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

Vol. II -- Unnamed Accounts

ACCOUNT #017

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The subject of entire sanctification became one of deep interest to me immediately after my conversion. This fact being known to some of my religious friends, they placed in my hands, I think, the "Plain Account of Christian Perfection," by Mr. Wesley. I distinctly remember that about that time (1831) I often engaged heartily, as I thought, in prayer to God for a clean heart. But my heart was unbelieving. At least my faith was too weak in the promises of God to claim the blessing.

Immediately after my admission into the ministry, having removed by this act (obeying the call of God) one insuperable hindrance to my happiness, I enjoyed many happy seasons, and am persuaded was often on the very threshold of perfect love. Could I then have had the society and conversation of a friend who enjoyed the blessing, it would have been of incalculable advantage to me, and I doubt not would have resulted in my entire sanctification.

Like all, or most, other ministers of our Church, I have always preached holiness, whatever were my attainments at the time; but the more earnestly and frequently when most engaged in its pursuit myself. During the years 1843 and 1844, the "Guide to Christian Perfection," edited by D. S. King, Boston, was sent to me regularly, a number each month. This work is a real treasure, and ought to be read by all who are seeking to "go on to perfection." I was blessed in reading it then, but much more in perusing the same numbers of late. At an early period of the present year, some two or three members of our society sought, obtained and professed the blessing of a clean heart. Their testimony was not doubted. They had previously been among the most faithful of my charge, and their account of the matter was both rational and Scriptural. Their profession had its influence upon the society, and upon their pastor. I attended a camp meeting in a neighboring circuit in August, where, after preaching from "One thing thou lackest," (which, though applied chiefly to the unconverted, was but too true of professors generally,) I went into the altar, and invited my brethren in the ministry and members of the Church present to seek with me holiness of heart. Some two hours, or more, I spent in prayer thus, and obtained no inconsiderable victory. Though much

exhausted physically, I was greatly strengthened in spirit. Some points in Christian experience, as attainable, were then discovered, which have never been lost sight of since: still the blessing of perfect love was not attained. Two weeks after this meeting (assisted by my colleague and the brethren in the vicinity) I held one at B____. During this interval my mind was very much taken up with the study and pursuit of entire sanctification. I greatly desired at this meeting to hear a clear and forcible discourse on the subject from one who then enjoyed the blessing; but failing in this, I discoursed freely with a few friends privately in reference to the matter. On the Sabbath of the camp meeting I preached from Matt. xxii. 37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," &c. I felt that this effort was beneficial to myself, and I trust was not without some good effect upon others. At a subsequent period in our exercises, at a prayer and experience meeting, I arose and declared frankly to all present the true state of my mind on the subject, and avowed my purpose never to cease to seek the possession and enjoyment of a clean heart.

A few extracts from my diary will show the transition state of my experience subsequently to the above declaration, and down to the attainment of the perfect love of God. It is proper, perhaps, for me to say here, that about this time (September) I commenced a careful reading of Dr. Peck's work on the subject of Christian perfection, and by the time I had concluded it, I was enabled by the grace of God to bear my testimony to the attainableness of "a heart from sin set free." This work may have its defects, perhaps it has; but certainly it has many excellences, excellences which vastly outweigh its defects, and highly recommend it to the attention and careful perusal of all who would understand the nature and enjoy the blessing of Scriptural holiness.

I will now proceed to give the extracts promised:--

"Sept. 16. The doctrine of Christian perfection is eliciting much attention and interest at present. My own heart pants, I trust I may say thirsts, for all the fullness of God. This day I have frequently seemed to be almost in reach of the blessing. My soul has magnified the Lord. I feel, Christ shall be 'all in all.' It seems to me I would have it so now, but my faith is not perfect, it wavers, and the result is, I am not yet filled with God.

"21, 22, and 23. My poor heart is unusually drawn out in prayer to God for the blessing of perfect love. This is the Lord's doing, but why do not I attain the thing sought? This delay is my fault. I think I often feel happy -- I call the Almighty my Father -- I am growing in grace. All the graces of his Spirit are, I think, maturing, being perfected. Surely I am not far from the promised salvation: yet I have not obtained. Of this I am perfectly conscious. There are dispositions, or emotions, or propensities, which, although I have, I believe, victory over in the main, are nevertheless lurking within. I try to analyze my experience. I am certainly now in the Lord; he reigns in me; but the prosperity, composure, and seeming peace of the wicked, I think I feel a disposition to envy. Not that I would change situations with them -- no! no! But my displeasure toward them seems to exceed my pity for them. Again, although I wish to love God with all my heart, and believe that generally now I love him supremely, yet this affection is not sufficiently strong, uniform, and constant, to exclude all sinful, and subdue all unlawful, and inordinate feelings, always. Again, toward my enemies, and the enemies of God and religion, though for a while I think I pity and love, yet presently, if the insult is repeated or persevered in, I find a spirit of retaliation rising up, and seeking exercise.

"As to my prospects for the future, if I am capable of ascertaining them when in health, and not in immediate danger of death, I have confidence that it will go well with me; but my hope is partly based on the conviction that God will, whenever he calls me, perfect the work, cut it short, sanctify me wholly, if it has not been previously done. Thus viewed in any and every light, still the great truth is before me, viz: that I yet need to be saved from all sin.

"Besides striving now to pray for holiness without ceasing, I retire for prayer six or seven times each day, when I am enabled to exercise much faith, and have access to God, and know that the Lord favors me with his presence and love. I try also to make a matter of conscience of the manner of spending my time, and no small portion of it is spent in reading his Holy Word, and other works on the subject of holiness. But in all this I know, I feel there is no merit, nor virtue, abstractly; prayer, reading, &c., are only means; while I thank my Savior for them, I must look only to him for life and salvation. O, may he fill me with all his fullness!

"27, 28. One fact I think I have clearly discovered for some time past, viz: that I am growing in grace: I am also groaning for full redemption; still I cannot say I have it, that is, that I am saved from inward or inbred corruption, or 'cleansed from all unrighteousness,' or that my heart is pure, or that I am 'sanctified wholly.' Whatever term be used to express the perfection of the Gospel, or evangelical perfection, I am not satisfied that I am in possession of it. Now this blessing and the evidence of its possession I sincerely desire and am in pursuit of. Never can 'I rest till pure within, till I am wholly lost in him.' My faith I find strengthened; have more love for souls, more zeal for the cause of God; I am enabled to pray with more fervor, and my hope of heaven is much brighter. Manifestly the Lord is at work for me, and in me. I am, it is true, taught to fear from what I find in myself, lest under strong temptation I should be carried away by the torrent. My hope is all centered in Christ, and I must every hour cleave to him, or I fail. His good Spirit must assist me, or my habits of evil will prevail against me. O that my divine Master may now cleanse me, and keep me clean!

"October 2 and 8. I find now my peace almost uninterrupted; by the grace of God I have of late gained real and great victories over myself, the world, and the devil. My heavenly Father this week has been more precious than ever. In my closet, the pulpit, the study, while traveling, and in conversation, I have in all these places and engagements been conscious of his indwelling presence and power. Through Christ I think I feel all is well, yet I cannot say he has sanctified me wholly; I think not. This is the point at which I am aiming; as yet I have not that evidence of its accomplishment which I think the Lord will give me when done; I am inclined to believe, too, that at times now I find evidence in myself that it is not done. O that the Lord may guide me right in this matter! I have infinite cause to praise him for what he has already done for me; and as regards what remains to be done, my soul breaks out in ecstatic hope, and says,

"His love I soon expect to find
In all its depth and height,
To comprehend the Eternal Mind,
And grasp the Infinite."

"May the Lord now witness with my heart that the work is done. Amen, even now, O my Redeemer!"

"9. I have had to struggle more for the last three days to keep up the same amount of religious fervor and feeling; but by the grace of my Redeemer, for the most part of the time I have been successful; I cannot, I must not question the reality of my salvation. Too frequently I find myself hesitating to express all I now enjoy -- all I now experience -- for fear of being hereafter overcome by some of my former besetments. This evening, at general class, lest some one had hesitated to express all their enjoyments, and had kept back a profession of their full attainments in the religion of Christ, from the very guarded manner in which I spoke of my own at the opening of the class, near its close I arose, and by the grace of my Master, testified thus: 'I now declare to you, my dear friends, my firm conviction that I now love God with all my heart.' My heart I felt and expressed was small, yet small as it was, and depraved and wicked as it had been, God, through the adorable Savior, enabled me then to love him with all my powers. To God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be unceasing praises now and ever. Amen. On his altar I now anew lay all I have, and all I am -- a poor little all indeed, yet it is all. O may he accept! He does; may he preserve and save for ever! He will, he will. Glory, glory, ALL glory to God. Amen.

"10. I see no cause this evening to change anything in the above. I am still persuaded that my heavenly Father now saves me from sin, all sin. I am also fully persuaded he will do so while I trust him implicitly.

"15 and 16. Through much mercy I am enabled to keep my mind and heart fixed on God. He keeps me in perfect peace. This is an effect or result to which I have heretofore been a stranger. It is true, it is not maintained without effort. I am enabled to pray more than ever, and I rarely, if ever, arise and leave without the answer to my prayer. Through the Lord Jesus I have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son; and the blood of Jesus Christ, I believe, cleanseth me from all sin. That my piety is still defective in the sight of God I have no doubt, but by his grace I am trying to do what to me seems best, relying upon the teachings of his word and Spirit, and then the unavoidable defects are continually pardoned, through Jesus Christ my sacrifice and my Redeemer.

"Christ has my heart; in his hands I commit and leave all for ever. My purpose is, that not in one single point, duty, privilege, or experience, will I retrograde: no, not one moment. I pray from five to eight times every day, read two or three chapters of Holy Scripture, and other good books considerably. Glory to God, he sanctifies his truth to my salvation. O how precious to my soul! Surely my heavenly Father will not suffer me to be deceived. If he has not sanctified me wholly, I am certain the work is progressing, so that all shall be finally well.

"17, 18, 19. These three days I have spent at quarterly meeting, two of them at our own, and the other in the adjoining circuit. On the 17th I preached from Psalm i. 1, 2, 3 Never before did I feel its appropriateness to my own experience as much as on this glad day. Truly God's law is my delight, and in it do I read and meditate day and night. By the grace and mercy of my Redeemer, I am as a tree planted by the rivers of water. O how pure and refreshing their stream, their banks overflow, occasionally at least, and every grace is watered and replenished by the proprietor of the vineyard, the Lord our righteousness! On the 18th (Sunday) in the love-feast I was enabled to acknowledge and praise my adorable Redeemer, not only for justifying grace, but for sanctifying love also; and at this time, and throughout this day, more than all my life before, I am enabled to realize that 'Christ is all and in all.' I can but ask myself continually, why have I spent so much of

my time in comparatively a wilderness state? Why have I not gone up and possessed the land before? Thank God that at length he hath brought me in to enjoy the promised rest. I have had an interview with a dear friend and brother in the ministry today, and have conversed freely on the subject of my experience. To him I related and read much that I have marked and written in reference to the working of my mind, both before and since I have received the blessing of a clean heart. This intelligence he received with much joy, and I felt that the relation of it was profitable to myself. One great reason, he thinks, why so few in the ministry and membership in the Church seek and obtain it is, the want of a deep conviction in themselves of its need. This opinion is doubtless true; but this conviction can be wrought, and will be wrought, if proper attention to reading and study on the subject be given by those who are living in the favor of God."

From the above extracts may be learned the state of my experience for the last two months, or more, and the steps by which I was led from a deep anxiety on the account of remaining corruption, and an ardent desire to be free from all sin, to the possession and enjoyment of perfect love.

For the most part of the time since I have professed this great salvation, I have had no difficulty in "exercising the presence of God," that is, in realizing the fact that God is with me, and in me. Under a full conviction of this I repair to his house, to the closet, to his word, and to Christian conference, and in all my faith apprehends his presence, and through Christ claims and enjoys the bread and water of life. Under it also I experience that "the water he gives me is in me a well of water springing up unto eternal life."

To say that I have no temptations, no trials from without, would be incorrect. Such a state I am persuaded is not consistent with human probation. The grand adversary has not been idle since the good work has been going on, nor is he now; but, thank God, by his [God's] grace I stand, with Satan beneath my feet. My language in relation to his assaults is, "Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." The world, too, is busy. With its spirit, maxims, fashions, and various allurements, marshaled under the prince of darkness, attempts are made, through the passions, affections, desires, imaginations and appetites of my heart, to introduce secret and wily foes in order to its recapture, but without success. "God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." My song is,

"My passions hold a pleasing reign
When love inspires my breast;
Love, the divinest of the train,
The sovereign of the rest."

A thousand times, perhaps, or more, both in my closet and in my almost constant aspirations, have I said to my heavenly Father,

"Nothing on earth do I desire
But thy pure love within my breast;
This, only this, do I require,
And freely give up all the rest."

Praise God, O my soul, for his unspeakable gift. In the strongest temptation that I have had, an appeal to my Savior for the sincerity and truthfulness of my entire consecration to him, leaves the matter beyond a doubt that he entirely accepts. "Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth," and by the communications of his mercy and grace enables me now to say,

"My hope is full (O glorious hope)
Of immortality."

This sketch must be brought to a close. Pleasing as is the theme to me, it may not (if extended too far) be so to your readers. Though "it is good to be here," and on this mount I may wish to "make tabernacles" and dwell, yet I must not detain you, nor the readers of your paper, till all this is accomplished, lest I fail of the grand object intended by writing, viz: to impress the importance, and give instruction and encouragement to those who may be without the blessing of a full and present salvation.

In conclusion holiness of heart, or entire sanctification, is attained like pardon and regeneration, by simple faith in Christ. The conviction of its necessity being deeply impressed by the Spirit of God, an humble trust in the merits of Christ, and a hearty belief of the promises of God will not fail to secure the thing sought without delay.

In most persons, perhaps in all, it will be gradual. But even this does not imply that any considerable time must necessarily elapse; I believe it is not necessary. Every moment God is much more willing to save us from all sin, than we are to be saved.

One distinct, strong impression I wish now to make: it is this -- that "loving God with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind," is the attainment of the blessing of entire sanctification. When this point is known to be gained, by the grace of God let it be professed.

None ought to conclude that the possession of this higher degree of love is to be attended by a cessation of effort to "go on to perfection." So far from this being the fact, their efforts to get and do good will be increased, and their attainments much more rapid. The works of God, his providences, and particularly his word, will be developing to the contemplative mind of the sanctified Christian facts of increasing interest every hour.

When it is attained, not only profess it, but "walk by the same rule, mind the same things," use as much exertion to enjoy, honor, and recommend it, as to gain it.

A few of the advantages of possessing this blessing now, are:

1. It secures the observance of the second great command, loving all men as ourselves, which effectually prevents, or destroys all jealousy, envy, anger, malice, ill-will, suspicion, &c., &c.
2. It gives efficiency to all our efforts to do good, and characterizes all our labors in religious matters, "as done heartily unto the Lord."

3. It makes our faithfulness in duty and perseverance in the cause of God much more probable.

4. It alone gives us fully to realize the promise that "the peace is as a river," &c., that is, always abiding and increasing as it rolls on.

5. "It casteth out fear," all fear that is attended with the least apprehension or unpleasantness, and of course all fear of death always.

6. I sum up many things in saying, in the language of inspiration, "It is the fulfilling of the law," and therefore makes us always pleasing to God, and "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

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

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THE END