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

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

DON BOWMAN (Gen. Foreign Missions Secy., BMC)

Don Bowman was born on January 31, 1934 in Elk City, Okla. As a child he attended Sunday School only occasionally. He attended a lot of different schools in and around Homedale, Idaho. After graduation from high school he joined the Navy. One time, while home on leave, he attended a holiness church with his older brother, who was a Christian, and that night he went to the altar, prayed through, and was saved. This was in June of 1953. In September of the same year he was sanctified in a holiness church in San Francisco, Calif. On board a ship the following year in Iwakuni, Japan, God called Don to preach the gospel. He began a few days later preaching on the ship, as there was no Protestant chaplain aboard. He also preached in a Japanese home through an interpreter. After the Navy, Don attended a Bible School in Idaho. Shortly after this he married to Grace Watson. Grace was reared in a holiness home and early came to know the Lord as Saviour. She was born the eighth child in a family of ten on March 1, 1938, After knowing Don for several years, and attending the same church, they fell in love, and with God's approval they were married on April 27, 1956.

While pastoring in Ontario, Oregon, God called Bowmans to Japan, in March of 1964. For some time prior to this call he had been reading different books on missions. He read an article by Sis. Billie Holstein on "Who will go?" This put Don on his knees in prayer, and he told the Lord that if nobody else was willing to go he would go. He prayed some about going to India, but God let him know that it was Japan where he was supposed to go. As he prayed he asked God to defeat every hindering voice, all human desires concerning the matter, and to let him know clearly only God's voice and will. God gave Him assurance that it was He that was calling. Don prayed, "Oh Lord, if you can strengthen this call with a definite verse of scripture, it will hold us steady when every opposing factor arises, every discouraging time, test, disappointment, loneliness and trial!" God gave Romans 10:14-15. God impressed on him that it was not man, not church, not people, but God that was sending him. The next night Sister Bowman spent in prayer. There was no pull back in her. The next Sunday, Easter Sunday, at the time when the missions offering was to be taken, Brother and Sister Bowman and their three little children, Teresa, Garry, and Joel, walked to the front of the church and said, "We don't have very much money to put in this morning, but we do want to dedicate five lives to Him and His service." The next few weeks God moved through

Don's testimony and folks began pledging money toward the fares and expenses to Japan. Many, many times during those preparatory months God moved in miraculous ways in providing needs. These times greatly strengthened the Bowmans' faith and prepared them for the days that lay ahead of them. On April 15, 1965 five excited Americans arrived in Tokyo, Japan.

They went on to Iwakuni, where Don had served in the Navy for a short time, and served as missionaries for two and a half years, and then the boat tragedy took place. It was on the evening of December 8th 1967 that the little party left the Iwakuni port for Atatajima, a small island about five miles away, to hold evangelistic services. It was a new boat, but the boat builder had made a mistake, and there was a flaw in it. That night the boat filled up with water, turned over, and seven people lost their lives after fighting bravely all night in the icy water. The Bowman's four children, Teresa-9 1/2 years old, Garry- almost 8, Joel 6 1/2, and Donnie - 6 months old, who was born in Iwakuni. Also Lt. Robert Hatcher, Masaru Fujioka, and Kyoko Hayashi lost their lives in that accident. They were wonderful friends and helpers of the Bowmans. Cpl. Herb Christiansen, and Don & Grace Bowman were the only survivors.

Exactly one year later from the day the others went to be with the Lord, December 9, 1968, Robert Masaru (Bobby) Bowman was born in Iwakuni. [I understand that the Japanese word "Masaru" means "Victory"! and thus Bobby Masaru became to them a Divine token of their Triumph over the Tragedy that had robbed them of all of their children exactly one year earlier. -- DVM] On July 5, 1970, Grace Kyoko Bowman was born in Nampa, Idaho. These two little ones have brought much comfort and joy to their parents, but they are still looking forward to the great homecoming in heaven, when all will be re-united.

As a result of the accident, Don became very sick, and they were forced to return to the U.S. for rest. It looked almost impossible for them to ever return to Japan, but after a year and a half in the homeland, God miraculously touched Don, and they were able to return to Japan on Sept. 21, 1971.

[This is April, 2002, and to date for years Don Bowman has been serving as General Foreign Missions Secretary of The Bible Missionary Church. He lives in Homedale, Idaho.]

Source: "Triumph Over Tragedy -- The Bowman Story" Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

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