

Rocky Mount, N. C., }  
Oct. 12th, 1870. }

Dear Brother Bodenhamer:—It is in much weakness I make the attempt to pen what I hope the Lord, in his tender mercy has done for my poor soul. From my earliest recollection I had serious impressions on the subject of my soul's salvation. My first impressions were, that I was unprepared to meet a just God. I remember well a proposition I made to my sister, who was a few years younger than myself, if she was fortunate enough to reach heaven, that she would administer to me in my suffering condition, which would be, I feared, in utter darkness. You must know my idea of God's plans and purposes were very faint. I remembered hearing ministers speak of Lazarus and the rich man; it bore with considerable weight on my mind, which led me to read the bible. Previous to that time I have no recollection of having any interest in even ever reading its sacred pages. But in searching the bible, I found that the Pharisees prayed three times a day. I resolved to do a little better than they did, and tried to pray four times a day, and thought surely the Lord would love me. This I kept up for sometime, but at length I forgot to pray at all, and followed greedily after the pleasures of this world—among them was dancing, which was my chief enjoyment; it was my soul's delight whenever an opportunity afforded itself. In this way I went for years the downward road to destruction; but at times would have a remorse of conscience, feel it was wrong, and resolve that I would never dance again. But often as I made vows I broke them, until I hope the good Lord, in his infinite mercy, saw fit to turn me from the love of sin.—Pen will fail to describe my anguish of soul. I could not enjoy the company I once delighted in, neither could I enjoy the company of christians. I felt ruined and undone, and could adopt the language of one of old:

"Like one alone I seem to be,  
Oh! is there any one like me."

In this condition I tried in my weak way to beg the Lord to have mercy on me, a poor, lost, miserable sinner, and even in that attempt I felt I committed a sin to take his name in my sin-defiled and polluted lips. In this deep distress I was going to school, and my teacher and com-

rades would often ask the reason of my sadness and depression. At times I would feign myself sick and go home. My father and mother would wonder what can be the matter. At one time a physician was called in; he pronounced my case a very simple one, but indeed I felt it was the worst of cases. I verily believed that I was going deranged, and that in that condition I should die, and eternal punishment would be my doom. I would often seek my silent chamber, and read the bible to try to find some comfort, but all was condemnation; I could find promises for others but none for me. I wished myself anything else but a human being, for I verily felt that I had committed the unpardonable sin; that the time had been when I could have found mercy, but I had been such a great sinner the day of grace was past.—Here I resolved to pray if I perished; I ceased to part my lips in prayer, but the very breathings of my soul was, Lord be merciful to me, a lost and undone sinner. I was unfit for any duty. The last night I remained in this deplorable condition I was afraid to close my eyes for fear I should wake in torment. It pleased the Lord, as the sun arose next morning, to speak peace to my troubled soul. These words were forcibly impressed on my mind, Ephesians 2d chapter and 1st verse: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." They were to my poor troubled soul like meat to the hungry and water to the thirsty. I can never describe the peace and gratitude I enjoyed for a season. I never felt that exceeding great joy I have heard others speak of. But alas, what was Satan's first step to molest my peace: You are deceived, or you would have felt like praising God aloud; but on the other hand I thought I would keep it within my own bosom and never reveal it to any human being. These doubts soon passed away, and my mind was directed to the church, but I felt so unworthy and my hope was so little I could never venture. I was afraid I was deceived, and if I was I did not want to deceive any one else. I felt that I could be as good a christian out of the church as I could in it; but these two passages of Scripture were forcibly impressed on my mind: If you love me, keep my commandments; and, He that denyeth me before men,

him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. This marred my peace day and night; there was no enjoyment for me. I concluded I would go to the church and tell them what I had felt—that they all knew how sinful I had been, and I was quite young, and they would not receive me, then I would have a clear conscience. I went to church in September 1853, fully determined to offer, but obstacles presented themselves over which I had no control, and I went away miserable. There was baptising next day. I felt at the water I should not live to see another meeting roll around, but promised the Lord if he would spare me I would not let another opportunity pass. With that promise I made myself pretty well contented for a week or two. Before the next meeting I determined fully within myself I never would offer. I went to church so determined, I moved the seat I had usually occupied. It seemed that the whole sermon was directed to me. After service a door was opened, and to my utter astonishment, my father went forward and was received. I could no longer forbear. We were both baptised the next day. I had just entered my seventeenth year. I can say of a truth it was the happiest day of my life. I felt indeed that all my troubles were over. I could view Jesus as my Saviour, and was enabled to exclaim, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire besides thee. I had no care, no sorrow, neither grief nor pain. I went on my way rejoicing over seven months. I often heard christians speak of their doubts, but they had seemed to take their flight. I verily felt that I should be carried to heaven on flowery beds of ease. But alas, my troubles came with double force; afflictions, sorrows, bereavements, trouble on every side. It is thus the Lord leads his chosen. It is through great tribulation you enter the kingdom. The Lord chastens whom he loveth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. The Lord Jehovah is my strength, I shall not fear. Like every other dispensation of Providence, it was wisdom and loving kindness in him to choose our pathway to be a rugged one. Behind a dark Providence he hides a smiling face, and makes every sorrow yield them

good. I have often felt in my trials if I was one of the redeemed of the Lord I would not be so borne down. But the promise is to his children, he will be with them in the sixth trouble, yea, in the seventh no evil shall touch them, and whenever we are enabled by an eye of faith to take hold of these promises, it does away with all trials, and we are enabled to go on our way rejoicing.—How comforting to the poor weary saint, overpowered with care and trouble on every hand, to meditate on the loving kindness of the Lord; how he leads us about and instructs us; leads us in paths that we have not known; opened our blind eyes, unstopped our deaf ears; gives us a heart to understand; has taken our feet out of the mire and clay and placed them on the rock of ages, and put a new song in our mouth, even praises to Israel's God. Behold what great things the Lord hath done for us, whereof we ought to be glad. I do feel to rejoice in the God of my salvation, but oh, how unworthy I feel. But Paul said, To me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace given.—I feel to bless God for this free and unmerited grace, which enables me to endure hardness as a good soldier. Oh, that the Lord would strengthen me, so I may be able to bear up with christian fortitude and resignation under all the trials and conflicts that may await me. I trust I have a well grounded hope, that Jesus has borne all my sorrows, all my iniquities, and that he is my blessed surety, and that I am justified by his righteousness, called by the operation of his Spirit, which Spirit can, and will I hope, enable me to pass through all my infirmities, deep trials, fiery temptations, sore discouragements, dark providences, and at last be glorified and eternally saved in Christ beyond this vale of tears, where the days of my mourning will be ended. Then sin will grieve me no more, affliction, sorrow and sighing depress me no more. Then shall I thirst and hunger no more, but shall rest safe and secure in Christ, the ark of safety. There the Lord in the midst of the throne shall feed us and lead us to fountains of living water, and God shall wipe all tears from our eyes. This is some, as I trust, of the dealings of the Lord with me.

Yours, I humbly trust, in Christ,  
P. E. WHITLEY.