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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

WILLIAM REEVES
(Methodist)

A little more than forty years ago, the active men in London Methodism made considerable efforts at chapel extension, and Lambeth chapel was among those erected, through their instrumentality, in the year 1808.

Churches were few, evangelical preaching rare; and the ministry of such men as Benson, Clarke, Moore, and others, was a powerful attraction, and a large congregation was soon gathered. The Lambeth society was an excellent one...

Occasional entries in the blank leaves of his [William Reeves'] class-books testify, from time to time, the trials and the triumphs of our friend's faith, and of his growth in grace. Of late years these entries became more copious, and some extracts may be made from them. In March, 1840, is the following:--

"I believe the ever-blessed Lord is carrying on his own work of grace in my poor soul, because I never felt the corruption and awful depravity of my own heart and life as I do now. Yes, indeed! it is one thing to read of it in the word of God where it is so clearly pointed out -- one thing to hear of it from the pulpit and to talk about it to others -- but O, how different it is when we see and feel it within by the light of the Spirit of God! Well might my beloved Saviour say, 'If I wash you not, ye have no part with me.' I bless the Lord that I ever felt his blood applied to my poor polluted heart, and still feel that I have need of its efficacious power every moment."

In another book, the same year, is written: "Glory be to Thy holy name that thou continuest to make thy house my sweetest home on earth; but praise the Lord, O my soul, that I know my name is written in the Lamb's book of life: and if the 'earthly house of this tabernacle' were dissolved, 'I have a building of God in the heavens.' "

His experience continued to deepen. In 1843 he wrote: "confinement by sickness is a seasonable opportunity for improvement in patience and resignation; the love of God is a sweet

support in pain. Glory be to Thy holy name, I feel it has opened a paradise on earth! I now feel I am 'dead indeed unto sin,' and 'my life is hid with Christ in God.' O my soul, art thou indeed lodged in such a heavenly place -- the thought is overwhelming."

Father Reeves was no stranger to affliction. He blesses God for having given him power to endure, but says, in 1843: "My nights have been full of tossing to and fro until the dawning of the day; often have I been obliged, through severe pain, to get out of bed from ten to twenty times in the night and walk my chamber; and yet the blessed Lord hath given me strength to labour hard all the day for the bread that perisheth, and to meet my classes, and to enjoy the visitation of the poor and sick of the Lord's people. His grace has ever been sufficient for me."

On some of the nights of painful watching, his soul was so blessed, while relying "by faith on the precious atoning blood," that he says, "I almost fear sinking into the arms of sleep, lest I should fail to retain the bliss I now enjoy. Give Thine angels charge over me!"

In 1844 an entry runs thus: "For several weeks past my soul has been longing for a clearer testimony from the Spirit of my entire sanctification. I pleaded hard with the Lord for it, through the precious blood of Jesus; and, glory be to my heavenly Father, he very soon granted me the desire of my heart, though so unworthy, and filled my soul with 'perfect love.' Blessed be the name of the Triune God for his unspeakable love to me."

This blessing Father Reeves appears to have enjoyed at an earlier date, but his evidence of it was now, as he remarks, given to him "afresh" and "far brighter."

In 1844, while reading the Scriptures in family worship, and "meditating, by the help of the Holy Spirit, on the exceeding great and precious promises, my soul, says our friend, "was in very deed, in a large and overwhelming sense, made a partaker of the divine nature; O how was I humbled at the Saviour's feet, and my soul filled with glory and praise to the almighty God of love!"

Take extracts from another entry -- "My body being tossed with great pain so that I could not sleep all night, while I was meditating on the mercy of God and the love of Jesus at midnight, divine light rushed into my soul; and though it was all darkness without, glory be to God, it was all heavenly light within." He went on meditating about heaven, the glorious city, the New Jerusalem, and the Lamb in the midst of the throne, when he says, --

"This blessed part of the word of God was, by his Spirit, spoken to my heart in a voice loud but sweet: 'I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' In a moment my soul was so filled with that light and life, my peace and joy became so exceeding great, the blood of atonement so sweet and precious, that it must have been a portion of heavenly joy and glory poured into my soul. I could only find vent for my happiness by crying, 'Glory, glory, glory to God and the Lamb forever and forever!' O, this was a happy night of pain! I would not have been without it for all the sleep in the world; if ever I could say in truth, it is now --

'With Thee conversing, we forget

All time, and toil, and care;
Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
If thou, my God, art here.' "

From this time his experience is of the richest and deepest tone; and, but that religious biography has for years past presented Christian enjoyment to the readers, till, it is feared, some of the effect of the recital is lost, a whole volume might be filled with passages nearly as rich as the above.

Father Reeves was eminently a practical man; and yet, had he indulged it, he might have exhibited much power of imagination. One of his class speaks of the aptness of his illustrations of Scripture doctrine and experience drawn from the scenes of his boyhood; and so true to nature, as at once to awaken interest and rivet attention. The following extract shows the imaginative faculty busy in sleep, and almost realizes an answer to the prayer of Charles Wesley:--

"Loose me from the chains of sense,
Let me from the body free;
Draw with stronger influence
My unfetter'd soul to Thee;
In me, Lord, thyself reveal;
Fill me with sweet surprise;
Let me thee, when waking, feel;
Let me in thy image rise."

Source: "The Life of William Reeves"
by Edward Corderoy

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THE END