

Battle Creek, Michigan, December 13, 1888 (Letter 48, December 13, 1888)

D. H. Lamson

Dear Brother:

I received your letter in due time, but have been so pressed with labor that I have been unable to write you. I have not been indifferent to your state for some time back; and now that you have written to me, I must respond, although I cannot see how relief is coming to you. I am sorry that you are situated as you are, under the pressure of debt. I know of quite a number, who, like yourself, are troubled and distressed over their financial condition. My son Edson is in about the same situation as yourself. We have tried to help him, but he has not as yet, been able to free himself. There seems to be a lack of ability in the management of financial matters.

Now, my brother, will you please tell me the real circumstances-how much is required to set you free? I feel very anxious to have all who can do so, laboring in the Lord's vineyard. I know that the loss of your sons is a sad bereavement to you, and my heart is drawn out in sympathy for you.

The Lord does not take pleasure in your distress. He wants to bestow upon you the consolations of His Holy Spirit, that you may be a free man, abiding in His light and in His love. He has lessons for you to learn, and He would have you move quick in learning them. You ought not to allow yourself to become financially embarrassed; for the fact that you are in debt weakens your faith and tends to discourage you, and even the thought of it makes you nearly wild. You need to cut down your expenses, and strive to supply this deficiency in your character. You can and should make determined efforts to bring under control your disposition to spend means beyond your income. Do not receive these words as though I was making a personal thrust at you, to wound you; for it is not so intended. I love your soul, and want you to be a perfect overcomer.

We are engaged in a conflict for eternal life; and in this battle, grace is arrayed against nature, and the whole strength of self is opposed to the victory. Few find the path of self-denial, which is lined with crosses, and fewer still pursue it. Yet some press on, notwithstanding the obstacles and discouragements they meet, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Every step is not backward; but forward, gaining sure victories, until they reach "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Can you not, dear brother, press into the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in? Will you persevere, and not become weary in well doing? This Christian warfare is one of strife and eternal vigilance. Perfect victory may be yours, if you will cheerfully lift the cross of Christ. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Eternal life in the kingdom of glory is worth a life-long, persevering effort. The battle is the Lord's; but if we are co-workers with Him, the victory will be ours.

Now, my dear brother, if you will learn of the Master, and be imbued with His spirit, being clothed with Christ's righteousness, you may yet do good work; but you must bring the solid timbers into your structure. The Bible is our guide as to the kind of labor we should put forth. Paul says: "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that

it was not in vain; but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as you know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention." "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor of guile; but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness; nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ, but we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

"I am made a minister (of the church), according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."

The Lord requires more of you than merely to minister; He requires you to bind off your work. I know that the same kind of labor is not given to every one, but the Lord has taught me that a worker in His vineyard must do his work thoroughly, even if he accomplishes far less in preaching. I have been shown that although you have been an acceptable speaker, your labor has not been of that benefit to the cause which it might have been. Let what you do in the churches be done thoroughly; for no church can be in a healthy, growing condition, unless all its members have been fully instructed, and are faithful in the performance of duty.

If they are withholding their tithes and offerings, and you go among them as an ambassador of God, with a pleasing, comforting testimony, and do not touch the plague spot of their hearts, they are only confirmed in their selfishness. The more gratifying your discourses the more will the very men who need your reproof, feel that they are all right; for such preaching will not help them to see the evil in their hearts.

When a man undertakes to labor in the Lord's vineyard, he must not choose the pleasing part of the work, and leave the unpleasant part for someone else to do after him. The people may be wonderfully pleased with him, because he does not point out their duty, and urge them to do it; but the Lord is not pleased. His work is imperfectly done; and when a more thorough man tries to show them their deficiency, they refer to the first minister, to whom they have become much attached, and say, "He was a man whom the Lord sent; and if these things are essential, why did he not teach them, and urge us as you do?" So they are disposed to question this man, because he speaks plainly and decidedly.

Heretofore you have aimed to please your hearers, when at all times and in all places you should have had an eye single to the glory of God. Faithful warnings, reproofs, and corrections are often required in the formation of a church, that every man may be "perfect in Christ Jesus." When those for whom you labor, see that you will not sanction a wrong act, that you will not do imperfect work for the Master, it will inspire them with confidence in you as a faithful sentinel of God.

You have done too much surface work. You move upon the sympathies; but deep, earnest, solid heart-work has not characterized your labors. Women have been attracted to you, and have been ready to pour into your ears their private troubles and family disappointments. You ought not to lend an ear to them, but tell them that you are yourself only an erring mortal; that God is their helper. Jesus knows the secrets of every heart, and He can bless and comfort them. Tell them that you might misjudge, and be led to encourage evil, rather than reprove it. Point them to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." If you will put on the armor, and, crossing though it may be, give personal labor just where it is needed, to those who are closing the door against the light of heaven because of their selfishness and covetousness, you may not make so many fiends, but you will save souls.

Timothy was a young man, yet Paul, his father in the gospel, gave him this counsel: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." And he further instructed him: "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." And he concludes thus; "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so-called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith."

Dear brother, the Lord is not pleased with the position you occupy. You have entertained doubts, and unbelief has darkened your pathway. The position taken by Elder Canright has had some effect upon you. You have been unsettled in your faith. I have known that you were tempted and skeptical, even upon the testimonies, but I have not let go of you. I have wanted to be where I could help you. Unless you are settled and grounded in the truth, your labors cannot be a success. You will always work with uncertainty. You need to place yourself in the channel of light, and know of a certainty what is truth. Your position has not made you a strong man to do God's work, and to help others up to the platform of faith. God has given you valuable talents, which you must return to him with interest. You can do precious work for the Master if you will be earnest and devoted, and so consecrated that you will daily, hourly, momentarily, yield yourself to him. The Lord accepts no superficial work. If you would cultivate other traits of character to combine with the strong traits you already possess, and then sanctify them all, you might be a power for good.

But, dear brother, why are you so determined not to receive advice and counsel, even from your best friends? The Lord designs that we shall help one another by counseling together; but if any one seeks to aid you by advice, you feel that your rights are invaded. You are impatient of control, and want to follow your own mind and judgment. This is a dangerous position for you to be in; because the enemy takes advantage of you, and you become discouraged. You are not yet like clay in the hands of the potter, which is turned again and again until the will of the potter is wrought out in the vessel. Grace and truth will make perfect the work of fashioning the human clay, that the glory of the great Potter may appear in the production of a shapely vessel, molded and polished for service. You should be ready to receive divine impressions. The Spirit of truth should inspire you, and govern all your movements. Your soul must be emptied of pride and self-sufficiency; that there

may be room for Jesus. You do not see the necessity of counseling with your brethren. You should lay your plans frankly before them, asking the advice of those of good judgment, and at the same time earnestly seek God for heavenly wisdom. The Lord would not leave you to make mistakes. He is ever ready to give wisdom to those who really feel their ignorance, and do not rely upon their own judgment. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed; for let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

If you will become a learner in the school of Christ, submit your will to Him, and come under His discipline, you will be able to walk in His ways; and by living in constant connection with Jesus, you will be a channel of light to others. You and I, and every worker, need to feel our entire dependence upon God, for His grace and His guidance. God wants you to come into sympathy and harmony with His plans. Submission to the authority of Christ, which forms an essential qualification in His disciples, is not only opposed to the pride which feels hurt when advised and counseled, but those who have it will choose to be subject one to another. It has not been easy for you to work with one of a different temperament than yourself; yet this is the very thing you should have done. If we allow our own will to control us, the Lord will not work a miracle to preserve us from the consequences of our folly.

I tell you, my brother, fatal deceptions are upon souls. They have a settled confidence. They think they are Christians simply because they assent to the truth; and so completely does this delusion enclose and encase the heart, that the arrows of the Lord do not find access to it, and the deep, searching truths, which clearly portray this very delusion, are listened to without effect, with not a thought of their application to themselves. Oh! Seek preparation of heart at the throne of grace, that when you feel your incompetence, you may have clear views of the power and dignity of Christ, and can grasp the promises by faith, and can have a living connection with God. You are assured you may have the guidance of His Holy Spirit, which will not lead you into uncertainty, but into a certainty of all truth.

Do not, I beg of you, rise up, against these things. You have unwise sympathizers, as men in your position always will have, who do you only harm. God calls upon you to return unto Him, receive the truth as it fell from His divine lips, and convey it as living power into the hearts of others. Then will He place upon you the image of Christ, who is the author of truth.

There is much, very much, which I would like to say to you, but I have not time. Why not come to some of our meetings, and place yourself in the channel of light? If you would, it may be that your children, too, would feel the influence of the Spirit of God, and His transforming grace. Your son, if molded by the Spirit of God, might be of use to the cause, but he has very much to learn. As it is now, his education and mold of character are such that he would do positive injury if engaged in the work. He is inflated with self, and does not know how to economize or limit his desires. He does not know how to live and work in a humble way, like His Master, the Prince of life. His spendthrift habits could not be tolerated in the work of God. If he does not come into close relation with God, and realize his defects of character, and become converted, he will ere long be left in darkness. Both yourself and your son need to be thoroughly renewed by the Spirit of God, converted

wholly and entirely, that every member of your family may be brought under the influence of the Spirit of God. This may and will be the case if you will only heed the warnings and entreaties of the Holy Spirit.

There is much work to be done for the Master, and men who might today be occupying high positions in connection with the work of God, have failed because they never learned to economize. They did not limit their wants to their income when they entered the work, and their spendthrift habits proved the ruin of their usefulness in the cause. Because of the great lack of a self-denying, Christlike spirit, they have not had the favor of God. Their want of a deep religious experience has made them unworthy to be trusted with eternal responsibilities, or to be called sons of God. Yet they have become so self-conceited that they feel entirely competent to enter upon the solemn, sacred, responsible work of the ministry, when they have no real fitness for it.

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. O, what love! What amazing love! And yet how few appreciate it! How few are partakers of the divine nature! Having undertaken the amazing work of redemption, He resolved that He would not give up the plan; but that he would spare nothing, however costly; withhold nothing, however dear, which was essential to the consummation of His design of bestowing on man gift upon gift, until He had opened to Him all the treasures of heaven.

The saving grace of God upon us, the increased conception of His greatness, justice, mercy, and love, will not fill our hearts to no purpose. This knowledge of God, which Jesus came from heaven to impart, must not be trifled with. The love of God cannot remain in our possession unless it is expressed. Shall it ever be reckoned our greatest curse that we knew of the blessed gift of eternal life, and did not make it known to others? O my brother, “Choose you this day whom you will serve.” Jesus is calling to you, and saying that you can be like Him.” Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.” God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” is willing to shine in our hearts, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

My brother, exalt the standard. If you ever handle the word of life again, which I sincerely hope you may, be faithful. Be not only a preacher, but one who will lift up Jesus wherever you are, being imbued with the Holy Spirit, and filled with all the fullness of God. Do not stand back, questioning, and doubting, and speculating; but come heartily into the work. The Chief Shepherd is soon to appear, and when He comes, He will give to the faithful undershepherds a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Truth will stand, for it is eternal: it will triumph; and may you triumph with it. I write in no spirit to oppress you, but because the love of Christ constraineth me.