

BAPTIST PUBLISHING HOUSE

800 MYRTLE AVENUE

P. O. BOX 211

EL PASO, TEXAS, 2/25/31

Dr. T. B. Ray,
Richmond, Va.

Dear Ray:

Your kind letter came some time ago, but I was heels over head in my third quarter lesson work, and so did with it just what I did with a lot more letters that could wait a little. But now I am seeing out over the top again--for this happens four times a year--and am catching up with my correspondence, and am now down to your letter, so shall answer it without further delay.

I am having them send you a copy of Bro. Cheavens' little book of poems, which contains a brief word of appreciation written by your humble servant. Yes, a whole issue of El Atalaya was dedicated to him soon after his death, but I do not have time to go over it and get the data needed. I am so short-handed in my department, and have work piled up so high all the time, I do not think I should take time for that. However, I would do it, if no one else could.

I suggest that you write Mrs. Cheavens and ask her to do this. If she does not have the paper, I shall take pleasure in sending it to her. Her address is 10 Burburg Lane, Great Neck, N.Y., or in care of The Town Crier, same address. I suggest you ask her to do this.

It is good of you to hope things are going well with us here. I suppose they are going as well as could be expected with conditions as they are--our appropriations cut down to the minimum, sent to us in Mexican pesos, which are steadily going down--this time they are worth 40 1/2 cts. on the peso instead of 50--and so little coming in from our crisis-stricken Latin-american constituency.

Last week and this not a press moves, and the future is about as dark for our publication work as it could be, but God is not dead. He can save the situation some way, and maybe He will, though I sometimes almost think He for some cause has turned his back off Southern Baptists, since apparently we are so wise in our ^{own} conceits. Maybe I am wrong, but I do not think I am--we never do, you know--and I think we have not yet reached the bottom.

I wonder if you would tolerate a suggestion--which I am sure will not meet with your approval--and a friendly criticism added? At any rate, since it is for you only, I am sure you could not blame a fellow for using the gray matter in his head-piece just a little. Well, I am going to say it anyway.

I do not think it would be very hard, if we had the chance, to take this work before our people and get full financial support for it. It would appeal to many. We have a great story to tell that would bring in the money, I THINK. But one thing seems to be true just now, and that is, the people are not going to take to the idea

set forth in your recent appeal to the missionaries about getting special contributions for the work, and then reporting it to you to be applied as you or the Board suggest. That is the very thing our folks seems to have rebelled against. Now, I may be wrong about it all, but my opinion is that until great and radical changes are made in our "leadership," little or no improvement is going to take place. Our people have money they would gladly give, but they are saying that they want to direct where it shall go and what shall be done with it. Oh, I am not saying they are right--but that makes no difference as to the general result. They have quit giving for our organized mission work, but every independent mission under the sun is getting plenty and to spare, while we are having our hands tied more and more.

Unshackle us and we can carry our cause to the people and in a short time we can have a real support for this Publishing House, and I dare say that not much of it would come from any source that would contribute to any great extent to the Board. Maybe I am all wrong, but I still do not think I am. The principle of the budget system may be all right--I do not pass upon that, since I have not had to study it to any extent--but in its outworking it is not making a howling success, it seems.

Your heart-rending appeals seem to fall on deaf ears. The more you plead and--shall I say it?--threaten, the more they shrug the shoulders and the greater their indifference seems to grow. So, this last appeal and slight variation from your former program, may help some, but in my opinion it will take something more radical than that to get very much of a response.

Oh, well, why take more time on this? If I could change it by writing I would gladly put in the whole day or week, but it goes on just the same, and is likely to for some time to come yet. It will take more radical retrenchment than what you have already inaugurated to save the situation. And I disclaim any tendency toward "calamity howling" as they call it. Calamity is upon us, and it seems to me that the time is at hand for radical changes: 1st, in leadership; 2nd, in method.

Now, this is absolutely confidential. It is the first time any thing like this has gone out from these four walls of my study and office. I write these impressions to you and you only. I do not feel competent to carry them any further. I do not want to do any one an injury, neither do I want to in any way cause further embarrassment to our mission Boards. God save the day.

May God bless you and help you. As you say in your letter--I mean circular addressed to the missionaries: that you love us all, so I can say that I love you in Christ, and have great faith in you and your ability. Did I not have, then most assuredly I would not have written so plainly about this matter. And you will understand, I know. I can not afford to use time needlessly in criticisms. And you will know that this is not a destructive criticism.

One of these days before long I hope to find time to write you a few little stories. Maybe I shall take time before sending this and give you one. I shall see. Also I think it a good idea to write our papers, yet many of our editors do not like "chain articles." Maybe it would be different if they were really worth while and short.

I hope your splendid hopefulness may prevail. I fear that it will be some time before the changes and readjustments are made, yet most certainly they are going to have to be made some day.

Assuring you of my heart-felt sympathy and praying His richest blessings upon you, I am as always, most cordially and faithfully

J. E. Davis