

Letter 136.

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of coming to Jesus Christ and seeking God's love and presence, especially in old age, and provides practical steps to take and guidance for those who are struggling to understand the Lord's teachings.

Scripture: Psalm 69:30, Proverbs 3:5, Matthew 7:13, John 3:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:21

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Faith Obedience"

Description

James Bourne emphasizes the importance of seeking God's presence and love in old age, urging Sukey and Charles to be diligent in prayer and to search for God in His word. He encourages them to be humble, teachable, and cautious in their faith, reminding them of the necessity of being born again and not being deceived by false teachings. Bourne advises Sukey to share her own experiences of finding salvation with her sister and to guide her in persistent prayer and discernment. He also extends his counsel to their daughter, warning against being consumed by worldly distractions and emphasizing the need for genuine faith and obedience.

Transcript

London, January 1838.

Dear Sukey Harley,

What an inexpressible mercy it would be for your husband to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ in his old age. I know that old age brings on many infirmities; death naturally draws nigh; youth will hope for long life, but old age cannot; and with me this reflection often brings many fears, which nothing can quell but the secret and comforting presence of God's love to my soul in Christ Jesus.

Let me ask you, Charles, what do you know of these things? If you say that few and evil have been your days, and you feel it a truth, do you ever go and tell this to the Lord? For he only can mind them, and give you grace and understanding to come to Jesus Christ for mercy and pardon. If you mean to be happy, be much in prayer; and when you read, search for the Lord in his word as for hid treasures, and you will be surprised how he will condescend to speak to you by it. Be not a stranger to the new birth; "Ye must be born again." This is the something that Sukey so long sought for before she could find, and yet did not seek in vain. Take heed, be of a teachable spirit, and be not wise in your own conceit; be very especially cautious not to lay a stumbling-block before each other's feet, for that would soon hinder your prayers. The

fear of God will prove "a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."

Do not lose sight of your sister; remember, Sukey, you have been long strangers in a strange land; watch over her and see what the Lord is doing, and whether you can help her with your prayers. She seems to be come to the birth, but not yet delivered. Show her the way to the Lord Jesus Christ. I think I hear you say, But how shall I show her? By telling her of the many years of fears and sorrows that you have had, and how the Lord made you to write vanity upon all created things; when you despaired of all things, and most of yourself, then the Lord Jesus came to your help and saved you.

Tell her to give him no rest, but to cry night and day, "for the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners." Tell her to watch if she ever gets answers to prayer; be sure to cherish such answers and magnify the Lord with thanksgiving for them, and this will please him better than any fleshly pretensions. [Psa. lxi. 30-33.]

Tell her to be cautious to whom she tells her tale. "All men have not faith," nor all that are in a profession; there are many false Christs, and her neighbours will cry, Lo here! and lo there and she will be deceived if she do not get wisdom from above. Let wisdom enter into thy heart, then "discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee, to deliver thee from the strange woman" (that is, the false church); "even the stranger which flattereth with her lips." There is much more danger here than perhaps your sister is aware of; tell her to be very tender and to receive instruction, or she will be betrayed. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding." [Prov. iii. 10-19, and 5-6.]

This counsel will also suit your daughter; and if it should please the Lord further to open her understanding, tell her to lay to heart and cherish his teaching. Let not the vanities and cares of this world choke the word; for the last state of such a professor will be found worse than the first. She may perhaps now say like Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do such things?" I hope not, but if she does, she will not be the first. I hope I may hear of better things, even things that accompany salvation, though I speak thus. But remember "strait is the gate that leads to life," and trifling professors will never find it. The profession of the day is easy, and all your neighbours and friends who go with the tide will, if possible, drag you along with them, and go you must, if the grace of God and his power made manifest in your weakness prevent not.

From your sincere friend in the Lord, J. B.

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