

# Letter 100

by James Bourne

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*The sermon explores the necessity of recognizing personal shortcomings and relying on God's grace through afflictions for spiritual growth.*

**Scripture:** Leviticus 24:2, Proverbs 6:27, Isaiah 28:10, Micah 7:19, 2 Peter 1:19

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Overcoming Sin"

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## Description

James Bourne, in a letter to M. C. B., reflects on his struggles with transparency and spiritual growth, finding comfort in God's compassion and care. He emphasizes the importance of enduring afflictions and trials, knowing that they are accompanied by the anointing of the Holy Spirit for spiritual illumination and righteousness. Bourne acknowledges the ongoing battle with sin and the continual need to come to Christ for salvation and cleansing through His precious blood, which leads to a deep love that fulfills every law.

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## Transcript

[To M. C. B.] London, 12 December 1835.

Dear Madam,

I am often greatly cast down, and think that every one is more transparent and honest than I am. I see their spiritual beauty and order, while I am judging myself not half so tender, nor so often making manifest my prevalency with the Lord. I was deeply lamenting this on Saturday evening, and the Lord kindly melted my heart with a sweet sense of his pity and care. I do not attain to what you may call great things; and yet they are great, because in them is felt a hope full of immortality; which in its measure causes me to die to this world, and the vain prospects and promises of it.

Every part of the word of God sets forth trouble, affliction, tribulation, but always points to the "wealthy place" beyond. I was sweetly entertained a little time ago with these words, "Command the children of Israel that they bring unto thee PURE OIL, OLIVE, BEATEN, for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually" [Lev. xxiv. 2]. Here I saw the anointing of the Holy Ghost accompanying the affliction; without both of these, the lamp of our profession will never burn brightly, nor will the "peaceable fruits of righteousness" be found.

I wish, with you, to be more meek, and to fulfil the duties of my station better; but as spiritual light increases, I am persuaded we shall find ourselves worse and worse to the end. This is to teach us to prize

the more highly the great salvation, and to be under the desperate necessity of coming continually to Christ. Nothing else but the discovery of our shortcomings in all things will have this effect. There is and can be no way of subduing our iniquities but by the Lord's casting them "into the depths of the sea;" or in other words, by the precious blood of Christ cleansing us. This brings in such love as fulfils every law.

I would caution you, myself, and all that fear God, against a light, trifling, frivolous spirit. It is the death of all spiritual life. There can be no intercourse with the Lord Jesus Christ with such a spirit; the furnace and the rod are prepared for it. I was once bemoaning my want of discretion before the Lord with much feeling, and this came with very great power to my conscience - Never fear but you will have trouble enough to keep that clown. And so I have found it. We do not learn every lesson in one day. "Line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" [Isaiah xxviii. 10].

I tremble for your pious friend; and if you dare tell her so, you may. I fear what she calls a cautious spirit is insensibility. It is not likely but that God is true, whatever man or woman may say. He asks the question, "Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" [Prov. vi. 27.] I like your disquietude better. The different places you quote, chiefly from the Proverbs, are, I believe, words applied with great power to your conscience; such words have been many times applied to me as warnings and cautions, "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place" - none darker than my soul has been.

Your unworthy though faithful friend in the Lord, J. B.

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