

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

JOHN ALLEN WOOD
(Methodist)

Mr. Fletcher says, "When you are solemnly called upon to bear testimony to the truth, and to say what great things God has done for you, it would be cowardice or false prudence not to do it, with humility."

It pleased the Lord to call me in early life to seek pardon and converting grace. I believe at ten years of age I first tasted the joys of redeeming grace and a Saviour's love. I remember as early as then to have realized a sweet satisfaction and delight in prayer and effort to obey God.

At the age of thirteen I joined the church. Through the blessing and grace of God, I have found a home ever since in the church of my early choice.

During the first five or six years of my experience I was often perplexed and distressed with doubts in regard to the reality of my conversion; arising from the fact that I could not fix upon the precise time when the change was wrought. I would often see people powerfully converted, and hear them tell of the place and the moment when their chains fell off, and their souls went free. The tempter would then whisper in my ear, and say, "You cannot tell when you were converted, and you never had those deep convictions or those striking exercises in religious experience of which many speak."

From this source I had no little trouble, and at times, for several years, I found it exceedingly difficult to hold fast my confidence. After many and severe trials on this point, the Lord enabled me to settle the matter; and a thousand thanks to his blessed name that many years have passed since I have doubted for a moment the verity of my early conversion.

The Lord removed my doubts by showing me that to know the precise time of my conversion was of but little importance; while the great question for me to settle was, Have I the evidence that I am now converted?

After I was led to see that to be able to know the precise time of my conversion concerned me but little, and to know that I am now in a converted state was my great concern, the question was soon settled by apprehending the abundant evidence which God always give of a state of salvation. I found it was one thing to have evidence of a justified, converted state, and quite another to apprehend and understand that evidence.

From this time to September 7, 1858, I maintained a general purpose to obey God, and received many spiritual refreshings from the presence of the Lord, suffering but few doubts in regard to my justification and membership in the family of God.

During this period I was often convicted of remaining corruption in my heart, and of my need of purity. I desired to be a decided Christian and a useful member of the church; but I was often conscious of deep-rooted inward evils and tendencies in my heart unfriendly to godliness. I found my bosom foes troubled me more than all my foes from without. They struggled for the ascendancy They marred my peace. They obscured my spiritual vision. They were the instruments of sore temptation. They interrupted my communion with God. They crippled my efforts to do good. They invariably sided with Satan. They occupied a place in my heart which I knew should be possessed by the Holy Spirit. They were the greatest obstacles to my growth in grace, and rendered my service to God but partial.

I was often more strongly convicted of my need of inward purity than I ever had been of my need of pardon. God often showed me the importance and necessity of holiness as clear as a sunbeam. I seldom studied the Bible without conviction of my fault in not coming up to the Scripture standard of salvation.

I often commenced seeking holiness, but at no time made any great progress; for as I read and prayed, some duty was seen to present itself which I was unwilling to perform, and so I relapsed into indifference.

I never read Mr. Wesley's " Plain Account," nor any of the standards of Methodism on the subject of holiness, nor the memoirs of Fletcher, Bramwell, Carvosso, Stoner, nor Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers or Lady Maxwell, without deep conviction on the subject, and more or less effort for its attainment.

I now see I was often on the very point of grasping the prize, and then would sink back, suffer defeat, and another season of comparative indifference upon the subject. I was often led to see my need of purity while studying for the ministry with Rev. William Hill, of Cambridgeport, Vt.

Brother Hill was an able Presbyterian minister, and for a number of years was pastor of a Presbyterian church in Newburg, N. Y. He became convicted of his need of entire sanctification, and obtained the blessing at a meeting for the promotion of holiness at r. Palmer's in New York city. He lived it, professed it, and preached it, and for so doing was expelled from the Hudson River Presbytery, in April, 1844. Rev. Henry Belden was expelled at the same time for the same cause. They both united with the Congregational church. Brother Belden became pastor of a church

in Brooklyn, N. Y. Brother Hill died in holy triumph at Bristol, Conn., July 31, 1851, in the thirty-seventh year of his age.

The society and influence of that holy man were a great blessing to me. I think more than one hundred times I have bowed with him in prayer in his study, and held sweet communion with God. Those season of devotion still linger in my memory as among the most precious hours of my early ministry.

By being convicted so often of my need of perfect love, and failing to obtain it, I, after a while, (like many others, I fear) became a little skeptical in regard to the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification, as a distinct blessing, subsequent to regeneration. I had no clear or definite ideas in regard to the blessing of perfect love, but came to think of it and teach it as only a deeper work of grace, or a little more religion. I taught, as many do, a gradual growth into holiness, or modern gradualism. I threw the whole matter into the world of indefiniteness and of vague generalities. I expected to grow into holiness somehow, somewhere, and at some time, but knew not how, nor where, nor when. I urged believers to seek a deeper work of grace, and to get more religion, but seldom said to them, "Be ye holy," "This is the will of God, even your sanctification," or, seek "perfect love."

I became somewhat prejudiced against even the Bible terms "sanctification," "holiness," "perfection," and disliked very much to hear persons use them in speaking of their experience. I was opposed to the profession of holiness as a distinct blessing from regeneration.

I became prejudiced against the special advocates of holiness; and at camp meetings and in other places I felt disposed to discourage and oppose direct efforts for the promotion of holiness. If a pious brother exhorted the preachers to seek sanctification, or the member to put away worldliness, tobacco, and gaudy attire, and seek holiness, I was distressed in spirit, and disposed to find fault.

During a number of years, this was about my state of mind upon this subject. And let me here record, that while hundreds of sinner were converted to God, in connection with my feeble ministry, I do not recollect a single case of a believer being entirely sanctified under my labors during the first nine years of my ministry, up to September 7, 1858. Let me further add during this time I was grieved, from year to year, by seeing what might astonish hell, and fill heaven with lamentation -- company after company of young converts walking into backslidden, unsanctified churches, first to wonder, then for a while to be grieved, but finally to add another layer to the backslidden stratification.

In May, 1858, I was appointed to the Court Street Church Binghamton. I went there much prejudiced against the professors of holiness in that church, and they were, doubtless, somewhat prejudiced against me, as they had cause to believe that I would oppose them on the subject of holiness. I soon found, in my pastoral visitations, that where those persons lived who professed the blessing of holiness, there I felt the most of divine influence and power. I realized a liberty in prayer, and an access to God in those families, which I did not elsewhere.

And let me remark, while I was prejudiced against holiness as a distinct blessing, and against its special advocates, I did desire and believe in a deep, thorough, vital piety, and was ready to sympathize with it wherever I found it. I had attended prayer and class meetings but a few times before I saw clearly that there were those in that society whose experience and piety possessed a richness, power and depth which I had not.

The more I became acquainted with them, the more I was convinced of that fact, and the more deeply I became convicted of my remaining depravity and need of being cleansed in the blood of Christ. I also became convinced that those professors of holiness were Wesleyan in their faith, experience, and practice, while I had drifted away somewhat from the Bible and Wesleyan theory of Christian perfection.

Through the entire summer of 1858 I was seeking holiness, but kept the whole matter to myself. During this time none of the professors of holiness said anything to me on the subject, but, as I have learned since, were praying for me night and day. God only knew the severe struggles I had that long summer, during many hours of which I lay on my face in my study, begging for Jesus to cleanse my poor, unsanctified heart; and yet I felt unwilling to make a public avowal of my feelings, or to ask the prayers of God's people for my sanctification.

The Binghamton district camp-meeting commenced that year the first day of September. About eighty of the members of my charge went with me to that meeting. During six days of the meeting, the sanctification of my soul was before my mind constantly, and yet I neither urged others to seek it, nor intimated to any one my convictions and struggles on the subject. The result was, six days of such deep humiliation, severe distress, and hard struggles as I never had endured before.

A number of the members present from my charge had once enjoyed the blessing, and had lost it. Some who professed to enjoy it were becoming silent upon the subject. With but very few exceptions, we, as a church were practically staving off and ignoring the doctrine and duty of entire sanctification. The Lord was evidently displeased with us, and so shut us up that our prayer meetings, in our large society tent, literally ran out. The brethren and sisters became tired with themselves, and tired with each other. Some of them were even tempted to strike their tents and go home.

On the last evening of the meeting, a faithful member of the church came to me weeping, a few minutes before preaching, and said, "Brother Wood, there is no use in trying to dodge this question. You know your duty, and may as well commence seeking holiness first as last. If you will lead the way, and define your position as a seeker of entire sanctification, you will find that many of the members of your charge have a mind to do the same." The Lord had so humbled my heart that I was willing to do almost any thing to obtain relief. After a few moments' reflection I replied, "Immediately after preaching I will appoint a meeting in this tent on the subject of holiness, and will ask the prayers of the church for my own soul."

Glory be to God! the Rubicon was past. In an instant I felt a giving way in my heart, so sensible and powerful, that it appeared rather physical than spiritual. In a moment after I felt an indescribable sweetness permeating my entire being. It was a sweetness as real and as sensible to my soul as ever the sweetest honey was to my taste. I immediately walked up into the stand. The

presiding elder requested me to exhort after his sermon. I replied, "I will, if the Lord will help." Just as he gave out his text, -- Eccl. 3, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter," &c., -- the baptism of fire and power came upon me.

For me to describe what I then realized is utterly impossible. It was such as I need not attempt to describe to those who have felt and tasted it, and such as I can not describe to the comprehension of those whose hearts have never realized it.

The most of which I was conscious was, that Jesus had me in his arms, and that the heaven of heavens was streaming through and through my soul in such beams of light, and overwhelming love and glory, as can never be uttered. The half can never be told!

It was like marching through the gates of the city to the bosom of Jesus, and taking a full draught from the river of life.

Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! I have cause to shout over the work of that precious hour.

It was a memorable era in the history of my probation, a glorious epoch in my religious experience -- never, NEVER to be forgotten. Jesus there and then -- all glory to his blessed name! sweetly, completely and most powerfully sanctified my soul and body to himself. He melted it cleansed, filled and thrilled my feeble, unworthy soul with holy, sin-consuming power.

Glory be to God! Perfect love is the richest, the sweetest, and the purest love this side of Paradise. Angels have nothing better. Well may the poet sing,

"O for this love let rock and hill
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour's praises speak!"

Source: "Holiness Miscellany" Edited
by John S. Inskip

* * * * *

THE END