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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

GEORGE STORY
1738 -- 1???
(Methodist)

I was born in the year 1738, at Harthill, in the West Riding of Yorkshire ... When I was twenty years old I was glad of the opportunity of seeing London ... I was conscious I had been pursuing a vain shadow; and that God only could direct me into the right path. I therefore applied to him with earnest importunity, entreating him to show me the true way to happiness; which I was determined to follow, however difficult or dangerous.

Just at this time a work of grace broke out in the village where I was born, through the labours of a person remarkably zealous for the cause of God. My mother, in particular, was deeply convinced of the truth, which she soon experienced, and retained the life and power thereof to her dying day. She was much concerned for me, hoping if I could be brought among religious persons I should likewise soon be convinced. She therefore, by an acquaintance, entreated me to converse with the Methodists. I answered, "If my mother desires it, I will visit them with all my heart." The first time I entered a Methodist's house they went to prayer with me and for me a considerable time. I looked upon them as well meaning, ignorant people, and thought no more about the matter. In a few days they desired I would come and see them again.

Considering it was my mother's request, I went without hesitation. I found four or five persons in the house with whom I disputed about religion for some hours, till I had finally wearied them. They laboured to convince me that I was a sinner, and in danger of eternal death, if I did not repent and return to God. These were subjects I had no kind of idea of; and as their arguments were only supported by Scripture, for which I had very little regard, all they said made not the least impression.

As I was about to withdraw, not a little elevated by my imaginary victory, one of the company desired to ask me a few questions: the first was, "Are you happy?" My countenance instantly fell, and I answered from the dictates of my conscience, "No:" she then inquired if I was not desirous of finding happiness: I replied it had been my pursuit ever since I could remember;

that I was willing to obtain it on any terms, and that I had sought for it every way I could think of, but in vain. She then showed me the true way of obtaining the happiness I wanted; answering me if I sought the Lord with all my heart I should certainly find in him that peace and pleasure which the world could not bestow. Every word sunk deep into my mind; and from that moment I never lost my convictions, nor my resolutions to be truly devoted to God.

I immediately broke off all connection with my companions; threw my useless books into the fire; and sought the Lord with all my might ... About this time I heard Mr. Fugil preach: his discourse was suited to one in my state ... I saw the way of justification and full sanctification so clearly that I could trace the path as if it had been a road map .. This was soon followed by a clear manifestation of pardoning mercy, that excluded all doubts, temptations, and fears, accompanied with a joy unspeakable and full of glory ... the enemy suggested to me, "Thou mayest now take thy time; thou art a child of God; and if once in Christ, always in Christ: as for full sanctification, it will be accomplished some time or other; perhaps in the article of death. God has begun the work, and he will finish it; therefore take thy case, and enjoy thy present comfort.

But I saw, whether these were true or false arguments, the conclusions were deadly. Therefore I rejected the suggestions with all my might, and determined to be wholly devoted to God ... Soon after, I entered into the most afflicting dispensation I had ever known, which continued three months. I gradually sunk into unaccountable anguish of mind, as if the powers of darkness surrounded me without intermission...I still kept cleaving to the Lord and staying my mind upon him; the cloud broke, and my former peace returned. I found something daily dying within me, but what it was I could not tell. When I was at the lowest, I began to rise again, and continued increasing in the life of God for three months more.

I was then one evening meeting my band, when the power of the Lord descended in an uncommon manner, and I believed he had purified my heart. At first I rejected it through a sense of my unworthiness. But the witness again returned. I considered, "What have I either done or suffered that could induce the Lord to show me this great mercy?" And I was upon the point of giving up again, when it occurred to my mind, "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." I was then constrained to acquiesce, and said, Since it is so, I will hold fast if I can.

The next morning I awoke in such power and peace as I had never known, and the promises in the latter part of the 30th chapter of Ezekiel were applied in such a manner as left no doubt but the Lord had wrought that great change in me. Nevertheless, it was not in the manner I expected. I supposed a soul saved from all sin would be a great, wise, and glorious creature; whereas I found myself infinitely little, and mean, and base; I had such a discovery of my own nothingness as humbled me to the dust continually. I felt myself as ignorant and helpless as an infant, and knew I could not stand a moment without the Divine aid.

Nor did I find such overflowing joys as I expected, but only an even, permanent peace, which kept my heart in the knowledge and love of God. Meantime several scriptures were opened to me at once; and I found a delightful relish for the whole. But still I found knowledge in Divine things was to be acquired gradually through patient labour; and that even this was limited; God giving no more than was necessary, and at such times as he pleased.

I walked in this liberty some months till one day I met with a circumstance which grieved me. I attended too much to the temptation, and was not inwardly watchful; so before I was aware, the temptation took place in my heart, and I found myself angry for a moment or two. As I never expected to feel this evil any more, my distress was inconceivable for three or four hours; the enemy suggesting that I was now an apostate from the pure love of God, and could never be restored. I cried mightily to the Lord, and he discovered the device of the enemy, and healed the wound that had been made. He likewise showed me that as I had received Christ Jesus, so I must walk in him; that the same faith by which I entered into rest must be continued, in order to be established.

Source: "The EXPERIENCE of several eminent Methodist Preachers with an account of their Call to and Success in the Ministry in a series of letters written by themselves to the Rev. John Wesley" J. Collard, Printer, New York 1837

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