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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

JAMES ROGERS
1749 -- 1807
(Methodist)

His Conversion

February 6, 1769... In that solemn moment, all the sufferings of Christ came to my mind. By the eye of faith I had as real a view of His agony on Calvary as ever I had of any object by the eye of sense. I saw His hands and His feet nailed to the cross; His head crowned with thorns; and His side pierced with the soldier's spear; with innumerable drops of blood falling from different parts of His body, and His face all covered therewith. But oh what a look was that! Such an inexpressible degree of approbation was communicated to my soul thereby as I shall never forget. While I now recollect it, my overflowing heart and eyes almost forbid my proceeding. In that moment my burden was gone; my heart was brought out of bondage into glorious liberty; and the love which I felt for God and all mankind was inexpressibly great. I was constrained to cry, with David, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul' I seemed as if I had never known happiness till now, and could hardly think it possible that I should learn war any more.

I now went about among my old acquaintance, with a confidence that they would all repent and be converted if they knew how ready Christ was to save them. Some I found willing to hear what I had to say; others stared at me as one quite out of my senses. However, as nothing discouraged me, if I found them unwilling to let me pray with them, I used to fall on my knees in the midst of the floor, and praise God for what He had done for me, and pray that He would let them see their wants, and give them all to experience the same blessing which I enjoyed. It pleased God to work powerfully at that time, especially among the young people, many of whom came from a considerable distance to hear the word. I and some others had great delight in accompanying them on their way home. Nor can I reflect on those seasons without singular pleasure, when we sang the praises of God as we walked along, and when we kneeled down in the fields, or on the seashore, and commended each other to the grace of God. This was in the twentieth year of my age.

His Entire Sanctification

About this time the Lord raised up several witnesses of entire sanctification, whose daily walk and conversation did honour to their profession. With some of these I often conversed, and they would frequently speak of the blessedness of this salvation from inbred sin. I did not fully understand them at first, but thought I was as happy as I could be; nor did I know that I wanted anything which I had not received. However, not many days after this, being closely tempted, I was convinced that, though the guilt of sin was all done away, yet there were in me the remains of an evil nature; that, though I was happy in a sense of acceptance, and had power also over inward and outward sin, yet the fountain of corruption was not dried up; that I had yet a degree of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. And had I not been told that this is consistent with a state of justification, it is probable I should have cast away my confidence, as the enemy strongly suggested that my experience was all a delusion. The attack was severe while it lasted, for I reasoned with the temptation till my soul was in an agony; but in my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He graciously heard me, and delivered me out of all my fears; so that my evidence of pardon was more distinct and clear than ever. And as I believed the report, and cordially received the testimony of the happy few who professed entire sanctification, I felt strong desires awakened in my soul for that inestimable blessing; and being daily urged by some of these to press after it, and to expect it every moment by faith alone, in a little time my thirst was such that I could not rest, whatever place or company I was in.

In reading the Scriptures I was more and more enlightened to see, and encouraged to hope for, deliverance from the root of sin. I saw there were given unto me exceeding great and precious promises that I should be made a partaker of the divine nature; and that the great end for which our Lord was manifested in the flesh was 'to destroy the works of the devil, to make an end of sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.' And I farther perceived that not only the promise of God, but His oath also, was given of old to His covenant people, 'that they should be delivered out of the hands of their enemies, that they might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of their life.'

From the manner in which this subject is introduced in the New Testament, I was led to infer two things. First, that the enemies there meant were our sins, especially the evils of our own heart. And, secondly, that the design of God is not to defer the destruction of these till death, or even to some little time before it, but that 'now is the accepted time'; for He here declares His will is that we should serve Him all the remaining part of our life in holiness, and without fear; which St. John, in his first Epistle, iv. 18, says we cannot do until we are made first perfect in love.

Indeed, the whole Bible seemed calculated to raise my expectation of an answer to that prayer: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' And the more I contrasted the spirituality of the law with my own corrupt nature, the more eager were my desires.

At last I resolved neither to eat nor sleep till my desire was accomplished. I had no sooner made that resolution than I was tempted to reason upon the rashness of it. But such was the condescension of God that He indulged my importunity, and granted my request. I went with a trembling heart to the very house where it had pleased Him to shed abroad His pardoning love in

my soul. That pious family no sooner learned my errand than they encouraged me to expect the blessing that hour; and exhorted me to believe on the Lord Jesus for full salvation. We then fell on our knees; and a good woman, one Mary Best, full of faith and love, wrestled and pleaded with the Lord for me.

In less than fifteen minutes my burden was removed, and I felt an entire change, accompanied with a peculiar humbling sweetness; but not that rapturous joy I always thought attended that perfect liberty.

On this account I was tempted much to reason; and it is probable the enemy would have wrested away my shield but for the comforting interposition of my friends, who were not, like me, ignorant of Satan's devices. They told me it was a common case that a soul might be emptied of sin, and yet not filled with love till afterwards; that the blessing of Christian perfection consisted in feeling I am nothing, and Christ is all in all. This I found true by experience, and therefore I was enabled henceforth to rejoice in a full assurance of this great salvation. In this glorious liberty I walked for at least three months; during which time, notwithstanding many fiery darts were shot at me, I could sing,

Not a cloud doth arise,
To darken the skies,
Or hide for a moment
My Lord from my eyes.

When I looked for those inward risings of anger, pride, and self-will, which, like dry tinder, were formerly ready to catch fire at any provocation, I found them not; but, on the contrary, I found meekness, humility, and resignation. I was so truly humbled with a sense of my own nothingness that I rejoiced to suffer reproach for the name of Christ. That natural enmity to the pure law of God being now totally removed, His commandments became more joyous than ever; and I could say, in a sense that I never could before, 'The law of God is in my heart, even the law of love.' I felt it the constraining principle which led me to do and suffer the whole will of God.

Source: Originally from "Lives of Early Methodist Preachers" by Thomas Jackson

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