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

Vol. II -- Unnamed Accounts

ACCOUNT #003

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The first distinct impressions of the nature of entire sanctification, and the first clear convictions of the necessity of attaining to this excellent grace, which I remember, were received at the early age of fourteen, while passing through a course of study preparatory to college. It was then, that, after reading the memoirs of a holy woman, encouraged by her example, I went in secret to the heavenly altar, and in a place as humble as the cradle of my Redeemer, sought to bring my soul to the point of entire consecration. Of the success of that effort, at this distance of time, it is neither easy nor needful to judge; but the more painful impression is deep in my memory, of quickly breaking my vows of consecration, and taking back part of the sacrifice I had laid upon the altar. The fascinations of an alluring world, the press of studies quite foreign in their nature to holy living, but, above all, a temperament buoyant and vivacious to a fault, without those guards of personal piety found alone in an acquaintance with the world and a knowledge of one's self, soon sunk me, in religious life, to a point, if possible, below my ordinary level.

It was not till the fall of 1842 that these impressions and convictions were revived. While the first term of my senior year in the Wesleyan University was drawing to a close, it pleased God to recall my attention, from a life hitherto comparatively irreligious, to the subject of personal holiness. While the rain drops of the Spirit, falling on the surrounding country, were heralding the advent of a revival year, and, as some supposed, the advent of the world's Redeemer, I was led to compare my spiritual stature with the rising standard of personal piety around me, and, above all, with the elevated standard of Scripture -- "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." To facilitate the work of self-examination and spiritual progress, I availed myself of the aids found in Christian interview and communion. Long will it be before those sacred interviews perish from my memory. The hours spent with a brother student, or with a select band of choice spirits, after the hours demanded by worldly science were yielded, consecrated in the stillness of the night to the noblest of all sciences, the science of holy living, can never be forgotten. Though the definite object of our search was not then attained, nor the one desire answered, yet obstacles were surmounted, objections were removed, and the light of Scripture and of our fathers was thrown

forward on the path which was to conduct us to the interior of the spiritual kingdom, far through its portals of peace and forgiveness, to the palace of perfect love.

About this period of my progress, it was my privilege to hear Dr. Olin preach. He stood where he had not stood before for years, and where he had forborne all hope of standing again. He came like one from the spirit world, where the soul had measured its responsibilities, and, in eloquence, overpowering the Christian bearer, seemed for a while to annihilate all personal claim to one's own self, one's influence and powers, exhibited the price which had bought up Christian hearts, and urged home the claims of universal love on the heart of the world. Everything then appeared mean in my eye but consecration, and every degree of that seemed low and unworthy, which was not entire. The second service of the day was conducted by another. A discourse, excellent in its kind, held the attention of the congregation, but failed to interest one, for it was foreign to the subject which had been riveted in his heart entire consecration. Under such influence my soul went upward. The communication between the suppliant and the throne was unobstructed, the distance between heaven and earth annihilated, and communication contracted to communion. The presence of divinity was then realized, not like a flood of bursting sunlight, not like an ocean of rolling glory, but like the circumambient air, surrounding, supporting, penetrating, and pervading all. It was like heaven, where the pure spirit takes its place among ranks of adoring seraphs before the throne, to whom God is "all in all." Then it was that all conviction and impression revived, and, with its full weight, inclined the ear of the understanding to one voice, inviting -- "Come up higher." That was the moment, -- the happy moment, reader, when all was lost in God? Ah, no! but the moment when the hand of faith fell palsied through unbelief, fearing to take the blessing; the moment, when, coward-like, the unbelieving heart fled from the pervading presence, and was lost in the mist and cloudiness of its fears. The responsibility assumed in professing, and the difficulties imagined in retaining this blessing, made me for a moment distrust that supporting grace which accompanied every blessing, and the joy of my heart fled, and surrendered the heart it had inhabited to fear and trembling. In all this there was nothing unusual; such seasons of intimate communion Christians often enjoy; but in the invitation and its impression, when submitted to the verdict of judgment and cool reflection, I found enough to cover me with shame, and to convince me that I had lost, by not accepting, the long sought blessing; that, after contending for months, I had trembled in the moment of victory, and refused the proffered grace.

The year rolled on, the term closed, and sacrificing the opportunity which a long vacation presented for chosen studies, I consecrated the winter weeks to revival work, and offered the little aid I could supply to meet the great demand of that revival year. About four miles from our institution, in a little parish westerly of the city, stands an unpretending brick building, which, from its appearance and location, no stranger would mistake for anything else than a village church. Radiating from this little church, as a center, lie a scattered population of Christians, whose location, by its proximity to the town, and by its retired seclusion of itself, combines all the advantages of a city and a country life. Since the foundation of the Wesleyan University, this has been a field, to some extent, under its cultivation; and the quiet people of the parish have been favored with every degree of pulpit talent, from the seraph powers of the sainted Fisk, to the humble attempts of the writer. Here many clerical students have first lifted their herald voices, and subsequently cultivated those talents which have since ornamented the church, and blessed the world. The good people of M_____ will ever live in the memory of those that have shared their hospitality, and around their names will cluster their earliest pulpit associations. Sacred are the

associations which cluster around one at the present moment, and seem to follow the pen that traces these lines. Happy the remembrance of the winter of 1842.

When our vacation was over, and we were remanded to our studies, rest from the stirring scenes of revival gave room for reflection. Then it was, while taking a retrospect of the winter's labors, that I discovered a principle, to me hitherto unknown. It was this, that one might labor for the salvation of others to the neglect of his own soul. Let my brethren in the ministry, if they can endorse this sentiment from their own experience, engrave it on their hearts, and heed it in every revival. I was somewhat startled by the discovery, that during the winter I had made no advancement toward holiness, and had, indeed, quite waived, except in the formulas of public prayer, the subject of entire consecration. As a laboring husbandman, neglecting the apostolic injunction to be the first partaker of the fruits, I found my garner almost emptied; for, while pouring forth to others, I had neglected to water and replenish myself. As the results of this discovery, my convictions revived with double force.

One evening in the spring, meeting with a class of Christians about one mile from our institution, while indulging in the usual exhortation to believers, "Go on to perfection," I thought of the unregenerate pastor, who cries, "Ye must be born again," and the relation which he sustained to sinners seemed not very unlike the relation which I sustained to Christians: his inconsistency seemed analogous to mine. Every exhortation was answered back with the convicting reproof, "Physician, heal thyself." This, added to the rational probability, that not one of my brethren would precede me in this matter, settled like conviction on my heart. From that moment I turned my exhortation upon myself, and resolved to sharpen the pointless dart of precept with sanctified example.

For the rest of my experience touching this matter, I would adduce a few pages of a religious journal kept at the time, in which were carefully minuted the successive steps of my progress.

"Feb. 17th and 18th -- Felt convicted of remains of sin in my heart, and deeply convinced of my need of holiness. Prayed for it, yet in vain: and perhaps not entirely in vain, for prayer increased my confidence and quickened my expectation. Felt willing to give up all, and to do anything to obtain the blessing: yes, longed to do some great thing -- to commit myself thoroughly to the search. Could I obtain the blessing by going twenty miles, where I might join with people praying for it, gladly would I go. But O! it is by FAITH, and not by works; by GRACE, and not by merits. It is only to wash in the Jordan of Christ's blood, and be cleansed from the leprosy of sin.

"Evening of the 18th. -- Attended class meeting at S ____ H _____. Went with strong desires for the blessing: nor were they barren desires: for a strong degree of expectation accompanied them. In this they differed all from my previous desires. Class full, and full of spirit. The meeting progressed so joyfully, that in the spirit of the meeting, while participating the joy of others, I lost all thoughts of sanctification at least, I did not make it the definite object of search, and the subject of wrestling prayer, as I intended. In this I was disappointed, and, when called to speak at the close of the class, could not conceal my disappointment. Humbly acknowledged my need and desire of being perfected in love, and my expectation that the work would have been wrought that evening. 'Well,' replied the leader, 'it is not too late yet.' I cast my eye upon the clock -- it was but

eight; I took him at his word, fell on my knees and began to pray. I prayed sincerely with increasing faith and fervency. Feeling that matters were verging to a crisis, and that what was done must be accomplished that evening, I prayed till there was cause to praise. I got sight of the blessing, and felt willing to receive it by faith, and to receive it then. I crowded all that I was, or had, or was expecting to have, my interests for time and eternity, upon the altar, and, sprinkled with atoning merit, I felt that my little all was all that was required, and was accepted. The blessing was before me, and the time to take it had arrived. Here, where my confidence and spirit had before failed, and a spirit of trembling possessed me, my faith sustained me. Feeling, as heretofore, that I was willing to be saved, I felt to go a little further, and exclaimed, I am ready! I am waiting! The fullness of the promise assured me that God was ever on the giving hand -- willing, ready, waiting: this reduced it to the present tense. Here infinite benevolence met the suppliant, and 'cut short the work in righteousness.' The blessing was mine -- I felt I possessed it; it made me contented. The witnessing Spirit supplanted my convictions, and I experienced a deep assurance that my prayer was answered, and the blessing bestowed. A mighty comfort pervaded my heart; a mighty peace rolled through my soul. Felt conscious that I had given all for Christ, and felt the witness of the Spirit, like an impression on my soul, that he had become 'all in all' to me. Then came a moment's struggle. I had a vow to perform. I had promised God, if he would grant the desire of my heart, I would profess and make it known. A moment's hesitation -- the devil tempted -- the flesh cautioned -- it was but for a moment. Resolved to fulfill my promise, and perform my vows, I arose, like a young convert about to declare the mighty change. I said but little -- my soul was full -- it overflowed. All sentiments resolved themselves in one, and all expressions were but synonyms of glory! I sat down. Not a doubt lingered, not a cloud obscured. The evidence then streamed in like sunlight, or rather like ceaseless undulations of glory. I had often felt sufficiently free, in religious meetings, to respond amen! glory! but never before had I felt it like something that MUST be uttered. 'T was no ecstatic flight, no height of rapture; but O! the depth! The fathomless depth! The ocean of love! 'T was boundless billows of joy, and ceaseless swells of glory! I went home all melted and subdued beneath this fresh manifestation of the love of my Heavenly Father.

"Sunday, Feb. 19th. -- I arose, and reflected on last evening's scenes. It was dream-like. I inquired of myself, 'Is it so?' 'can it be?' For a moment I trembled: but promises of sustaining grace recurred to my mind, and made me confiding; a thing quite unusual with me, for which I had never looked in my experience. They seemed like the oil of consolation poured on the sea of soul that had been ruffled by a little tempest. All was calm, or rather all was joy. Some parts of the day were peculiarly glorious. My cup was full to overflowing. A new world sprung up within me -- a new creation sprung up around me. Love was the supreme law of the heart. I discovered new beauties in Scripture, and that all-comforting promise, 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,' especially, revealed a world of light and glory. My reflections gave me solid comfort. The scenes of the previous evening, instead of seeming extravagant, were heightened by holy meditation. I was glad for all I had done, and could not sufficiently express my gratitude to God for that grace, which overcame my fears, and enabled me to attest his work. Thus passed the day in silent or shouting joy. I longed for evening to come, when I might preach a full salvation, and test it by my own experience. I sought a text that contained the word, or idea, salvation. Had a good time preaching, and wonderful freedom in prayer: joyful in the hope, that now that one

stumbling block is removed, my brethren and sisters will press into the kingdom, nay, into the palace of the kingdom -- the palace of perfect love."

One week subsequent I find the following minute:-- "The past has been the happiest week of my remembrance. My soul has been a sea of peace, unruffled but by waves of joy." And now, at the distance of nearly two years, setting to my seal that God is true, I can heartily subscribe all that I have transcribed as the truthfulness of God, tested in the earnest experience of Gospel Holiness.

But let no dear Christian, searching for this priceless pearl, estimate its size or appearance by that exhibited in the experience of the writer. Let no dear saint, in full enjoyment of this blessing, cast a way his confidence in a complete Savior for the same reason. Let each consider, in the work of the Spirit on the heart, how much is due to the differences of natural temperament, and to one's manner of telling what many have experienced. Let them also remember that our object is not fully attained till love becomes our law, and obedience our life. There is no sanctified saint on the footstool, who would not hail the approach of that time when all this tempest of joy shall subside in

"The sacred awe that dares not move,
And all the silent heaven of love."

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

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THE END