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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

JOHN PARKER
(Methodist)

There were no circumstances in my early life especially friendly to the doctrine or experience of entire sanctification, except that the Divine Spirit called me in early years to the Christian life and made me very susceptible to religious influences. So that at ten years of age I had a fair apprehension of the nature of sin, a dread of God's displeasure because of it, and a strong desire to be guided to the knowledge of salvation. But mine was a home without prayer, or Bible, or godly influence, yet I prayed and lived in daily fear of the consequences of sin from childhood.

The Wesleyan Sabbath-schools of England, to which I owe much of my early convictions and character were supplied with the best library books relating to the Christian life, and until my sixteenth year I read these with great avidity. At the age of sixteen I was thoroughly converted, after three months of diligent seeking; so converted as to be forever spoiled for a mixed life. My hunger for good books was now greatly increased. I read the writings of Wesley, Fletcher, Clarke, and the biographies of early Methodist. I was deeply convicted for the blessing of a clean heart and obtained it in six months after my conversion -- while reading The Life of Hester Ann Rogers. I did not, of course, understand the philosophy of the doctrine, or its relation to my needs; but, daily beset by the most violent antagonisms to the Christian life, I felt the need of something which would give me greater strength and rest.

At twelve years of age, while working in the cotton mill, I was severely injured, so that during the four following years. I suffered greatly from pain and poverty. Out of this came the advantage to me of a lowly mind -- a simple, confiding heart, ready to receive the truth and light of the Spirit. By severe discipline from my earliest years I had also obtained self-reliance, and courage to attempt and pursue to the end whatever I felt to be my duty. Thus had God prepared me to welcome this self-crucifying doctrine and life of perfect love. I had little to give up, for my estate and prospects were exceedingly limited. And with that I seemed to sink into the will of God.

But I gave myself intelligently, deliberately, forever. And my heart was open as the flower to welcome the light and warmth of divine love. It was morning at last; the night had seemed long to me, for I had no happy childhood; the light had come, and how I welcomed it! I now entered the Beulah-land life, without any purpose to experiment on the subject of full salvation by avowing it only while favorable and convenient. My consecration was, like my marriage in later years, for life without drift, but with growing love.

And after forty-six years of its experience and profession, and often of reproach, my purpose is unchanged. For with me the logic of the doctrine is very short, sharp and direct. Either I can be holy or I cannot. If I can I must, for God wills it. He cannot approve in me the opposite of His will. Fellowship with Him, therefore, is impossible without obedience, for less than obedience is sin. God offers to make me holy through my faith in the atonement of Christ, and to maintain in my heart and life that holiness by the ministry and reigning of the Holy Spirit. Less than glad acceptance of His grace is rejection, and rejection is sin. I cannot be a sinning Child of God and heir of heaven. But I must be His child; I am in great earnest to get to heaven. He approved in His servants of old their plain declaration that they sought a heavenly country. I love His approval more than I love the light of my eyes. Mine shall be a plain declaration daily that I am going to heaven. Then I must be holy. I can be holy. I will. I rely this moment on His power to make me clean, and He doeth it; by faith I walk, live, and sing in liberty victory and joy.

"How did I become established?" It is difficult to answer this question. For nothing in my life of consecration supplies me with a starting point for thought. As well ask the obedient and loving child of a wise and devoted parent, "How do you manage to keep from running away from home?" Or the godly and devoted husband, "How do you keep from drift?" Each would say what I want to say, "I never have thought of drift." Love knows nothing of drift, or vacillation, or weariness, in its constancy. My only answer is, I saw the King and loved Him perfectly, and with my increasing years my Vision of God is enlarged; so is my love. My heart was defiled, even after my thorough conversion. He promised to make me clean and then to put His Holy Spirit within the heart He had cleansed. He did it. He doeth it now. He keeps me satisfied, but O, so hungry. "They that know thy name," thy perfections, "will put their trust in thee." I know His name. He deigns to reveal Himself to me every day; and thus I am abased in my own eyes, but exalted in His. He keeps me clean and strong and free.

It takes an all-consuming and separating love to settle and establish heart and mind in the fullness of gospel liberty and rest, and to die to unholy ambition for preeminence or popular favor. God would not trust me with distinction or popular favor or wealth. He has trusted me with His communion and kept me lowly, and I am satisfied. The books I prefer do not suggest doubt; I have enough of that without feeding it. The society I seek does not weaken me by dissipation. The unfriendliness of the average church to the subject gives me pain, but no fear. I have stood alone many, many times; I can do so to the end. I have reached a place in Christian life where my own company is a pleasure to me, for my conscience attests my sincerity and the Holy Spirit attests that I am clean through the blood. There are forty-six years of this life behind me, and an eternity before me. I am established; He has done it. "Rooted and built up in him, established in the faith abounding therein with thanksgiving." Hallelujah!

JOHN PARKER, HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT, July 11, 1887.

Source: "Forty Witnesses" by S. Olin Garrison

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