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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

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(A Nazarene General Superintendent)

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My father and mother were separated and our home was broken up when I was but six years of age. I remember Father taking us to live with him and my grandmother coming to keep house. Neither my father nor my grandmother was inclined toward religion. The family was without any religious training whatsoever.

A Methodist minister came through the country where we lived and stopped at our house for a short call. Before he left he prayed for our home, a prayer that made a lasting impression on my youthful mind. When he had left, Grandmother said, "I believe that was a good man." With the preacher's prayer still ringing in my ears, I prayed at nightfall and promised God that I would try to be a good boy. A strange peace came into my heart, but it was gone by noon the next day.

Soon after this my father bought a sawmill and moved the family near it, where my three brothers and I were surrounded by a group of very wicked men. This environment caused me to lose ground rapidly. Having a quick temper and a feeling that I was quite important, I kept in trouble most of the time.

My life of sin was brought to an end when I was converted at the age of seventeen. I never saw anyone converted at an altar until I went to one myself. I knew nothing about the Bible or Christian doctrine. However, my conversion was clear and definite. When I broke with the crowd with which I had been associated, stopped my bad habits, and became interested in the church and prayer meeting, gave my testimony and led in prayer, the crowd was convinced that my conversion was genuine. I was supremely happy in my newly found joy.

I had been converted only a few days when a fellow with whom I had had trouble insulted me. My first impulse was to fight, but something reminded me that I was now a Christian and must not fight. For a full minute the war was on in my heart. I shall never forget the warring in my members; but I took the insult, said nothing, and went on my way. I was filled with fear when I considered how near I came to doing something which I would have always regretted.

Knowing that I had that vicious something still in my heart alarmed me and put me on my guard. Two or three times within ten days I had upsets because of my quick temper, but after prayer and repentance I found forgiveness and the joy bells would ring again in my heart. I loathed the thing within my heart that constantly strove to upset me.

An elderly lady who heard of my conversion spoke to me one day and inquired how I was getting along spiritually.

I said, "Oh, fine! I only wish I could get victory over my quick temper."

Then she said, "Well, Son, you do not have all the Lord has for you."

I asked, "What do you mean?"

Her answer was, "You need to be sanctified."

My next question was, "Do you mean I can get rid of that inward uprising?"

She quickly replied, "Yes, and you ought not to put it off."

I hastened to ask with all the earnestness of my soul, "How do you get sanctified?"

I still remember her answer; it was clear and simple: "Give God everything you have, pray earnestly, and trust Christ, and He will meet your need."

From that moment I became an earnest seeker, desiring to be sanctified. I prayed when I worked. I prayed in my bedroom. A prayer was sent up from my heart almost night and day, crying out for this experience that would give deliverance. One afternoon, I had such a calm rest in my heart that I decided I must have the experience I had been seeking. I went to the water tank with my horses. While they were drinking, I was meditating on how pleasant it was to be sanctified. I was so engrossed in thought that I did not notice old Bill raise his head and look around. I was taken by complete surprise when he opened his mouth and let about a quart of water on my head and down my neck. (Certainly any horse should know better than that!) Like a flash, I jerked him and kicked him several times. Then I caught myself. I shall never forget the sorrow that came over my whole spirit as I realized that I had been mistaken in thinking that I was sanctified; and, too, now I must seek pardon and forgiveness for my unchristian feeling and actions. I found peace before I slept that night and renewed my seeking for deliverance from this quick temper or inner uprising.

A few days afterwards I sent word to a man who was having a cottage prayer meeting that I wanted him to make an altar call the next Tuesday night, for I wanted to be sanctified.

I did not know that he did not believe in people getting sanctified. Tuesday night I started for prayer meeting with my heart bubbling over with joy because I believed I was going to get sanctified that night.

The man gave a little talk at the prayer meeting and finally set out a chair and said, "I understand there is a fellow here that wants special prayer." I quickly knelt at the chair and began to pray for God to sanctify me. A fellow who knew the way came and knelt by me and began to probe my consecration and uncovered several things of which I had not thought. One was being a preacher; the other was going to Africa as a missionary Both were high hurdles; but after much earnest prayer for about an hour, I got over them. Everything else was easy.

He further instructed me that the same Christ that gave me pardon also purchased my cleansing. My faith reached up; I trusted Him to sanctify and cleanse the gift I had brought Him. A quiet assurance came into my heart that Christ was faithful and that the work of cleansing had been wrought in my heart. From that day to this I have never questioned or doubted that I was sanctified that Tuesday night.

Years have come and gone. I have thanked God a thousand times that I met the little old lady who said "You do not have all the Lord has for you." I feel certain I would not have continued on the Christian way and have climbed the hills and journeyed through the tunnels thus far had I not found the way of holiness in my early Christian life.

Source: "Living Flames of Fire" By Bernie Smith

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THE END