

# Letter 116

by James Bourne

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*The Lord's work in our lives is to bring us to subjection, refine us, and lead us to a deeper understanding of our deceitful hearts, ultimately leading us to deliverance and the new way through Christ Jesus.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 2:30, Job 33:28, Psalm 34:18, Proverbs 3:5, Isaiah 48:10

**Topics:** "Gods Mercy", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

James Bourne preaches about the journey of being found by the Lord, feeling lost and condemned, but ultimately experiencing deliverance and enlightenment through God's mercy and grace. He emphasizes the importance of humbling oneself, acknowledging one's faults, and surrendering to God's will, even in the face of trials and misunderstandings from others. Bourne encourages leaning on God's wisdom rather than relying on human understanding, and highlights the refining process God takes us through to purify our hearts and bring us closer to Him.

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## Transcript

London, 3 November 1336.

Dear Mrs. H(arley).,

When first the Lord takes us in hand we always feel as if it were for our destruction that he has found us out. Under these terrifying feelings we are often charged with being mad, and lost to our family and friends; nor do we know to what extremity the displeasure of God which we feel may drive us. We secretly join in all the accusations of the grand enemy and of our blind friends, and sink into great despondency, thinking there can be no case like ours.

If any light appears, and we think that the Lord is surely instructing us, and bringing us either out of the world or a false profession, how our little light seems to encourage us to point out to those about us the dangerous places from which we have been plucked as brands half burnt from the fire. At first we are astonished that the friends we thus converse with cannot see with our eyes, nor understand they are in any danger; some pity, some laugh and mock, some scorn and utterly despise, and some that we think we have gained only prove thorns in our sides, and bring us into great bondage by a sort of compromise; half meeting their ways, to the great hindrance of the work of God. Yet here the Lord's pity is seen, in that he suffers not all this to stop his work, but prepares for it a furnace, and, like a wise Refiner, watches over the pure metal, so that none is lost; but only the dross of natural affection, and of loving mortal man more than

the living God, is purged away. By these afflictions we are brought to a measure of subjection. "He is thy Lord; and worship thou him." Though this work fills us with fear and shame, yet it puts us a few steps lower in our own estimation, and leads us a little more steadily to stand in awe, and commune with our own hearts; and the discovery is, how deceitful they are, and not to be trusted.

Still, under all these various circumstances and trials, the work goes on, like the child that grows in the womb, and we know not how. At length we cry, "Behold, I am vile" This is what the Lord means to bring about by all his repeated blows; and when we lay our hands upon our mouths and justify God, acknowledging his infinite wisdom in all that he has brought upon us, God's messenger (and but "one among a thousand " is such) is sent to us, and his message is, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." This opens or unfolds a marvellous "new and living way," CHRIST JESUS, and we pray unto him, and he is favourable unto us, and we "see his face with joy," which but just before was a terror to us.

Thus if by the power of the Spirit you are enabled to stoop under all your various embarrassments, and find grace to put your mouth in the dust because you have perverted that which was right, then I say, however you may tremble for fear of God's judgments, yet you will find deliverance, and your " life shall see the light." Do not be surprised at the way the Lord is leading you, for it is written, " Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man" - and that for no other purpose than "to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living." [Job xxxiii. 14-30.]

"MARK WELL, O Job." In the various beclouded places in which you are now continually exercised, seeing you are surrounded with many that watch your movements, mark well that you lean not to your own understanding, though it may be naturally good; but be aware that fleshly prudence and natural discretion go but a very little way in spiritual matters. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;" but fools despise this all odd ways, singular habits, or anything that attracts attention. Be doubly cautious, by prayer and supplication, to square your life and walk, that they may reverence "your chaste conversation, heavenly treasure, and know not that it brings DISCRETION. Shun coupled with fear," and be ashamed when they falsely accuse you.

Let all see, when you have to act as head of the family, that the true fear of God increases your desire to be most useful, ornamental, and tender, in every direction. "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Yours faithfully, J. B.

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