

Letter 103

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the journey from spiritual blindness to true healing through the acceptance of God's truth and grace.

Scripture: 2 Kings 5:13, Psalm 1:1, Romans 5:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Hebrews 6:12

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Surrender To God"

Description

James Bourne preaches to Mrs. Tims about the journey of seeking truth and healing, likening it to the story of Naaman in the Bible. He encourages her to embrace the process of spiritual growth, acknowledging the struggles and trials that come with it, but also the eventual peace and joy found in surrendering to God's will. Bourne emphasizes the importance of patience, submission, and living by the Word of God, highlighting the transformation that occurs when one fully surrenders to Christ and experiences His love and grace.

Transcript

[To Mrs. Tims.] London, February 1836.

Dear Madam,

I have often wondered at the length of time during which some have waited at the pool of Bethesda to be healed, having the mortification of seeing others outstrip them, and get their healing, and go their way. There are many mysteries in the word of God that flesh and blood will never be able to fathom. You once were lame and sick, and under a false ministry got your healing and went your way. This afforded satisfaction, and it worked as that sort of healing always works; for when Providence throws such in the way of hearing the truth, there is found in them a most determined hatred and resistance against it; and, like that great man Naaman, they are ready to exclaim, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" - being enraged that any should presume to dictate to them what is truth. If God were to leave us here, how just, and yet how awful!

Surely a measure of this has been fulfilled in you. You went to Hertford satisfied with anything but the truth; and when the Lord opened the mouth of such a poor weak instrument, how it offended your greatness! But, like Naaman, you were persuaded at length that the waters of Damascus could not heal your sickness, and you were made willing, by slow degrees, to receive the waters of Israel, which not only recovered you of your disease, but also brought you to see. How wonderful are the ways of God! As a

further test of the power and efficacy of his word, he put before you a living and dying testimony of the power and efficacy of these waters of life. You are not yet fully aware of the wonderful grace thus so freely bestowed upon you, that the Lord should cause the Spirit of life to enter your soul, by which you discover the difference between your former profession and that in which your dear mother so peacefully ended her days. You cannot yet fully understand the great condescension of the Lord in the manner in which he has so tenderly led you, and made you submit to his yoke.

Hart says of the Christian's warfare,

" His fairest pretensions must wholly be waved,

And his best resolutions be crossed;

Nor can he expect to be perfectly saved,

Till he find himself utterly lost.

When all this is done, and his heart is assured

Of the total remission of sins,

When his pardon is signed, and his peace is secured,

From that moment his conflict begins."

Nor let your heart sink at this, though the trial comes from quarters none can foresee. The Lord puts no value upon human happiness, it is made up of such vanity; therefore he will not spare, though there be much crying for the loss of it. But this he will do - he will sanctify the troubles, let the nature of them be what it may, by working a measure of patience and submission, and teaching us, by little and little, to live upon the word of God. First, believing we are great sinners; then, feeling sin exceeding sinful before God; then, trembling at his threatened judgments; then, stooping with fear, and yet crying for mercy, even after we have many times obtained mercy; - in this way he makes us feel how little we are, and these exercises continued keep us little in our own estimation. And often while thinking, Shall we, so mean, so base, ever attain to eternal life? in some secret whisper we are surprized at the honour and value he puts upon us. Thus he gives us strength according to our need.

I have lately felt greatly cast down at the sight of many things which seemed lame in me, and greatly afraid lest I should be suffered to turn them aside without a sound healing; but in my many days of mourning, the Lord was pleased to look with compassion upon me in these words - "He hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." This was inexpressibly reviving, and made me to rejoice in hope.

When I paid your mother a visit, I requested Mr. G. to read to her Psalm i., which was very sweet to me, as well as the comfort I found in prayer. My heart was united to her in spiritual love, and I could discover the joints and bands by which Christ's spiritual building was fitly framed together. I would now recal your attention also to the same Psalm. Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of ungodly sinners, nor stands in obstinacy in the sinful ways of error, nor sits down quietly in the seat of scorners, to make light of those who hold the truth. But his delight is in the truth of God, the effect of the light of life entering the soul. He now begins to be a thinking man, and meditates day and night. He takes the whole word, not a part.

The effect of all this is sweetly found in your experience. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." Alas! you say, where is this fruit? You have been quickened to feel there was a divine power manifested in your mother's testimony; you believed the report; and the fruit was an earnest seeking to have that established in your heart, which you saw in her was quite sufficient to live and to die by. Then I add, as you thus received Christ, the light of life, so also look for the love of his heart; and whatsoever you do in this line of things will prosper. "The Lord knoweth the Way of the righteous," and their many fearful and despairing thoughts. May he encourage you to follow the steps of those who are now, through faith and patience, inheriting the promises, is the prayer of

Your most unworthy servant in the Lord, J. B.

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