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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

L. W. PILCHER

The experience of Dr. L. W. Pilcher, late president of Peking University, and for twenty three years a self-sacrificing missionary in China, who died November 24, 1893, illustrates most beautifully the distinction between partial and perfect salvation, and shows how definite the transition becomes from one to the other under the light and power of the Holy Ghost. His own record of his spiritual transfiguration, under date of February 2, 1887 -- six years preceding his translation to heaven -- which was found among his papers, tells impressively his story of the struggle and triumph by which he reached the delectable mount of full salvation. He said:

"It is now twenty one years since I received the assurance that God, for Christ's sake, forgave my sins. During all these years I have been as one dwelling upon a plateau of comfortable width, well up the mountain sides. Beneath me was the 'pit from which I was digged.' Before me was spread out the beautiful landscape, filled with many a view of delight to the spiritual sense. But before and above me towered the mountain with its brow bathed in eternal light, and from whose crest the ever-widening view stretched away in every direction clear up to the gates of pearls, through whose open portals streamed the glory that filled the soul of the dwellers upon the mountain-top, and shed some rays down the slope till they reached me, imparting some notion of what was above and beyond.

"Year after year, and day after day, I continued to dwell there. Earnest men and women passed me in their journey toward the light that blazed overhead. They often stopped and urged me to go with them. With Bible in hand, they pointed out the promises of our God which gave assurance of a loftier experience and a broader vision. I often felt drawn to follow with them, but with decreasing satisfaction and diminishing pleasure continued to dwell upon my chosen terrace, with its beautiful but narrow view. Each time I wished them Godspeed, and each time was left behind.

By and by these passers-by irritated me. I shunned their presence as much as possible. If obliged to listen to their stories of the wonders of the glory that shone above me, I did so with indifference, and looked upon them as visionaries. I put aside all their messages unread. I tried to

persuade myself that the towering mountain and its crown of glory was a figment of the imagination, and that where I stood was the true height of spiritual desire. In this delusion I rested.

For seventeen years God has permitted me to preach the gospel of love and salvation. He has placed me upon the outpost in a most responsible position. I have tried to tell men of Christ, and, from my own experience, could point to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Under my ministry men have, from time to time, seemed to yield, but seldom have they given themselves to Christ.

Within the last fortnight, by the kind exhortations of a friend, and because of our intensified desire to help some who are about me, I have been forced to thoroughly review my whole Christian life, and examine into the motives that have inspired what had seemed to be my most praiseworthy acts. Prayerfully and tearfully I undertook the task. I suddenly -- and I must say it in justice to myself, for I verily thought during all these years that I was doing God's service -- awoke up the fact that I had been striving to glorify self and enjoy God forever!

"Dwelling upon my little mountain terrace, God's face has been hid from me, and only a few rays of his glory have fallen upon the spot where I lived. I have sung, 'Arise, my soul, arise,' and have clung hard to things below. I have cried out, 'Nearer, my God, to thee,' and then turned my back upon him. I have with my lips said, 'O for a heart to praise my God!' and my heart said to praise self. I have exclaimed, 'Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove!' and have not looked up for the blessing. My private devotions have not been seasons of communion with my Father, but times of formal adherence to habits formed in childhood. My Bible has been read only in a perfunctory way, because a professing Christian is supposed to own a Bible, and read it too. But, alas! its clean pages and unused condition testifies too truly to my neglect.

Humiliating as this confession is, it is not half of what the Lord showed me, until in self-abasement I could have groveled in the dust in agony of despair.

"For a whole week I sought the path leading up. For some reason it seemed hedged up, and I could not make the start. Others about me found the path, and from their altitude of desire attained, beckoned me on, pointing out the path that seemed so plain to them, but hidden from me.

"I tried, with God's help, to remove self entirely from sight; but at the same time I was inclined to dictate to the Lord just where I ought to discover the way. and just how I wished the blessing. So long as I continued in this spirit, the way was hidden from my view. Once I was almost ready to give up, thinking the blessing was for me, and that the glory of the mountain-top was reserved for others. For a while I tried to rest resigned in this thought; but I found I could live no longer where I had dwelt so long. I must climb higher, or sink lower. Encouraged by the words and experience of others, I determined to rest in the promises and wait, expecting the answer in God's own time and way.

"Yesterday, at noon, in our prayer-meeting, the pathway began to open up. The evening before, while exhorting the Chinese who had been seeking salvation, I had used the illustration of the persistency of a beggar in seeking alms. Good old Brother Sun arose soon after, and, dwelling upon the same illustration, spoke of how often it was the case that the beggar became so engrossed

in seeking, that he fails to notice the gift that is thrown to him, and allows it to fall unheeded in the dust. I thought, while others in the noon prayer-meeting were telling their joys, 'Have I not failed to heed the gift already bestowed?' Then the light began to stream in, slowly filling the broken and empty vessel. Higher by faith I climbed, until soon I stood upon the summit, all bathed in light with the joy that overflowed.

"It was no vision or chimera of a disordered mind. I hungered and thirsted, and was filled. O blessed experience! O joy unspeakable! I had asked for a great deal, but the Lord gave me more -- exceeding ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL that I asked or thought.

"I now stand on the mountain-top. Clouds of doubt can not rise to this altitude. The light that is all around, streaming forth from the throne of God, is too bright and all-pervading to permit of a shadow."

Source: "Salvation Papers" by S. A. Keen

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THE END