

Letter 123.

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual discretion, humility, and seeking after God's favor in Christ Jesus.

Scripture: Psalm 50:15, Proverbs 19:21, Luke 10:20, Luke 19:10, John 15:5

Topics: "Spiritual Guidance", "Redemption Through Christ"

Description

James Bourne preaches to Mrs. H. about the importance of seeking spiritual discretion from the Lord to guide her steps, emphasizing the need to rely on God's counsel rather than her own plans. He encourages her to call upon God in times of trouble, knowing that divine favor and forgiveness will lead to true humility. Bourne reminds her that only through recognizing her sinfulness and seeking Christ's love can she find peace and redemption.

Transcript

London, 12 May 1837.

Dear Mrs. H.

Much of your future happiness depends upon your present measures, and how far you prevail with the Lord to give you that spiritual discretion without which you cannot take one step aright. He himself declares, "Without me ye can do nothing;" yet how many vain plans you contrive, and forget that he is always telling you, "Many are the devices of a man's heart; but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." If the sight of these things makes you tremble, and you feel the force of them, you will continue the prayer you spoke of, for nothing will communicate such divine courage to the soul, as the sweet sense of the Lord's presence, and of his kindly hearing your feeble petitions. This will give the wisdom and prudence I speak of, and clear the rugged path.

I purpose by the help of God to tell you what in your letter fails in knowledge of the word of God, and the work of the Spirit, and yet to show that even such are taken in hand and instructed, "here a little, and there a little," until they fall flat at the feet of Christ, like Mary Magdalene.

First, your legal spirit wants to make a preparation; for you say you do not know how sinful you are, and therefore are not humbled before God. I should wonder if you had known this mystery, for God himself has asked the question, and it never yet was answered, "Who can understand his errors?" Let it suffice that

you are troubled. It is said, without naming what your trouble is, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Nothing will make you more bitterly lament your sin and folly, than a sweet revelation of God's favour to you in Christ Jesus. This will effectually humble you in the dust.

" Law and terrors do but harden,

All the while they work alone,

But a sense of blood-bought pardon,

Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

Christ gives his disciples "power to tread upon serpents and scorpions" - the serpents and scorpions of pride, self-will, self-sufficiency, and the love of vanity. We shall have power given to tread on these; it must be so; but the Lord adds, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." This is the testimony that you must seek after. [Luke x. 19, 20.] Then you write "There always seems something between me and my God which I cannot see." You are nothing but sin in God's sight, and loathsome, and blind; and therefore no wonder you cannot see. Why seek to the Good Physician, if you could see? He is of no use to such as can help themselves, nor will he help any that claim him as their God, without the witness of the Holy Ghost.

You again add - "and there is a lurking fear of man." I should wonder if it were not so; but I see you are determined to be very good, and God is determined to serve you as he did Job - plunge you into the ditch, so that your own clothes shall abhor you. Nothing but perfect love can cast out all fear; and that is the love of Christ, which I entreat you to seek after, and not to mend yourself before you cry for it.

These few hints may at first sight dishearten, yet a false healing will never do any good. If ever you are saved it must be as a sinner;

" Not the righteous;

Sinners Jesus came to call."

Only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" was Christ sent. When you begin to mourn alone, and really feel a secret suspicion rise in your heart that it is all over with you, and now there can be no hope, then is the time of deliverance. "Then look up, for your redemption draweth nigh."

Take courage; be willing to be nothing; you have long enough been something in your own eyes; but God will strike a humbling blow upon the weakest part, and give you many a weeping eye, when you lay to heart how little you have thought what Christ has done and suffered for you; and you will learn to put your mouth in the dust before God, and wonder at his inexpressible condescension to you a worthless worm. Can you understand this language? By God's grace I can, and find it the happiest place in all the world; for whilst I am nothing before the Lord Jesus Christ, he is everything; yet he allows me such holy familiarity as I cannot describe, telling him how much I love him, because he has first loved me; and suffers me to bring all my troubles, cares, and sorrows, perceiving that he is moved with the feeling of all my infirmities.

Whatever I have written at the beginning that may cast you down, let this encourage you to hope in the Lord; and remember he is "no respecter of persons."

Yours in the Lord, J. B.

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