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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)

It is a delicate and difficult thing to speak or to write of one's own personal experience and not to have self crop out. Our Lord said, "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory, but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true and no unrighteousness is in him." Can I do this in endeavoring to "declare what the Lord has done for my soul"? May the Holy Spirit give me a "single eye," that I may magnify the grace that "hath saved me, and called me with a holy calling."

I was born in what is now Ledyard township, Cayuga County, N.Y., September 28, 1813. I was at different times, in early life, somewhat convicted of the need of salvation, and made some feeble and abortive attempts to seek the Lord. I was induced to attend a Methodist revival meeting and found myself bracing against the influence of the meeting. But after having declined to go to the altar on the solicitation of the Congregationalist minister, who had known my former failure, I at last decided to yield, and in going I said, "I will never leave that altar till I am saved, if there is salvation for me." I struggled and wrestled, but when I gave up my struggles and sank down in self-despair, saying, "If I perish, I perish" I then found rest and a degree of peace.

I felt that I had crossed the line and was, by choice and surrender, "on the Lord's side," but without much emotion, and without a divine and intelligent assurance of pardon. But I was settled in my choice and purpose. I was tempted, before I reached my home, that I was not converted. And I could only answer, "I do not feel as I expected. I would not dare to say that I am certain that I am converted; but I shall never go back. My choice is made. If I am not converted I shall not rest until I know for certain that I am."

Though I immediately gave my name to the church, and met in class and attended to secret prayer and all religious duties, yet it was some months later before I was blessed in secret prayer as to banish all doubts. I was nineteen years old at this time.

I was unacquainted with Methodist literature, but I was hungry to know the truth. I procured books and read with avidity whatever pertained to the new life upon which I had entered. I

devoured all the literature I could. I found the doctrine and the experience of perfect love inculcated and exemplified. It was a revelation to me, so unlike the doctrine of the necessary indwelling of original sin, and the impossibility of living without "committing sin," in which, from childhood, I had been taught.

I determined to test its truth, first by a careful study of the Scriptures. This being settled affirmatively, I then resolved to test it by experience, if possible to me, and I had learned that God is no respecter of persons. Then followed a prolonged struggle for more than nine months. I sought "with strong crying and tears" in; my closet and in my barn, sometimes till midnight.

The memoir of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers was the instrument of my deliverance. I was then a class leader, and I had been to meet my class and had taken the little memoir with me to read to my Class some of her spiritual letters, in order to stir up the class to seek with me this great salvation.

O how my soul hungered and thirsted for this blessing! I could truly say, "'Tis more than death my God to love, and not my God alone."

Returning to my home, my (Presbyterian) mother having retired, I lighted a candle and sat down on the carpet in front of the stove, and opened up a page containing a quotation from Mr. Fletcher, in which he illustrated the text, "Reckon ye yourselves also to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He showed that as when we reckon with a creditor or with our host, and have paid all, we reckon ourselves free, "so now reckon with God--Jesus has paid all, paid for thee, hath purchased thy pardon, thy holiness, and it is now God's command, 'reckon thyself dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God.'

"O begin" (said he) "to reckon now, and believe, believe, and continue to believe; for it is retained as it is received, by faith alone." The view thus opened revealed to my eye the atonement--its provision for me, its freeness and its fullness and that my believing was simply crediting the truth of salvation as already wrought out in Christ. My believing made nothing new; but what was "true in Him before" became "true in me."

I began simply to reckon myself dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ my Saviour. The words of St. John then had a meaning which I had not previously seen: "Which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth."

This was the immediate effect I seemed to myself to be reduced to a cipher, and Christ filled the whole horizon of my vision! O how serene and peaceful I felt!

"Of my Saviour possessed, I was perfectly blessed,
As if filled with the fullness of love."

In this peaceful frame I retired to rest, reckoning myself dead indeed unto Sin. The thought was suggested, "This will all pass off with the sleep on the night"; but I still reckoned, rested and rejoiced. (This occurred in 1835.) In the next morning I continued the reckoning, and was free.

The next day after my deliverance, while absorbed in spiritual communings, the suggestion came to me, "Are you willing to confess what the Lord has done for you?" This was a startling thought. I dropped my eye to look at the suggestion, and immediately it was whispered, "If you confess this blessing you will be called a 'Perfectionist,'" and at once the odium and the reproach which attached to others because of wild and fanatical doctrines then regnant in the land seemed impending over me. Then, further, it was suggested: "You will enjoy this but a little while, and then, if you have made the confession and lost the blessing, it will bring dishonor upon the blessed doctrine."

Without realizing that these last suggestions came from the enemy, I yielded, and determined to be silent and endeavor to live it for a season first; and in an instant I found I had lost the blessing. I then saw the snare in which I had been taken. I had shrunk from "the reproach of the cross," and I had distrusted the keeping power of my Deliverer.

O, the sad reaction which came over me; self-reproach, loss of the keen relish, loss of confidence, and loss of a sense of the presence of Jesus, which so delightfully I had enjoyed. From being an heir I was a bankrupt. But I resolved at once to recover my forfeited inheritance in Christ.

But I was hampered; yet I continued faithful in duty, and sometimes was enabled in secret to trust and claim the blessing. But when in public I was afraid to confess it. I rounded my corners in my testimony, and then would sink again. This fluctuation continued about four years. Meantime I preached the doctrine, and others thought that I professed the blessing; but there was a little reserve and evasion.

At last, one day, in my secret struggling, I said: "O Lord, what does hinder me?" And I was reminded of my distrust and shrinking in regard to confession. I saw it and said, "If I live to preach next Sabbath I will confess Jesus as my full Saviour, whatever may be my feelings." Sabbath came, and I preached Christ as a full Saviour. In class meeting came the test, and I ventured out further in my testimony than I had ever done before, and I was correspondingly blest.

One brother, an exhorter, afterward a traveling preacher, received the blessing in class meeting that day. At my afternoon appointment I ventured still further, and was more explicit, and was still more fully blest. In the evening service, in class, I heard sung for the first time, "I've given all for Christ, He 's my all," etc., and it went through me as a lightning streak, and my whole being responded, "I've given all for Christ, He's my all."

Three things I must record in justice to the facts of my later experience.

1. The advantage which Satan gained over me in the first instance has furnished a sort of fulcrum on which he has rested his lever in his subsequent assaults and devices toward me, and too successfully has he "hindered me" at the same point. It has cost me great struggles to rise above the influence and to assert my liberty. Hence my "interior life" has fluctuated, and been obscured at various times. The stem has been broken, but the root has never been killed. I have always been in sympathy with the theme and with those who are identified with it. The more explicit I have been in my teaching the clearer has been my own experience and the more successful I have been.

2. Whatever of success God has been pleased to bestow on my labor and teaching I owe to that early initiation into the "interior of the kingdom," and my adherence to the truth touching "the deep things of God."

3. I am humbled in view of frequent lapses in spirit and temper, though graciously restored and still abiding in Christ. When I have contracted a stain upon my white robe I have found no safety or relief except by an immediate resort to the cleansing fountain of atoning blood, and there to wash the stain away.

Mr. Fletcher's experience in losing it several times before he was established in it has helped me in my recovery. I know the power of Jesus to cleanse from all sin, and to "save to the uttermost." I know the Holy Ghost as a sanctifier, comforter and guide.

My life has been one of delightful labor, of severe and repeated trials and bereavements. These words of St. Peter have been instructive, inspiring, and assuring to me: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect" that is, "stablish, strengthen, settle you" -- "establish you unblameable in holiness before God unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

William Reddy, SYRACUSE, N. Y., July 6, 1887.

Source: "Forty Witnesses" by S. Olin Garrison

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THE END