

All Rights Reserved By HDM For This Digital Publication  
Copyright 1994 Holiness Data Ministry

Duplication of this CD by any means is forbidden, and  
copies of individual files must be made in accordance with  
the restrictions stated in the B4Ucopy.txt file on this CD.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

**ROBERT ROBERTS**  
(Not to be confused with Robert R. Roberts)

\* \* \* \* \*

I was in great bondage through fear of death from my infancy, and an entire stranger to the way of peace. I had no notion of salvation through a Redeemer, and knew no more of the nature and necessity of the new birth than Nicodemus did. Nor do I remember that I ever heard one gospel sermon till I was above twenty years of age: so that I have reason to add, I was at that time "without Christ, being an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." And yet I was kept from the commission of scandalous sins. I was sober by constitution, diligent in business, and very careful. And as I went to church oftener than many, I was deemed by myself, and those who knew me, better than others. But I was a great sinner before God, and a child of wrath; my heart was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and my tempers, words, and actions were abominable in His sight with whom I have to do.

The first good impression, as far as I can recollect, that was made upon my mind, was by a few words dropped by Mr. Thomas Brisco, without any seeming design of his: but God sent them home to my heart, and they were as a nail fixed in a sure place. We had been school-fellows when very young; and when I went to live in Chester, we were intimate companions till he became religious. But then I avoided him, as though he had had the plague, because he was called a Methodist. Nevertheless, I retained a secret respect for him. About two years after his conversion, being in company with him and his brother, he happened to mention some rude usage they had met with that day as they returned from the church: among other things the people cried out, "There go the sanctified Methodists!" He pitied their ignorance, and with a good deal of fervor wished that what they had said were true; adding, "If I was sanctified, I should not be long out of heaven." He talked about death, as though he was not afraid of it, but rather as if it were a desirable event. This struck me indeed, and made a deep impression on my soul, and convinced me that there was something in religion which I was a stranger to.

From this time I determined a good opinion of the Methodists, and believed them to be the servants of the living God. I began to pray, and strive against sin; I likewise resolved to join the society, but not yet. For I knew, if I went among them, I must suffer persecution. At that time the Methodists were looked upon as the worst of men, and the most horrible things were laid to their charge that could be invented. They were represented as hypocrites, blasphemers, disturbers of the peace of families and of the nation; and to associate with them was said to be the way to destroy body, soul, and substance. Others, indeed, might curse and swear, get drunk, profane the Sabbath, and starve their families, and yet be in no danger of persecution or ill-treatment of any kind; but, on the contrary, were deemed innocent creatures, in comparison of the Methodists, &c. I thought, "I cannot bear this usage where I am known, and from my relations and neighbors; but, if I live to the expiration of my apprenticeship, I will go to London, or some other place where I am not known, and then I will be a Methodist."

When I was about twenty-one years of age, Mr. Brisco invited me to hear Mr. John Hampson. I went with him, but was very much ashamed, and afraid of being seen by any that knew me. However, I was well pleased with what the preacher said, and believed him to be a messenger from God. Notwithstanding this, I did not hear another preacher for near six months; for I feared persecution. Nevertheless, I retained my good opinion of the people, and the way in which they worshipped God; and now and then I spoke a word in their favor. My desires increased, I prayed frequently, and more fervently, but was overcome by sin, although I wished to be delivered from it, and made many resolutions against it. But, alas! I was without wisdom and power, and too often was led captive by the enemy of souls. At length I took courage, and went to hear another preacher. The discourse was made useful to me, and likewise the conversation of some pious young men belonging to the society. I resolved, by Divine grace, to serve God, and save my soul. My mind became in a measure enlightened, and I was enabled to forsake my sins and sinful companions all at once. The latter was no hard task; for most of them fled from me, as soon as I was reported to be a Methodist: they were glad to get out of my way, lest I should reprove them, or cause them to be stigmatized with the same opprobrious name.

I now desired admission into the society; and after being examined by one of the preachers, respecting the state of my mind, my motives, &c., I was favored with that privilege; for such I then looked upon it to be, and I see it in the same point of light at this day. And I hope, and believe, I shall have reason to praise God to eternity that I ever was united with that despised people, whom God had greatly blessed; and I trust He will continue to bless them for ages to come.

I now constantly attended upon all the means of grace. I went to church, and received the sacrament almost every Lord's day. Divine light broke in upon my soul with so much clearness, that I was astonished at myself, and was ready to say, "Where have I been? and what have I been doing all my life till now?" I compared myself to a man who had lived all his life in a dungeon, and was brought suddenly out of it into the full blaze of day. The Scriptures seemed new; as also the Common-Prayer Book and everything that was spiritual. And I was fully convinced that the doctrines taught by the Methodists, and those contained in the word of God and the Common Prayers of the Church of England, must stand or fall together; there being no difference between them. I also saw that the Methodists had been greatly injured by slanders and evil reports; for instead of finding them to be hypocrites, disturbers of the peace of families, enthusiasts, &c., I found them sincere, peaceable, humble, and rational Christians; minding the things of this world in

their place, and not neglecting those of another. For these reasons my soul was firmly united to them.

And now I met with what I expected; namely, persecution from relations, friends, and neighbors; and wherever I went, some railed, and others cursed me, and said, "it would be no more sin to kill me than to kill a mad dog." Others pitied me, and cursed the false prophets, as they called the preachers, who had deceived me, and driven me out of my senses. Into whatever street or lane in the city I went, I met with reproach and cruel mockings. This was a great trial to me; yet, by the grace of God, I bore it; though sometimes shame made it a sufficient exercise for all the patience, resolution, and grace I had. From my first setting out to be religious, I never denied the truth; neither would I suffer its professors to be spoken against, without vindicating them to the utmost of my power. And I thank God I always found somewhat to say that would either convince or stop the mouths of gain sayers; for I have always observed that the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, and that the enemies of the truth cannot stand before it.

I had not been long among the Methodists, before I was made sensible of my guilt, misery, and danger, and likewise of the absolute necessity of having an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ; that my sins might be forgiven, and that I might be born again; without which, I knew I could not see the kingdom of God. I sought the Lord with earnestness day and night; and even wished it had been possible for me to live without sleep, that I might have spent all my time in this employment. Indeed, I did make a very little sleep serve, though I wrought hard every day. The consideration, that I had wasted so much of my short life, in a state of sin, ignorance, and rebellion against so good and merciful a God, greatly affected me, and I found it hard work to forgive the ministers I had sat under so long a time, for not instructing me in the essential doctrines of the gospel; for I was persuaded that if I had heard the truths of the gospel laid down in a clear manner, I should have been brought to an acquaintance with the Lord some years before.

It was in the month of June, 1754, that I joined the society; and about six weeks after I experienced that peace which passeth all understanding. The love of God was shed abroad in my heart, and His Spirit did bear witness with my spirit that I was His child. And now I blessed His holy name that ever I was born. I loved Him who had first loved me; and with joy declared His goodness to my fellow travelers, and we rejoiced together.

In a few weeks after I had found peace with God I began to see and feel the depravity of my nature in a greater degree than I ever had done before. At first I was dejected and cast down; then I began to doubt that I had deceived myself in concluding that the Lord was reconciled to me; and, my comfort decreasing, by and by I entirely cast away my confidence. And now a horrible dread overwhelmed my soul; and, to increase my distress, Satan threw his fiery darts at me, which stuck fast in my mind, particularly blasphemous thoughts. For some months such thoughts crowded into my mind as are not fit to be mentioned, and which could only proceed from the prince of darkness. The enemy then suggested that I had sinned against the Holy Ghost, -- that there was no mercy for me, -- and that these thoughts were not from him, but arose from my own heart. This affected me more than anything I had ever felt: to think that I should have such thoughts against that blessed God who had been so kind to me, and whom I desired to love and honor for ever, pierced me with inexpressible anguish.

In a short time I gave up all hope of mercy and deliverance, and sunk into utter despair. I imagined that I had blasphemed against the Holy Spirit, which threw me into such inexpressible misery, that I had no rest day or night, but in the morning I was ready to say, "Would God it were evening!" and in the evening, "Would God it were morning!" I fasted, prayed, and used every means of grace constantly, and resolved to serve God as long as I lived, if He did send me to hell when I died. I do not know that I gave way to one known sin, open or secret, when this distress came upon me, except that of unbelief. I conversed with the most experienced of the children of God I met with, but could find none who had drunk so deep of the wormwood and gall as I had done. However, they did all in their power to comfort me; they told me that God was with me, and would deliver me. I likewise read all the books I met with that were calculated to direct and help a soul in deep distress, but found few suited to my dreadful case. The books I received most benefit from were, Bolton's "Instructions for the right comforting of afflicted Consciences;" Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and his "Grace abounding to the chief of Sinners." At one time I was a little comforted with the following lines:

"I never shall rise  
To my first paradise,  
Or come my Redeemer to see;  
But I feel a faint hope  
That at last He will stoop,  
And His pity shall bring Him to me."

One day when I was at work, musing on my unhappy state, those precious words of Scripture were applied to my soul with some degree of power: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." This afforded me some consolation: but it was only like the morning cloud and early dew; it soon vanished away. I often thought that both God and the whole creation were against me; and concluded, that I should have been happy had I been anything but a man; and was ready to say, "O that I had never been born!" But one Saturday evening, at a prayer-meeting, the Lord blessed me with the powerful drawings of His love, and with a dawning of hope that He would yet be gracious to me. I was as a man raised from the dead; for I had been a long time in darkness, and would, I thought, have given as many worlds, had it been in my power, as there are minutes in eternity, for the least dawning of hope. From this time till my great deliverance, I frequently found comfortable visits from on high.

My great distress continued about nine months; and the Lord was pleased to sanctify it to me. I was more abundantly sensible of the power of unbelief, and of my helplessness. I clearly saw I must be saved by grace, or not at all. I was stripped from all self-righteousness, and every other dependence, but a crucified Saviour, and was made willing to be saved in God's own way as a sinner; yea, as the most unworthy of all creatures. I thought I was willing to wait till my last breath, if I were but sure the Lord would then smile upon me, and show me His salvation. The Lord then graciously manifested Himself unto me, as my Lord and my God, in a powerful manner. He overturned my unbelief, and all my doubts and fears. He removed all my misery, and filled me with peace and joy through believing; so that I was as a giant refreshed with new wine; my cup ran over, and I was ready to proclaim my great Deliverer's praise upon the house-top. I could no more doubt of the favor of God than of my own existence. And such were the impressions then made upon my mind, that I was a stranger to doubt or tormenting fear for many years after.

\* \* \* \* \*

Source: "The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers" by Thomas Jackson

\* \* \* \* \*

THE END