

Floyd County, Ga., May 28th, 1876.

Brother Gold:—

Having, through the abundance of rain, been disappointed in going to New Hope to meeting, (though my mind and desire is to be with the brethren, but cannot) I feel this morning to be alone, or rather, away from the brethren; yet my mind is engaged in beholding the order of the house of God; and, after having many thoughts upon the subject, I picked up the last number of the LAND-MARK (May 15th,) and read your views on Ezekiel 8: 10, which I fully endorse; for I do feel sure that I have had some special views on that, as well as other scriptures.

Although I have been trying to preach Christ and him crucified for nearly ten years, yet this morning I feel to be no more than a babe, and feel so unworthy within myself, that within myself I cannot claim to be a christian; but often in looking over my unworthiness I reflect on the character of others.

Moses was a man, the Lord called him to lead Israel from the land of Egypt to the land of Canaan. The prophets of God were all men, and within themselves were not able to teach Israel aright. The scriptures were written by holy men of God.—Holy men, yes! How were they holy? The Lord God made them so. Did they prepare themselves to testify the things of God to Israel? or, were they prepared of men, or of God? This is an important question. Who prepared Saul of Tarsus to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ? Was it the Jews? or, was it the Lord? Saul was a preacher of the law. Paul was a preacher of the gospel. The Jews taught Saul to preach the law. The Lord taught Paul to preach the gospel. The law is death to the sinner—the gospel is life.

Saul, when a preacher of the law, believed it to be his duty to persecute the children of God, which thing he did do. And this is what the carnal mind teaches. But when the Lord caused the light to shine round about him (yes, and I believe in him,) he viewed things in a different light, for he viewed things just right—just as they were; he saw he was lost and ruined within himself; his righteousness failed. But when he was cleansed from his sins, and the Lord made it his duty to preach the gospel of his Son, he prepared him to preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that were bound.

Paul also was a man, and as the Lord prepared his prophets to prophesy, their worthiness was not of themselves—but of God. So he prepared his apostles to preach his gospel, and they, as men, had no worthiness of themselves. But their preparation and worthiness was of the Lord—and, as it was then, so it is now, for the Lord has not changed.

Let me mention a few names, to wit: K. Rambo, L. C. D. Payne, J. A. Mims, D. W. Patman, T. K. Pursley, C. B. Hassell, P. D. Gold, &c. These are all men, and within themselves have no worthiness. But God has the power to prepare, the

right to choose; and their preparation is of the Lord, and their preaching is the gospel. As men they can not preach the gospel; as servants of God they can. But they as men (if they preach to please men,) are not the servants of Christ. But if they teach the things that are taught by the Spirit of Christ, which dwells in them, then are they the servants of Christ, and testify the things that pertain to his kingdom, and can adopt the language of Paul and say, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. They are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savor of death unto death; to the other, the savor of life unto life: and who is sufficient for these things?"

Here these servants of God do not preach a yea and a nay gospel; but they preach yea and amen to the glory of God the Father. And were it not that these servants feel the obligations binding upon them, they could not warn the children of God as they do—to turn from evil, and from sin, and from disobedient paths, to serve the true and living God.

Dear brethren, I have said what I have, to direct your minds to your experience—from the law to the gospel, from death to life. The conflict is in forsaking father, mother, brothers, sisters, wife and children, and even your own life for Jesus' sake.

Brethren of the ministry, think of the cross, the conflict which was in your minds when you felt the awful sentence fall upon you, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Here you began to look for qualification but found none; you felt that you were the most unworthy of all. But as a man, you were just as worthy as Moses, or Peter, or John, or James. And why? Because they were men. And you are men. But the Lord God called them to do a work according to his will and purpose. Only one thing is needful on your part, that is, to do whatsoever the Lord God has commanded you—forsake all. Yes, you must forsake all and follow Jesus. In so doing the Lord has promised to be with you, and never to forsake you. And if it is your lot to pass through the fire, it shall not hurt you; if through the water, it shall not overflow you.

Brethren, God is sure to fulfill his promises; he will neither leave nor forsake you.

Where was Ezekiel when the Lord God lifted him up by a lock of the hair, and the Spirit of the Lord God was upon him? He was then teaching the Elders of Judah. I have no doubt but what he was teaching them to leave things which were contrary to what the Lord had commanded, for the Spirit of the Lord God was upon him.

Now, brethren in the ministry, although you feel your unworthiness, yet, when you begin to speak in the name of God, then the Spirit of the Lord is more with you than before. If it was not so, you would soon stop. But he gives life, and of his Spirit. And sometimes we are as Ezekiel

was, able to dig in the wall and behold an open door of the heart and to see the abominations which are done there. This I understand is to see, as it were, the secret recesses of the heart; for we are not to judge according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. There are many things which appear beautiful without, but within are uncleanness.

We are commanded to correct errors as well as to establish truth. Notwithstanding our own unworthiness, we derive our worthiness from the Lord. And when we consider that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered, and that his sufferings were for us, to cleanse us from our sins, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, we should try to live after the example of the Lord, and to crucify the flesh with its affections. And in so doing we let our light shine so that others may see, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. And we are informed that every idle word is to be judged. We should let our hearts be right, and if we lack wisdom ask of God who giveth liberally and upbraideth not.

This is called an enlightened day, but to the discerning eye it is a day of gross darkness. And many of God's children are in darkness and out of the right way.

We are commanded to feed the sheep and lambs. Many of them are sickly and do not come to the fold. But we are to hunt for them and deal tenderly with them, and to feed them on the sincere milk of the word. The flesh is one thing—the Spirit is another. That which feeds the flesh does not feed the Spirit. If we gratify the flesh it is at the expense of the Spirit. I am of the opinion that many of God's children have, to a great extent, left off prayer; and it is only while the christian prays that he can live in the light. It is a great cross to the flesh to live in the discharge of christian duty, yet it is for our own good to obey the commandments of God.

Error is inviting. Yes, the different branches of error are inviting, but many of God's children are beginning to see, who heretofore have been deluded and lead astray.

Brother Gold, since I began this I have been much distressed, and called off to attend to other matters, and it lacks so much of being what was intended. If apologies would do any good I would make them—but they will not. But I believe God's children possess charity, and that they will overlook imperfections in each other. We have been prosperous since you were here last Fall. There have been twelve added to Silver Creek Church—nine by baptism—for which we feel to humbly thank God. May the Lord impress it upon the minds of all his dear children to examine themselves and see whether they are living where the Lord has taught them. If not, do so, if you have to sacrifice friends and relatives. And while we have some things to rejoice in, we have been made sad.—The Lord has been pleased to remove two of our members: Old brother Obediah Formby died on the 10th inst., he was 85 or 86 years old; also on the 18th inst., sister Henri-

etta F. Compton died. They have gone to receive the crown of life which is laid up in heaven for them. Sister Compton has many relatives in North Carolina. And while the Lord is taking some home, he is bringing others in to fill their place.

May the Lord in his mercy bless all his children, is my prayer and desire.

Yours, in love,

ALFRED JOHNSON.

Tarboro', N. C., Sep. 20th, 1876.

Dear Brother Gold:—

Feeling somewhat impressed to write out what I hope the Lord has done for my poor soul, I'll now make the attempt, though I feel so small, and feel ashamed for my name to appear in your paper among those of the saints; but, after correcting, you may publish it if it is worthy a place in your valuable columns, and if not cast it aside and all will be right.

I cannot tell where I was convicted of my sins. I had serious thoughts, when I was but a small child, about the welfare of my soul after death, and would often wonder where I would go to after death. Sometimes I would feel like I wanted to pray, but could not. I went on in that way for a long time—sometimes would feel like I wanted to pray, and sometimes would care nothing about it.

In 1869 I became troubled about something, but did not know what it was; so I began to try to pray, and would repeat the same prayer every night before going to sleep. Finally I thought it was a sin for me to try to pray; so I stopped praying, and turned my attention to worldly affairs.

In 1872 I went to school to Elder Dameron, and boarded with an Old Baptist who often told me to take his horse and go to Church; he caused me to go many times when I cared nothing about going. After attending Church a while I became troubled again and felt like I wanted to try to pray. Sometimes I would feel like I had some kind of disease that would kill me. Sometimes I thought I would lose my mind.

After quitting school and being with the neighbor boys I became thoughtless on the subject, and went to Church but seldom. My mother was a believer in the Baptist faith, and for sometime before she died she professed a hope in Christ, and I believe she is with him to day. She (my mother,) died and left me when I was but nine years old. She said, while on her death bed, that her hope in her blessed Redeemer was made stronger than ever. Oh how happy it is to us to know our dear ones have gone to rest with Jesus.

In 1874 and '75 I was troubled again, thinking I would soon die; but I never saw my lost and ruined condition until 1876. The Methodists then held a protracted meeting in this place, but it had been going on a week before I attended, when, one night a friend asked me to go with him to preaching; we made several unbecoming remarks about the minister and the meeting. When the bell rang I walked in and took a seat in front of my father. When