

Letter 146.

by James Bourne

To be saved, one must understand the sentence of death and rely on the revelation of Jesus Christ, rather than leaning to their own understanding.

Scripture: Psalm 25:4, Proverbs 3:5, Proverbs 16:25, Acts 14:22, 1 Corinthians 8:2

Topics: "Spiritual Discernment", "True Faith"

Description

James Bourne emphasizes the importance of being made aware of our sinful nature and the need for a revelation of Jesus Christ for salvation. He contrasts leaning on our own understanding with leaning on the Beloved, highlighting the spiritual discernment needed to walk the right path revealed to those who fear the Lord. Bourne warns against a superficial faith that lacks the fear of the Lord and encourages deep prayer, seeking counsel from God, and acknowledging our own inadequacies.

Transcript

[To J. B.] Pulverbach, July 1838.

My dear young Friend,

It is a great thing to be made a sensible sinner, and to know for what the sentence of death has passed upon us; and that nothing but a revelation of Jesus Christ to our souls in all his saving benefits can remove this sentence. But do we think we attain to this by leaning to our own understanding, as thousands think and perish; or have we the secret and powerful testimony of the Spirit upon our consciences that we have come out of the world, and the spirit of it, leaning upon the Beloved? The difference is so spiritual, and so far beyond the natural understanding, that God says, "There is a way which seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" [Prov. xvi. 25].

The right way must be acknowledged to be a secret not known to the world, nor to all professors of religion; but the Lord says it is revealed to them that fear him. O how tender are such as fear him; how afraid to take part with any that do not understand this tender point! How hard is the conversation of those who do not possess this fear; how confident they are, and yet how evidently without any experience or saving knowledge! Such as possess this fear have always (more or less) some knowledge what truth is, and where it is; and are not unceasingly talking about its being here and there and everywhere; for the Lord the Spirit shows them in this fear that there are few that be saved, though many run in the heavenly race. [Psalm xxv. 4-12.]

You have many subtle enemies within that will argue and reason very wisely; and if your present religion be only in the flesh it will not be long before it comes to an end, and only because of the want of the fear of the Lord. You will find it an easy matter to be persuaded to go in a beaten path, which many have made smooth and even; it seems to be freer from crosses and difficulties, and is not stigmatised with bigotry and dogmatism, nor is it called narrow and limited; this is true; but the fear of the Lord will tremble at that beaten path, and call to mind what God says, "we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom."

Be not hasty; be much in prayer; take counsel of God; and remember, if you think you know anything of yourself you know nothing aright.

Yours most faithfully, J. B.

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