

Chambers County, Ala., Sep. 9, 1874.

Dear Brother Gold:—

I don't know how it is that any one who feels as unworthy as I do can attempt to write to one whom I look upon as being one of God's children, unless it is because the Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am made to rejoice. It has been impressed on my mind ever since I joined the church to write out my little experience. I have attempted it in the love of Christ, and I hope he will be with me. I was born and raised in Chambers county, Alabama. My father and mother were raised in South Carolina. They were Primitive Baptists, and were received and baptized into Flat Shoals Church, after which they moved to Alabama. Here they joined Ephesus Church, where they lived until their deaths. My father died in the year 1871; my mother in 1873; and they are gone where, I have ever reason to believe, they are resting in the arms of Jesus. They left several children to mourn their loss, but at that time I had no hope of ever meeting them again; for I had always been such a sinner, and my thoughts only on this world's goods, that I never thought of hereafter, nor of what would become of me. I took a great delight in parties and dancing, and thought when one joined the church that his pleasures were gone. Soon after this I attended very regularly a revival at a Missionary church, and went to the altar for prayer. One night I concluded that I would join, but when the invitation was given and I started to get up, I could not: something seeming to hold me down and telling me that I was deceived and not fit to be a member of the church. I then felt that I was a sinner, without the grace of God, and would perish. I felt so mean I did not want to be where any one was, and would wander in the woods for fear some one would ask me what was the matter. I would try to read the bible, but it seemed that every word condemned me. I continued in this state until my mother died, when I promised myself that I would meet her in heaven if God would be my helper; for I knew without his grace I could never enter. I went to preaching at Ephesus Church, in August, where I had often gone with my mother. It seemed like home to me, and the sermon that was preached seemed to be preached to me. After services were over the minister and I stopped at the same house for dinner, and I never spent such a miserable evening. I was afraid that some one would ask me if there was not something the matter. Soon the subject of people joining the church was raised, and the minister asked me if I had met with a change. I told him I had not, and that I never expected to attach myself to the church until I did. I was so afraid that he would ask me some questions I got up and left the room. After I went home it kept coming in my mind whether or not I had ever met with a change. I could not get rid of it, and it was not long before I went to hear the Old Baptists again. After a good sermon in the day, I went again at night. An invitation for membership was given,

when one of my dearest friends offered and was received. I was then left. I felt that if I could have gone with her I would have been happy, but she had left me with that burden which seemed so heavy that I thought it would kill me, and that I would die that night a poor lost sinner, to live with the wicked in everlasting punishment. I went that night to sit up with a sick child. I looked at it and thought its sufferings would soon be over, but that mine never would. I started home the next morning, but I did not know whether I would get there or not. I came to a place of woods, and there I got down upon my knees and tried to pray, but could not utter one word; for I was so afraid that something would catch me, that I got up and went home. I tried to be lively, but could not. I did not say anything to any one, but I got my bible and tried to read, but could not find any consolation there. I again went to the woods and tried to pray, but my prayers did not seem to rise above my head. I continued to pray without ceasing, but did not get any comfort. I had no one that I could tell my feelings to. The lady I was living with talked so lightly of religion that I was afraid to say anything to her. I just thought if I could see a member of the Old Baptist church, and talk with him, and tell him my troubles, it would be a great comfort to me. The next day was the Sabbath, and I spent the day in weeping and praying, but my prayers did not avail much. That night after all had sunk into deep slumbers but myself, for there was no rest for me, I fell down on my knees to try to pray; for I felt that if I did not get rid of that heavy burden I would die, and then where would my sinful soul go? down, down to the burning pit, where I would live forever with the wicked angels in everlasting punishment, and never more be permitted to see those dear parents any more. Right then I gave up all this world's goods and fell at the feet of Jesus, and asked him to have mercy on me a poor lost and undone sinner. I do not know how long I remained there, but there were some words which seemed to be spoken to me, saying, arise and be baptized, for I have blessed thee, and Oh, brother Gold, I cannot find words that would express my feelings at that time, at the joy and happiness I felt. I arose from my knees praising God; I felt that I loved everybody; every thing looked new; my burden had left me, and I felt like a new person that was just born into the world. I had always loved the Primitive Baptists, but now felt that I had a right to love them. I felt that I could never thank God for bestowing his blessings on such a poor sinner as I was. I felt that I loved Jesus, and could put my trust in him. I could read the bible and find much to comfort me, but it was not long before something told me that I was deceived. Then I was in trouble again. I went off to myself and prayed to the Lord to make it known to me in some way, whether I was deceived or not. That night I had two dreams about joining the church and baptism, and when I awoke the sun had risen,

and the birds were sending forth their praises to God, and to me every thing seemed to be happy. I went to preaching soon after, and when an opportunity was offered to those who wished to join the church, I thought I would offer, but failed and went home feeling that I would never have another opportunity. I promised myself that I would never let another opportunity pass without offering myself to the church, whether they received me or not. On Saturday the 9th day of Oct., 1873, at Ephesus church, after preaching by Eld. A. B. Whatley, an opportunity was given. He sang the old familiar piece;

"I love the sons of grace."

I tried to sing but could not. I began to tremble as they sang the fourth stanza:

"They love the Father's name,
And gladly do his will;
They humbly follow Christ the Lamb,
In righteousness and zeal."

I went forward and gave him my hand, and told the church what great things the Lord had done for me.—It was a little experience. I told them that I was not satisfied living out of the church—that I loved God's children, and wished to live with them. I was received with joy into full fellowship with the Old Baptist church, and was baptized the next day, by brother Whatley—by one whom I have every reason to believe is a child of God.

I have had many doubts and fears since I have belonged to the church, but my prayer is, that the Lord may enable me to overcome the tempter. There is no pleasure to be seen outside of the house of God's dear children.

I have given you my short and poor experience. Brother Gold, pray that I may hold out faithful to the end. Feeling that I have done my duty, I close.

Your unworthy sister in Christ.

C. A. HUGHES.

Rocky Mt., N. C., April 13, 1876.

Brother Gold:—

I do not like apologies, or I would offer one for troubling you now.

For several months past I have felt so blind, ignorant, and unbelieving that I am generally afraid to speak a word on the great and glorious subject of the salvation of sinners.

There has been such a night resting upon me, and pressing me down, that I often feel like sinking under it. I am afraid it is a presentiment of impending evil—of some great sorrow that is to come upon me. I have striven hard to cast it off, but all my efforts have proved unavailing, and although it is very hard to bear, I know it must remain till my heavenly Father is pleased to remove it.—I hope I believe "all things work together for good to them that love God." If I love him, I am beloved by him. "We love him because he first loved us;" and as the wisest, the best, the most faithful and loving Father, he does not afflict willingly, but for our good; and I would fain bow in humble submission to his holy will.

Since I saw you, I have thought much on the subject of Christ's temptations, and (with all due respect to

you, I hope,) I must say I cannot see them in the light in which you appear to view them. You spoke of Abraham's temptation as being similar to Christ's. To me they appear different. God tempted or tried Abraham—the devil tempted Christ. God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Abraham knew it was God that spoke to him, and it was his duty to obey.—If you command your son to perform a piece of work, although it may be very repugnant to his feelings, and he may not understand your object in having it done, he knows his father has commanded, and his father's commandments are right; he goes forward and performs it; his faith and obedience are manifested. Thus it was with Abraham, and it was left on record for our ensample. Christ came into the world to bear—to suffer for all the sins of his people. "In all our afflictions he was afflicted."—Unbelief is one of them. I know to doubt God is sin, and Christ knew no sin; yet in some (to us) unknown, mysterious way he suffered for it.

If a man should say to you, If you were a child of God, you would always be rejoicing, and his words would have no effect on you, make no impression at all, would it be a temptation to you? I think Jesus really felt the devil's temptations. He was in the wilderness where there was no food, "and when he had fasted forty days and forty nights he was afterwards an hungered." His flesh was weak, yes, weak as ours, I think. Now we know the most natural thing for a hungry man to desire is food. The tempter knew this—hence his first attack. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." The blow was given—reached the flesh—made an impression—produced pain, but could not enter to corrupt it, for God was there, in that flesh, to repel it. He was strength. Jesus replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." We would always be eating—feasting, but this is not the will of God, and he knows what is best for us. We must live by every thing he gives us—nothing more.

The devil next endeavors to get Jesus to tempt God. "Then he taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, (prove it.) cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Brother Gold, have you never been tempted to tempt God? I have been; and have prayed, Lord, keep me from presumptuous sins.—But the tempter is not yet done with him. He desires Jesus to worship him—to bow down to him—to acknowledge him his lord and master—well knowing that if he could make him his subject all would be his.—