

But Gideon wants his sign reversed and thus proved. Did he think it might have been an accident? It could not. But the very strangeness of the matter makes it hard to believe; for, if we had as much readiness to believe a miracle as we have to believe only what we can account for, then faith would oftener relieve us. The Lord is gracious to Gideon, and reverses his sign; and now the wool is dry and the earth wet. Is not the other a better sign? I do not know. It is not a pleasant sign for the preacher to feel dry while trying to preach; but often the dew is on the flock, and they are refreshed when he feels that the morsel he is giving them is very dry indeed. But what a blessing that the dew does not come from the preacher, but from heaven. The truth is, a preacher that never gets dry, or at least, that does not feel that he is dry, is wanting in one of Gideon's signs, and one that never gets wet is badly wanting.

The people now in great numbers rush to Gideon's camp, but there are too many. If they are victorious they will ascribe the glory to themselves and not to the Lord. What extremists men are! When full, they forget God and take the glory to themselves; when empty, they forget God's power and say he cannot deliver. A proclamation sounds that all faint-hearted ones should return home. Such are unfit to die. God prepares his people for death before this battle comes. A great many go back, and still the number must be reduced. Only those that lap water like a dog shall fight. Three hundred only of those are found.—A poor set of soldiers to fight Midian. So God's servants seem poor and are, in themselves. A preacher seems to himself to drink very little, and like a dog. He seems to lose more than he swallows. Did you ever notice a dog drinking water? How little he seems to swallow. He drinks though very often, and gets some.—A true preacher is drinking almost every where. In all things he is instructed and knows both how to abound and how to be in want. He drops more than he swallows. That is, a preacher is dropping and scattering the message of truth here, there, and everywhere, from his tongue; for it is a gift of tongues; and the many thousands of Israel go back to their tents and rest while there is a woe on the preacher unless he goes to preaching.

But is Gideon yet ready? No! What, not yet? A man not in his circumstances would say, he was a great sinner. An arminian would not want any sign, would he? "And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise, get thee down to the host: for I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host," &c. The fact that he took his servant with him shows that fear yet lingered—perhaps that carnal fear is about the last enemy to be cast out of the soul—before death, or in it.—What a blessed thing that we have servants to go with us.

Behold, when he goes he hears a dreamer telling a dream about a cake

of barley bread tumbling into the host of Midian, and smiting a tent and casting it down; and he hears another Midianite interpreting it as being the sword of Gideon, because into his hand had God already delivered Midian and all the host. When Gideon hears this all fear flees and faith perfectly prevails. Then he worships God and returned to his host and tells them to arise, because the Lord had delivered the host of Midian into their hand.

If faith comes strangely and slowly, when it comes all is over, the victory is won—the last army is taken. What a wonderful way does God choose to strengthen it. How pitious and merciful he is to us. How slow of heart and what fools we know we are in not believing. But when faith works all is over, the night is gone, the day is come. Then all our enemies turn to slaying one another. Anger finds a foe in some other Midianite that slays it. Malice is killed by some other enemy. These lusts consume one another and melt away. How simple the method.—Hearing the interpretation of a dream. The interpretation of truth to one that knows the truth is so confirming. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Ah how often when one tells his little experience to the Church, or when one christian talks to another, is faith strengthened and we worship and overcome, feeling that all things are delivered to our Gideon, even Jesus, and that we are enabled to follow him, and overcome because he has; and the hosts of Midian disappear.

Lamps in empty pitchers were strange weapons to carry to war, and the shout "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" was doubtless never heard in battle before. It strikes me that Gideon fitly illustrates our Lord in this battle; and the broken pitchers the earthen vessels; the gospel preachers the trumpet or the gift of utterance; the lamps the heavenly illumination—and the battle cry—or sword of the Lord and of Gideon, the word of God, or what they preach. They were to exactly do as Gideon, or it was his example and spirit ruling them. Jesus is our Captain, who was the least it would seem of the House of David, yet faithful in everything, and God gave him the victory; yet he endured and suffered. I don't say that Gideon represents Christ in everything but especially in the battle over Midian.

Gospel preachers are to sound the alarm—for to them a trumpet is given; yet, they are as empty, broken pitchers, worse than empty, for they were broken. But they are nothing till broken. For the lamps that are given them cannot shine until they are broken. When weak they are strong. Their shout is the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. They preach the word and go whither the Spirit goes. They have no strength at all except in their place or in following Jesus. But when they proclaim the truth in its fulness how do our sins (Midianites,) turn against each other and melt away, and everything works together for good. How does the wonderful interpretation of God's dealings with others and our-

selves strengthen faith; so that we believe and worship the Most High through Jesus Christ our Lord. For it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.—Ed.

Afton, Ga., June 20th, 1876.

Elder P. D. Gold,—Dear Brother in Christ:—

I am in receipt of the LANDMARK for June 15th, and can say of a truth, am well pleased with its columns.

Elder D. W. Patman's communication, on title page, is, I think, very much to the point—has come in good time, especially his description of the Church of Christ. It is indeed the highest organization under heaven, and is separate from every other kingdom or order that ever has been or ever will be set up. And the reason is obvious: it was set up by the Lord of heaven, and it shall not be left to other people. And why? I think we have the best of reasons assigned or brought to bear in the case of the Ark of the Covenant falling in the hands of the Philistines. It proved to be a pest to them; they did not know what to do with it. Neither do other people—the unregenerate—know what to do with the kingdom set up by the God of heaven. Elder Graves himself declares that fact in his essay upon the extremes to which his Church and its ministry run. This kingdom is so separate and distinct from all other kingdoms. It shall break in pieces all those kingdoms (powers of anti-Christ,) and it shall stand forever.—Truth, brother P., the Church of Christ is in no way related to the host of anti-christ in all their plans, doctrines, practices, names, orders and unscriptural movements. And, my dear Father's children, let us, in a spiritual sense, disregard every order and sect—no matter how fair it may look—that has a form of godliness but denies the power of a God to accomplish his allwise designs independent of men, money, and all earthly powers that be.

Next: brother S. M. Charles, of Davidson County, N. C., on the important subject, "There is none that seeketh after God." He has so beautifully described the "none who does not seek after God;" and so far from it in the text and in which the heaven-born soul does seek, that they thought to destroy God in the person of his Son, and forever abolish the babbling with his doctrine, from the earth. All by nature are the children of wrath. And look, if you please, at the ways of children of men in a state of nature: destruction and misery are in them, *i. e.*, in their ways—and the way of peace have they not known; awful indeed. And "there is no fear of God before their eyes." In this condition they know him not, consequently there is none that seeketh after him.

Again: he has been so consistent with the scriptures in showing that God has ever had a witness on earth, a people that is prepared and does seek him, and that principle to do so must be born in them, is a heavenly principle, or, as the apostle Peter says, "born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the

word of God." I agree with brother C., that it is under the influence of the divine Spirit only that God is sought, and that the words *quicken, regenerate, born of God, &c.*, are synonymous. I understand to quicken is to give life.

Speaking of the natural birth, when the child cries we know there is a birth, and we know too there is life, but the child does not know it at that time, but afterwards it is made manifest to it. Yet, there was life at the birth, and soon a thirst for nourishment. Even so with the quickened sinner, there is divine life in the soul, they thirst, yea, hunger and thirst and yet they do not know they have spiritual or eternal life.—Saul of Tarsus was three days without sight, and neither did he eat or drink; but here was a praying man, an enquirer, a seeker indeed, and under the preaching of Ananias the Lord (not Ananias,) was pleased to so fill him with the Holy Ghost that the scales of unbelief, the workings of satan lurking in the flesh (in which Paul afterwards said dwelt no good thing,) gave way or fell, and he received sight. And here faith, which is the gift of God, an anchor to the soul, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, gets the ascendancy with all the children of promise and so completely justifies them from all things, from which the law of Moses could not justify them, that they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And here is the victory, says the apostle John, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

I now wish to say to my precious brother, Elder D. W. Patman, in the best of feelings and with all due respect, that while I think there is much of that Christ-like spirit and christian forbearance manifest in his communication that should characterize the children of God, whether in writing, preaching, or any other christian duty; yet, I am not at this time sensible of seeing one single scripture bearing upon or even authorizing any christian going into or even taking part in any secret organization or societies for farming or agricultural purposes either; neither do I see any good reason why they should thus act. Secret things belong to the Lord, and revealed things to us and our children. If I make any new discoveries in farming, which are really an improvement, I conceive it would be selfish in me to keep it a secret. Then, let us be mutual helpers together, do our duty, and trust God for the necessary blessings.

We had some hope brother P., that you would visit the Union Association last Fall—our hopes were blighted. The Lord blessing you, can you not visit us the coming Fall? The Association will convene, the Lord willing, with Cat Creek Church, about twelve miles North of Valdosta, on the A. & G. R. R., embracing the third Sunday in Oct., and Saturday before, at which time and place your presence would make many glad hearts. And the same for you, Elder Gold, or any sound, consistent Primitive Baptist minister in good