

Communicated

RALEIGH, N. C., September 1873.

Elder P. D. Gold, Brethren, Sisters and Friends:—

I have been requested several times to write my experience and have it published, and I have written twice before but it looked to me like it would be in the way of something better, so I have failed to do so; but, that does not relieve my mind. So, I think now, I will write again, and whether it is published or not my mind will be easy.

Brother Gold, I expect to be lengthily to do my feelings justice, but I don't expect to write often, so I hope you will bear with me.

I was born in the year 1832; my father died when I was about four years old; in a few years mother married again, and soon after, if I make no mistake, joined the Primitive Baptist Church, and I think I can say, that she brought her children up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." She taught us, while very young, that there was a God that had all power, that created all things and guarded all things, and that there was a heaven and hell, and that there were two kinds of people—good and bad—and the good ones went to heaven and the bad ones to hell. She described to us as well as she could the difference in the two places. So I feared hell and desired heaven and tried to live as I was taught, and feared that if I died as I was that I would go to hell. I lived in that same belief until the year 1858, I think. I got one of my eyes burned badly in the blacksmith shop when I was small and have been suffering with it ever since—sometimes it is better and sometimes worse. It has been so bad that I was compelled to be shut up in a dark room for days at a time and could not see those that waited on me. Oh, what I suffered, words cannot describe. I thought if I had lived when Jesus was on earth I could have been cured instantly. I felt that I could see how those did rejoice that were healed so suddenly, but I knew that I would have to wait for time and the skill of our earthly physicians. I left my mother and father when about seventeen years old. When I was with them I went to hear the Primitive Baptists mostly, but other denominations when I wished. After leaving them I heard the Methodists and Missionaries. They told their congregations that they could get religion if they would use the means—they would tell what the means were. I will here state what they told me on one occasion at a (so-called) revival: They told me that if I remained at the back of the house I would not get religion. Up to that time I loved to hear some of them preach, for they told me I could get religion, so I thought if I could get it before I died all would be right with me.

After they told me that God would not do anything for a sinner in the back of a meeting house that put me to watching preachers. As I told you in the start, mother told me that God was a God of all power and had proven to my young mind by the scriptures—that he created all things out of nothing in six days.

Parents, let me say to you right here, read the scriptures to your children, read to them how he created the world, Sun, Moon and stars, how he saved Noah and drowned the world, saved the children of Israel and drowned the Egyptians, and such other places where his power is so plainly shown. These things will have good effect and lasting impressions, and it may be that your children can say, That the Arminian's god is not a God of all power—he is not the God that I was taught to fear.

When I was quite small mother let brother and myself go with some of our old servants to a camp-meeting. I think I can say truthfully, they told the people if they would give them money enough they would evangelize the world—the money went to them from every direction. I think we got a war instead of a millennium. Money that is given in such an unscriptural way I think will always turn out a curse to any people.

After I left mother and father I fell in with very wild company and became very rude, though I tried to honor my parents. I did not participate in out-breaking practices—I used witty expressions and was a clown for the young people—still promising myself to get religion if I could, for I did not want to be dishonored. I did not want to get religion to get a wife as is often the case, but I aimed at a wife first and then religion. I thought if I became a professor before I got married my pleasures would be at an end. I would sympathize with the Old Baptists. I thought that they were christians, and thought they did not see any pleasure in this world; but, I felt sure that they would realize all the happiness and pleasure that heaven contains for them. I married in my twenty-third year.—My fixing up for a family put me in debt. A short time after I got married my eye inflamed again. As soon as I got so I could travel I started to Wilmington, N. C., to have my eye operated on. I left home August 3rd 1867, and on the 4th the cars met with a severe accident and I came very near being killed. I was taken back to Goldsboro, put in a small room in the hotel where I remained forty-two days—the small of the back and other bones were fractured. I could use my hands and could turn my head a little to the right and left. There is no way to express what I suffered. But I was mightily blessed in this awful condition.—As soon as the news reached home I had many relations and friends

around to wait on and sympathize with me. I had everything that I asked for. I will here state one trying circumstance that befel me in a few minutes after the accident, and then pass on: There was a lady and her children in the same coach that I was in, returning from Philadelphia, She had carried one of her sons there to have his eyes operated upon. She came to me with her little children and assisted me all she could. Her baby was about as large as one of my little twin girls that I left at home, (I never expected to see them any more). Oh! how I felt when this kind woman had to leave me! In a few hours she and her children bade me good-bye—she told me that she hated to leave me. I hope the Lord has visited her for her kindness.—After I had been in my little room a few weeks I felt like I wanted to read the scriptures. I asked one of the citizens of the place that visited me to loan me a Testament—he did so. One Sunday morning I took my book and opened in John, I think, and commenced reading about the crucifixion of Christ. I closed the book, I could not read any more for a flow of tears. It seemed to me that he was in the piazza near the door of my room, though he was at one side of the door close to my head so that I could not see him with my natural eyes. His appearance on the cross and his mother sitting at his feet, Mary Magdalene standing

side, seemed to be in the direction of my house and his right hand towards me. It was expected for me to die every day after the accident. I told them to take me home as I felt that it would be for my good, and I bore it with much fortitude. I was taken back to my nearest depot; kept there seven days, and then carried home, eight miles, on a spring wagon, drawn by hand. While at Goldsboro, my wife and one of our little twins were taken to see me, the other one of the twins was left with her aunt. When I was carried in my house my dog soon found it out and came to me, he seemed very glad and stood some time looking at me, he seemed to sympathize with me, and then walked out. Oh, how humble I felt! I can't express my thanks to my friends and relatives.

Time rolled on and the next Spring found me able to hobble a little on crutches. After my strength increased I commenced my former habit of joking and jesting. After so doing I would not feel exactly right about it, so I stopped it only when in certain crowds. I had been in the habit of playing the fiddle to get the baby to sleep, but found that the art of fiddling was a worse terror to my conscience than the cry of the baby to my ears. So I stopped that for a while but kept these things to myself. The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him. After a while my wife asked me to string my

fiddle and play some. I did so to satisfy her and test my feelings. That would not do for my feelings at all. Something was upon me that was never upon me before. I had to humor my feelings or I was unable to suit them. I would often trespass on my feelings to keep things from other eyes. I went on all that Summer, not knowing what was the matter with me. During that year I was taken down with typhoid fever and every one thought that I must die. One evening I felt considerable change in my feelings, I thought my time had come and I must go.—I had the servants called in, all that were about the yard, then called in those that were in the house with me and told them all good-bye. I told my wife to leave the room, that I did not want her to see me die. I, after bidding them all a final farewell, as I thought, turned on my right side and said: "Lord, save my poor soul!" As I made that expression I saw mother pass a door. She said: "I hope he will, son!"

Brethren, sisters and friends, for people to be as low as I was, and to have seen and felt that they were sinners, and knowing that the necessary change had not taken place and their feelings telling them that they had to leave is more than I think any man can describe, for it was the feeling than it was in his "natural mind."

Pretty soon my feelings changed again and I turned over and my fever left me. Well, the next Spring found me on my crutches again, as the weather grew warmer my strength gradually increased. As my strength increased so did my sins. I endeavored to forsake all my former habits but that did not do any good. If I stayed in the house and said or did nothing my feelings grew worse. Praying did not seem to do any good. I became to be miserable in and out of company, and became to be afraid of my own self and was afraid that I would lose control of myself and cut my throat.—While in that condition there came a passage of scripture in my mind. It is this: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." I still grew no better, but worse. When the Sun set that evening I did not expect to see it any more, and when it arose the next morning I did not expect to see it set again. I started to the mill one day and went by my step-father's and told him that I did not feel like going and he said he would send for me. I stayed a while and brother went in and told him that I thought I was sick. He said to me: I think it strange that a man can't tell when he is sick. I was suffering greatly in my feelings and started for home. Just as I got to the gate these words came to my mind: "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." When I got