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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

LUKE WOODARD
(Society of Friends)

I was born at New Garden, Wayne County, Indiana, on March 12, 1832. My parents were members of the Society of Orthodox Friends; were exemplary, godly people; and hence I enjoyed the advantages of careful training. While I was, during my youth and early manhood, preserved from immorality and kept a tender conscience, I was not converted till my twenty-fifth year.

My awakening was sudden and very powerful. Independent of any immediate instrumentality, "an horror of great darkness fell upon" me at midnight. I trembled violently at the sight of my guilty and undone condition. I cried to the Lord, but, for want of a clear understanding of the blessed doctrine of justification by faith, I did not for some weeks get the assurance that my sins were forgiven, and find peace with God. But suddenly Christ revealed Himself to me, and I was overcome with the joyous sense that I was accepted in Him.

I soon began to tell others what the Lord had done for me, and He opened the precious truths of His Word to me and called me to preach His Gospel. "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." I never broke the covenant I made to endeavor to be faithful in this service, and He blessed me and enlarged my gift, which, in due time, was endorsed by the Church; and I had some seals to my ministry.

Some years after I began to preach, while realizing that I had not lost my hold on Christ or backslidden, I became conscious of internal conflicts like that described in the 7th of Romans. I understood the full meaning of the words, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." By a combination of providential occurrences I was brought to understand, in a measure, the doctrine of entire sanctification as a result of the baptism with the Holy Ghost, received upon condition of definite consecration to God and the prayer of faith. Here Satan took advantage, and presented the fearful responsibility involved in such a consecration as I saw it to be, to give myself wholly and forever to God.

I saw it meant more than to consecrate myself to His service in any particular work. It was like signing a blank sheet, leaving it for God to fill out as He chose. The devil paraded before me the possibility that I might be called to go to Africa, and this I feared I would not do, and he made me believe it was "better not to vow than to vow and not pay." Now my agony of soul became great. It was like Bunyan's pilgrim's fight with Apollyon. I many times groaned, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

At length, while engaged with some brethren in Michigan in holding some meetings in the autumn of 1871, I heard yet more definite instruction on this most important feature of Christian experience. Early in the morning of October 31 of this year, in the city of Adrian, as I was communing with my own heart upon my bed alone, I made this resolve: "I will go to the meeting this morning, and there, it may be, I will receive the longed-for baptism," when something seemed to whisper, "Why not now?" And at once, I responded, "And why not now?" I hardly knew how, but O, such a flood of glory as covered me. My whole being seemed permeated with divine power and joy unspeakable. I wept tears of joy. That morning I made a formal consecration at the family altar, and went to the meeting and testified to what God had done for my soul.

The first test I had was the suggestion that when I returned home I should say nothing about it, or speak of it only in general terms and let people judge from my life. But I soon saw that my covenant of consecration meant to speak for God as His witness, and He gave me the victory. I have not been free from various tests and severe temptations, but the gracious Lord has been with me, and while there have been times of momentary wavering yet at no time have I lapsed entirely from this experience, and the Lord has taught me many precious lessons of His truth, and blessed to my greater establishment in holiness some very severe trials; and through the exceeding riches of His grace I can now say the blood cleanseth and the Comforter abideth within my heart. Glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

GLENS FALLS, N. Y., June 18, 1887.

Source: "Forty Witnesses" by S. Olin Garrison

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THE END