

Letter 134.

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual revival, the pastor's role in crying out to God, and the need for a repeated sense of a clean conscience to ensure we are not in error.

Scripture: Hosea 13:13

Topics: "Spiritual Leadership", "Holy Spirit"

Description

James Bourne emphasizes the importance of pastors being spiritually vigilant and diligent in their ministry, ensuring their message comes directly from the Lord to avoid worldly distractions. He urges the pastor to have a rich experience with God to effectively guide the congregation in spiritual matters, highlighting the necessity of a clear understanding of spiritual truths and the significance of personal application of the message through the Holy Spirit. Bourne stresses the need for a deep personal connection with God to avoid spiritual errors and to lead the congregation towards true spiritual transformation and growth.

Transcript

[To the Rev. B. G.] London, 3 November 1837.

My dear Friend,

I have been made deeply to feel the various cases in your little church, and the various circumstances under which they lie. When I first went down in the beginning of last summer, there was an evident sleep pervaded the whole, and the case of secretly grieved me to the heart; for I found her a source of stumbling to the weak, instead of an old soldier enduring hardness. The evident confidence she felt was not at the time attended with a broken heart, and she had need again to learn the first principles of the Oracles of God.

If you ask me to account for this, I know of no reason, except that the pastor had folded his hands, and had not sufficiently cried in secret in behalf of his little flock. There is a deep necessity of having our message warm from the Lord, like the showbread. To receive it thus from him, is a wonderful means of being abstracted from all worldly objects; and this is the best condition in which we can stand between the living- and the dead. The credentials being thus sealed home upon our hearts, we shall be at a point in declaring them to the people. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to LIFE, and few there be that find it." You have professedly made an open declaration of this; and if you thus proclaim that many are wrong, how careful you ought to be in testifying what is truth 1 Paul well says to Timothy, "Give thyself

wholly" to these things, "that thy profiting may appear unto all." I perceive that some are brought to the birth, but for the want of a skilful midwife they cannot bring forth. I have heard you describe the pains of this spiritual labour in a measure, but I am anxious that you may, from a rich experience, be able to set before the people "the place of the breaking forth of children" [Hos. xiii. 13], and to manifest a clear prevalency with God there. This gives a sweet savour to what you advance, and enters the hearts and consciences of those that hear. It shows to them that this spiritual life is not all labour and toil, but that there is a sweet rest; and this must be continually pressed home upon their consciences.

Spiritual watchfulness and diligence is indispensable when God has given the charge; and the Lord Jesus Christ perpetually cautions his disciples to this purpose. Your people will never be clear if you are short in your spiritual tokens. "We have the mind of Christ," if so be that we know anything aright. "We have received the Spirit that is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God, and these we are to distribute to an afflicted people; that which we speak the Holy Ghost teacheth, for "the natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God." [2 Cor]. If all this be true, what manner of men ought we to be with such a charge! "Study to show thyself approved of God, a work-man that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Nothing can preserve you from error but a repeated sense of the heart's being sprinkled from an evil conscience. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin; but not your sin, if not applied personally by the Holy Ghost. This makes clear the New birth, the Adoption, the Sonship, the Heirship. All religion short of this will prove no better than the white of an egg.

I have been greatly exercised since my return. I long after your spiritual prosperity.

Yours &c. J. B.

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