

Letter 129.

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a spiritual life, overcoming Satan's lies and temptations, and trusting in God's sovereignty and goodness.

Scripture: Psalm 18:35, Psalm 66:12, Psalm 119:71, Galatians 6:2, Philipians 2:3, Hebrews 4:15, James 4:7, 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 5:6

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Perseverance"

Description

James Bourne encourages Mrs. Oakley to cherish the spiritual life that has begun in her, urging her to seek the Lord through prayer and His word to maintain and increase it. He reminds her that trials are part of the journey to the 'wealthy place' and that Jesus understands and sympathizes with all our struggles. Bourne also advises E. P. to stand firm against enemies and to endure hardships as a good soldier, relying on the Lord for strength. He emphasizes the importance of the communion of saints in bearing each other's burdens and fulfilling the law of Christ.

Transcript

[To J. G.] Hertford, 20 August 1837.

Dear Friend,

I have been much comforted with your letter, and cannot but perceive that the Lord deals very graciously with you in an increase of divine knowledge and godly simplicity. It has been your mercy that the Lord has given you a teachable, tractable spirit, and though you may be despised of men for this very thing, yet the day will come when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and that it is only of the mercy of God you were not led away from that simplicity to follow a multitude in an evil profession.

I cannot but bless God and admire his goodness and mercy in watching over Mrs. Oakley, and at length appearing and speaking upon her heart, by which it is sweetly manifest that eternal life is begun. Now then, seeing this is most assuredly established, and she dare not deny it, let me entreat her to cherish it most tenderly, and never cease, by secret prayer and much seeking the Lord in his word, that he would maintain and increase this spiritual life. I know there will be no end of things that must be done, and Satan will insist upon their propriety in all directions; but she must not listen to all the lies he is ever injecting into our minds, to give us a disrelish for divine things, but remember that, thus saith the Lord, "Be instant in season and out of season," and "Pray with-out ceasing;" and life will spring up and light to guide her steps,

and she will perceive the truth of God's word, "Him that honoureth me I will honour;" and again, "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

Be of good cheer, my dear friend Mrs. Oakley; you may depend upon it that he who has begun this good work will accomplish that of which he has so often and so sweetly given you kind intimations from time to time. Be not dismayed at your trials; they are compared to fire and water, but God tells us this is the straight road to the "wealthy place" [Psalm lxxvi. 12]; and as our Lord Jesus Christ has passed through the whole of this, he knows all the miry places, marshy ground, pit-falls, and dangers of all sorts, and was in all points tempted as we are, every one, for the express purpose that he might be moved for us in all our calamities, and know how to succour, both as to the time when, and the manner how. Fear not; the Lord delights in all such as hope in his mercy. Your difficulties and hindrances, your afflictions and burdens, are no hindrances to the Lord. "He giveth more grace."

I pray you to remember me to E. P., and tell him that if he maintains his standing it will be against ten thousand enemies, and that he must learn to "endure hardness as a good soldier." He will be both threatened and allured by his master as well as by his old comrades; he must turn a deaf ear to both, and earnestly entreat the Lord to help him. He will often be ready to give way, as I have often feared for myself, but in these cries the Lord has appeared and given me fresh courage, and assured my heart that he will never leave me nor forsake me; so he will find it: sometimes he will fear the enemy has quite got the mastery over him, and in this sorrow he will perceive a crying to the Lord under all, and this is the place where the Lord steps in, and makes us to feel that he has a regard unto us, and will defeat our enemies; and instead of being clean carried away, fresh life is communicated, fresh vigour added, and there is a sweet perception that the Lord is our strength, and is also become our salvation. This will brighten his views, and will be a comfort to the little few that are watching over one another, and you will be jointly encouraged to see the work of God go on in the midst of an enemy's country.

The communion of saints is what I wish much to impress on your minds, that each of you may learn by it to bear one another's burdens, and so to fulfil the law of Christ [Gal. vi. 2]. Your sister will, by such communication, learn a purer language, and be led to consider, with fear and trembling, that whether the vessel be mean or not, yet the treasure in it is infinite; and therefore, when addressing herself to such, it is as in the presence of God, whether she be instructing or receiving instruction. This ought to put an awe upon our spirits, while we are acting as lively stones in this spiritual house.

Remember me kindly to Sukey Harley. I can enter into some of her feelings in her affliction, and I have no doubt the Holy Spirit, who darted such convictions into her heart, made her greatly to fear and tremble, and turned all her comeliness into corruption. Is it not marvellous that a poor creature like her, living in a wood, in that corner alone, should be the object of God's care, and that by his grace she should be able to describe the work of salvation upon her own heart, and that her description should exactly agree with the testimony of living saints, and of those that are gone before, and above all with the word of God? She may well say with David, "Who am I, O Lord God, or what is my house," that I should be dealt with after this manner? The loss she has sustained I hope will not be long mourned after; perhaps her covetous heart was too much set upon that which has been taken away, and a calculating spirit had contrived many things that God was not well pleased with. Has she been able to confess this, and with her mouth in the dust to feel that true and righteous are his judgments? and by it has there been discovered some fresh corners hitherto hidden of her treacherous heart? If so, God be praised for taking such pains. Pray let him have his way, and do not cry after toys and idols, but rather cry that your sin and folly procures such measures; and then, when submission is wrought, all shall be well.

You will be glad to hear that your brother is made useful here, and I trust above all things he seeks for himself the lowest place, by which means the Lord exalts and honours him, and instructs him in the work he has for him to do.

Yours &c. J. B.

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