

Letter to Brother Himes

[Charles Fitch]

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CLEVELAND, Dec. 5th, 1843

Dear Brother Himes:

This day I have laid in the grave my dear Willie, a little boy that would have been seven years of age the 15th of the present month. I need not tell you that my heart aches, and I cannot tell you how much. Some ten months ago, he took an inflammatory rheumatism, which left him with an organic disease of the heart. He was comfortable through the summer, and went east with us. He kept about until the last of October. While I was absent at that time, he was prostrated. On my return the physicians said there was no hope of his recovery. Oh, how my heart was pained at the prospects of seeing his life wrung out of him with anguish, of then following him away to the cold grave.

I stood and watched by his side three weeks, held him in my arms to relieve his distress, and sung to him at his oft repeated request the second advent hymns to beguile his tedious hours. "Sing to me, Pa," was his repeated request every hour. "What shall I sing, my dear?" "Sing, *How Long O Lord Our Saviour*," and again, "sing, *Lo, What a Glorious Sight Appears, sing, My Faith Looks Up to Thee* ." After three weeks, I thought he might live for weeks to come, and feeling it to be duty, I tore myself away from his side with an aching heart, and I went last Monday week to Huron county to preach the kingdom of the Lord. On Sabbath morning last, being in Fairfield, more than 60 miles from home, I was awakened from my pillow by a messenger who said, "Your child is dead." I hastened home, and we have just laid him in his lowly bed.

It has been painful, painful; but the Lord sustains us. But we have hope in his death.

When he was three years of age, I was accustomed to relate to him in language suited to his capacity, the interesting incidents in the life of our Saviour, for the purpose of teaching him to know and love the character of Christ. He became exceedingly interested, and would often climb my knee and say, "Now, Pa, tell me something about the blessed Saviour." At length he arose from his bed one morning very early, and came to me, calling my name repeatedly to get my attention as I was conversing. He said, "The blessed Saviour is my Saviour." This was said by him, when there had been nothing at that time to turn his attention to the subject. Sweeter accents than those never fell upon my ear. Never from that moment did his faith in Jesus waiver. When told by a sister some years older than himself, "You will never live to be a man. The Saviour is coming soon, and the world will be burned," he replied, "I don't care, the Saviour will take care of me."

Once when he saw me greatly disquieted at some perplexing circumstances which came suddenly upon me, and at which I ought not to have been moved, he said, in his usual calm and deliberate manner, "The Saviour will come pretty soon, and then we shan't have any more trouble."

In his sickness, he manifested the most perfect resignation. During all the time I was with him, he never expressed a desire to get well, or to be relieved from suffering. At one time when I had expressed such a desire, he replied, "The Saviour can make me well if He wants me well." He had his senses till the last, knew perfectly well he was dying, composed himself, closed his own eyes, and died with as much calmness, as he would have gone in health to his pillow for a night's repose.

He was not without the follies and faults of childhood, but we do believe he lived and died with confidence in Christ, and we cannot doubt that the blessed Saviour is indeed Willie's Saviour.

Perhaps I should apologize for occupying you with so much that has no particular interest for any but ourselves, but when our bosoms are heaving with sighs we cannot suppress, and our eyes

are gushing with tears which will flow, we love to lay open our whole hearts to those we know have hearts to feel. I must not neglect to say, that we have had friends through all our affliction, that have been friends indeed.

CHARLES FITCH