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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

WILLIAM MOSES TIDWELL

I love to think of that wonderful verse in the grand old hymn, "Amazing Grace," which says, "'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved; how precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed." Here we have the convicting grace of God and then the saving grace that brings relief. "How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed." Jonah was right when he said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Praise the Lord for preventing grace, the grace that kept us out of hell before we were saved; for convicting grace; for saving grace; and for keeping grace. "Grace that is boundless and free. Grace that is as fathomless as the sea. Grace enough for you and for me." The old lady, who was very poor and had to stint in everything, saw the ocean for the first time and cried out, "Thank God for one thing there is plenty of!"

I praise the Lord for His faithfulness in conviction for salvation. The Holy Spirit began to strive with me at about the age of six. At that time I saw my first death and funeral. "Aunt Tabbie Fulghum," as she was called, died. After hearing the funeral sermon by the old Methodist preacher, and hearing them sing, "O come, angel band, come and around me stand, O bear me away on your snowy wings to my immortal home," and returning home, in the stillness of the evening, I felt strangely moved upon. I had heard that "Aunt Tabbie" had gone to that heavenly world because she was a Christian. I definitely understood that all must die and in order to reach that good land we must be Christians. I got off alone and cried and prayed. From that day, until I was definitely saved, the Holy Spirit was faithful. When I had done wrong I felt afraid and would weep and ask forgiveness.

At the age of nine, at old "Mount View," I attended a genuine old-fashioned revival. The crowds came. They came early. The men went off in the woods in one place to pray; and women, in another. Such praying! They sang. They prayed, they shouted. They prayed through. Many were saved in these "grove meetings." They came to the church rejoicing, laughing, singing, and shouting; however, some came with heavy hearts. They were under deep conviction. They wept while the man of God preached. When the "call" was made there was no persuading necessary. They were there on their knees praying. They took it by the job. If they did not get through, then they prayed at home, in the field, and "everywhere" till the victory came.

I would go to the grove meetings. I would sit toward the back of the church and weep. I was rather small for my age. I wanted to go forward, but feared they would think me to be too young. How I longed for someone to invite me. Don't neglect the children. But while I did not go forward, I sat there and wept and prayed. One night toward the close of the service, when I had been deeply convicted, I prayed earnestly to the Lord, and the burden rolled away. I was so happy. I was definitely blessed for days, but again Satan beat me out. He suggested that if I told it, they would think me too young. But I still praise God for that experience, but not confessing, of course, I did not live victoriously; however, I did live under constant conviction and the fear of the Lord. I went a few times to the old-fashioned, country play parties, but was never comfortable. Often while others were having what they called "a good time," I would slip out in the dark and pray and ask God to forgive me for being there. This condition continued till I was about sixteen. Then I became greatly concerned about my soul. I was not victorious. I was thrown with wicked boys. Temptation began to call. I was alarmed. I was afraid to lie down and go to sleep lest I should wake up in hell.

Finally the burden and conviction became about unbearable and I began, in a new way, to seek the Lord. Well, He is faithful. Deliverance came. No revival was on now, just the faithfulness of the Holy Ghost. I was happy. The fear to go to sleep had gone. One morning, about this time, Mother and I were milking the cows. Mother stopped milking, looked up at me and said, "Son, have you not been saved?" I replied, "Yes, Mother, Jesus has saved me." Well, a meeting broke out there immediately. Just the cows, Mother, myself and the Lord there; but that was sufficient for a good meeting. The cows did not seem to fully understand, but they knew something out of the ordinary had taken place. The following Sunday I went to church and gave my first public testimony. As I think of this, though it has been a long time ago, the fire seems to break out anew, and I feel like saying, "Praise the Lord for His faithfulness!"

Then the Lord was faithful in leading me into the experience of holiness. I united with the church immediately after being saved. When I was a little past seventeen they made me a steward in the church. I was so happy in the work of the Lord. I loved the people, the church, the work of the Lord, and above all the Lord. I was in school almost continually from the time I was saved until I heard holiness preached. At the age of about twenty I was teaching school. Some friends came along, where I was teaching, preaching holiness as a second, definite work of grace. They were wonderful people. Old-fashioned Methodists, refined, cultured, and full of the Holy Ghost. I attended regularly, worked at the altar, and helped to pray seekers through. From the time a few years before, when I obtained the victory I was so blessed in the Lord and His service that I scarcely felt any further need. It was my custom to pray each evening until I was conscious of the presence of the Lord. Usually this was up in the old log barn loft. But as the meeting progressed, and the truth on carnality came clear and strong, I began to feel my need. I took a few nights off during the meeting, went out into the woods and prayed much of the night. The Lord would bless graciously, but this did not satisfy. I became conscious of the need of a clean heart. I had a new heart, but I longed for a clean heart. I had life, but needed more abundant life. I had love, but I wanted perfect love. I had a clear, definite experience of justification, but I desired sanctification.

I think I was just a little prejudiced against going to the altar. Then many of my friends, among them my official church brethren and pastor, were opposed to "second blessing holiness."

However, this heart hunger became so intense that I began to lose sight of these hindrances. Then in an evening service, as I sat on the front seat and knew practically everyone in the crowded church, the Lord spoke to me. Not not audibly, but consciously He seemed to say, "If you will go forward and make the consecration, I will satisfy you." At this moment holiness opposers seemed to vanish, and almost before I knew it, I was at the altar praying, earnestly, for the blessing. This did not take long. The "Comforter came." There was little outward demonstration, but I was satisfied. My heart was clean. I seemed to move into the vestibule of heaven. Christ, His word, and all things spiritual took on new life and meaning. It was all indescribable. The witness of the Spirit was clear. That has been many years ago. Much water has gone under the bridge since then. Nights have been long, tunnels dark, and trials sore, but this blessing has held. Yet, justification and sanctification are real, definite, genuine experiences. Jesus is not a sin regulator or suppressor. He is a sin eradicator and exterminator. "He will crucify the old man and electrify the new man." He can save and keep as long as we will walk in the light and resist the devil. Paul said, "Neither give place to the devil." Even though we are sanctified we can still do this, and will unless we watch and pray, but the grace of God will keep every moment if we meet conditions.

Source: "The Faithfulness of God"

By William M. Tidwell

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