

Letter 121.

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon encourages believers to trust in God's love and support through trials while maintaining faith and community unity.

Scripture: Psalm 27:14, Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 9:10, Zechariah 4:6, 1 Corinthians 5:8, Ephesians 4:3, Hebrews 11:6, 1 Peter 5:7, 1 John 5:14

Topics: "Gods Love", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

James Bourne preaches to the Church of God in Pulverbach, Shropshire, commending their teachable spirit amidst difficulties. He encourages Mrs. Oakley to hold onto God's love in Christ Jesus, reminding her to keep close to the Redeemer who delivers from enemies. Bourne urges believers to seek God's love, remain transparent before Him, and wait in prayer with expectation for Christ's help and love to be revealed. He advises the young seeking the water of life to treasure the fear of God, avoid worldly temptations, and confess sins to Jesus for assurance of His love and salvation.

Transcript

London, 1 May 1837.

To the Church of God, or little hill of Zion, at Pulverbach in Shropshire.

I have been much pleased with the accounts which my friends have lately sent, and I cannot but be thankful to see that teach-able spirit which so much abounds, and its sweet effects. Godly simplicity is an inestimable grace which will stand the furnace, and never shines more brightly than when depressed and surrounded with all sorts of perplexities and difficulties, as in the case of your friend Mrs. Oakley. You have sent a sweet account of the work of God upon her heart, and as sure as THE REDEEMER. appeared for her, in all her overwhelming difficulties, so sure will he deliver her from every enemy.

Remember her spiritual anxiety was great; she was brought very low, and the sorrows of death compassed her about; but the Lord heard the voice of her supplication, and the support she found was none other than the love of God to her in Christ Jesus, for he stood at her right hand to save her from those that would condemn her soul.

Let her be mindful of the exhortation "that ye increase more and more." She is not yet out of the field of battle; she may rest assured that every inch of this heavenly ground will be disputed; therefore tell her to

keep close to that Redeemer who came to her help in the first instance, and to believe that he will never leave her nor forsake her. Troubles do not spring out of the ground, but are given in weight and measure, as the Lord sees that we need ballast. She would never know the preciousness of this sweet Saviour, if she never went into the depths of misery; it was here David cried, and the Lord heard him; but see how earnestly he waited both for and upon the Lord, and surely he did not wait in vain; no more will Mrs. Oakley. David bids her to hope in the Lord, "for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." I have indeed found this to be a truth many times, and especially of late, far beyond my utmost expectations.

Dear Mrs. Oakley, you have found with me that the incorruptible seed of eternal life is sown in weakness; and (like your corn) sometimes lies earth-bound for want of the showers of heaven; but the Lord has graciously told us "the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain." You and I have found that the Lord has tried us long here, but at length has not failed us; we have been surrounded with many fears, and have often been ready to give up all, yet a power unseen, and less understood, kept us, and kept us crying, and for this purpose - that our strength and wisdom might have no hand in the mighty work of God.

O what little light we have upon God's ways and purposes for a long time! Yet as we need so he gradually unfolds them day by day, keeping us dependent upon him. It is wonderful how, in these dark dispensations, we are kept seeking; and how the Lord blends temporal concerns with spiritual, and often when we are seeking for wisdom to act in our outward matters, condescends to show us some token for good as it respects his favour towards us, even a, sweet hope that Christ is our Redeemer, and that WITH HIM we possess FREELY all things.

How sweetly these words came, to me last night, "After long abstinence" (much darkness, many fears) Paul said, "There stood by me this night the Angel of God" (the Angel of the everlasting covenant) "whose I am and whom I serve, saying, 'Fear not' [Acts xxvii. 21-24]. This shows the goodness and mercy of God in trouble, and also gives us to understand that there is yet further trouble to come, but that the Lord will stand by us, and tells us not to be disheartened. I felt this was a truth, and for the time was enabled to cast all my cares, fears, and anxieties upon him, in full confidence that He would not leave me nor forsake me.

No doubt the little help that the Lord has afforded you has often since been disputed as being nothing but delusion; but let me entreat you to dispute this point, and not think yourself obliged to believe every lie the devil will tell you. Only watch and see when you claim these sweet seasons (however short) to be of God, whether HE will tell you they are a deception. I am sure you will never find any such thing; but if, in your fears, you cry earnestly to him, he will confirm it all, and add more. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Be constant at a throne of grace, and watch how the Lord receives you there; and if you find shyness or difficulty of access, then be sure something is wrong, and turn your prayers into confessions, and tell him HE is the light of the world, and HE alone can discover the hidden deception of the heart; and be sure you seek to feed spiritually on "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" [1 Cor. 5:3]. I often beg (and I trust by his grace with some sincerity) that I may be made and kept transparent; this is in opposition to a double mind which shall obtain nothing from the Lord.

I have known many troubles, and have often remained long in them, because I have much pride to bring down; but the Lord has, sooner or later, not only taught me to bear his indignation because I have sinned

against him, but has also given me the brightest discoveries of his love I ever knew, when his delivering hand has appeared. Therefore I say if we think it long before this takes place, "though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry;" and wait in prayer, not in idleness; "watch and pray;" let your eye and expectation be continually on the look out for Christ, for you that wait for HIM shall never be disappointed nor confounded world without end.

I entreat you to seek for further discoveries of God's love; it is called unsearchable riches that pass all human knowledge; the length and depth, breadth and height, exceed your utmost objections, sins, and difficulties. Give the Lord no rest until he make you "a praise in the earth." The prayer of faith will quench the fire of temptation, and will make the weakest strong in the Lord, so as to wax valiant in fight and turn to flight all the armies of the aliens; thus we shall obtain a good report of the Spirit of God, that the work is his own, and that he will finish it, bringing forth "the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, Grace unto it." [Heb. xi. 2, 34; Zech. iv. 7.]

I am truly glad to hear that there are a few among you who are seeking for the water of life.

The young man you speak of appears very hopeful, and I hope the world, and all the cravings of that body of sin within, may not draw him aside from "the simplicity that is in Christ." Tell him to seek most earnestly for that rich treasure - the fear of God; it will prove "a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death" which will be laid for his feet in all directions. Tell him to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing, false professors who will come, some with "Lo here!" and others with "Lo there!" Tell him to read his Bible, and pray over it, and confess his sins to the Lord Jesus Christ. If they become a heavy burden, too heavy for him, it will make him cry for help, and he will find there is no help but Christ, and he will one day be surprised how kindly Christ will come and speak to him, and assure his heart of his love to him, and that he shall never perish. Tell him also to beware of the public-house, and shun it as he would the devil, either to receive wages, or meet sick clubs, or for any other pretended necessary purpose. Such baneful beginnings would cut up all spiritual increase, and leave him, like Samson, shorn of his strength. Attending funerals of the dead, eating, drinking, smoking, carnal company and publicity of all sorts, tend to deaden the soul and make the spirit flat when we return in private before God. May the Lord condescend to clear his way, and keep his heart tender and his mind sober, so that he may be brought to the saving knowledge of the truth in a sweet experience.

Tell Sukey Harley to watch over him, and like a good mother in Israel, to pray for his spiritual prosperity; and to be sure to blow the trumpet and give the alarm at the first sight of the enemy towards him.

May you all preserve the unity of the Spirit and have the testimony of God that you are of one heart and one way. J. B.

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