

# Letter 108

by James Bourne

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*James Bourne reflects on the trials of faith, the necessity of God's mercy, and the transformative power of living faith amidst affliction.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 3:11, Psalm 51:17, Lamentations 3:22, Hebrews 10:23, James 1:2

**Topics:** "Gods Mercy", "Faithfulness"

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## Description

James Bourne, in a letter to Mrs. Clark, reflects on the afflictions of Joseph and the fear of being forsaken in times of trouble. He shares his deep ponderings on sinfulness and the need for God's compassion and mercy in moments of extremity. Bourne acknowledges the goodness of God in affliction, noting that conflicts often lead to experiencing God's gracious favor. Despite great personal struggles and a sense of weakness, he finds assurance in God's faithfulness and promises, emphasizing the importance of living faith that seeks fresh visits from the Lord in every trouble.

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## Transcript

Tunbridge Wells, 22 July 1836.

Dear Mrs. Clark,

You have been much upon my mind since I left town; though I have left you all for a season, I have not left off to consider "the affliction of Joseph," but am deeply affected by it, knowing that I am also in the body, and subject to the same. My fears run very high, lest I should be utterly forsaken in these times of trouble. I read the word, and am often appalled at the manner it looks at me, and tremble lest I should not find a hiding place. This was very searching to me the other day, "I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity that he knoweth" - not only his not restraining his sons, but for many more things which the Lord and he had often (if I may be allowed the expression) touched upon, but which Eli had passed by, and was therefore now to be judged. [1 Sam. iii. 11-14.] I cannot tell you how these things make me ponder my way, and are a maul upon that levity and vanity, which so quickly brings in spiritual death.

The night before last I had a most awful sight of myself as a sinner before God. I saw nothing but his holiness and my sinfulness; every way of escape was hidden from my sight; very little power with the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and very little hope of seeing his reconciled face again. But such is and always has

been his compassion, that it never fails in the time of extremity; "Our Joseph cannot long refrain." The following day he returned, not with much joy, but with sweet power, and made me very sober, very little indeed in my own eyes, and trembling lest I should again be brought to such a place, and kept there; for I am persuaded the Lord need not look far for plenty of causes, if he were pleased to deal with me according to my sin.

I admire the goodness of God in your behalf, for I am sure you will acknowledge the truth of what I am about to say; - while you were not so afflicted in body, and perhaps not so cautious in spirit, you had not those sweet intimations of God's gracious favour so frequently as you now have. You no doubt find with many of us, that the conflicts and conquests go together.

When I was lately called to speak to the people, my conflicts were very great. I never had such a sense of my ignorance and weakness in my life. I knew not what the Lord would do with me; all I could cry day and night was, "Lord, have mercy upon me." I was on a pinnacle, and knew not but that I might be dashed off. Yet the Lord had mercy, and often promised me I should not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end. So I have found it hitherto. "He is faithful that hath promised."

Every fresh trouble needs a fresh visit from the Lord. I cannot rest unless I find it. This is the exercise of living faith. A dead faith lives upon the written word; a living faith lives upon the power of God, brought into the conscience. This is always attended with peace, and a perfect contentment with our lot, as given us in infinite wisdom. We, with the burdens thus fitted for us by divine wisdom, are sanctified by his sweet presence.

I hope you will forgive my writing, but my heart has been greatly toward you in your conflicts. Though I have been so silent, I seldom forget you before God; also our friend Mr. Nunn, whose case often makes me to tremble, lest the Lord should put me into such a furnace, and I not be able to bear it, as he does.

Your faithful friend in the Lord, J. B.

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