

Letter 157

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and God's mercy in times of despair and spiritual struggle.

Scripture: Psalm 34:17, Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 30:18, Isaiah 41:10, 2 Corinthians 12:9

Topics: "Spiritual Despair", "Gods Compassion"

Description

James Bourne, in a letter to a friend, shares his personal journey of despair, crying out to God in his destitute condition, and experiencing the Lord's wonderful condescension in giving him the Spirit of grace and supplication. He encourages his friend to seek faithfulness in ministry, declaring the truth of God's Word even in the midst of trials and hardships. Bourne expresses his extreme misery and desperate state, yet testifies of the Lord's unexpected appearance and the assurance of experiencing more of God's compassion and favor through humbling experiences.

Transcript

[To the Rev. B. G.] London, 26 November 1838.

My dear Friend,

There seems a necessity laid upon me to reply to your letter forth with. In my trouble I sympathized with Mrs. G., and thought more of her than anybody. I then felt the anguish of soul she felt; and I also felt the turning point, where the Lord in his sovereign mercy caused her to hope. I found it not a step between me and death; and I dare say she found it so too. Despair seemed close at my heels, and I thought, and was resolved in it, that even if I perished and went to destruction, it should be in crying to God. This is what I always insist upon; and here I found that the prayer of the destitute was heard, and I manifestly came to that destitute condition which God's word speaks to. Here it was God broke the gates of brass, and bars of iron. I was made sensibly to feel that indeed, indeed, there was no help in me; and when the Lord came, I was more than surprised at his wonderful condescension and his wonderful manner of giving me the Spirit of grace and supplication, which encouraged me greatly, and brought me very nigh in hope.

As it respects yourself I also truly sympathize with you, nor can I believe that you will labour for nought, or bring forth for trouble. You say truly, many here seek your spiritual welfare. It is by the painful things you describe, that the Lord instructs his people; and, if messengers, makes them faithful in declaring what he shows them. Beg of him that you may be faithful in the ministry, "to declare unto Jacob his transgression,

and to Israel his sin;" that the gate is strait, the way narrow; that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence; but that the strength of the Lord shall be seen to be made perfect in every coming sinner's weakness.

I wish I could convey to you how ardently I desire that you may be partaker of my joy. My misery has been extreme, my case exceeding desperate; yet the Lord appeared when I least expected it. I thought he would never come more, that his mercy was "clean gone for ever." But he showed me the need for all this heaviness and humbling, and told me that I should yet know still more of his compassion and favour. You see I do not know where to stop. H - is much better, and I believe the Lord is sweetly instructing her. By these terrible things in righteousness he answers us, and becomes our Saviour.

Yours affectionately, J. B.

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