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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

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(Methodist)

I was converted in 1856, in Vermont, on a mountain, alone, amid a terrific thunder storm, after only a few minutes' meditation upon the goodness of God.

Shortly afterward I felt clearly a call to the ministry. I went to Newbury Seminary, Vt., but for two years did not join the Church, as I was trying to shake off the duty of the ministry. But in 1858 God so signally revealed Himself to me in gracious power at Lyndonville camp-meeting that I promised Him I would preach the Gospel. I returned to school, prepared a sermon at once, and determined to put the seal to my vow without delay. I told one of the professors my convictions and purposes, and he invited me to go with him to McIndoe's Falls the next Sabbath and preach. I did so, though I was not then a member of the Church, and had no license to preach but the inward call of the Holy Ghost. I forthwith, however, joined the Church in full, without probation, and was given a local preacher's license.

In 1860, while in college at Amherst, Mass., I joined the New England Conference and supplied neighboring churches till I graduated, in 1862, and was appointed to Chelsea, Mass. I was pastor for the next ten years in Chelsea, Lowell, Worcester, and Springfield. While pastor in Springfield, in 1872, a memorable incident in my experience occurred. I had never, consciously, lost my zeal or devotion to the Gospel ministry, nor the evidence of my assured salvation in Jesus Christ. God never left me a single year without a gracious revival, in which many souls were given as the seals of my ministry. Never had my pastorate been more favored with the divine blessing than at Springfield; but in the summer of 1872 a deep heart-hunger that I had never known began to be realized. I hardly knew how to understand it. I had not lost spirituality, as far as I could judge of my condition. I longed for I scarcely knew what. I examined myself and prayed more earnestly, but the hunger of my soul grew more imperious. I was not plunged in darkness or conscious of condemnation; yet the inward cravings increased. The result of these weeks of heart-throes was a gradual sinking of self, a consuming of all selfish ambitions and purposes, and a consciousness of utter emptiness. Then arose an unutterable longing to be filled. I waited upon the Lord, but He delayed His coming.

No matter how or by whom, but I had been prejudiced against the National Camp-meeting Association. I avoided their meetings; but in the midst of my longings of soul their meeting at Round Lake in 1872 occurred. I had not thought of attending, but in the midst of the meeting a conviction was borne in upon me, as clear and unmistakable as my identity, that if I would go to that meeting and confess how I was hungering after more of salvation I would be filled. To my surprise, and as a proof that my sincerity was genuine, I found no prejudice rising up, but a longing to go. I conferred not with flesh and blood, got excused from officiating at an important wedding, and started the next day.

I arrived near evening, and as I had but that night and the next day before returning to my pulpit I resolved to waste no time. At once I told the leaders of the leaders my purpose and errand. I seemed to be near to Peniel, and my soul was impatient. After a sermon (by whom I forget, for men were eclipsed in my yearning to see "Jesus only,") I asked the privilege of saying a few words. Many old friends were present, but I felt no hesitation, so fully was I possessed by the desire to know "the length, breadth, depth and height" of the love of God. I frankly told my errand there, and sought the prayers of all. I told them I wanted "the fullness;" that night, and felt it was the Divine will to give it that hour. I then descended to the altar and knelt with others before the Lord. I knew what I came for, believed it the will of God to bestow it, and cast myself fully upon the promises of God.

By simple trust I was enabled to take Christ as my sufficiency to fill and satisfy my hungry soul. The instant I thus received Christ as my "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption," the stillness and emotionlessness of absolute quiet permeated my entire being. I came near being deceived, for I had anticipated being filled with boundless ecstasy and joy. My enthusiastic and highly emotional temperament foretokened this, and I had already discounted such rapture. The tempter was by my side instantly, and suggested seductively, "All feeling has left you, the Spirit is withdrawn, and you are doomed to disappointment."

But quick as thought came my reply, "With or without feeling, I here and now take Christ as my all and in all!" I knew that moment He was my complete Saviour! At once the most delicious experience was mine that I can conceive! No joy, no rapture; but something sweeter, deeper than anything before known--"the peace of God that passeth all understanding!" It settled in upon me deeper and deeper, sweeter and sweeter, till I seemed "filled with all the fullness of God." I was ineffably satisfied. I could not shout or speak. Words would have been mockery of that peace I felt,

"That silent awe that dares not move!"

I continued in speechless wonder until the meeting closed, and was wrapped in adoration. The Spirit sealed these words on my heart, which have been ever since the sweetest verse in the Bible to me: "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." My soul knew that peace, and was subdued and filled with it. I continued through the night in that silent bliss; but the next morning at the stand I confessed the gracious work that Christ had wrought. As I testified my soul caught fire and my words burned with love, and yet peace was the supreme consciousness. I returned home that day and, at the first opportunity declared to my own flock the fullness of Christ that had been bestowed.

And this experience I have never lost -- not always equally clear and conspicuous, but ever a sacred deposition in my heart. Certain results have followed this experience or attended it in my ministry:

1. My soul has been one with God. I have not had an ambition or plan or purpose that was not formed in the desire to glorify God. Not perfect, nor faultless, nor mistakenless, yet the whole purpose of my life has been to please Him.

2. I have had a greater love for my work. I always loved it intensely, but it has seemed to possess me. The salvation of dying men has been a passion. I love the work with glowing affection.

3. Greater results have followed my ministry. More souls have been converted each year -- two or three times more. I have had power unknown before to persuade sinners to come to Christ.

4. My intellectual work was at once vastly stimulated. I have studied twice as much each year. My thought has been clearer and my love for patient thinking more ardent.

5. Perfect love has reigned in my soul. I have not slept a night since that camp-meeting with a bitter or vindictive or unChristian feeling toward a human being. It is easy to love men. I have experienced my share of occasions for the exhibition of unsanctified human nature, but it does not spring up. I judge it is not there.

6. I have had an aversion to argument or controversy on the subject of Christian perfection. I dare not speculate. I dare not mix my little human philosophy with the great divine truth and the divine experience. This instinctive shrinking from polemic or speculative methods of treating this subject has, perhaps, made me misunderstood by reason of my silence. Any movement which has seemed to isolate or differentiate holiness from the traditional teachings of Christianity has not commanded my convictions. I do not condemn others, but obey my own convictions.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord" for this experience which has doubled my joys, and, if I may judge doubled the effectiveness of my imperfect ministry.

J. O. PECK

Taken from "Divine Life" and submitted to Dr. Peck for revision. -- Ed.

Source: "Forty Witnesses" by Rev. S. Olin Garrison

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