

Letter 155.

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon encourages believers to find joy and strength in their afflictions through a deep relationship with God and persistent prayer.

Scripture: Proverbs 9:10, Matthew 7:7, Galatians 5:16, Hebrews 12:6, James 4:8

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Holy Spirit"

Description

James Bourne, in a letter to Mrs. Oakley, encourages her to find comfort in the midst of afflictions, reminding her that God disciplines those He loves. He emphasizes the importance of seeking daily communion with the Lord, being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and walking in the Spirit to overcome the desires of the flesh. Bourne warns against fellowshiping with dead professors and urges a continual pursuit of Christ, assuring that His presence will bring peace and perspective amidst trials.

Transcript

London, 9 October 1838.

Dear Mrs. Oakley,

You have been much upon my mind since I saw you, and I desire to be a fellow-helper of your joy, and to hear that the Lord comforts you in all your afflictions. It has pleased God to put a worm to every gourd that you have planted, so that all things in this life wither, and it is a mercy to you that they afford no shade nor repose for your flesh. It appears to me that God has some better things in store for you, and will teach you that whom he loves he chastens, and scourges every son that he receives. This is hard to believe and understand; but as it pleases God to sanctify these afflictions by humbling our souls in the dust, and there showing us his lovingkindness under them, so shall we discern his wisdom in all his dispensations, and wonder at the pains he takes to bring us out of the world and the spirit of it, and to make us more in earnest to seek for a better inheritance. If your troubles work as mine have done and yet do, they lead you to daily communion with the Lord, and to be greatly troubled at the thought of grieving the Holy Spirit by lightness in thought, word, or deed; for if he condescend to give us his company, he will be honoured and cherished; "Him that honoureth me I will honour;" and we never more honour him than when we lament and mourn his absence. This is true love; especially if we put our mouths in the dust for the causes of his hiding his face from us, which will easily be discovered if we are in the habit of watching what goes on within. This is walking in the Spirit; and if we thus walk, we shall not fulfil the desires of the flesh. The sweet influence of the fear of God will be as a sentinel at the door of our hearts to stop the entrance of

folly, and if through the power of temptation it enter there, what struggling and restlessness will be found (where the conscience is kept tender) till Christ comes with his whip of small cords, and drives it out. This will be the continual warfare, and we must learn of the Lord how to be good soldiers, and endure hardness; for it is hard work (I find it so) to deny self in all its various branches.

There is nothing will grieve the Holy Spirit, nor cause him to depart, sooner than the giving of the right hand of fellowship to dead professors that rest in the letter, and know nothing of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, nor of his holiness, but are hardened in a presumptuous confidence. You and I know by the grace of God that the true evidence of a child of God is to fear always, and to tremble at his word; for the Lord declares it is to such he will look: and you and I know that one look from the Lord Jesus Christ is worth more than ten thousand worlds, and assures our hearts of God's everlasting love to us in Christ Jesus.

Search daily for this Friend, as you would for hid treasures, and you will surely find him from time to time. His presence will compensate for all your bodily pain, family troubles, and worldly anxieties; and while it lasts you will be able to see all things in their right aspect, and that he can do you no wrong. Stick close to him; pursue him in his word; do not mind any of his disciples crying, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." Give him no rest; pray without ceasing; and you will find that he will say what he said to the poor woman of old - "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt;" and I am sure that under this influence you will leave all to his management, with all the heart, mind, and strength. Can your poor husband understand these things? If he can, tell him from me to seek the Lord incessantly.

From your affectionate friend in the Lord, J. B.

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