

Letter 182.

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, simplicity, and dependence on God's power and guidance in overcoming spiritual struggles and achieving spiritual prosperity.

Scripture: Psalm 66:12, Psalm 107:13, Matthew 9:13, Galatians 6:2, Hebrews 11:10

Topics: "Faith And Humility", "Spiritual Perseverance"

Description

James Bourne reflects on his visits to Hertfordshire, sharing about his struggles, fears, and encouraging moments in prayer. He emphasizes the importance of experiencing the presence of the Lord in his ministry, especially in places like Hitchin and Underwood's house. Bourne discusses various spiritual challenges faced by individuals he encountered, highlighting the need for genuine faith, humility, and perseverance in the face of trials. He urges believers to embrace the 'happy bondage' of serving Christ and to trust in His transformative power from death to life, both in the present and eternally.

Transcript

[To the Rev. B. G.] London, 20 April 1840.

My dear Friend,

I have often reflected upon my visits to Hertfordshire - the fears with which I was surrounded within and without, and the many encouraging times I found in prayer, respecting the whole of them. My bodily health kept me low, which I found to be profitable; for the Lord did not keep me at a distance. While at Hitchin I found my spirit free to speak all the truth, as the Lord enabled me; and I trust it was not wholly in vain, for the Lord was there. I was comforted in the account some gave us, because I felt we were taught by the same Spirit. My heart was one with Samuel Underwood, and I had much sweetness and power while speaking at his house. I also felt it no small mercy that the Lord discovered to me that there was a contrary spirit amongst some of them. I thought it the most awful thing imaginable to be found in such darkness and presumption, and especially dreaded the light manner in which they held the truth as experienced in Underwood and others. I was thankful that I could exceedingly profit by the account of that poor and outwardly wretched woman, Fanny Chote - too insignificant to be considered profitable by many of them, for want of their being well immersed in affliction themselves. This is the reason why they cannot be intimate with the poor and afflicted people of God, who they say are always in bondage. Happy bondage! Love is all the Saviour asks for, and that he bestows. He entreats us to take this bondage upon us, and try it. He says, "My yoke is easy, and my burden light;" and so will all say that have laboured hard under the

terrible yoke of their transgressions. They who have changed that yoke for the Saviour's will readily join with me and say, Happy change from death to life, both present and eternal!

I also found my labours at Hertford very profitable to my own soul, being often much exercised with fears and the sight of my own danger, yet as often comforted with the cheering presence of the Saviour, causing me to hope in him for all that I had to do among you. I found many different cases, and my mind was much exercised on account of them. Mrs. H. and her sister seemed to be in travail of soul, and in pain to bring forth, but they seemed held where a deliverance ought to be wrought. I felt as if Miss S. and Mrs. Thus were much increased in simplicity, and that both of them on that account would be the objects and subjects of much temptation. The more they are in earnest, the more the enemy will throw hindrances in their way; but I am sure they will find that the "wealthy place" lies directly through the fire and water [Psalm lxxvi. 12]. Luther speaks of nothing else. This life, with all its accommodations of health and comfort, is not compatible with a spiritual warfare. Our sin has polluted them, and therefore God will continually strike at them as our worst enemies, and the greatest hindrances to our spiritual prosperity.

Mrs. R. has certainly found a goodly pearl, and so cleared her way, that I hope she may never forget how she received the Lord Jesus Christ, but by God's help be able to walk in the same spirit, and be a comforting example to the little colony about her. There are others surrounded with various difficulties, into which, I believe, the Lord has plunged them, in order to make manifest of what metal they are. It is said "They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their hands asunder" [Psalm cvii. 13, 14].

Pray remember me affectionately to Mr. M. May he be spared through all his delicate health to be a further comfort to you, as a helpmate in all the various changes and afflictions that occur in your little community.

I found the Lord so near and so precious, the last two mornings especially, that I thought I felt an intimation that the whole of my labours would be blest, and that the Lord would make it manifest that the weakest instrument, under his almighty power, might be made use of to the pulling down of some of the strongholds of Satan.

Remember me affectionately to Mrs. G., who is labouring in this heavenly vineyard, and tell her not to be envious of those who are paid before her. The penny a day is agreed upon, and will be paid; but we must learn spiritually both to wait patiently, and quietly to hope that it is not a sweeping dispensation which holds us at a distance, but that the Lord's time will come, which will be then thought the very nick of time, and that all trouble will presently be forgotten in the ocean of eternal love.

Give my affectionate regards to Mrs. F., who waits in hope; the Lord seems gently to pull down her fleshly hopes, and is still under-mining all confidence in the flesh, and attracting her heart to a better and more enduring substance, "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," I must not forget her neighbour; I am sure she had some feeling of the things spoken, but she hardly dares, through want of courage, quite to show her colours. I think I saw some very great tenderness, but the kingdom within her seemed partly clay [Dan. ii. 41-43]. I fear the furnace; the Lord is a jealous God, and whatever we sow we shall reap. I hope she will never seek to patch up a friendship with heaven by her own righteousness; for Christ says, for the great humbling of such, that publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before them. O do not think that taking the sacrament at stated times has any salvation in it; that is most awful darkness. Beg and obtain mercy; then "Do this in remembrance of me" of my dying love.

Remember me kindly to the H 's, and tell them from me that strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and I hope they will seek it with all their hearts.

Remember me also to the poor blind friends; tell M. that it has been a great mercy that the Lord has bestowed upon her a quiet spirit, and that she feels the necessity of humility. It has pleased God to place her where she (though naturally blind) must be as a candle upon a candlestick. The true fear of God will lead us all to be anxious here, and I trust E. will also consider the goodness of God, who has graciously fixed the bounds of her habitation, and caused her lines to fall in pleasant places. It is a sign of good teaching to be deeply affected with these things, and to be thankful that they have the privilege of constantly hearing the truth. May the Lord bless them both, and keep them united in spirit, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

I feel it utterly impossible I should have been so comforted in my soul during my long visit with you, had not the Lord been amongst us; I cannot therefore easily forget it, but my prayers and sincere and affectionate good wishes attend you all, and I hope you will increase more and more. Be sure, my dear friend, to entreat the Lord for clear work upon your own soul, as a proof of the power and genuineness and reality of the work of God; and that his presence may so arm you as to enable you to say, "Thus saith the Lord."

Yours affectionately, J. B.

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