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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

MRS. C. W. (LAURA) RUTH

I was born in Story County, Iowa. While I was very young, my parents drove to a Fourth of July celebration; but finding no dance floor on the grounds they drove back twelve miles to the county seat, where they found a tent with a holiness camp meeting in progress. Eternity alone can reveal how much that meeting has meant to my life and eternal future; for after attending and seeking the Lord in three services, my father and mother were saved.

County and State holiness leaders kept camp meetings and conventions before the people, and my parents were sanctified.

When the next Fourth of July came, a neighbor wanted to take my sister and me to the celebration, as our parents had no desire to attend. I have always been thankful that our mother was not moved by our pleading and tears; but her "No" was final and we never attended again, though I was greatly disappointed that first time, as I wanted to hear the band music.

On the night before I was eleven years of age I was converted in a revival meeting in an Evangelical Church. The pastor's wife invited me to the altar. My mother had often spoken to me concerning my soul's need, but never until the night before I was saved did I realize I was a sinner; I knew I should go to the altar when the invitation was given, but I was with a young lady; the little church was crowded and we were in the "Amen Corner." The enemy said, "What would she think of you if you walked out and kneeled at that altar?" I was the only one at the altar the next evening. The people may have thought it a small meeting with only an eleven-year-old, bashful girl converted, but it was a wonderful service for me. The evangelist, Rev. Charles Pickford, soon came to be our pastor. If his daughter or I failed to testify when we had opportunity, he always reminded us after the service that we must witness for the Lord. That kindly admonition was just what I needed; otherwise my timidity might have checked my testimony and caused me to backslide.

Our pastor's wife encouraged me to commit scripture to memory and our pastor was continually preaching holiness, showing the condition of the unsanctified and telling of the possibility and great need of having all sin cleansed from the heart.

My parents took us to holiness conventions and camp meetings, so I was well "exposed" to holiness teaching. I am more thankful to them for what they did for me in this way than for anything else they might have done.

Before I was fifteen years of age my mother was taken to Heaven. My sister was twelve and brothers ten, eight and three years of age. Since I was oldest, I quit school and cared for my baby brother, sent the rest to school, and took my mother's place in carrying on the work in the home, on a farm. I baked the bread, churned the butter, canned several hundred quarts of fruit, raised many hundreds of chickens, and much garden, cooked for corn-pickers, harvesters and carpenters.

How good it was that I was saved, for I had no mother to direct. Sometimes when my brother didn't do as he should, I had a feeling in my heart that troubled me, though no one knew about it. It was often so difficult for me to testify, even though I wanted to, yet I was afraid I wouldn't speak just as I should. I had heard, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."

Soon after I was saved we had a new pastor who didn't preach holiness; but one Sunday afternoon some Salvation Army people held a meeting in our church and I went to the altar, knowing I had a heart need. The pastor's wife came to me, telling me I was all right, and didn't need to be at the altar. She didn't know the inner feelings of my heart when things didn't go as I thought they should.

I don't remember how many times I was a seeker in camp meetings and conventions, trying to get rid of carnality. I would think I "took it by faith," and go on for a time sincere in my belief and testimony that I was sanctified; then I would get in a good holiness meeting and a doubt would arise and again I would go to the altar.

At the National Holiness Association Camp Meeting at Des Moines, Iowa, I heard C. J. Fowler, Will Huff, H. C. Morrison, J. M. and M. J. Harris, C. W. Ruth, G. A. McLaughlin, and others sing and preach holiness till I knew it was the will of God for me. But when Dr. Carradine preached from Romans 7:24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" picturing the awfulness of carrying around the body of sin and clearly showing that carnality means death to the soul, if we are not delivered, I was more determined to be sanctified; for I loved the Lord, and the knowledge of the awfulness of carnality was so stamped on my mind that nothing but complete deliverance could satisfy.

How thankful I am for such faithful messengers! Oh, that all young people may hear as I heard! I kept on seeking, and each time I thought I had believed. One Sunday afternoon at the National Holiness Camp Meeting, when I was seventeen, I determined that I would never leave the altar until I was absolutely certain the work was done. Previously I had promised the Lord I would be or go as He might choose. I became willing to join the Salvation Army or go to Africa; but I

didn't want to say a thing that wasn't true, so I thought I must have the witness before I believed. Believing God's Word is so simple, yet the enemy makes it a mountain. But I was at the altar and didn't intend to leave till I was rid of all sin if I stayed there till I died. Jennie Reeves, now Mrs. C. A. Thompson, took out her watch and said, "Now can't you believe God this twelfth day of June at fifteen minutes till six o'clock?" I said to the Lord, "I'll believe Thy word at any cost." I felt as I think the priests must have felt when they stepped off the Jordan bank. I felt I was stepping into dark, turbulent waters that would swallow me up unless the Lord came to my rescue. I never touched the waters, but the Holy Ghost came like an electric shock through my entire being. No one needed to tell me the work was done. I hardly knew how I got up from that altar and down the long aisle, but I do remember when I reached the outside of the tabernacle.

Never again did I feel I should go to the altar because of a question mark in my experience. And the inward carnal stirrings were gone. I might be discouraged with those who go often to the altar, if it were not for my own experience. Some one has said that we must want to be sanctified more than mildly if we are to obtain. When our desire becomes great enough, we will receive.

Source: Autobiographical Life Sketches of C. W. and Laura Ruth

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