

Letter 124.

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon encourages believers to seek communion with God amidst trials and emphasizes the unique power of the gospel for salvation.

Scripture: 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Salvation Through Faith", "Trials And Tribulations"

Description

James Bourne, in a letter to M. C. B. in London on May 18, 1837, expresses deep concern and compassion for the struggles and trials faced by his friend, urging them to seek salvation through the truth of the gospel and to be aware of the temptations that may lead them astray. Bourne emphasizes the importance of enduring through trials, finding refuge in Christ's salvation, and seeking communion with God above all else. He shares his own experiences of distress and how God's compassion and faithfulness brought him through, encouraging his friend to hold on to hope and trust in the Lord's deliverance.

Transcript

[To M. C. B.] London, 18 May 1837.

My dear Friend,

- Do pardon my liberty in so quickly answering your letter, which has laden me with much sorrow. I have seen much of the world, as well as much affliction in the church of God, and have met with a great variety of characters; and therefore am often led to ponder those words - "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." This has taught me much tenderness and patience.

I know and am persuaded that there is no other gospel, nor way of salvation, than that I have set before you; and that if the truth does not save you, nothing else can. I also know that when the law enters it will stir up nothing but wrath and enmity; and this is God's design, that some discovery may be made of the depths of iniquity within, and of the desperate state in which sin has involved us. Your kind interest in my behalf has deserved and brought out the utmost faithfulness in my prayers on your behalf. I have no other means to show my gratitude to God and to his people; and herein have I found both my safety and spiritual prosperity, and do expect to find afterwards more favour than he that flattereth with his lips. I must press this upon you, Do not suppose I am judging you, but that I feel for your case, and would, with many prayers, defeat the purpose of the devil, who is going about seeking whom he may be permitted to devour.

You have been long in the Slough of Despond, and it would sorely grieve me that you should make a desperate plunge, like Pliable, to get out on the side next to your house.

I think I never pass a day but I beg of the Lord to remember you. I cannot altogether be so easily thrust off, and not correspond any more. "Who is offended, and I burn not?" Long-suffering is a grace of the Spirit which I wish to be found in the exercise of. I am not naturally so soon disheartened, and I think the Holy Spirit has taught me not to be too hasty in any of my measures. If you knew the full extent of what it is to be rent from the heart, prayers, and affections of the people of God, you would exceedingly fear such a tiring. I was once under that distressing trial, and could find no rest, night nor day; no sleep, no appetite, no relish for the world, no looking for anything but an everlasting separation from the presence of God. But here it was his compassions did not fail; and here he said, Thou shalt return in the power of the Spirit; and though I found it hard to believe, as being too great for such an unworthy creature as myself, yet his word was like a hammer, it broke my heart to pieces, and like ointment poured forth, it comforted me so that I believed I should never perish, but have everlasting life.

I am sorely grieved for you, and know how to feel for you in all your troubles. I wish I could help you. Dare you believe me? This is a day of trial to you; God has put you into the trial; you must not murmur at a faithful friend. I dare not deal roughly with any because of the fear of the Lord. I dare not deal falsely with any because of the same. This day of trial shall come upon ALL flesh; but all flesh will not stand it. My dear friend, Stand in awe, for if we stop short of Christ's salvation, what an awful day will that be! Do not so much fret about your present deprivation of communion with the people of God; but rather seek communion with God himself, and tremble when your pen is about to write that you do not pray. If once you could prevail with the Lord, you would soon see that that gift would make room for you in the hearts of all the children of God.

As I told Mrs. H., so I tell you, it is hard to be nothing. Yet I hope the Lord is working this mighty work in you; and rest assured it will not be the work of a day. When he has brought you to this, you will not wish to drop your correspondence with me, but will more heartily wish to declare to all what a dear Saviour you have found.

I must still insist upon it that my difficulties and afflictions are as great and manifold as yours, and my sorrows as heavy upon me; though I allow that, by the mercy of God and long experience, I have been taught a readier way to find shelter in Christ's wounded side. I see no cause why you should be disheartened when your case is pointed out; nor will I hear of your not having intercourse with the people of God. My prayers shall yet be for your spiritual welfare, and that the Lord may appear for you in your present anguish, and make it manifest that though there is none like it, yet he will deliver you out of it.

Yours faithfully, J. B.

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