



"You will know them by their fruits." Mt. 7:16

HOW THEY ENTERED CANAAN

(A Collection of Holiness Experience Accounts)

Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

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I was born in Accomac County, Virginia, March 26, 1845. My father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, were Methodists. I was raised up in family prayer, attended Sabbath-school and went through many revivals of religion. I suppose I was the black sheep of the flock; the worst boy of the whole six. I was exceedingly passionate, self-willed, imperious and contrary.

My earliest convictions were when I was five or six years old. One night Father and Mother went to church and left us children alone, the eldest being twelve or thirteen years of age. We sang "Rock of Ages," and all got under conviction. I prayed and cried, but did not know what ailed me. At that early, age I was called to preach. When I was twelve or thirteen I sought religion, and after that was at the altar at every revival; but my will was not thoroughly broken down.

I was converted in the Southern army, near Richmond, Virginia, August 12, 1863. When I was converted it was a new creation. I read the New Testament through twice that year. I began to hold prayer meetings among the young men. My old companions would meet me and knock my Bible out of my hand and call me names. I had not been saved a month until I found there was inbred sin in my heart. I had never heard of holiness. If some one had known how to lead me I think I would have obtained the blessing then.

I went to the Biblical Institute at Concord, New Hampshire, where I acquired a knowledge of the rudiments of Hebrew, Greek, and theology. I joined the Philadelphia Conference in 1868. I went to the National Campmeeting at Oakington in 1869, and there first heard a sermon on entire sanctification. I went to the altar seeking it, and there through the influence of Alfred Cookman, who was then a member of my conference. I received a great blessing, felt great tranquillity, and called it perfect love. I went back and testified to holiness.

My presiding elder opposed the doctrine and ridiculed me for preaching in advance of my elders, and so did others; and under the pressure I did not testify as often as I should. I did not preach against it; but I did not stand up for the doctrine, and soon got back into my old state. I then descended from a restful Christianity to a toilsome Christianity, and also began using tobacco again. I had hours of communion with God, but they were unsteady; and I had a great deal of soul twilight. I loved to preach; enjoyed a revival; felt much enthusiasm in all the interests of my church; felt at home in Christian society, and was often thrilled with the harmony and grandeur of Bible truth. I went into science and philosophy. For four or five years I ate the strongest intellectual food that the Church could furnish me. **But I was starving my heart by trying to feed my brain.** All this time I was trying to seek God. I would

break down and cry over my condition. God blessed my labors, and souls were converted. But I was having a terrible struggle with myself. I felt my whole life to be one unending will struggle. I suffered more than tongue can tell from melancholy. An unkind or unfavorable criticism, or an apparent neglect, would often hurl my spirit into deepest gloom. I grew tired of living in the public eye: tired of routine work; but most tired of myself. My wife was sick, and I could not bear sickness. I had a great deal of trouble that others did not see was trouble, and yet sorely tried me.

In October, 1876, I began to seek holiness again. I was now filled with all sorts of notions. I said, I will grow into it. Then I took up the repression theory, then the Zinzendorf theory. I was like a sailor, first setting his sail one way, then another.

One cannot always tell by the way a man talks what he thinks. Three weeks before I was sanctified I said in a preachers' meeting, "When God converts a soul he makes it as pure as it ever will be," and at the same time I was seeking holiness. About this time a local preacher came and said to me: "Would you object to having a few holiness people from Cincinnati come up and hold a three-days' holiness meeting?" I told him I should be very glad to have them come.

On the 1st day of December, 1876, the holiness-meeting began. That night, after my wife had retired, I prayed for an hour, as was my custom. Sometimes the next day I would get mad, and my wife would say, "I am ashamed of you. I am afraid you have not a bit of religion, and you preaching as you do." I felt ashamed, and yet I would sometimes defend myself, and then go away and pray and cry over it. But that Friday night I was teachable as I lay on the edge of the bed, with my hand under my cheek and my face toward the door so as not to disturb any one.

Then the Lord began to talk to me. "Will you receive it?" "Yes, Lord." "Will you consent for me to make your family sick; your wife sick?" "Yes, Lord; give me the blessing." "Will you let me take your health in my -- hand give you bronchitis or consumption?" "Yes, Lord. Any time you want me to die, I will consent to go." "Will you consent to leave those large appointments you have been having? Will you consent to take a poor appointment for me?" "Yes, Lord, I will take the poorest appointment in Indiana if it is thy will." (And there were some poor ones.)

"Suppose I want you to go and preach among the Freedmen, will you go?" I said, "Yes, Lord, if it is thy will." "Will you give up your tobacco, that your body may be my temple?" I had tried several times to give it up, but would go back to it again. I said, "Yes, Lord, I will give it up. I will do any thing. Give me the blessing." When I got all through I dropped to sleep. I do not know how it was, but when I waked up next morning I found the appetite for tobacco was gone. I never have taken back the consecration.

The following Monday, December 4, at noon, I went into my study and began reading the Scriptures, with the first chapter of First Peter: "Peter, an Apostle of Jesus Christ ... Elect according to the pre-knowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit." I stopped. "There," said I, "that is sanctification." "Whom having not seen ye love." "I do love thee, and I know thou lovest me." "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." As I uttered these words God let loose a Niagara of salvation in my soul. I walked back and forth shouting, "Glory to God!" After a time that subsided into a calm.

My next appointment was where the church was very worldly. Still there were some lowly ones, as there are in all churches. The Lord saved some there; but I had a terrible time. I got rash and said harsh things. I would say things that took the skin off. Instead of encouraging and strengthening the weak I would strike hard blows. Several times I lost the witness of holiness and would have to fly back to the fountain. Sometimes I acted wrong with my wife. I tried to hurry her along and have her get the experience as I did. It was not her nature, and it could not be expected she would get it as I did. Sometimes, perhaps, I would say things to try to urge her along too fast; then I would see I had done wrong and ask her pardon. Then I would go to the Lord and say, "Put me in the fountain."

I went to another place, and began urging men too fast. An old man, the one who led Bishop Hamline into sanctification, came to me and put his arms around me and said, "You are preaching holiness in the wrong way." About that time I had a sort of vision. I thought I saw a large flock of sheep. Some were scratched with thorns, some with the wool off; others had horns; then there were lambs. I was walking around among the sheep with a club trying to keep them right. I saw I was wrong. This was three years after I had been cleansed.

Then I was in a hurry. I wanted to be as perfect as Paul in all things, right away. The Lord has since melted me down and softened my heart. I love all God's people. The devil has tried, on one side, to make me too tame. I had been too radical, and when I began to be too conservative the Lord brought me back. I was like a pendulum--first swinging too far this way, and then the Lord would bring me back.

And now, after suffering many defeats, learning many lessons in this Canaan of Perfect Love, I praise God for the trials of my faith and for His marvelous keeping power. I have learned that I must be an uncompromising, unwavering witness to the cleansing power of Christ; that I must not make an idol of holiness or holiness people; that I must not lean upon my emotions, but must walk by faith, and sometimes in seasons of darkness; that Satan tempts and tries me more directly and boldly than ever before, that I must often be dead to things and plans that are in themselves innocent, must sow and reap, or sow and let others reap. My heart breaks down under a delicious burden of humble and adoring praise to the wonderful Jesus. I have no will of my own. My will is the will of my Father. A sense of utter nothingness is growing upon me, together with an increasing sense of merit of Jesus.

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Source: "Forty Witnesses" by S. Olin Garrison