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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

WILLIAM TAYLOR
(Methodist Bishop of Africa)

Our next series of special services was held at the house of old Father Perkins.

At the close of my week of special services in Sheriff C.'s neighborhood I was announced to commence a series at the Perkins appointment; but on account of the number of bright conversions to God that week, and the deep awakening in the community at large, and the subordinate consideration that I had promised to celebrate a marriage there on Thursday of the week ensuing, I concluded that the Perkins people would accept for the present a four-days' meeting, and allow me to follow, as it seemed to me, the manifest leading of the Spirit, and resume work in C.'s neighborhood on Wednesday night, attend to the marriage celebration on Thursday, and go on with the meetings as long as the Lord would give us signal success there. So I adjourned that series on Friday night, to be resumed on Wednesday night of the following week. Next day I went on and preached at the house of Father Perkins, according to appointment. After preaching I gave them an account of the blessed work of God in C.'s neighborhood and the liberty I had taken in shortening the time of their series at present, to be resumed as quickly as the Lord would permit, and then be protracted indefinitely.

Father Perkins was a plain, blunt, but good man of the old school, a local preacher in our Church, who in summer heat would take off his coat and preach in his shirt sleeves. He took the floor, and in the most earnest and emphatic manner entered his protest against any change of the plan, as before arranged, saying, "You have given a whole week to those people, and they have had a good time. They ought to be satisfied, and not interfere with our meetings. We certainly have as good a right to your services as they have. We have made our arrangements for a week of special services, and many of our friends have come a long distance to spend the week with us, and we can't disappoint them, and hence cannot consent to any change of the original arrangement."

I could make no defense, but said, "I thought you would be so glad to hear of the opening work of God in a hitherto fruitless field that you would, after a series of four days, cheerfully

consent to let me follow what seems to me to be a manifest leading of the Spirit of God; but as you hold me to the original agreement, as before announced, I must fulfill it to the letter."

I was cornered, and, being young and inexperienced, Satan took occasion to torment me. I was grieved to hazard the possibilities of the progressing work in the other neighborhood, and was committed, by public announcement, for preaching on the same day and hour at two places twenty miles apart, and no opportunity of recalling the one ignored by Daddy Perkins. So I cried to the Lord in my trouble, and he heard my cry. It was a greater grief to me to be unable to fulfill a promise made to a man or to a congregation of men and women than many are prepared to appreciate. So I cried to the Lord, and he gave me deliverance far exceeding the immediate occasion of my distress.

From the day of my restoration to filial union with God, four years before, I earnestly sought holiness of heart -- perfect love to God. I saw that by the redemptive covenant and provision in Jesus Christ, by commands and promises, by invitations and admonitions, by the recorded experiences and testimonies of holy men of old, it was plainly taught in the Bible as the common privilege and duty of all believers. I carefully read Wesley's Plain Account and the like narrative of Adam Clarke, John Fletcher, and a host of credible witnesses, and was greatly enlightened and encouraged. I heard the subject preached by many of our ministers, and saw Rev. William Prettyman and a few others invite believers to come forward as seekers just as sinners were invited to do in seeking pardon, and I always responded to such calls and went forward for entire sanctification, but without success. For my own information and as a preparatory qualification for the intelligible instruction of others in similar complications I had to suffer a while.

Peter, by the inspiration of the divine Teacher, says, "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." So I was in this intermediate school, had been pardoned and regenerated and was being preserved by the power of Jesus from sinning, without one voluntary departure from him during the four years of my renewed allegiance; but I was tormented by an overly scrupulous conscience and other involuntary disabilities and deprived of settled peace.

The principle of obedience was wrought in me by the Holy Spirit and frequent struggles and painful apprehension on account of the evil of inherent depravity. It was sincere and unreserved from the beginning, but I needed light to apply and strength to fulfill it.

I had to learn the difference between essential human nature and the carnal mind. The one, according to God's design in his original creation of man and in his new creation by the Holy Spirit, is to be developed and utilized for its legitimate purposes; the other, an extraneous diabolical thing to be destroyed by the might of the Almighty and separated from us forever. Yet the carnal mind, though foreign, has so diffused itself through our whole being and so identified itself with every part of it that it requires special divine enlightenment to enable us to discriminate clearly between these two opposite things. The human body has five senses. They are a part of God's creative ideal; hence, essential and legitimate. It has three appetites, with the affections which connect them with our mental and moral constitution.

We have, also, mental appetencies, with their affections -- the mental appetency for knowledge, the sinful lust of which would manifest itself in self-conceit, pedantry, and pride; the mental appetency for property, the lust of which is covetousness and its train of abuses; the mental appetency for power, which in lustful excess results in tyranny and oppression; and so on through a long list of this class, together with another class adapted to the relations we sustain to society, to the state, to the family, to our neighbors in general.

Our mental and moral constitution is specially endowed with higher attributes essential to our relations to God and to eternity. All these belonged legitimately to the constitution of man before "sin entered," -- and will be retained in our sanctified being when "cleansed from all the filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

The carnal mind is that diabolical infusion which permeates all these appetites, appetencies, attributes, and affections, and fills them with enmity to God and leads the unsaved into all manner of misapplications, lustful excesses, and abuses, dishonoring to God and destructive to man. Hence, one leading characteristic of holiness is light -- divine light -- to enable us to perceive clearly what the Holy Sanctifier has come to do for us; what to destroy and remove, what to retain, purify, and adjust to their legitimate purposes so that we may receive and trust the Lord Jesus for all that he came to do for us, and no more.

The principle of obedience must not only be enlightened, but must be in proportion to the enlightenment, enlarged to the measure of full concurrence in practical obedience to all perceivable duties in the field of enlarged vision, and must, moreover, be perfected so as to accept at all times the behests of God, covering all possibilities in his will; not those only which come within the radius of an enlarged vision, but those in the immeasurable margin beyond; not only our legal obligations to God and man as defined by the decalogue, but the broadest application of the new commandment as exemplified in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

On the eve of his departure from the world, in a solemn charge to his disciples he said, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." What was the measure of his love for us? Love up to the legal lines of the Ten Commandments. On those legal principles he would have stood on his rights and would have executed judgment upon us according to the law. He would have retained his glory and stayed in his own happy home in the bosom of his eternal Father and sent us to the place prepared for the devil and for all his followers. But under the new commandment, which does not antagonize our legal rights and duties, he voluntarily and gladly gave up his rights and, under the weight of our wrongdoing, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

To discriminate clearly between temptation and sin was another lesson I had to learn in the school of Christ under the tuition of the Holy Spirit. Christ "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." It is not sin in us to be tempted in all points like as he was, but in yielding to temptation, which always entails sin and condemnation.

I tried the theory of a gradual growth out of sin into holiness, but found from sad experience it was not in the nature of sin to grow out, but to grow in and grow on and bring forth fruit unto death, and that it had to be restrained still totally extirpated by the Holy Sanctifier.

A sincere spirit of legalism, more than anything else, trammelled my faith and prevented the Holy Spirit from perfecting that which was lacking in my faith. It was not theoretical but practical legalism. I did not for a moment trust to anything I had done, but, under cover of vows and covenants to be holy, I was really trusting to what I was going to do. To the best of my knowledge I presented my body, my whole being, on God's altar and worked myself nearly to death trying to be holy. I was often blessed and comforted, and hoped at the moment that I had found the pearl of perfect love, but soon perceived I was mistaken. I had been justified by faith, kept in a justified relation to God by faith; my ministry from its commencement had been attended by the soul-saving power of Jesus, and why I failed to cross over into the promised land of perfect love was a profound puzzle to me; but I was getting light and gathering strength in the struggle.

In the month of August, 1845, I attended a camp meeting on Fincastle Circuit, the old camp where my presiding elder, three years before, appointed me to the work of an itinerant minister. On my way to the camp meeting I saw that in connection with an entire consecration of my whole being to God, which I had been sincerely trying to gain from the beginning, I should pay no particular attention to my emotional sensibilities nor to their changes, nor to the great blessings I was daily receiving in answer to prayer, but should simply accept the Bible record of God's provisions and promises as an adequate basis of faith, and on the evidences contained in these divine credentials receive and trust the divine Saviour for all that he had come to do for me, and nothing less. I was then and there enabled to establish two essential facts: (1) To be true to Jesus Christ; (2) to receive and trust him to be true to me. So there, on my horse in the road, I began to say more emphatically than ever before, "I belong to God. Every fiber of my being I consecrate to him. I consent to perfect obedience. I have no power to do anything toward saving myself, but in utter helplessness I receive and trust Jesus for full salvation."

Then the tempter said, "Take care; don't go too fast; there may be reservations in your consecration you don't think of."

I replied, "I surrender everything I can think of and everything I can't think of. I accept a principle of obedience that covers all possibilities in the will of God."

"But you don't feel anything different from your ordinary experience."

"The word of God is sure. On the evidence it contains I receive and trust the Blessor without any stipulation as to the blessing or the joyful feeling it may bring."

I went on to the camp meeting maintaining my two facts as the Lord gave me power to do, without the aid of joyous emotional sensibility or feeling.

My dear father was there as an earnest worker. I was delighted to be with him, for besides being a kind father he was in Jesus a brother to me. I met many old friends at that meeting, for it

was on the circuit I served the year preceding, and found many sources of real pleasure; but my struggle within was so severe that I had but little enjoyment of any sort.

In conversation one evening at that meeting with Aunt Eleanor Goodwin, a saintly woman, I said: "In the years of my unbelief and apostasy I acquired such a habit of doubting that I have never yet been able fully to conquer it."

Instantly the taunt of the tempter rang with an echo through the domain of my spirit nature: "Can't, can't; you can't do it."

I saw that I had inadvertently made a concession which Satan was using to defeat my faith, and I said: "Aunt Eleanor, in saying that I have not been able to conquer my old habit of doubting I see I have made a mistake. God commands us to believe and be saved. He doesn't command impossibilities; so in regard to believing -- receiving Christ -- for all that he has engaged to do for me, I have said 'I can't believe' for the last time. I can do whatsoever he commands; for he hath said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.'" So I at once revised my spiritual vocabulary and ignored all the "can'ts," "ifs," and "buts" as used by doubters in regard to the grand possibilities of the grace of God. That was a victory for my faith, but I felt no special cleansing power within.

At the close of the camp meeting I returned to my circuit, steadily maintaining my facts. Through the series of my special services in Sweet Springs Valley, at Dan Weekline's, where we had the blessed work before described, and the series at Jake Weekline's on the mountain, and in the series of Sheriff C.'s neighborhood, I stood by my two facts, as Abraham stood by his offered sacrifice, in spite of smothering darkness and devouring fowls, but I felt no assurance of the Holy Spirit that I was sanctified wholly. I was not; though my consecration, so far as I know, was complete, but the point of self-conscious utter impotency where faith ceases to struggle and reposes calmly on the bosom of Jesus I had not quite reached.

One sleepless night during my week of services with Daddy Perkins I said to myself, "What shall I do? A blank disappointment at C.'s next Wednesday night will be damaging to my reputation for judicious management and fidelity to truth, and preclude the possible achievement of greater soul-saving victories there! To preach at the two places twenty miles apart is impossible!" In a moment the oft-repeated fact went through me like an electric shock, "With God all things are possible." I nestled on the bosom of Jesus and rested my weary head and heart near to the throbbing heart of infinite love and sympathy. I laughed and cried, and said, "Yes, all things are possible with God. He can arrange for two appointments at the same hour twenty miles apart. I don't know how. He may have a dozen ways of doing it, and I will let him do it in any way he may choose. Yes, and I will let him do anything else he has engaged to do for me." I was not praying specially for holiness that night, but I rested my weary soul on the bosom of Jesus and saw spread out before me an ocean of available soul-saving resources in God, and overheard the whispers of the Holy Spirit saying, "Jesus saves you yet. He saves you now. Hallelujah!"

Satan was listening, and said, "Maybe he doesn't."

"But he does, and it is the easiest thing in the world for him to save me from all sin, wash my spirit clean, and make me a full 'partaker of the divine nature.' I can't do any of it. He can do it

all, and I will henceforth let him attend to his own work in his own way." Instead of receiving a great blessing I received the great Blessor as the bridegroom of my soul. I was fully united to him in the bonds of mutual fidelity, confidence, and love. I have from that day to this dwelt with Jesus and verified the truth of "the record of God concerning his Son." Through the mistakes of my eyes, ears, judgment, and memory I have given him trouble enough, and myself too; but he has wonderfully preserved me from sin and led me to victory in a thousand battles for the rescue of perishing sinners in many climes; and, strange as it may seem, the greatest Gospel achievements of my life have resulted from his overruling of some of my greatest mistakes...

I grew in grace and in the knowledge of God before I was purged from all iniquity, but much more rapidly afterward. When the obstructions to growth were removed and my union with the infinite sap sources of the living vine was completed, then why should I not "grow up into him in all things?" Holiness, therefore, does not fix a limit to growth, but adjusts the conditions essential to a continuous "growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," which is limitless and eternal.

Well, when I went to my preaching appointment next day Father Perkins met me and said, "Brother Taylor, we can arrange for Wednesday night here, and you can go Wednesday and fill your appointment as announced, celebrate the marriage on Thursday, and return to us by Thursday night.

"All right, Father Perkins; let it be so written."

So from a very small beginning God has been leading me along the high lines of human impossibilities from that day to the present moment. "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

...In presenting the truth of God, especially on the subject of holiness, I always tried to avoid ambiguity, make every point as clear as possible, keep within the lines of admitted truth, and avoid debate.

I preached holiness as a Bible doctrine from the time I entered the ministry; and when I experienced its full cleansing power I added my testimony to confirm the truth of what I taught, and have continued ever since, through dry seasons and wet seasons, proving from the Bible that it was the duty of every living man, woman, and child under the sun, and the possible attainment of all who will "walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh."

...I am marching along through my seventy-fifth year. Thank God, I feel in every bone and muscle of my body the health and vigor of my early manhood, and my spirit is full of the life and the native wit and fun that bubbled in the springtide of my boyhood, and all these blending with perfect loyalty to God, perfect faith in him, perfect love for him; and as I march through the mountains of Africa I sing:

"I'm happy, I'm happy, O wondrous account!
My joys are immortal, I stand on the mount;
I gaze on my treasure, and long to be there,

With Jesus, my Saviour, his kingdom to share.
O, who is like Jesus? He's Salem's bright King;
He smiles, and he loves me; he taught me to sing.
I'll praise him, I'll praise him, and bow to his will,
While rivers of pleasure my spirit do fill!"

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THE END