

Leon, Gto., March 2nd 1907

Dr. R. J. Willingham,

Richmond, Va.

Dear Brother:--

Your kind letter received. I have not written sooner because I am desirous of doing my duty in a way pleasing to all, when it is possible to do so. So, I have been praying over this matter of returning to the "States" to study medicine, and considering the matter very carefully.

I want to make a few observations on your letter, and then ask a question or two.

To be sure it would be impossible to say beforehand whether a medical student would make a good doctor. You did not know whether Dr. Hooker would succeed, and as a matter of fact, he did not make things go very lively here in Leon. Am proud of the fact that he is doing a great work in Guadalajara. My calling in life was to medicine. My father and others could tell you that till God called me to preach that was my great aim in life--to be a doctor. I have succeeded in everything I have undertaken in life except in mission work in Mexico. Taking the two things into consideration, I am led to believe at least, that I can succeed in medicine. If you should recall the fact, you would remember that I wrote you just before I came to Mexico about the advisability of studying medicine first.

You seem to have a very different idea from mine of what a knowledge of medicine is for in mission work. I want it so I can preach to people instead of benches. I find it easier to convert fanatical people than hard benches. I have always advocated that a pastor ought to get a congregation, using every legitimate, God-ordained, God-blessed means to get the people to hear the Gospel message he brings. I am not able to get hold of this people by the same means I used in the States. I see that the medical missionaries make their opportunity and use it for God's glory by preaching to sympathetic and grateful people who have been helped through the consecrated use of medical means.

If Dr. Hooker should see your letter and remark about him, I am sure he would feel humiliated. You say: "I think that Brother Hooker will succeed at medicine, but I believe that you were cut out more for a preacher." Here is what he says: "I wish to remark and emphasize it, that unless the Gospel is preached in the dispensary or hospital every day, or at least at stated times each week, it has no right to be called a missionary work..... I reach thousands to where I reached one as a non-medical man. I am constantly thrown with new people and have a chance to preach to them and this is a daily occurrence." You see that his chief idea is that the Gospel is to be preached to the people.

I have to confess that I cannot do this, and the other missionaries cannot do it either--only the medical men are reaching the masses. We visit the people--go among them--invite them to church--try to teach them--but they are prejudiced and un-responsive. We cannot help them and they have no confidence in us. The doctor can help them and tear down their fanatical prejudice to the Gospel, and he gets to talk to a responsive people every day.

You want me to do evangelistic work. Where? How? I am on a stated field. It is large to be sure. But I go to Silao every once in a while and preach to four or five people. On to Irapuato and three or four more. I go to Lagos and three is the most I have ever had there. Of course that is hard for you to understand at such a distance, but if you could but talk to us and be with us some, you would soon see that we have to work here on a very different basis from up there. In other places than those mentioned, I cannot preach till I can find somebody to preach to and arrange with the authorities. We are prohibited preaching on the streets or in public places except where we have a definite place and the authorities are notified. So you see that it is slow work at the fastest.

Why not disregard the law? That would please them immensely. To jail without fail, in such event. And then there would be no sympathy for us, for these folke are constantly agitated by the priests against us, and in their ignorance they would be happy in our trials.

A man who is attending our services regularly and wants to be baptized, was summoned before the judge here the other day in a civil matter. The accuser said that the brother was a protestant. The judge asked him if it were true. He answered in the affirmative. "You don't believe in a God then?" asked the judge. You see how they think of us. What can we do in evangelistic work? We have to get hold of one by one. The medical man can do it.

You seem to think that I am working constantly in the printery. I have hardly seen it for 6 months. It is here but I am not running it. It is practically idle, and is likely to continue so.

I have been otherwise engaged. I have been doing everything I know how to do to advance the Kingdom of God. I am not one to take my afternoon nap and be satisfied. I often burn oil far into the night. I am busy every day. But I want to be conscientious in everything. I want to be ever open to the leading of the Lord. I think I am. My duty in this matter is clear. I must do it. I am not acting hastily.

Now the question:

Is your decision final, or are you (I mean the Board) open to a further discussion of the subject? If so, I have a pile of evidence to submit in my favor; if not, I will know what course to pursue. Please answer explicitly this question at your earliest convenience.

Well, we have a new baby boy at our house. Came February 10th. Mrs. D. is getting on well.

Nothing new. Hope to hear from you soon. Praying God's richest blessings on you and your great work,

I am fraternally and lovingly yours in Chrsit,

J. E. Davis