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

Vol. II -- Unnamed Accounts

ACCOUNT #049

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It is more than two years since my mind became much interested in the subject of personal holiness -- a subject to which, at that time, the attention of the religious community was particularly directed. I was entirely dissatisfied with the attainments I had made in religion, and fully aware that I was not living wholly for Christ -- that there was too much conformity to the world, and too little of the "fruits of the Spirit" manifest in my life. My soul thirsted for holiness, as the only means of usefulness or happiness, and I sought it earnestly in prayer. I obtained at that time increased nearness to God and uncommon peace of mind, which I enjoyed for several weeks -- but it was not abiding. A few months after, at a religious meeting, I became acquainted with the experience of some who professed sanctification. Being myself of the Congregational order, the subject was in a great measure new to me. I was deeply affected with the statements made of their religious exercises, and felt that such a work of grace as they described was just what I needed, and entirely beyond anything I had experienced. From this time I became much interested to inform myself respecting the doctrine of "Christian Perfection," and examined the Scriptures and other books in reference to it, having my heart much set on obtaining the victory over sin, if such were my privilege. I found much encouragement to enlarge my desires, from the precious promises of the Bible; and determined never to rest till I could appropriate to myself the language of Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." My hungerings after righteousness were greatly increased, and also my hopes in regard to it, by reading the Memoir of J. B. Taylor. As I contemplated his elevated piety and exalted joys, my whole soul panted for like attainments; yet, notwithstanding my efforts, I seemed, for a while, "nothing bettered, but rather grew worse."

After the lapse of several months a revival commenced among us, and my anxiety for advancement in holiness increased. I felt that I was unprepared to labor for the conversion of others till my own soul should be set at liberty, and that my first duty was to myself. My mind became exceedingly burdened. I was convinced that I must make a new and entire consecration of myself to God, yet shrunk from such a total surrender. I sometimes felt that if the Lord would make

some communication to my soul, as a pledge that he was ready to meet me, and would grant sufficient grace, in case I entered into such solemn covenant to be his, I could then venture to engage to live henceforth for him alone; but, through weakness of faith, I dared not venture forward upon his naked promise. No such aid to my faith, however, was granted me. I saw that the surrender must be unconditional, and became overwhelmed with the intensity of my feelings. In this state, having retired one evening for prayer, I deliberately surveyed the whole subject of an entire consecration to Christ -- counted the cost and laid the peculiar difficulties, which I apprehended in my own case, before the Lord -- and then, as I believe, by the help of God, surrendered myself to him, without reserve, to be his forever. I arose from prayer relieved of the burden which had oppressed me; but my mind, though calm and peaceful, was shrouded in darkness, and scarce a ray of light gleamed across my path. Nearly the same state of my mind continued through the succeeding day; yet I had reason to believe that God was with me, granting me unusual aid against temptation. The next day there was a great increase of my peace. I found my faith much strengthened, and felt satisfied that God was with me of a truth, and that he had accepted the sacrifice which he had enabled me to make. The day following, which was Sabbath, the little rivulet of my peace had swelled to a river, and my heart was filled with the love of God. I had a delightful consciousness of his presence, and was so absorbed in holy contemplation and communion with my Savior, as scarcely to be sensible of what was passing around me. I was remarkably assisted in every duty, and the hours glided sweetly by. Thus my evidence of acceptance, and my joy in the Lord, increased daily. I had little disposition for food or sleep; and during the wakeful hours of night, quite unlike to my former experience, my mind was intensely occupied with devout meditation and prayer.

As weeks and months passed by, I discovered more and more the value of the blessing I had received. I continued to enjoy a sweet serenity of soul, a calm submission to the will of God, and trust in his fatherly care, (which shielded me from everything like anxiety or disappointment,) an abiding sense of his presence, and access to him free and delightful as that of a child to a parent. I found his yoke indeed easy and his burden light, beyond what I had ever understood before: and was taught by daily experience, that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace."

At two or three different times, in my past life, (for I had been a professor of religion thirteen years,) I had walked with God and enjoyed great peace of mind for some days or perhaps weeks together; but had always suffered much fear of soon losing the narrow path which fear had, in every instance, been realized -- but now, I had such filial confidence in God, such love, as almost cast out fear. He seemed to me not like a hard master, watching for my halting, but a loving father, always ready to lend his aid, and better to me continually than my expectations; and his goodness, so abundantly manifested, drew from my heart corresponding returns of love and gratitude to him, such as I never knew before. I felt that I could make any sacrifice for his sake, and should "rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." I could cheerfully renounce the world, and the good opinion even of those whose esteem I had most highly valued, when it came in competition with my Savior's love. I was willing to incur reproach and have my name cast out as evil; yea, to be counted a fool, if necessary, for Christ's sake -- and delighted to pledge myself anew from day to day, to perform any service to which he should call me.

It is now not far from a year since I received this great blessing, and I feel that I can never sufficiently praise the Lord for what he has done for me. I have ever since abode under the shadow of the Almighty, and had constant experience of his faithfulness and loving kindness. Surely it is not a vain thing to serve God. The still vouchsafes to me his presence, and an abiding, blissful peace, which is indescribable. I have passed through some seasons of severe trial, being in great "heaviness through manifold temptations;" but at such times I have been distinctly conscious of divine support; there has been a deep-seated tranquillity, which I think has never left me, and an unwavering confidence in the love of God, which has sometimes enabled me to bless and praise him, from my inmost soul, for his dealings with me, even while his hand was heavy upon me. I could adopt, as never before, the beautiful language of the Psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." I recur with gratitude to the memorable day to which I have referred, as the time when my feet were taken from the miry clay and set upon a rock; when I was enabled to present myself "a living sacrifice" to God, henceforth to be wholly devoted to his service. Since then, I think I have felt continually that I am not my own, and have sought to glorify God in my "body and spirit, which are his." I have kept in view the direction, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God;" and have felt that it is perfectly practicable, by the hp of God, to obey this command. I have loved daily to repeat my vows to be the Lord's; and my heart has responded to the words of the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee." I have been led to seek the guidance of the Spirit in all my concerns -- temporal and spiritual -- and have learned how sweet it is to cast all my care on him who careth for me. The most prominent feature of my experience has been a cordial submission in all things to the will of God: which, together with a clear perception of his overruling providence, even in the most minute events, has reconciled me to every situation, and produced, at all times, that contented mind which is "a continual feast." I have often been surprised at the strength afforded me against temptation, and have sometimes felt that I had nothing to do but "to stand still and see the salvation of God." Since I have learned to look simply to Christ for grace, instead of depending, in a great measure, on my own efforts, I find it is very easy for him to work that in me which I had been vainly seeking for years, (though not aware at the time of my self-dependence,) to effect in myself; and since his gracious interpositions bring new evidence of his love and faithfulness, I do, with St. Paul "glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." It is my constant prayer that I may grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; for I have learned, more than ever before, that in him is all my salvation; that he is an overflowing fountain, and his fullness a mine of inexhaustible wealth to those who believe in him.

In all past years, there has been, at times, an aching void in my heart, which nothing on earth could fill; but since the date of my recent experience, I have not for a moment been conscious of that painful sense of want, but have ever found the promise verified, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

While I thus recur with gratitude to the past, I would by no means rest in present attainments. It is the height of my ambition to press forward in the heavenly race -- to get clearer views of the glory of the Savior, and thereby be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

It may be that these professions may expose me to the charge of boasting; but, could the accuser look, as God does, at the heart, I think he would see his mistake; boasting is excluded -- by the law, not of works, but of faith. I see this far more clearly than when I was under the dominion of a legal spirit; and so deep is my sense of obligation to rich, unmerited grace, that I can hardly conceive of being so misunderstood. It will be found, I think, that where man may judge thus harshly, God sees only the promptings of duty, and a desire to bear some feeble testimony for Christ, that others may be induced to drink at the same fountain, and secure for themselves a like blessing. The poor, helpless orphan, that should tell to his companion in misery the story of another's generosity, who had supplied all his wants without money or price, and was ready to do the same for him, would hardly be accused of boasting. It would seem that gratitude to his benefactor, and a benevolent desire for the happiness of his friend, must prompt to such a course.

It is in the hope that my humble testimony to the freeness of divine grace, bestowed on me, most unworthy, may be the means of encouraging some poor, famishing soul to avail himself of the fullness of Christ, that I make this communication. It is my sincere desire and fervent prayer that the church may arise and shine, clothed in her Redeemer's righteousness, that the lives of its members may be, in all respects, consistent with their professions. Then will the grand obstacle to the progress of religion be removed, when all who profess to live under its influence, shall feel and exhibit its power; then, also, will complaints of coldness and unfruitfulness be exchanged for the cheering words of the apostle, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world."

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

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THE END