

J. E. DAVIS,
TOLUCA, MÉXICO.

Toluca Mexico, April 5th 1905

Dr. R. J. Willingham,

Richmond, Va.

Dear Brother:-

Your fatherly latter came this noon. I was looking for your reply and was not disappointed in it. It did me much good.

I want to say first, that you need entertain no fears of my giving up my work in Mexico. I came to give my life to this work and I am not to be turned aside by difficulties. If some difficulties are too great in one place, I can go to another. I want to spend my life in this land.

There are some things that you may not have any way of knowing so far away. That is the reason I wrote you as plainly as I did. Brother Mahon can score others and write glowing accounts of the work here to you that I am sorry to say simply shock some of us. The letter that you printed in the Journal about hard work during vacation was the first thing that staggered me. There was nothing doing when we came and nothing was done to speak of after we came till school opened. I could do nothing at all then except study my Grammer a little. He slept a large portion of the time and some days all he did--to my certain knowledge, for he was living with us, his wife being at that time in the States--was to write a letter to his wife.

Then as to the opening of school work: Absolutely nothing was done the first week except enroll the names and it was far into the second week before any classifivation was done and then Miss Schantz did the most of it. I write this to show you how we have been shocked at some things we have read from Toluca.

Now, I am not a murmurer or complainer. You will not find me to have such a record. I am not one to foment strife among brethren--I believe in peace at almost any personal cost. I have said these things

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from a sense of duty and nothing more.

I could say more along that line but now to a more important matter. You may not know it but we have a "Director" of the schools who holds his directorship by virtue of being elected by the South Mexican Mission. he intends to hold it Brother M. is that director and if he can, for four years yet to come, then, as he says, while he goes back to the States for a year's visit and rest, I am to step in and take hold. In the mean time I suppose I am to be a teacher in the schools and do his bidding. I am willing to help some in the schools but I am not willing to sit down here to this work with the prospects that appear. I want to preach and I expect to preach. True, I could preach here but why should one work merely to relieve another unless it is that the other may have opportunity to more work more efficiently? I do not know.

Now, my plan is this: I will wait till our mission meeting in July and then may be the time for me to speak out. There may be some mis-carriage in plans laid by some of the brethren. Whatever seems best, I will do. What I want to do is to open an evangelistic work round about here with our boys to help (and be helped) and after mentioning the matter over and over and at last getting our four best boys together and going to him with a petition for permission to go (equality with a vengeance) I have succeeded and will begin work next Saturday.

As you know by this time, Bro. Dodd has gone to Morelia. I think I ought to stay here or go to Torreon on account of our printing work. No other missionary knows how to direct that work and at any other place he would have little or no help.

I shall try to follow your good advice as near as seems best, and I trust it will turn out well. I anticipate some trouble in getting anything out of the hands of our "Overseer" even by vote of the mission, but it will come out all right.

Thanks for your kindly interest and words of cheer and confidence.

Yours in Christ,

J. E. Davis

J. E. DAVIS.
Toluca, México.

Toluca Mexico, April 9th 1905

Dr. R.J.Willingham,

Richmond, Va.

Dear Brother:-

I write again. Yesterday afternoon I took two of our boys and went out to a town about three or four miles from Toluca to work for the Lord. We found several liberal families in the town and several promised that they would attend services if we opened up a station there. We found a room that we can fit up at a cost of \$3 silver for rent and very little more for other expenses. Now what I want to know is whether there is a fund of any kind in the hands of our Treasures for such work. He said that we would have to pay our own traveling expenses--that there was no fund for it. I suppose he knows but I want to know from you as I confess I have very little faith in what he says. When Dr. Chastain presented the final and fully itemized report of his building work in Guadalajara to the mission, there was something like \$80 and perhaps a fraction more, that he had spent out of his own pocket. Our treasurer suggested that as their traveling expenses in that mission would be light that he get the amount in that way--directly contrary to the rules of the Board. Dodd and I protested at once and it was dropped. I have been wondering if there is not some traveling expense fund for this very work we are beginning and I have wondered where it goes. You may think I am very hard to please but if you were here you would not wonder at it at all.

We are going out to Tenango next Saturday to look that field over, but as you see this cannot last long at my expense solely. I think here is a great opportunity and I want to see it improved. The boys are eager to work and say that the reason they have done nothing is that they were not permitted. They can preach well--four of them can--and I am in favor of giving them the opportunity. The two I took yesterday are splendid

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personal workers--they do better than many of our pastors in the States. We went into homes and read the Bible to the people and talked to men on the streets, gave out some gospels and tracts, and I think did good.

I am trying to put in a motor for our press. It will cost me considerable money but it is necessary and I hope to make the plant pay it back after a while. I do not know whether it will, or not. I am sure it will fail to do it if we have to depend on these peons for power--they are not much account for work--they do not know how and then they do not care. I hope to get help some time to pay for it. We are working on Expositor and when it is finished I will send you a copy to show what nice work we can do. It is to be enlarged and much improved in many ways over what it has been in the past.

Brother Cheavens and I have been corresponding and I am of the opinion that if the Board could transfer me to that place it would be a good thing, if it proves too ^{here} unhealthy for my soul's good. Now since you have sent Brother Dodd and now a new man to this field it seems to me that Torreon should not be neglected. Dr. Watkins is there to be sure but ^{only} as a field man and Cheavens tells me that he needs a man and as you know he wanted me. I do not know about this as yet, but will do the best I can under the circumstances. I am expecting Mahon to do me as he did LeSuer. In fact I think he will da any man that way.

A letter from Brother Dodd says that he is well pleased at Morelia. He says that the prayer-meeting did him good a thing that seldom occurs here. He likes Brother LeSuer and thinks they will be satisfied there.

I will close. Perhaps I have said too much. I hope to say nothing but plain truth and then abide by what is right.

Yours in the work for the Master,

With love to you and yours,

J. E. Davis

Toluca Mexico, April 12th 1905

Dear Brother Willingham:-

I write you another word which will grieve you. It grieves me more than I can tell. In fact I am crushed under this trouble on account of the fact that it is here where it is so necessary that there be peace.

Your letter to Brother Mahon was handed me yesterday evening with a request for an explanation. I was on my way home and so at my leisure I wrote out a statement in brief of what I wrote you with ^{out-}the allusions to him as "BOSS". I suggested that we meet and talk the matter over. He set the hour at three o'clock this afternoon. I went and in a very few minutes he called me a liar point-blank and I told him that I had taken that off of a whiskey-drummer once and I could take it off a preacher. I immediately left the room and after cooling off till night I think you should know about the matter.

That which he said was a lie was the following which I wrote you in my letter of March 24th: "I teach more classes than he does, about two to one. If he put in his time preaching and evangelizing it would be different, but he preaches just as little as he can possibly get along with, and as to going out to the towns round about, he not only does not do it but does not let the boys of the school do it. I want to go out, but his advice is to wait. Ah that is the spirit of the whole thing--wait, wait, to-morrow, ~~no~~-morrow." I can make affidavit to these statements if it was necessary. He teaches 12 half-hour classes per week and I teach 18 classes six of which are three-quarter hour classes. He preaches much less than half the sermons that are preached here and never goes out to the towns around. Not till some time after I wrote you the letter in question did he give permission for me to take some of the boys and go ~~out~~ to the towns

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towns near by and that at my own expense as I wrote you last. I had asked him again and again about it before the permission was given.

Now, you may be very tired of this trouble and I am too. I am a little surprised that you wrote him anything about it, if you know him as he is--high strung and irritable. But it has come to a bad point now. I do not know what to do. I expect to go on teaching my classes unless he takes them away from me but you know that we cannot get along together and I think you had better send me elsewhere as soon as possible. You can imagine how it would be. I do not expect him to apologise in the least because he is built that way. He will not speak to me I feel sure and I want to go from here as soon as possible unless things change very radically and that very soon.

You spoke of wanting to strengthen the work at Guadalajara. Do you think of sending a man there? I am sure I could get along with Dr. Chastain and we could work together on Expositor and I could get ready to preach just as soon as I possibly can. I am not very much struck with the idea of going to Leon for Dr. Hooker and Mahon are very close friends and Hooker is a sort of cats-paw for Mahon if I am any judge. I could go to ^r Toxeon but I am afraid that my wife's health would not hold up there, however it is far preferable to this.

Well I must close. Pray for me, for I need your prayers. I hope the good people will roll the money that belongs to the Lord into the treasury till there will be a nice balance on the right side.

With love to you and yours,

I am, yours unworthily,

J. E. Davis

Toluca Mexico, April 16th 1905

Dear Brother Willingham:-

I have just finished reading in our Kansas City paper, The Word and Way, that it is proposed that the Boston Union and the Richmond Board co-operate in the establishment and support of Theological training schools in Shanghai and Yokohama. This appeals to me as a wise move and I shall rejoice if it is done.

But there is no country that needs an educated, trained evangelical ministry more than this. We have infidelity and catholicism and the laws of the land all to contend with. We have conditions of material and intellectual growth that are astonishing. This country is bound to come to the front more and more. That means that if we are to do the work that should be done during the next fifty years we should lay better foundations. It is heart-rending to realize how poorly equipped we are for the battle. We need a native ministry that can fight for God.

Now what are we doing toward such an end? Something, to be sure. But the little we are doing is scattered out and broken up into bits and almost, if not all, our missionaries realize that there should be better equipment for the training of God's called ministry in Mexico. In Torreon we have one school struggling for existence, here we have another doing the same thing. Brother Cheavens in a letter to me not long since said: "Why in the name of reason should I be teaching three or four boys Greek here, and you be teaching three or four more the same thing there in Toluca," or words to this effect.

Now, my proposition: Why cannot the New York Board assist in this work? Why can we not have one first-class school in Mexico to train the generals and captains for the campaign to come? I think I can get the signatures of every Baptist missionary--unless it should be Mahon--in Mexico to a petition to this end.

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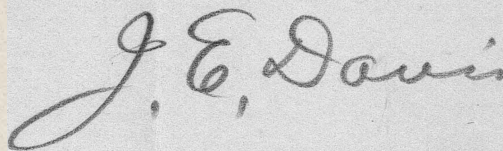
But what do you say? Shall I try? God knows I want to do the greatest possible good here in this land. I do not want to row and fuss. I am suffering now more than I can tell, but the Lord is my helper. I do not want to undertake a thing that would not please you there at that end of the line. I am here to serve God and while my ideas may not be worth anything here in Toluca, I feel sure that they are ^{worthy} of at least slight recognition. My heart is pained at this waste of energy and money. Wrote me fully and frankly. Please do not refer anything more that I may write to Mahon. There has been no reconciliation between us as yet--I mean permanent. I do not think he will settle things on the terms I ask--your suggestions. I think now is the time to settle it all fully. If he will not settle on those terms, I had better be transferred as early as possible.

I am here to do what I can for the evangelization of this land and I want to be right at all times and hence this letter.

With Christian love and best wishes for you and yours,

I am,

Yours fraternally,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "J. E. Davis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a distinct "E". The name "Davis" follows in a similar cursive script. The signature is placed on a light-colored rectangular piece of paper that is slightly offset from the main letter.

J. E. DAVIS.

TOLUCA, MÉXICO.

Toluca Mexico, April 29th 1905

Dr. R. J. Willingham,
Richmond, Va.

Dear Brother:-

Your kind letters received and your counsel and words of encouragement appreciated.

I wish to say but a few words. I am through with this fight. I had no intention of raising a disturbance in the beginning but it has come and I may be to blame for it. I am very sorry that my report which I have not and do not retract for it would require falsehood to retract it, has done what has resulted from it. If the cause is injured, it was no intention of mine, for I want to see the work prosper.

But I have received counsel from several men in this country that actually scares me. They say that we must make haste slowly in this country. That may be true, but if that is an excuse for neglecting the people and the work then I want to go back to the States where I will not have to be idle in the vital work of winning souls. It appeals to me that the fact that people do not turn to Christ does not excuse me from taking them the gospel and doing all they will let me do to win them. Yet, a Methodist Presiding Elder told me Sunday night last that this work cooled off a fellow in a year or two so that they all drag along in the same old ruts year in and year out. He said that there was little or no encouragement to pray and that little of it was done. He told the truth there. I have a letter from one of our missionaries which reads in part in this way: "When you have been in Mexico even a year you will begin to see things differently. Put this down in your book"

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Put this down in your book and in after years you will remember what ----- told you. It wont do to trust to first impressions of Mexico and the way work is done here." What is the jist of the whole argument? Simply that because the work is slow, we can afford to go at the snail pace. I do not want anything of this kind in mine. If I cannot work for the Lord after I get the language, here, then I want to go where I can. True, first impressions are oftentimes wrong, but if half the effort were put forth in some of these towns that a working pastor puts into his work in the States, there would be more souls saved. If there was a little earnest prayer for souls there would be more good done. I succeeded in my pastorates in the States by prayer and hard work--will less succeed here in this catholic land? Not in my way of seeing things.

Well, as to the trouble between us here, I have little to say except that as far as I am concerned, it is settled, yet very unsatisfactorily. It is settled, however. There was no meeting. I asked for it but it was taken in the same spirit that I thought the letter of apology was written. I wrote and explained and asked for a conference again, but got it not. I said that it is settled and I mean by that that I accepted the apology and get nothing in return in the way of an understanding to avoid anything of the kind again. It will come again if I stay here. ~~My~~ Mrs Davis is not as impulsive as I and she could tell you that we have no hope of any other kind of treatment than what has been in the past. Our little Lula is here--so far as all that remains in this world--and we do not want to go away for any little thing, but whether Brother Mahon thinks so or not--

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he pretends to think not--we have had all we think we can stand. There is no need of my saying anything further. We would rather stay here, but I tell you that it seems absolutely impossible. Paul and Barnabas had a large trouble--and doubtless came to an agreement in it for they were good men--but they parted company. There are some men that cannot get along. There are some men that will boss about till nobody will stay with them at all. Try all you please, I predict that you will have trouble in getting any body to stay here. The kind he wants, will not put up with it and the kind that might put up with it, he will not let stay here. But than that is your business and not mine. I have had it thrust at me that I was trying to attend to the business of the Board--if you have such an idea, I hope you will lose no time in getting it out of your head for such was far from my mind. Dodd has been blowed up and called a liar--but not to his face--and branded as a scapegrace and all because he did not like to put up with it all. I hope also that you will not be too hard on him, as I knew him right well while he was here and like him very much. I regard him as a good christian man and have great confidence in him. He is going back to the States because he thinks it is his duty. I have tried to get him to stay while others have done all they could to get him out of here, and now that I have incurred their displeasure, I know that they will have very little good to say for me. I know that a good deal of time was spent in copying the letter which came to you that I wrote while I had no confidence whatever in the confession he wrote--I could tell you why but I will not try your patience and then too that is all ~~the~~ ^{past}/_{not} ~~and~~ ^{past} now, and sending it out to the missionaries--I do not know how many but I know

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of one for he wrote me that it was done. I am sure that it is better that we part company and that as soon as arrangements can be made to do it. I followed your advice and wrote Dr. Chastain, but he has been away on a trip and I have not heard from him as yet. If you think as I do about this matter, or are willing to weigh these words which I have written--and I have written them coolly and deliberately--then authorize me to go to Guadalajara unless a definite understanding can be reached here that will enable me to go my way and let ^{him} go his. You may think this is overdrawn, but I could convince you if we could have the face to face talk which you can not desire more than I. ~~can~~

You will see Dodd at Kansas City and if you are not convinced of his sincerity then I will miss my guess. Please bear in mind that there was no collusion between us. We were both very much dissatisfied but his letter was not caused by me. I wrote on my own hook as my duty as I was thoroughly convinced at that time and have no reason to change my mind except that I think I would have been tempted to refrain from duty had I known what would result.

I will close. Hope you will have a great convention. It is a good thing that I am here and that with a bull-dog determination, or you might see me at K.C. also.

Yours with love,

J. E. Davis