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

Vol. II -- Unnamed Accounts

ACCOUNT #081

LOUISA _____

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PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Brother King:-- As the pages of your "Guide" are sacredly consecrated to experience, rather than theory -- if the following humble testimony, in honor of that grace that purifies the heart, may be deemed worthy to afford encouragement to one soul that is athirst for purity, you are at liberty to give it to your readers.

On the earliest page of memory, I find records made of visitations from the Holy Spirit. I read no line there, however, that tells of a devoted mother leading her child to the place of secret prayer, and with prostrate form -- uplifted hands -- and streaming eyes, imploring the divine benediction upon her; I love to dwell upon a scene like this, when I find it in another's history; it gives rise to emotions of admiration that are indescribable. But such a picture does not grace the humble story of the writer. I never was familiar with the smile of a pious mother. Before I had become conscious of her tenderness, she bade me farewell. They tell me that at the calm twilight hour, one day in June, a bird came in at her window, and rested on the bed-side. She said it was a spirit come for her, to escort her to a brighter world. It lingered a little while, and when it flew away, she slept in death. My father's profession called him incessantly from home; but when there, he never took me upon his knee, to tell me about the Saviour of sinners; his own heart was a stranger to things of a spiritual nature. I never was an inmate of a Sabbath School -- that happy gate which opens into Christ's visible church. My footsteps were never trained to tread "the sanctuary of the Most High;" and the sound of the gospel trumpet was too distant to fall upon my ear.

My home was a retired farmhouse, hidden almost in the seclusion of surrounding woods. It was here I passed away the hours of childhood, -- a stranger to the world beside. No one ever thought of coming to our abode, to bring the glad tidings of salvation.

I go back to these scenes, in order to show the marvelous leadings of the Holy Spirit, which thus, unaided by any human instrumentality, in the very dawn of childhood, made me to feel the necessity of a regenerated nature. By its hallowed beams, gilding the darkness of my understanding, sin was made to appear in its real character; which made me long for a deliverance from it. For months together, my days would be passed in sinning and repenting, alternately. Sometimes my convictions would be so keen that I would steal away to some lone spot -- the thickest part of a wood -- where I would vent my tears and cries, until the anguish of my heart would in some degree subside. But I was a stranger to the mystery of "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Consequently, I wandered to and fro in my "wilderness state." But it pleased God to let a brighter day dawn. A change came over my father's house. I was allowed to go to a Methodist prayer-meeting. I knelt when the worshippers did, and prayed for mercy -- arose when they arose, and took my seat. Some one overheard me praying, I suppose, and whispered, "Believe! and praise God for salvation!" It was enough in a moment, my chains fell off. My soul mounted as in a fiery chariot. I seemed to see the Saviour, surrounded by a host of glorified spirits -- and he looked on me, and smiled. From this period, I was literally the subject of another state of existence. The word of God was the companion of my wakeful hours, and its inspiring truths gave character to the visions of the night. I had many sore conflicts with the powers of darkness, but they were invariably followed by unspeakable triumphs of soul, and increased confidence in a delivering Saviour. All fear of death and judgment was removed: yea, they became themes of richest thoughts. In a word, I seemed daily, to walk with God.

No one, that I remember, ever talked to me of holiness of heart, but I clearly saw that I must love God with my whole soul, as the only possible qualification for living with Him forever. But I hasten to a sad reverse of experience. After two years, another change transpired beneath the paternal roof. I was no longer allowed to go to the house of God. After months of sorrow on account of it, I began to yield my confidence -- listened to the entreaties of a mandate voice that was both loved and feared -- and requested the removal of my name from the church. I felt it to be a fearful expedient, but it was not wholly a voluntary act. I reserved a serious intention, when circumstances would admit, to unite with the people of God again. But I allowed myself to become discouraged and the comforts of grace faded away into a shadow. At length I left home, to engage in an important avocation; my resolution came back to my mind, but alas! the balance of religious character was gone -- and I felt no disposition to resort to a mere profession. I was unhappy; I tried the world as an antidote I was pleased with its charms, though I could not make myself a stranger to the truth that they lured to death. I listened eagerly to the strain of the siren; but I could not close my ear to the stern admonition: "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth!" I never entered a gay circle but with faltering steps; I never returned from one, but with a heart whose vacant recesses echoed dolefully to the conclusion of the wise man's researches: "Vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit!" I trembled to forget, and yet I was wretched while I remembered the past. Oh! the forbearance of Infinite mercy, that would not --

"..... let the lifted thunder drop"

upon a rebellious subject! After a lapse of many months, I was constrained, through the interposition of an overruling Providence, by placing me in the way of religious influence, to reach after the lost pleasures of religion. But I did not at once unloose my hold upon the world; I aimed

at a medium. I tore my heart from some of its idols, -- formed religious habits and associations, to some extent, -- cultivated an interest in the institutions of Christianity, -- particularly the cause of Foreign Missions, -- studied, fasted and prayed, but was not re-instated to my former peace. A crisis occurred, that most clearly showed me the ground I occupied. I was thrown in the way of worldly society, and solicited to partake of poisonous joys -- which, though unsought, I found I had not sufficient courage to resist. I entered tremblingly the gilded snare, and was well nigh fatally enclosed. At an interval, I sought my closet, and prostrated myself before the Lord. The Holy Spirit seemed about taking its flight. Never was a soul nearer being lost! Oh the recollection of this period! I involuntarily pause to repeat new strains of praise to an omnipotent Saviour's grace, while I fancy I hear the celestial chorus in commemoration of it, that breaks from the harps of happy spirits above, of whom it is said, "which things" they "desire to look into!" But I proceed:-- The gentle Dove forbore his flight, and sealed the solemn vow, to "renounce the world" and seek my only joy in Christ for ever. Two weeks, I think, precisely, from this evening, found me a humble -- or at least a weeping -- penitent, at the lowly spot where I first found a sin-pardoning God. The fourth evening I approached the altar. I was again made to rejoice in justifying grace. My soul was very happy -- but in that very hour I saw, -- I felt, that pardon was not purity. I panted for the full image. I eagerly read every work I could find, on the doctrine of Christian holiness. Five months passed -- but my researches in theory had yet failed in introducing me to the experience of "a heart in every thought renewed."

Oh, how I longed to converse with some one who could assure me they felt the sanctifying influence of the all-cleansing blood! A sister handed me the memoir of Mrs. Rogers. The simplicity of the way by which she was brought to render the entire sacrifice, gave courage to my longing heart. At once I resolved to seek full salvation as a present blessing. A week rolled by, while I was trying to learn the hard lesson of receiving "by faith" -- and receiving "now." I became a mystery to myself. The adversary made his last grand efforts. Wherever I went to pray, the suggestion arose, "Not here! not now!" But conscious need impelled me on. Sometimes I wept profusely; sometimes I prayed agonizingly, and seemed near the blessing; and again I could scarcely weep or pray at all.

On the evening of the 11th of February, 1846, I retired to my chamber, bearing the memoir alluded to, and the Holy Bible in my hands. I opened the former, when it seemed whispered -- "Why not seek direction in the Word of Truth, alone?" I closed the book, and opened the sacred volume: my eyes fell upon the passage, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, &c." I listened, as to a voice directly from heaven. The invitation looked as broad as the universe, and as free as the vital air. I extinguished the light, laid my hand upon the promise, and knelt before the Lord, solemnly resolving to plead, should it be practicable, until the break of day.

At once I was imbued with the spirit of wrestling Jacob. I plead upon the ground of the invitation and the promise. Ah, how truly I felt that I came "without money and without price!" Hours fled away, while I seemed to talk face to face with God. I was soon wholly consecrated, and rather than give up the struggle, I believe I would have fallen a martyr on the spot. Yet I could not appropriate the purifying merits. I asked why I should be brought into such communion with the Invisible, and still be unblessed. I was assured I had not yet believed! I inquired,

What, Lord! must I believe so great a thing as my heart made pure without an evidence first?" "Presumption in the first degree!" interrupted the grand enemy. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen!" said the Word of God. I caught the immutable declaration, and in a moment ventured my all upon its authority. I threw every power of my soul into the act of believing. There was no fanaticism resorted to, but the utmost simplicity. I said, "Lord, I believe, if I were this moment ushered into thy presence, I should stand, washed from every stain in the Redeemer's blood, spotless before thy throne!" A moment had not fled, before the place seemed filled with the very atmosphere of heaven. In breathless rapture, I listened to the echo my soul sent back to the tidings of angelic spirits in the heavenly world "A worm of earth is sanctified to God!" A whisper would have been too boisterous to have mingled with the holy stillness of the scene.

When I opened the Bible for the first time after I entered into such solemn relations to God, I had a single, undivided purpose: it was to learn the Divine will. With the same simple, perfect confidence that would characterize momentary suspense for the answer of a friend, I turned over the hallowed pages -- when my attention was arrested by the sixth chapter of Romans. I learned I must "reckon" myself "to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ." From that hour, for more than three years, I have leaned upon Jesus, as a full Redeemer. I have been assailed in many instances, by the very powers of darkness; but through Christ, have been more than conqueror in them all. Storms and angry waves of tribulation have dashed around my soul: but the Omnipotent arm has stayed them from breaking in to inundate my peace! Christ is the center to which my being tends. I am learning there are degrees of sanctifying grace. I have proved some of them -- but, while conscious they have only been the introductory ones, I am not disheartened. Perfection has ever been the work at which my immortal powers have aspired -- to the Triune God, be all the praise, that I have found the pathway to it! I am a sinner saved through Christ! Oh that every believer were a witness to sanctifying grace! Oh that the church were a flame of perfect love!

Louisa
New Jersey, 1849

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