

GOLDEN SHEAVES By Beverly Carradine

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POSSESSING THE LAND

It was one thing for the Jews to cross over the Jordan into Canaan, and another thing altogether to possess the land. Years after their entrance Joshua said to them, "Why are ye so slack to possess the land?" They had overrun a portion, but there were numbers of lofty hills and mountains, beautiful valleys and fruitful plains which they had not scaled, explored and cultivated.

In like manner it is one thing to obtain the blessing of sanctification, and it is another to enter upon its many privileges and full blessedness.

As we study the sanctified people today we find them divided into three classes:

First, those who have crossed the Jordan years ago, but have never left its banks. They use the same expressions, have no better experience than that of the first day or week, and are, so to speak, camping in the same place. These are the ones who are continually slipping into the Jordan, and getting washed back to Moab. They have to be picked up and dried, and ferried back to Canaan every summer at some camp-meeting.

A second class are those who have crossed and gone some distance into the experience, when suddenly, after a few years, they stop and never advance again. The whole case is full of mystery to many, but the explanation is that something has been buried under the tent, and God will go up with them no more to battle. They have stopped short in the midst of a life all aglow; and though years have passed they go no deeper nor farther into holiness. Sermons, books, papers and meetings which they continue to read and attend seem powerless to bring back the glory, and restore that wonderful push and go in their lives which once everybody most plainly beheld. Like the first class the question could very properly be asked of them "Why are ye so slack to possess the land?"

A third class sweep on and over the whole of Canaan. They scale the mountains of joy, penetrate its valleys of rest, drink of its rivers of pleasure, and till its plains of duty. They allow no spiritual fruit to go untasted, and own the country from Dan to Beersheba, or, in other words, enter upon and enjoy the experience in all its wideness and fullness.

They possess the land, we say. What does this mean, what is it to possess the land?

In general terms it means that there should be a steady advancement on all spiritual lines; that there should be an ever-deepening experience; that there should be a continual growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; and that the fruits of the Spirit which were brought over into the Canaan life should become larger, better and more luscious; that just as Canaan was a better country for fruits than the wilderness, so the sanctified heart should be a better soil for the Christian graces, than when that same heart had in it the stone of inbred sin.

But to particularize. If we are in the Canaan experience we should enjoy a deeper peace.

We can understand how a person on an ocean steamer would in the first few days feel decidedly nervous, but when the vessel has for days carried one over billows and through fierce storms, that

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anxiety should give way to deep confidence and even tranquillity. So we can understand how at first people who enter upon the experience of holiness feel some apprehension about the keeping power, and as to what the future holds for them. But when for days and weeks they discover that this peculiar grace of God is sufficient for every condition, that it preserves and upholds in all circumstances of life, then the natural result should be a profound and ever-deepening peace.

Second, there should be an increasing sweetness of spirit.

One of the things promised in Canaan was honey. This stands for the tender loving spirit the blessing brings. Now as the land was said to flow with honey, then it follows that the deeper one goes into the country the more of this beautiful liquid treasure should be found. In a word, the sanctified should steadily become sweeter spirited as the years roll on.

We do not mean a sickening sweetness; nor a namby-pamby, mawkish sentimentality and softness. Not molasses, but honey. The real, genuine sweetness of Christ in the soul.

Think of a man starting out with a beehive, and after twenty years having still only one. He should have had at least an hundred, and the industrious man would have owned that number. Certainly we ought not to be put to shame by an individual running a bee farm. When we see sanctified people becoming vinegary we fear that they are already out of Canaan and back in the wilderness. And when they grow bitter we have reason to dread that they are still farther back and are in the gall of Egypt.

Truly, if we possess the land, we who began with a single hive of honey should in a few months or years have enough in the shape of love, gentleness, kindness, pity and sympathy for a whole community.

Third, there should be a profounder joy.

One of the promised fruits of Canaan was grapes. The land was said to be one of vineyards, while the presses burst out with wine. Wine is a Bible figure for spiritual exaltation and joy. The teaching then in the imagery is, that just as one going deeper into Canaan would find more vineyards and wine, so, in the Sanctified life there should ever be an increasing soul gladness. Instead of drying up, our heart presses should burst forth with new joys and fresh spiritual rapture.

He would be a poor gardener who set out a grape plant, and after ten years had no more than he began with. The hillsides should have been covered with a beautiful increase, and the house fairly crowned with a clambering vine of richness and beauty.

Even so with us. Our joy should grow as we press on in holy living. Nothing could be more convincing and attractive to beholders than such spiritual fruitfulness, such holy gladness shining in the eyes, welling up in the heart, and transfiguring the life.

Truly we can then sit under our "own vine" and need not go to others for comfort. We have a vineyard in the life, a joy plant covering us as a shelter, and a greater inner gladness flowing like an intoxicating wine in the soul, with full and increasing measure.

Fourth, there should be a greater faith.

If a person has been introduced to you and endorsed by a trustworthy friend, the acquaintanceship begins with a measure of trust. But when months and years have rolled by and you find this individual, now a friend, always reliable and true and faithful in every changing circumstance to be depended on, then your confidence has grown so that it can scarcely be shaken.

So we knew Jesus already when we entered the experience of sanctification. But when after months and years, filled with all the peculiar experiences, tests, difficulties and assaults coming to the sanctified, we discover that Christ never fails us, that He always relieves and delivers, always fulfills His promises, then has our faith grown from a seed to a tree whose great boughs protect and whose shadow rests us. We have now such a confidence that no matter what happens, we cling to, believe in, and rest assured that the Saviour will bring us out all right. A sweeter trust, a profounder confidence, a mightier faith seems to be the natural outcome of the life in Canaan with its deepening acquaintance with the Son of God.

Finally, our victories should be easier and greater.

Jericho was the greatest triumph the Israelites had up to their entrance into the promised land. But Jericho was not the mightiest victory they had after that, by any manner of means. To take that city they required six or seven days of marching, an encirclement of the place thirteen times and a great deal of noise. But the day came in following years when they won a mightier victory while standing still and playing on harps. And at another place God overwhelmed their enemies by throwing down stones upon them from heaven, and all they had to do was to stand and behold the salvation of the Lord.

In like manner our victories in the life of holiness should be greater and easier as we sweep deeper into the experience.

We have noticed that when persons are first sanctified, there is still a great leaning upon, and use of old-time weapons. There is still a trust in the bow and spear, and an almost unconscious use of severe methods in dealing with all kinds of opponents.

After a while they discover that rams' horns may do well, but harps are better. The first may stun and deafen, but the other goes to the heart and moves the soul. They also gradually get to see that if God has entrusted them with the sharp razor of truth it was intended for a milder and more merciful use than the cutting off of men's heads.

Still the advance goes on, and the man deep in the Canaan experience leaves it to God to fight his battles and cast stones of conviction from heaven into the breasts of his enemies. The astonishing vision to the world is that of a victor who has not laid his hand on a single carnal weapon, nor lifted a solitary stone to cast in self-defense; but keeping sweet all the time, and committing all to God, faces undismayed the world, the flesh and the devil, while God gives him the greatest victories of his life.