

January 28, 1963

Dear Bob and Family,

It was good to hear from you. Thanks for your concern and prayer, plus the help.

I like the sound of the recommendation to Edcouch. I could come down to preach in your pulpit, and if the committee felt very strongly about my preaching for them in definite view of a call, I could afford to take another Sunday away. There seems to be no other way to do it. That will be o.k., though, if they want me to come. In fact, I hope they do.

Betty and I were talking about the fact that you said that the church had problems. Betty said, "Well, who can afford to be choosy about problems?"

Things are not too bad here. I think they are just as determined that I leave, but are not going to put pressure, just so I do what I can to find a place to serve.

The church is down, but not so bad that they wouldn't improve immediately with a bit of visitation by Sunday School teachers, and a bit of good spirit on the part of some of the members. It just won't satisfy some of them till the church returns to the spirit of enthusiasm it had 14 years ago when it was new. Anything short of that makes them complain about what is wrong with their church. On every hand you hear complaints that the church is going down, and has been for several years. After a while I felt that nothing would satisfy them and on every hand ~~you~~ heard gripes that make me feel it to be almost impossible to become enthusiastic about trying to get people to come to church, ~~must~~ much less try to win a lost man or child to come into Christian fellowship in this church. They'd freeze to death from lack of Christian warmth after they once came into the church. This negative attitude has driven off more than one person in the past two years, because I've talked to the new ones about why they no longer attend. Some of them have been good workers in other churches, in other towns,

but they almost won't touch Centralab. We've even gotten to the place where we dreaded going to church on Sunday. So, you can see that it's no wonder I couldn't preach with the drive I want to. But, after this upheaval and then the Evangelism Conference, I feel like a new man. I don't expect any change in the attitude of the deacons, but I'm sure the change in me is evident. Several have commented on it. God's grace is sufficient. He'll see us through. Strangely enough, Betty and I feel a real peace in the face of possible real trouble if they should get anxious to try to hurry the Lord's will. But, they (the Deacons, or, to use a more often applied term from the Bible, the Sanhedrin) say they don't want to hurt us, but just want me to seek another field in which to serve. That is the way they feel, and since there are 13 of them, the large part of our faithful church nucleus, I see no reason to do anything else. It could only end in misery, hurt to the family, and I really believe trouble in the church, if I tried to just fight it out. So, away we goooooo!

We do want to -move soon, if possible. I would be nice to be in good distance of you, and easier for Mother to visit all of us. Also, we'd have easier drives to see Betty's folks. As they get older, that takes on more significance. We've felt so isolated here, so far from everyone, that at times we've felt sorry for ourselves, I suppose.

Please pardon the messy typing. I'm in a hurry, and wanted to answer while this was fresh on my mind. We enjoyed the cartoon. How true it is. People like preaching that doesn't hit too hard on their sins and pet past-times. Most of my sermons have been on the ethics of the Christian life, involving total dedication, especially in the time devoted to the Lord's work. I've preached many other themes, but this they don't like! One man, a pre, told a visiting preacher my sermons were light, and shallow. Here is the heart of the problem, and it has sort of come out in the open. His is a hot bed of pre-ism, as you probably remember from hearing of some so called "Bible Conferences" held during or following Ralph's stay at Pennington. Because I told a ring-leader in the church, a lay-preacher who teaches a class, that I was not a pre and could never even consider becoming one, he and his followers say I'm a modern product of modernistic seminaries and colleges. It's even said in the T.U. and S.S. I've heard many comments about these young preachers who come out of seminary not believing or

preaching the Bible. These have been in the Adult dept. assemblies and even in the Training Union to which Betty belongs. They'll do anything to discredit one who openly disagrees. I've not preached on it in the pulpit, only in private, but they still talk about it everywhere they get together. The walls of our SS rooms are old and thin, and I've heard ~~man~~ many things that have sent me to the pulpit just ~~about~~ beaten down. If they'll run a man down in a class room, what will they do in a private conversation? I was beat before I came here, just because of a personal conviction. Deliver me from these lay "preachers". The man who held the first secret meeting with them is the manager of our encampment, and is a fine Christian man, going to Japan in March. But these lay preachers get to thinking that because they can do a fair job in the pulpit, they can take on a pastor's responsibility. They're not prepared. They don't even begin to understand the mind of a pastor, or what he has to be to do his work. They think in terms of hours, money, products, and high pressure in selling, along with the demand of immediate, visible, results. In church work these things are in almost opposite occurrence and importance from the business world. But, boy, this man here in my church, thinks he is a qualified expert to judge any and all preachers. Deliver me!

Well, enough of this. Gotta close. Teacher's meetin in two hours, three hours of work to do. Stay sober, write soon, pray often, and rush that committee!

Dane