

*Dear Lord, bless this little letter*

*to the glory of Thy Name.*

*May it make its readers better*

*May none of its words be vain.*

Montgomery, Alabama

May 12, 1905

Dearly Beloved Bro. and Sister Messill,

Your heartily welcome letters reached me this evening, and I cannot feel satisfied to retire without sending a prompt reply, even though I fear it will have to be both hasty and brief.

Next to communion with my Lord I value communion with His children, and after the fellowship we enjoy face to face with those who love Him I esteem communion by letter with such. But the precious Father in heaven evidently sees that one of the most effectual ways of teaching me patience and submission is to very much limit my opportunities for correspondence.

Your previous letter was also received safely and greatly enjoyed and should have been answered long ago had it been possible; the memory of the debt was often on my mind.

I am truly glad to learn that under the guidance of Him who knows where the rich pastures are, you are being led into such precious places as your letters give evidence of. How sweet it is to have Him for our Shepherd. (Psalmsa 23:1) What condescension when we think of what glorious sheep He had in the Angels and other heavenly beings, and yet He left the "ninety and nine" different kind of better sheep to come to earth in order to find and save "the one that was lost." How wonderful to think He would be willing to be our Shepherd! What an honor to be His sheep! We cannot feel satisfied to have "the hirling shepherds" take our fleece, (Ezekiel 34:1-12) but how happy we are to give "the good Shepherd" (#Jo 10:11) not only our fleece, but also our life, our flesh, our all. Praise the Heavenly Father for having given us such a Shepherd in the person of His Son.

And how careful and attentive He is to the needs of the sheep is manifested in the daily experiences he grants us, as well as in the testimony of the Word.

Dear brother and sister, I would like to write you much more but fear it cannot be this time. I hope the good Lord may have a place on my lists for Wagoner again someday and then He may say what time will not permit me to write.

God bless and keep you is my prayer. Thank you for So kindly remembering me in your petitions. Accept my warmest Christian Love, and give sweet little Loulie my love too. Remember me to Bro. Read.

Thank you for the poems.

In the Redeemer's Name,

Benjamin H. Barton