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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

PAUL S. REES
(Covenant Church)

Paul S. Rees, the son of Seth Rees, served as pastor of the First Covenant Church of Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was as a prolific writer whose contributions to literature which have been read and appreciated by holiness people everywhere.

A merciful Providence gave me birth in a home of fervent piety. I learned the external pattern of the Christian life from my infancy. Memory does not go back to a time when I did not say prayers and was not, after a fashion, a believer.

Yet at the age of seventeen, I was awakened to the realization that I had simply taken over the forms, phrases, ideals, conventions and habits of Christianity. But no flame had been lighted within! I had not been "born again." The issue was frankly faced. Matters came to a head after a sleepless night. Some restitution would have to be made. Would I make it? I would. Kneeling at my bedside, on a Monday morning, I made my confession to God. I then passed beyond an intellectual acceptance of Christ as the Saviour (which had been mine all along) to an eager, restful trust in Him as the Giver of life, forgiveness, and peace.

The impartation of new life and the assurance of peace with God came to me with penetrating and powerful effect. Mine was no longer a borrowed Christianity; it was something that possessed me, a vitality within, a mighty motivation that I had so desperately needed.

What happened four days later, so far as the time element is concerned, was almost certainly due to the kind of theology on which I had been reared. My father was a convinced and convincing preacher of what A. J. Gordon has called "The Twofold Life," or what John Wesley, long before, referred to as "the second blessing, properly so called." In my mind was the thought that I would soon make my way to the public altar in our church and claim my "inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith."

That I had peace with God was beyond all doubt. It was literally delicious. But there were several matters on which I wanted to be equally sure. There was, I well knew, a dispositional trait of deceit that must be blasted away. There was the question of a deep and unqualified readiness to enter the ministry if that proved to be God's will for me.

God knew that I was dead in earnest. He knew that I wanted to go "all out" in a life of devotion to Christ. He knew that my mind was now occupied -- four days after my conversion hour -- with thoughts of what I was going to do and say when, in the near future, I should kneel at an altar of consecration. What happened then was inexpressibly quiet but indescribably real. The Inner Voice said, "Why not now?" To which, in a moment, my voice replied, half aloud, "Yes, Lord, now!" What took place in that instant had its human and its divine side. On my side it was an invitation to the Holy Spirit to take over completely and continuously in my life; on His side it was, in my view, a stroke of death to the least and last claims of self, the "crucifixion" to be maintained thereafter by my constant yieldedness to the sovereign claims of Jesus Christ.

Several things stand out as, in gratitude to God, I review the years that have followed:

1. The Holy Spirit has sustained within me a sense of unity in my life. There has been a joyous absence of conflict and strain.
2. It has been easy to love, and to do the things that love does when it is Christian: to be forgiving, unresentful, unsuspicious.
3. It has been my increasingly challenging experience to discover how wide a gap still separates me from the perfect life and the perfect service which Jesus Christ so richly deserves from this redeemed soul of mine.

Source: "Living Flames of Fire" by Bernie Smith

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THE END