

Letter 70

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the importance of perseverance in ministry amidst trials and opposition, highlighting God's grace and the necessity of humility.

Scripture: Isaiah 3:10, Joel 2:12, Luke 11:15, Hebrews 12:6, 1 Peter 4:12

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Persevering Faith"

Description

James Bourne preaches a message of encouragement and warning to a friend facing spiritual attacks, emphasizing the need to remain vigilant and armored in faith even during times of apparent peace. He highlights the inevitable opposition faced by those preaching the word of God and the importance of enduring through trials to reveal the true nature of people's hearts. Bourne urges his friend to find strength in humility, self-abasement, and secret communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, emphasizing that only through grace and correction can one be received by the heavenly Father.

Transcript

[To the Rev. B. G.] London, 22 November 1834.

Dear Friend,

I am grieved to hear that you have been again attacked. In one of my former letters I ventured to caution you that if there should be an apparent cessation of arms, you must not sleep, nor put off your armour. I am sure that if the Lord has sent you to preach the word where of late it has not been heard, the enemy will raise a strange outcry, and tell you that you "cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." You must be a continual living reproach to all who live in sin, whether professor or profane; and the thorn goads them so, that they spit their venom in enmity against the Most High himself. If it be he who has set you to the work, it is his power and will they strive against and defy; and often for awhile such may seem to prevail.

The Lord has many things to do in such a tumult as this, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Who knows but that --, who in his bitterness vows vengeance, may yet, like the jailor, cry out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved!" - even after scourging Paul and Silas? Perhaps these troubles will try the spiritual integrity of your friend, and prove whether true religion will be as closely adhered to when held in dishonour by false professors, as when it walks in silver slippers, as Bunyan says. How will your sober friend Mr. M. act, who, like Nicodemus, comes by night? Perhaps these tumults may draw a line which

without them might never have been discovered.

There is one thing yet of more consequence to yourself; that is, How goes on the work within? Does every fresh appearance of the rod (for such no doubt it is in the hand of God) bring on a fresh humbling, and lead you in heart to be willing to be servant of all? If so, no evil (as such) can befall you; nor must you think it strange concerning the fiery trial; it is foremost among your best tokens, especially if it lead you to secret converse with the Lord Jesus Christ. He talks with us of judgment as well as of mercy.

Whatever you are or may be in your public capacity, this I know, that if saved at all, you must be a sinner saved by grace and every outward dishonour shown to you, if it operate aright, will have the effect of great self-abasement before God in secret; and here the Lord will show you not only that you are hated for telling the truth, but that you are chastened by the Lord as a son in whom he delights. If you are to be received by this heavenly Father, it can only be through correction. Whatever hand may be lifted against you, no blow can be given until the Lord permit and if it come, it is because it is needed.

"These are hard sayings, who can hear them?" Can you? If you can, then be assured the Lord has opened your ears to discipline; and when you understand experimentally this terrible work, you will be the most proper person in the world to declare what all the Prophets and Apostles have declared in ages past, that it is only to the LOST SHEEP of the house of Israel that Jesus Christ was sent.

Your situation raises in me a spiritual anxiety for your welfare and though I cannot fathom the depth, nor measure the extent of your present trial, yet I know full well that I may say to the righteous, "It shall be well with him" [Isaiah. iii. 10], and there now remains no labour so essential as to know that that important word belongs to us. Let me entreat you to be much in earnest. The Lord has blown the trumpet in Zion, the alarm is given. It is a day of gloominess, for the enemies we have to contend with are powerful; many faces gather blackness with rage. The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and unless you are enabled to turn to him with all your heart, with fasting from strife, with weeping and mourning, and heart-rending confessions, you will not find what is most desirable, that the Lord "is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?" [Joel ii. 1-14.]

Yours &c. J. B

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