blessing of Perfect Love"
by D. S. King

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THE END