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

Vol. II -- Unnamed Accounts

ACCOUNT #005

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In regard to my early experience as a Christian, I would say, that that experience had two prominent characteristics, a desire, inexpressibly strong, to be freed from all sin in every form, and to be entirely consecrated to the love and service of God, in all the powers and susceptibilities of my being. Nor can any one conceive the gloom and horror that covered my mind, when older Christians assured me, and as I supposed with truth, that that was a state to which I should never, in this life, attain: that my lusts would not be perfectly subdued or subjected to the will of Christ, and that one of the brightest evidences of my conversion and growth in grace, was new discoveries of the deep and fixed corruptions of my heart -- corruptions from which I was never to be cleansed till death should deliver me from my bondage. Notwithstanding all the impediments thrown in the way of my progress in holiness, I continued to press forward for a succession of years, till I could say, in the language of another, "I do k now that I love holiness for holiness' sake."

In this state, I commenced my studies as a student in college. Here I fell and fell, by not aiming singly at the "prize of the high calling," but at the prize of college honors. I subsequently entered a theological seminary, with the hope of there finding myself in such an atmosphere, that my first love would be revived. In this expectation, I grieve to say, I was most sadly disappointed. I found the piety of my brethren apparently as low as my own. I here say it with sorrow of heart, that my mind does not recur to a single individual connected with the " school of the prophets," when I was there, who appeared to me to enjoy daily communion and peace with God.

After completing my course under such circumstances, I entered the ministry, proud of my intellectual attainments, and armed, as I supposed, at every point, with the weapons of theological warfare, but with the soul of piety chilled and expiring within me. Blessed be God, the remembrance of what I had been, remained, and constantly aroused me to a consciousness of what I was. I looked into myself, and over the church, and was shocked at what I felt and what I saw. Two facts in the aspect of the church and the ministry, struck my mind with gloomy interest.

Scarcely an individual, within the circle of my knowledge, seemed to know the gospel as a sanctifying or peace-giving gospel. In illustration of this remark, let me state a fact which I met with in the year 1831 or 1832. I then met a company of my ministerial brethren who had come together from one of the most favored portions of the country. They sat down together, and gave to each other an undisguised disclosure of the state of their hearts, and they all, with one exception, and the experience of that individual I did not hear, acknowledged that they had not daily communion and peace with God. Over these facts they wept, but neither knew how to direct the others out of the thick and impenetrable gloom which covered them, and I was in the same ignorance as my brethren.

I state these facts as a fair example of the state of the churches, and of the ministry, as far as my observation had extended. When my mind became fully conscious of this fact, I was led to compare my own, and the experience of the church around me, with that of the Apostles and primitive Christians, and with the "path of the just," as described in the sacred Scriptures. I found the two in direct contrast with each other. Here the great inquiry arose in my mind, What is the grand secret of holy living? How shall I attain to that perpetual fullness and peace in Christ, which, for example, Paul enjoyed. Till this secret was fully disclosed to my mind, I felt that I was and must be disqualified in one fundamental respect, to "feed the flock of God." While the gospel was not life and peace to me, how could I present it in such a manner that it would be life and peace to others. I must myself be led by the Great Shepherd, into the "green pastures and beside the still waters," before I could lead the flock of God into the same blissful regions. For years this one inquiry pressed upon my thoughts, and often, as I have looked over a company of inquiring sinners, have I said within myself, I would gladly take my place among those inquirers, if any individual would show me how to come into possession of the "riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints." But clouds and darkness covered my mind in respect to this, the most momentous of all subjects.

In this state of mind, I continued to press my inquiries with increasing interest upon this one subject, till the fall of 1836. At that time, during a series of religious meetings, a large number of the members of the church arose and informed us that they were fully convinced that they had been deceived in respect to their character as Christians, and that they were now without hope, and appeared as inquirers, to know "what they should do to be saved." At the same time, the great mass of the remainder disclosed to us the cheerless bondage in which they had long been groaning, and asked us if we could tell them how to obtain deliverance. I now felt myself, as one of the "leaders of the flock of God," pressed with the great inquiry above referred to, with greater interest than ever before. I set my heart, by prayer and supplication to God, to find the light after which I had been so long seeking.

In this state I visited one of my associates in the work, and disclosed to him the burden which had weighed down my mind for so many years. I asked him, if he could tell me the secret of the piety of Paul, and tell me the reason of the strange contrast between the Apostle's experience and my own. In laboring for the salvation of men, I observed, that my feelings often remained unmoved and unaffected, while Paul was constantly "constrained" by the love of Christ. Our conversation then turned upon the passage, "The love of Christ constraineth us," &c. While thus employed, my heart leaped up in ecstasy indescribable, with the exclamation, "I have found it." I have now, by the grace of God, discovered the secret after which I have been searching these many

years. I understood the secret of the piety of Paul, and knew how to attain to that blissful state myself. Paul's piety all arose from one cause exclusively, a sympathy with the heart of Christ in his love for lost men. To attain to this state myself, I had only to acquaint myself with the love of Christ, and yield my whole being up to its sweet control.

Immediately after this, I came before the church and disclosed to them what I then saw to be the grand defect in my ministry.

1. Christ had been but as one chapter in my system of theology, when he should have been the sun and center of my system.

2. When I thought of my guilt and need of justification, I had looked to Christ exclusively, as I ought to have done. For sanctification, on the other hand, to overcome the "world, the flesh, and the devil," I had depended mainly upon my own resolutions. Here was the grand mistake, and the source of all my bondage under sin. I ought to have looked to Christ for sanctification as much as for justification, and for the same reason. The great object of my being now was, to know Christ, and in knowing Him, to be changed into his image. Here was the "victory which overcometh the world." Here was the "death of the body of sin." Here was "redemption from all iniquity," into the "glorious liberty of the children of God." At this time, the appropriate office of the Holy Spirit presented itself to my mind with a distinctness and interest never understood nor felt before. To know Christ was the life of the soul. To "take of the things of Christ and show them unto us," to open our hearts to understand the Scriptures, to strengthen us with might in the inner man, that we might comprehend the "breadth and depth, and length and height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," and thus be "filled with all the fulness of God," is the appropriate office of the Spirit. The highway of holiness was now rendered perfectly distinct to my mind. The discovery of it was to my mind as "life from the dead." The disclosure of this path had the same effect upon others, who had been, like myself, "weary, tossed with tempest and not comforted." As my supreme attention was thus fixed upon Christ, as it became the great object of my being to know Him, and he transformed into his likeness, and as I was perpetually seeking that divine illumination by which I might apprehend him, an era occurred in my experience, which I have no doubt will ever be one of the most memorable. In a moment of deep and solemn thought, the veil seemed to be lifted, and I had a vision of the infinite glory and love of Christ, as manifested in the mysteries of redemption. I will not attempt to describe the effect of that vision upon my mind. All that I would say is, that in view of it, my heart melted and flowed out like water. The heart of stone was taken away, and a heart of love and tenderness assumed its place. From that time I have desired to "know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." I have literally "esteemed all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," and the knowledge of Christ has been eternal life begun in my heart.

Now when the Lord Jesus Christ was thus held up among us, by myself and others, a brother in the ministry arose in one of our meetings and remarked, that there was one question to which he desired a definite answer be given. It was this, "When we look to Christ for sanctification, what degree of sanctification may we expect from Him? May we look to Him to be sanctified wholly, or not?" I do not recollect that I was ever so shocked and confounded at any question before or since. I felt for the moment that the work of Christ among us would be marred, and the mass of minds around us rush into Perfectionism. Still the question was before us: and to it

we were bound, as pupils of the Holy Spirit, to give a scriptural answer. We did not attempt to give a definite answer to it at that time. With that question before us, we spent most of the winter, in prayer and the study of the Bible. The great inquiry with us was, what degree of holiness may we ourselves expect from Christ, when we exercise faith in him; and in what light shall we present Him to others, as a Savior from sin? We looked, for example, at such passages as this, passages of which the Bible is full, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." We looked at such passages, I say, and asked ourselves this question, Suppose an honest inquirer after holiness, comes to us, and asks of us, What degree of holiness is here promised to the believer? May I expect, in view of this prayer and promise, that God will sanctify me wholly, and preserve me in that state, till the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? What answer shall we give him? Shall we tell him that merely partial and not perfect holiness is here promised, and that the former and not the latter he is here authorized to expect? After looking prayerfully at the testimony of Scripture in respect to the provisions and promises of divine grace, we were constrained to admit, that but one answer to the above question could be given from the Bible: and the greatest wonder with me is, that I have been so long a "master in Israel, and have never before known these things." Since that time we have never ceased to proclaim the redemption of Christ as a full redemption. Nor do we expect to cease proclaiming it as a full and finished redemption, till Christ shall call us home. For myself, I am willing to proclaim it to the world, that I now look to the very God of peace to sanctify me wholly, and preserve my whole spirit, and soul and body, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I put up this prayer with the expectation that the very things prayed for will be granted. Reader, is that confidence misplaced? In expecting that blessing, am I leaning upon a broken reed, or upon the broad promise of God?

There is one circumstance connected with my recent experience, to which I desire to turn the attention of the reader. And that is this: that I have forever given up all idea of resisting temptation, subduing any lust, appetite or propensity, or of acceptably performing any service for Christ, by the mere force of my own resolutions. If my propensities, which lead to sin, are crucified, I know that it must be done by an indwelling Christ. If I overcome the world, this is to be the victory, "even our faith." If the great enemy is to be overcome, it is to be done "by the blood of the Lamb."

Believing, as I now do, that the Lord Jesus Christ has provided special grace for the entire sanctification of every individual, for the subjection of all his propensities, for a perfect victory over every temptation and incentive to sin, and for rendering us, in every sphere and condition in life, all that He requires us to be: the first inquiry with me is, In what particular respect do I need the grace of Christ? What is there, for example, in my temper that needs correction? Wherein am I in bondage to appetite, or to any of my propensities? What are the particular responsibilities, temptations, &c., incident to each particular sphere and condition in life in which the providence of God has called me to act? What is the temper that I ought, then, to manifest, so that I may everywhere, and under all circumstances, reflect the image of Christ?

Thus having discovered my special necessity, in any one of the particulars above referred to, my next object is, to take some promise applicable to the particular exigency before me, and to go directly to Christ for the supply of that particular necessity. By having the eye of faith

perpetually fixed upon Christ in this manner, by always looking to Him for special grace in every special exigency, yes, for "grace to help in every time of need," how easy it is to realize in our blessed experience the truth of all the "exceeding great and precious promises" of divine grace. How easy it is to have the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, "keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." "Our peace is then as a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea." The mind seems to be borne upward and onward, as upon an ocean of light, peace and blessedness, which knows no bounds.

"O glorious change! 'tis all of grace,
By bleeding love bestowed
On outcasts of our fallen race,
To bring them home to God;
Infinite grace to vileness given,
The sons of earth made heirs of heaven."

And now, reader, "my heart's desire and prayer to God" for you, is, that you may know this full redemption. If you will cease from all efforts of your own, and bring your sins, and sorrows, and cares, and propensities which lead into sin, to Christ, and cast them all upon Him, if with implicit faith, you will hang your whole being upon Him, and make it the great object of life to know Him, for the purpose of receiving and reflecting his image, you will find that all the "exceeding great and precious promises" of his word, are, in your own blissful experience, a living reality. The water that Christ shall give you, "shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life." You shall have a perpetual and joyful victory over the "world, the flesh, and the devil." Everywhere, and under all circumstances, your peace in Christ shall be as a "river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." "O, taste and see that the Lord is good." "There is no want to them that fear Him." And, reader, when your cup is once filled with the love of Christ, you will then say with truth, "The half has not been told me." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

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

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THE END