

All Rights Reserved By HDM For This Digital Publication
Copyright 1994 Holiness Data Ministry

Duplication of this CD by any means is forbidden, and
copies of individual files must be made in accordance with
the restrictions stated in the B4Ucopy.txt file on this CD.

* * * * *

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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

MARY SPARKES WHEELER
(Methodist)

I was born in England, June 21, 1835. At the age of six years I came with my family to America. My parents were devoted Christians, and spared no pains to train me up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Since my earliest recollection I have never passed a day without prayer, but it was not always the prayer of faith that brought salvation, for I often felt the burden of sin and condemnation on my heart.

When eight years of age I was once playing "class meeting" during recess at school. I was leader. All passed off joyfully until a little girl younger than myself arose to speak. She seemed to take the matter all in earnest, and said with trembling voice, as the tears rolled down her cheeks, "I am not as good as I ought to be. I sometimes do wrong and disobey my mamma. Pray for me, that I may be forgiven." Suddenly my own heart began to ache. I thought, "If that little innocent girl needs pardon how much more do I!"

The meeting closed and I started for home. When I supposed myself to be entirely out of sight and hearing I wept aloud. A gentleman, until then unobserved by me, passed, and said in pitying tones, "What's the matter, little girl?" I made no reply. I did not stop until I reached my own little room, and, falling upon my knees, with a broken and a contrite heart I prayed earnestly for pardon. God heard my prayer.

"He spake at once my, sins forgiven
And gave me glory, peace, and heaven."

That night, young as I was, I could scarcely sleep for joy. I believe I was then converted, and had I told my parents and availed myself of the counsel and aid they would so gladly have given, I might have walked in the light from that time until the present. But I did not understand that

I was old enough to be a Christian; did not hold fast whereunto I had attained, and soon relapsed into my former state.

As years passed I drank into the spirit of the world, and it was not until I was fourteen years of age that I made up my mind, after a great struggle, to give my heart to Christ and become a Christian. In the year 1818 I was powerfully convicted of sin. I tried to quench the Spirit. I was away from home, attending school, but my heart was so overwhelmed with a sense of my sins and my need of a Saviour that I could neither eat nor sleep. One day I tried in vain to commit my lessons to memory, and asked the teacher to excuse me. I went to my seat and with my head in my hands, entirely oblivious to all that was passing around me, I promised God if He would spare me until a certain quarterly meeting, which was to be held some miles away, in about six months from that time, I would attend it and there seek Christ. My heart grew calm and I pursued my studies without anxiety until the Friday preceding the meeting. Then came a great conflict with the adversary. I thought, "Tomorrow I am to seek God." The tempter said, "You are too young to begin now! All the other students, with few exceptions, are attending dancing school, getting ready to enjoy life. You are cutting yourself off from all that is desirable in the future."

"But I promised God, and I must!" "You cannot, because you have no feeling now! You must wait until you feel as deeply as before." "I promised I would wait no longer, and I must seek now."

Thus the controversy continued until my head began to ache. Wishing in some way to calm my troubled mind I took a magazine from the shelf, intending for a time to change the subject by reading some entertaining story. I opened it, and the first words my eye rested upon were these:

"If now you're convinced, O yield to conviction!
Resolve to be God's in the strength of His grace,
E'en now He beholds you with tender affection
And you as His child He longs to embrace."

Affrighted I threw the book from me. A trembling seized me, I fell upon my knees and said, "O, Lord, it is enough! I will keep my promise. I will attend the meeting and acknowledge myself a seeker." I did so. When at the close of the Saturday evening meeting the presiding elder asked those who desired to become Christians to arise I arose alone in the great congregation. I was so young that my rising attracted no attention and called forth no remark or prayer, but when I reached my place of entertainment, in company with my own pastor's wife, she proposed prayer for me, and herself offered a fervent petition for the "dear child who had resolved to 'remember now her Creator in the days of her youth.'"

I did not experience any change in my mind during the meetings that followed, and returned on Monday morning disheartened, disappointed. Now the enemy renewed his attack, and said, "You put it off too long, and God has turned away from you, for is it not written, 'Because I have called and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded. I also will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh; then shall they seek me early but shall not find me?'" Nearly a week passed away, bringing no relief to my heart, but I determined that I would never cease seeking, until I found Christ.

Desiring uninterrupted communion with God I entered a little grove near by, and, kneeling by a moss-covered log, I prayed earnestly for pardon. I tried to repeat God's promises to penitents, and while thus engaged hope sprang up in my heart, and I began to believe that mercy could reach even me, and amid my tears I said, "Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'tis all that I can do."

The burden of condemnation rolled away, and I was freely pardoned. When I reached home the sun was gilding the west with radiance and glory; so the Sun of my soul seemed to be flooding my heart with light and peace. It was not a rapturous joy, but peace like a river, continually growing wider and deeper. My experience was clear and definite. I knew that I had passed from death unto life, and the joy this blessed assurance gives dwelt in my soul continually. I continued to walk in the light. I had an ardent desire to live a deeply spiritual life. To be merely an "acceptable member of the Church" was not enough. I resolved that I would take for my motto this verse,

"Be as holy and as happy,
And as useful here below,
As it is your Father's pleasure --
Jesus, only Jesus know."

I did grow in grace, but the progress I made seemed very slow and unsatisfactory. I was constantly struggling against inbred sin. The carnal mind would assert itself, and with tears and self-abasement I was often led to cry, "I am carnal, sold under sin." "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." I resolved in the strength of grace that I would be made "free from the law of sin and death." I said, "O Jesus! if Thou canst do the work, let it be done quickly, instantaneously!" And I began to seek earnestly for entire sanctification.

Time would fail me in telling of the conflicts with the powers of darkness, the struggles of my soul in trying, in some way, to free itself from the body of this death, before sin and self were abandoned and the heart was unconditionally surrendered to Christ. I sought earnestly for months. My anxiety was so great that at times I was almost overwhelmed. My conviction was much deeper than that preceding conversion. I wept, fasted, prayed, consecrated and humbled myself before the Lord over and over again. I would have given life itself to have secured the blessing. Often amid tears I sang,

"I thirst, thou wounded Lamb of God,
To wash me in Thy cleansing blood.
To dwell within Thy wounds, then pain
Is sweet, or life, or death is gain."

Blessed be God, the fountain was open! Christ was more willing to bestow than I was to receive, but I did not understand the way of faith. I was young, less than sixteen years of age, had never heard a sermon on the subject, had read but little; did not know where to procure the helps I needed. I reversed God's order. I said I must feel that the work is done before I believe it. To be

sanctified wholly is a great blessing, and my joy must be correspondingly great, and until I have a joy unspeakable and full of glory I will not believe.

Thus I lingered, and could not enter in because of unbelief. At times I was tempted to regret that I had ever heard of the doctrine, for before this I was happy in the enjoyment of justifying grace. Now I had come up to the Red Sea of difficulty. I had received the command, "Go forward!" To retreat must be spiritual death. How to go forward I did not know. But the God who divided the Red Sea opened the way for me also.

One day I went to a prayer meeting, hoping to hear something on the subject that would bring relief to my mind, but was disappointed. As I was returning home, bearing on my heart a burden that seemed unendurable, I prayed earnestly to God for help. While passing a house, a lady with whom I was only slightly acquainted, and who knew nothing of the state of my mind, called to me, saying, "I have a little book here which perhaps you may like to read." "What is it?" I eagerly inquired. "I do not know," she replied; "I have not read it; but I know it is good because my friend, Mrs. A., who lives in New York, sent it to me; and just as you came in sight the thought occurred to me that you had so much more leisure than I it would be well for you to read it first."

I opened the book. It was entitled *A present to My Christian friend*, by Mrs. Phoebe Palmer. In it the author beautifully describes the way of faith. I went to my room, and, falling upon my knees before God, I read every word before rising. O what a feast to my hungry soul! Every question that had perplexed me was satisfactorily answered, every difficulty removed.

Presenting myself to Christ was such a reasonable sacrifice, and after doing this it was so easy to reckon myself dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God. If an angel had come down from heaven and handed me the book I could not have believed more fully that God sent it to me. Now the mystery vanished and the simplicity of faith amazed me, and in the calmness of that hour I took Jesus as my complete Saviour from all sin. There was no rapturous joy, but the burden was gone. The "man of sin" was cast out, and Christ had entire possession, while a peace which passeth all understanding seemed to permeate my entire being.

That night I dreamed that in company with a friend, who had a few weeks before entered into this perfect peace, I was walking on a narrow strip of land "'twixt two unbounded seas," when suddenly a cyclone or storm of wind arose. I looked at my friend. It did not disturb her did not even move the folds of her dress--while I was powerless before it. It lifted me from the earth and was bearing me out to the ocean. I caught hold of the branches of a tree that overhung the water, but they began to bend and break. I thought, "I shall surely be drowned in the depths of the sea."

In my anguish I cried, "Lord, increase my faith! Lord, increase my faith!" Immediately the branches broke, but instead of sinking I began to rise, and with nothing but the ocean beneath me and the sky above me, I floated outward and upward nearer and nearer to God, while my soul was filled with ineffable glory.

In a few moments I was awakened by my now sainted mother, who said: "What is the matter? Do you know you were making a noise? You were shouting Glory! at the top of your voice." "It was only a dream, dear mother; but God has been teaching me wondrously today, and

tonight He is teaching me to let go of every earthly support and by simple faith alone launch out into the ocean of God's infinite love."

I rested here for about two weeks, when one day the Holy Spirit whispered: "'They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.' You have believed and received, now confess Him." The enemy said: "Will you dare profess that you are perfect in love when you have no evidence, only the Word?"

I said, "Yes! I know, by faith I know. God's Word is more reliable than my emotions; when I have a favorable opportunity I will tell to the glory of God what He has done for me." A few days after, while seated at the tea-table with a company of Christians, a clergyman said to me: "My young sister, have you ever reached the point where you felt you could claim Christ as your Saviour from all sin? Do you love God supremely?" I replied, "I trust I have. I hope I do." Instantly the Spirit seemed to say, "That is not faith. That is not definite. That does not glorify me. You said you knew by faith. Tell them so."

I said so loud that all could hear, "Yes, I know that Jesus saves me from all sin. I do love God with all my heart." No sooner had I uttered the words than I felt a strength and power imparted that I had never before experienced. That evening the pastor called upon me to pray audibly, and while lifting my heart to Christ the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I was lost in "wonder, love, and praise."

For months that followed I seemed to be in a new world. The whole earth seemed illumined with divine light. The very air seemed laden with the breath of God and the perfumes of Paradise. What sympathy was there between my divine Lord and myself! How heartily I entered into all His plans for the evangelization of the world and the conversion of sinners! How my heart yearned with unutterable longings for the sanctification of believers and for the baptism of fire to fall upon the entire Church of God!

O what humility was mine, what self-abnegation, what a sinking into Christ! And when the Angel of the Covenant touched my lips with living fire what a change was wrought in me! I, who had ever been afraid of the sound of my own voice, so timid, so shrinking, who had felt myself to be weakness personified, was now upheld by Omnipotent power! The Word of the Lord was like fire shut up in my bones. I was weary with refraining, and to every call of the Spirit I responded, "Here am I, Lord, send me!"

I would mention some of my difficulties and triumphs in becoming established in holiness. With humiliation I recall many lapses, with gratitude the forbearance and longsuffering of the Holy Spirit. The lapses came in neglecting to testify to this saving grace. In my earlier experience the enemy suggested that as so many in the church were older and wiser and richer in Christian graces than myself, at whose feet I could sit and learn of Jesus, and they did not profess this blessing, therefore it would be immodest for me to say much about it; that I could live it, and the life would testify sufficiently without words. As often as I yielded to this suggestion I lost ground and in a measure was shorn of my strength: and I have learned by experience that I must not only believe in my heart, but also confess with my mouth this uttermost salvation.

Many years have passed since I entered this blessed "Beulah land." God has kept me by His power, not stationary, but constantly advancing from grace to grace, and from glory to glory, until often in amazement my soul cries out, "My Lord and my God!"

"Like a river glorious
Is God's perfect peace.
Over all victorious
In its bright increase.

"Perfect -- yet it floweth
Fuller every day;
Perfect -- yet it groweth
Deeper all the way."

MARY SPARKES WHEELER, PHILADELPHIA, PA., Sept. 21, 1887

Source: "Forty Witnesses" by Rev. S. Olin Garrison

* * * * *

THE END