

FARMVILLE, PITT COUNTY, N. C., }  
March 29th, 1869. }

Dear Brother Bodenhamer:—If an entire stranger may venture to claim that tender relationship which my feelings encourage me to do: yet, although stranger in the flesh, I humbly hope that it is not so in the Spirit. Therefore, after many thoughts and irresolutions, I have undertaken to avail myself of your kindly invitation to contribute to the columns of your very interesting and highly prized little paper. And now it seems almost like presumption in a poor weak creature like myself, to venture on so sacred a cause; but I feel encouraged by the example of my dear sisters, whose writing I have been reading for sometime past, both in the Landmarks and in the Signs of the Times.

Dear brethren and sisters, I would not have you suppose that I expect any one to be much edified by this feeble attempt; for what am I calculated to say, that you do not already know. My object in writing is this: I wish to bear testimony amongst a cloud of witnesses, that salvation is of the Lord, with those who have repudiated the filthy rags of self righteousness and Arminianism, and rely solely on the merits of our once crucified but now risen and exalted Saviour, for justification and acceptance with the Father. O, when a poor sinner is brought to see how vile, how low sunk he is by nature, he gives up all reliance on anything which he can do. To this place, the writer of these lines has been, and if any one was ever saved by grace alone, it is me, if saved at all.

A long time ago, when a very small child, by peculiar circumstances, I became aware that I was a sinner, and felt in some measure condemned. As I grew older, these uneasy thoughts would often recur, and at times I would be much troubled, and I would try to pray; but oh, how relieved I felt when I could escape from such solemn feelings, and enjoy my play and sports with my young companions; such reflections are indelibly stamped on my memory, and although I am now in my seventy fifth year, I have never forgotten them. From my earliest recollection I was accustomed to sitting under the preaching of both Methodist and Baptist denominations; but as nearly all of my near connections were Old School Baptists, I thought that they must certainly be right, and supposed I believed that doctrine;

when poor deluded creature, I was nothing but an Arminian by nature and principle. Through the restraining grace of an allwise God, I was never suffered to run into such lengths of folly and profanity as many of my youthful associates were permitted to do. But instead of giving the glory to whom it was due, I took it to myself, and now I can see how proud, and what a self righteous Pharisee I was; I believed my heart and natural disposition, to be far better than the generality of my acquaintances, and even some professors of the Old School Baptist order. Although I was fond of gay amusements, and sometimes indulged in them, yet I never joined in making a mock of religion or telling falsehoods, in jest or in earnest; and often after spending a gay night, on being left alone, the thought of a future state would be presented to my mind, and oh, how miserable I would be, but still I believed in my good heart, and by some, I was thought to be so perfect, that they told me they believed me to be a christian, yet, I could never persuade myself that I was a converted person. After a while I came out with my figleaf apron, and said I did believe I could do something towards recommending myself to the favor of God, when my dear old father, who was a thorough going Predestinarian Baptist, urged me to hurry about it; said I had no time to lose, no excuse to make. I thought when I get married I will seek religion; but alas, that time never came, I never got ready to begin. Meanwhile I thought that I felt reconciled to God in all things but death, I was not reconciled to die. I heard others complain about the season, about wet, heat, cold and all such things; I thought I felt willing that God should rule his own earth according to his own will; I thought I loved Him, and could not see why I did not obtain the blessing. I heard of a Mediator, but could not see my need of one.—Truly the Saviour was a root out of dry ground, having no form or comeliness in Him for me. Poor deluded creature that I was, I had been creating a God to suit my own capacity, who existed no where but in my own imagination. All this, while I often heard the gospel preached in its purity, and often felt much affected under it, but still the blindness was not removed nor the deaf ear unstopped; I tried to live a moral,

upright life, and build my hopes on that; I was trying to make clean the outside of the cup and platter, without ever thinking to look within; I did not expect to be accountable for those sins which I could not avoid; indeed I scarcely knew that they existed; having never discovered the depravity of my nature nor the exceeding sinfulness of sin. In this way I went on for years. But at last, I one day attended a funeral. My dear old brother Hyman preached. Under his discourse I began to comprehend something of the nature of original sin, and of accountability to God for even the thoughts of foolishness. I went home in a very unhappy state of mind. The whole truth did not flash on my mind at once, but step by step I was led to realize the awful condition I was in. O, then this good heart of mine, in which I had trusted so much, I found to be the cage of every unclean and hateful bird. The whole head was sick; nothing but wounds, bruises and putrifying sores throughout. And, ah, they had not been molified nor bound up. Whole swarms of evil thoughts, such as I never imagined before, came flocking in, and now I found what I never could see before, that the carnal mind is enmity to God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. I saw no way but that my poor soul must be forever lost. I could see no way to be saved but by obedience to the law, and I failed in every point. O, how uprightly I tried to walk. I could not be careful enough in speaking, for fear I would say something wrong. But all this gave no relief; instead of getting any better, I grew worse. I could imagine of no created thing that ever had been or ever would be more sinful than my poor corrupt heart. And yet I could not weep and grieve over my sad state as I wished to, which caused me to suppose that it was nothing good, but a fearful looking out for fiery indignation. In this condition I remained a long time. I could eat and sleep, and sometimes my troubles would wear off measurably, but would return again. During all this time I would often try to pray. But poor ignorant creature that I was, I knew nothing of a Saviour. I had often heard of Him, but understood nothing of a Saviour's love. Yes, and all my life long had been in the habit of reading the Old and New Testaments, and felt great indignation against the Jews for their treatment

of our Lord; never once realizing that it was you, my sins, my cruel sins, his chief tormentors were. I often sat under the ministry of a Hyman, a Ward, Lawrence, and others.—Their preaching seemed to apply to my case; still my distress remained, and I thought that I was one who never was to be saved, for not anything I could hear or do would relieve the sorrowful state of my mind. One Monday morning, (while I retain my reason, that day will never be forgotten,) I think I had been to preaching the over day, and that morning I arose with a deeper gloom on my mind than ever I experienced in all my life; a deep sense of my forlorn situation was impressed on me, and it came to my thoughts that my case was similar to that of the wicked—cursed in my basket and in my store, in my goings out and my comings in; a deep gloom seemed to hang over all nature and myself too. As the day wore on, I got no better. At last, not feeling like attending to my domestic affairs, I took a solitary stroll in a field, musing in deep dejection on my sad condition; all that I could do I had done; I could not see how God could shew mercy to such a wretched creature as I was; when in a moment, as it were, what a glorious vision burst on the view of my understanding; with my mind's-eye I plainly saw the blessed Saviour before His Father's throne, as Mediator and Representative for all who ever had or ever would belong to His church; and the Father no longer looked on the poor helpless sinner for restitution, but on His dear Son, who, by His sufferings here on earth, and ignominious death on the cross, had given complete satisfaction for them, to offended law and justice.—O, what a sweet calm; delight diffused itself over my mind; I could see now how a sinner could be a sinner and yet saved by the merits of a crucified Redeemer; I could now rest from my laborious work under the law, hoping that I was one of those who was represented in Him. With very different feelings from what I had on leaving it, I returned to my house, singing or repeating:

'Tis not of works, lest I should boast,  
But 'tis of grace alone;  
If the least work depends on me,  
I'm sure to be undone."

I did not feel that ecstatic joy which some are so highly favored with.—Perhaps that might be the reason why I was so soon doubting my evidence of being one of the number