

Letter 61

by James Bourne

The sermon reflects on the trials of faith, the grace of God, and the importance of humility and repentance in the Christian journey.

Scripture: Psalm 34:18, Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 57:15, Acts 14:22, Romans 2:4, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Philippians 4:7, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6-7

Topics: "Tribulation And Humility", "Repentance And Grace"

Description

James Bourne, in a letter to Mr. Nunn in July 1834, reflects on the deep waters of tribulation believers must go through to enter the kingdom, emphasizing the need for humility and repentance. Bourne shares his personal experience of despair and the eventual comfort and hope he found in God's mercy and grace. He warns against the snares of the world and the importance of heeding God's warnings and repenting. Bourne expresses his desire for Mr. Nunn to experience the everlasting love and peace of Christ, urging him to remain humble and reliant on God.

Transcript

[To Mr. Nunn.] Bushey, July 1834,

Dear Friend,

I am very glad to hear that there is hope you may yet be spared to us a little longer. It has been deeply impressed on my mind, and may it be yet more deeply impressed on yours, to remember the sore conflicts we have had, and the vanity we have been made to feel in all created things; and may we now find leisure from the world to "sing of mercy and judgment." We have been put into these deep waters as a caution to light professors, to show them what they must go through if ever they are saved; and that making their strength firm will not deliver them. You and I know in our measure what this means - "we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom." They are not words without meaning.

I think I never felt anything like the sensation of darkness and despair which I felt when the Lord once seemed to speak these words upon my heart, "Ye have forsaken me, and served other gods, therefore I will deliver you no more "[Judges x. 13]. This was a place of all but despair. I repeated the words, No more and something replied, No more. O the sackcloth that covered my soul, and the dark and hopeless condition of my spirit, being fully convinced of the righteous judgment of God! Here I lay three days, and could not rest in my bed. What confessions, what stooping, with my mouth in the dust, if so be there might

be hope! At length a whisper, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," to show that the Lord is faithful. He made me feel that he was grieved for my misery, and touched with the feeling of my infirmities; and I have heard such whispers as these, Because thine heart has been made tender under the rod, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, "Behold I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace" [2 Kings xxii. 10, 20].

This, my dear friend, is one of many things that have tended to make me dread the snares of a bewitching world, and a vile, treacherous heart which takes part with it; yet, by the mercy of God, I cannot quite forget "the wormwood and the gall," and my spirit wishes to take the lowest place.

Another sweet motive which often lifts me above the world in hope is the thought of this

"Was ever grace, Lord, rich as thine?

Can aught be with it named?

What powerful beams of love divine,

Thy tender heart inflamed!"

The whole of that hymn of Hart's has been very precious; and I may continue

"Grace and glory in thee shine,

Matchless mercy, love divine."

I often say in my family, and you may say it in yours, Woe unto you all, if God does so many mighty works before your eyes, and you repent not! "It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you!" For God has spoken to them not only by our lips, but by all his dispensations to us. They have seen our castings down, and they have seen how the visitations of the Lord have preserved our spirits, and they must all give an account of whatever talent the Lord has lent them.

It is no small joy that the Lord permits me to hope that I shall see you once more in the flesh, and that as I have entered in a measure into your conflicts, so I may be a partaker of the consolation. I hope you will be able to dictate a few words that I may hear how you go on.

Mr. Burrell is now beginning the morning service. My heart is with him and the rest of the people, that a double portion of the Spirit may be there, as a Spirit of judgment, and a Spirit of burning [Isaiah iv. 4]. How little we are apt to think of our privileges till they are past! Though all things may appear to go on quietly for awhile, yet I am sure the time will come when slighted means and ordinances will appear against us in a very different light from that in which we now see them. Where is the late church? "Ichabod" [1 Sam. iv. 21]. I fear many amongst us are on the borders of the same precipice.

May the Lord Jesus Christ take you up in the arms of his everlasting dying love, and bless you! May he keep you little in yourself, and of no account in this world, but one on whom he sets an infinite value, having paid an infinite price for you! May he never leave you in the hour of extremity, but grant that we both, as our breath departs, may find something to whisper peace, and give us an abundant entrance into glory.

My heart has been sweetly entertained while I have been writing this, so that sometimes I could scarcely see to write.

Yours &c. J. B.

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