

## FRAGMENTS No. 31.

"Peace, be still."—Mark 4: 39.

*Beloved Elder Gold:*—Into what a strait the disciples of Jesus were brought that evening they were crossing the lake of Genessareth, or sea of Galilee! Their Master had ordered them to cross over the lake, here, opposite Capernaum, some six or eight miles wide; it was in the evening, after he had been teaching by the sea side, and wearied with the labors of the day. They launched forth as commanded, and steered for the other shore, "And there arose a great storm of wind and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full." In this terrible catastrophe, with the tempest roaring and howling over head, attended, probably, as usual, with terrific peals of thunder, and vivid lightning, and the mighty billows rolling in fury over their vessel, they are at their wit's end, and are ready to sink. They are now at the mercy of the wind and the waves, and utterly helpless in themselves.—No skill, nor effort of their own can avail them anything, and no human aid can reach them. In this dire distress they bethink themselves of their Master, and run to him, (as we all should do in our distresses,) but he is asleep on a pillow, in the hinder part of the ship. Here is an evidence of the manhood or humanity of Christ—he can be weary, can sleep, rest, eat, rejoice and weep like unto his brethren; but he is also God with us, and possesses all power. They cry, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Yes, he does care for them as the objects of his love, and rises from his couch, and in the majesty of his power, and the riches of his compassion, he speaks to the warring elements, saying, "Peace, be still!" "And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." It did not require a day nor an hour for the wind to lull, the tempest to calm down, the thunder to cease echoing through the concave, and the maddened waves to stop their furious lashing against the trembling vessel; no, but at the voice of Him who hath gathered the wind in his fists, and who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, all were hushed to silence at once, at his word, and a great calm immediately ensued.

What astonishing power! and what a display of sovereignty over all created things was here exhibited!—"What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" As it was when Jesus walked on the troubled sea in the dark night, and came to the terror-stricken disciples, and calmed their fears, and stilled the storm, they exclaim, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."—Matt. 14: 33. Here we have indubitable evidence of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ, and of his care, compassion and love towards them that trust in him; and in contemplating this scene on the lake, we are reminded of the omnipotence of the God of our salvation, and of the displays of an interposing arm in defence of his people. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind," and is an "hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tem-

pest" to all his dear children. He enables them to "hasten their escape from the windy storm and tempest," and to take shelter under the shadow of his wings. They are often, in their experience, and in the discharge of their duty to their Master, made to "do business in great waters." These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distress. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto his desired haven."—Psl. 107: 23, 30.

What a clear illustration of the christian's voyage of life across the troubled sea of time, and what a guarantee for the safe conduct and final landing in the port of peace.—"He leadeth me beside the still waters," because he hath said PEACE to my troubled soul. When we become fearful at the rising winds of doctrine, and frightened at the terrible billows of trouble, and our vessel is about full and ready to sink, a word from our Captain, heard above the roar of the elements, saying, "Peace, be still," will calm the troubled breast. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and thro' the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flames be kindled upon thee."—Isai. 43: 2.

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow."

If we are brought to Mount Sinai by the divine law, and hear its thunders against our guilty souls, see the lightnings of wrath against our sins, and feel the storms of vengeance, and the billows of condemnation sinking us to the depths of hell, a word from the lips of the Prince of Peace can calm our troubled hearts. "Thy sins are forgiven thee: go in peace!" O what sweet words to the guilty soul! "In me ye shall have peace," says the Prince of Peace, the King of Peace, who hath made peace by the blood of his cross. "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Being justified by Christ, we have peace with God, a peace that passeth understanding.—Our fallen nature opposes the work of grace, and the lusts of the flesh war against the soul, keeping up an unceasing conflict; and yet the renewed mind enjoys tranquility and peace whenever it looks to Jesus, and is able to trust in him, for he is our peace. "Be still," says Jesus to the raging storm and rolling billows, and in our greatest straits, and sorest conflicts, when he says, "Be still, and know that I am God," a sweet stillness, peace and confidence in his word and power fill the mind. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee."—Isai. 26: 3. While the war lasts the soldier has no peace, and until the campaign is ended, and the last enemy van-

quished, he is required to wear his armor and keep up the fray; and so the soldiers of the cross cannot have perfect peace and rest for both soul and body, until the end of their earthly pilgrimage. Many battles are to be fought, many storms and tempests borne, many heavy waves and billows must lash against our little frail bark before we reach port and ground our arms; but while on the way across the sea, if our Captain is aboard, and says, "It is I, be not afraid," we feel at ease and rest in confidence in the wisdom and power of our Master,

"Who plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm."

Jesus brought his disciples safe to land, and every soul that trusts him shall be brought to the port of peace.

"The nearer still she draws to land,  
More eager all her powers expand;  
With steady helm, and free-bent sail,  
Her anchor drops within the veil.  
And now for joy her sonnet signs,  
I'm safe at home."

I. N. VANMETER.

Benga, Bullock County, Ga.,  
July 1, 1876.

Dear Brother Gold:—

I have, for some time, felt a desire to pen down some of my feelings and belief in regard to religious matters; but, knowing my ignorance and sinfulness, I feel unworthy to write anything for publication; and knowing I fall so far behind my superiors in wisdom; I also feared I might, thro' ignorance, say something wrong, and some able pen would criticise what I had written, and wound my feelings, and then more harm would be done than good. I am old, but feel that I am a fool, or very ignorant; but would, in my weakness, admonish the dear saints of the Lord to love and good works; and if a brother or sister is overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.

Dear brother Gold, what I now write is by no means to get up a controversy, for I am opposed to such, especially between brethren and sisters of the Primitive Baptist Church, for I think we ought to be of one mind, and one judgment in things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ, and of God. And if I am not deceived, it is through a pure motive of love to God and the great cause of Christ, and good will toward the dear saints, and the Zion of God, that I thus write. And now, if my views differ from any of my brethren's or sisters' judgment, I can assure you that I have not written with any intention of wounding the feelings of any of the lamb of God.

Brother Gold, I see in the LAND-MARK (No. 15, dated June 15, 1876,) a communication written by Elder D. W. Patman, who was an able writer for the *Southern Baptist Messenger* before the war—which communication I read with sweet delight. Now brother Patman, because I differ with you in some of your views found in your communication, do not, dear brother, be offended with me because we don't see alike; for, tho' I never saw you in the flesh, I think I love you in the spirit. The first thing I noticed in your communica-

tion was that of suffrage.

We agree with Elder Patman that white and colored men, and male members of the Baptist Church have a right to vote as they please in our common elections, and no man has a right to complain; but suppose there comes before the people an uncommon election—say the authorities had left it with the people to say whether we have an established religion according to law, or whether we still have the liberty of conscience to worship God according to the dictates of our consciences. Now say there are two candidates—one in favor of a law religion, the other in favor of freedom of conscience—is it right for any brother who is a Primitive to vote for the candidate in favor of law religion? I think not!

Brother P. says, some churches are not disposed to allow their members to receive any aid the laws of the country may offer or allow them, without laying themselves liable to discipline, and probably exclusion from Church privileges.

It may be true, that some of the Churches and Associations have been too hasty in passing resolutions; still we think, notwithstanding the law allowing homesteads—in almost every homestead case some one is defrauded—and we feel assured the law offers aid to men (or at least some aid), when if accepted by saints, they do wrong, for they have no more right to take shelter under the homestead because they are in debt, than Daniel had to worship the image that King Nebuchadnezzar set up. Daniel refused to worship the image set up: so we think all christians should refuse taking the homestead. And if christians put their trust in the aid the law allows them, we fear they distrust the promise of God, and lean upon an arm of flesh.

Brother Patman says: the law, whether right or wrong, has made provisions for the relief of citizens involved in debt, and to this law saints are required to be in subjection, and thinks it's the privilege of Church members to receive any aid the law gives them, as much so as any other citizen. True, they have equal rights with other citizens agreeable to law, but we can't think it's agreeable to the law of God. We can't see that either the homestead law or the law of God compels any man to be in subjection to it. And why? Because the law, if we understand it, compels no man to homestead, but leaves it with him to do or not do, unless he is worth more than the law allows him as such. If it is a bad law saints have no right to make themselves subject to it. For instance, if the Legislature made it no harm to swindle our fellow-man, agreeable to law, would it be right in the sight of man to cheat or swindle any man? Surely not! And if Churches suffer one member to take the homestead and hold him in fellowship, they may directly have to fellowship another. Then we think there would be more distress and confusion, and perhaps division, than there would be to keep it out of the Churches.

My advice to the Church of Jesus Christ is, to have nothing to do with