

# Zion's Landmark.

DEVOTED TO THE DEFENSE OF THE PRIMITIVE BAPTISTS.

"TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY."

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## Zion's Landmark.

By the help of the Lord, this paper will contend for the ancient landmark, guided by its stakes of truth, and strengthened by its cords of love.

It hopes to reject all TRADITIONS AND INSTITUTIONS OF MEN, and regard only the BIBLE AS THE STANDARD OF TRUTH.

It urges people to search the scriptures and obey Jesus as the only King in the holy hill of Zion, keeping themselves unspotted from the world.

It aims to contend for the mystery of the faith in God and the Father, Jesus the Mediator, and the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Comforter.

All lovers of gospel truth are invited to write for it—if so impressed.

May grace, mercy and peace, be multiplied to all lovers of Jesus.

## Communicated

Near Lexington, Ga., June 23th, 1876.

Dear Brother Gold:—

Having some leisure time, and feeling somewhat impressed to write on the following subject, I proceed: "Be not righteous over much, neither make thyself over wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself? Be not overwicked, neither be thou foolish; before thy death."—Ecc. 7: 16, 17.

"What was written aforetime was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Poor fallen men are creatures of extremes in almost every thing they engage in or profess, and even those who are subjects of saving grace are too often found going to great extremes, manifested sometimes by complaining of themselves to their brethren, as being so unworthy and unfit for even a place amongst christian people; when it is known by their brethren that their walk and christian conversation are unexceptionable, when it may be, while complaining of themselves, their inward object is to excite pity, or get applause of their brethren; for if their brethren were to agree with such complainers, and let them know that they thought of them precisely as they thought of themselves, it might not set so well. It might be like the two old sisters who were in conversation. One was telling the other how bad she was, and what a poor, unfit, and unworthy creature she was, &c. The other, being more experienced, replied: That's just what I have always thought of you, and now you have come out at last: when the complainer, in excitement, replied: Well, I reckon, after all, I am as good as you are, any way you can fix it. This I do not doubt, said the other, but there is no use in complaining so much to others; for if we could get their pity or applause it would be entirely unprofitable. There was one extreme properly exposed.—

Another extreme equally disgusting is that of framing themselves as being so careful and successful in guarding against evils, in which they see others indulge, and telling how particular they are now, and have been, in discharging every duty enjoined upon them, and how careful they are now, and have been, in guarding against evils that might interrupt the peace of the saints, and complaining greatly of others who have not been so careful and guarded as they themselves have been. Such are just where they can see plainly the mote in their brother's eye, but see not the beam in their own eyes.

If such are the children of God (which is not impossible), they will soon be brought low under the chastening rod of their heavenly Father, and be made to abhor themselves in dust and ashes, so to speak, and complain only of themselves, willing to bear with any brethren who can put up with them, because they had been looking too much outwardly and not enough inwardly, and had become overmuch righteous, and foolish, overwise in their own estimation.— If, however, such fault-finders are not the children of God, they will continue more and more to praise themselves, and find fault with others, till they fully expose themselves; till their own destruction (religiously) is brought about, which would prove to the best interest of the church.— Let none say, "I am not liable to such evils." The depravity of human nature is alike in all, and "the heart (or carnal mind, which all have,) is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?"— Jer. 17: 9. And even ministers themselves are no better than their brethren, but all are liable to err. They complain greatly of inferiority, weakness, inability, and unworthiness in themselves, which no doubt they feel, indeed, but to be always complaining of it they find to be unprofitable to themselves, and of no benefit to others; and to make it worse, they claim to see all sufficiency in their preaching brethren. In this they may sometimes dissimulate. To illustrate: after the church at Black Creek, Madison Co., Ga., called me to serve them, twenty or thirty years ago, there was an old brother David, a sound gospel preacher, living in the neighborhood (though his membership was at Middle River, Franklin Co.), and he always attended our meetings, and would sit in the stand with me, but I never could get him to preach.— His reply when asked was, "What! I preach, and you here; never! never!" Once I determined to try a new plan with him. So, when I got to the place, brother David met me gladly, and as usual went up in to the stand with me. After being

seated, I said to him: "Brother David, I am tired; if you please preach to-day." His reply, as usual, was, "What! I preach, and you here; never! never!" Then I said, "Now, brother David, I am going to talk plain to you, and do pray don't take offense. I want you always to come and hear me, but I never intend any more to invite you to preach here.— If, however, you at any time feel it to be your duty to preach, let me know, and you shall have an opportunity to discharge your duty." At this he began rubbing his hands and groaning earnestly, and soon remarked: "I reckon I must try a little to-day."— He went on and preached greatly to my relief and comfort; and, after that, never failed to preach there as long as he was able to get there, which was several years after. Others, I have noticed, who like him seem to try how much their brethren will beg and persuade them to preach, when, if their brethren were to object to their preaching, simply because they were so hard to get at it, they would become offended likely, and would visit them no more; or, if other

preachers present seemed to be present, they would speak out to their brethren. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after."— 1 Tim. 5: 24, 25. He is wise indeed, and not overwise, who knows and feels his own errors, with his unworthiness, his ignorance, with his utter destitution in himself: and, without complaining so much, if he is a preacher, his brethren will learn enough of it, by his preaching with the ability which God giveth. Such are not overmuch righteous, nor filled with a self-exaltation. But if ministers become unmindful of their weakness, and become exalted in themselves, the consequences are disastrous, and cannot be hid. The church at Laodicea, with its angel or minister, was in a luke-warm condition, and said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," when in fact she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."—Rev. 3: 17. Now, to have been either entirely cold, down, heavy under a sense of her miserable and destitute condition, or hot, light, moving and active, revived, and rejoicing, would have been preferable to this lukewarm state. Cold water is heavy, and is still, and is lowest down; hot water is lighter, active or moving, but lukewarm is the most offensive to the stomach. As saints then were in that awful state, it is entirely reasonable to believe they may be so no longer, become righteous overmuch,

overwise; very particular indeed about others, and insensible of their own condition. Hence the great importance of self-examination, care and watchfulness, lest any of us, before we are aware of it, become righteous overmuch or overwise, or wise above what is written.

I must notice the last charge to the same character, "Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish; why shouldst thou die before thy time?" Some may ask the question, Can the saints become overmuch wicked? Answer: They are all thus subject, so long as they have the carnal or fleshly mind, warring against the Spirit or mind of Christ, which dwells in them. For proof, notice the case of Peter, who, when overmuch righteous, said, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended."—Matt. 23: 33. Again, when overmuch wicked, he began to curse and to swear, saying, "I know not the man."—Matt. 26: 74. Again, immediately after Jesus had pronounced the great blessing upon Peter, and had given unto him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus began to tell the disciples about what must befall him at Jerusalem; and when Peter, being overmuch righteous, began to say, "Lord, this shall not be unto thee." But Jesus turned and said unto this same Peter, "Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offense unto me, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those things that be of men."—Matt. 16: 22. No doubt but Peter was earnest and sincere in what he said, but nothing we do is made right because we are earnest and sincere. If prompted by the flesh, and we are made righteous overmuch or overwise, it is by no means pleasing to the Lord, but offensive. And can any claim to be more able to guard against and overcome the flesh and the devil than Peter was? Surely not. Once a minister of ability and high standing was very zealous in contending for the faith and order of the primitive saints, standing firm with the Old School Baptists for several years; but, eventually, about the year 1850, he became offended with an overwhelming majority of his brethren, because they differed with him in his belief that God used his ministers and their preaching as means in his hand, by and through which he quickened and saved sinners from their sins.— His brethren were all willing to bear with him and live in peace; but he would not bear with them, but took up charges against two leading brethren in the Church, where he was a member, and the pastor. Every effort possible was made to reconcile him, but he could not be persuaded to let the brethren differ with him on that point, and live in peace. To use