

# Letter 158.

by James Bourne

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*James Bourne's sermon emphasizes finding hope and comfort in God's mercy during times of deep personal despair and suffering.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 54:10

**Topics:** "Divine Mercy", "Suffering Faith"

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## Description

James Bourne shares his personal journey of sinking into despair and anguish as he faced his daughter's severe illness, feeling as though God intended to crush him and his family. Through earnest prayers and cries, he experienced moments of despair and hopelessness, until God mercifully intervened and brought calmness to his soul. Bourne found comfort and renewed hope in passages from Isaiah, where he was reminded of God's mercy and faithfulness even in the midst of affliction and despair.

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## Transcript

[To M. and J. G.] London, 30 November 1838.

My dear Friends,

When first I heard of my daughter's illness I was alarmed and sank in spirit; and when I arrived at home and saw how matters were, I felt the affliction would not be either small or of short continuance. I continued sinking in spirit some days, till I seemed to lose my own hope, and everything about me looked as if God meant to crush me and all my family; for I could get no sensible help nor find my prayers were heard. The nights were a terror to me, and the days were spent in most earnest and bitter cries and groans till I thought the Lord would hear me no more. One night in particular, about midnight, I felt as if I were on the brink of despair, without power to help myself from sinking for ever into destruction; but I thought if I perished it should be in crying to the Lord; and then it was the Lord condescended to compose my mind, and caused a calm, which I had not felt for some days. But it was not till the following day that any words were presented to me; and then Isaiah xlii. 10-17 raised my soul again to hope in his mercy. "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants there-of. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice; the villages that Kedar (that is, sorrow) doth inhabit. Let the inhabitants of the rock sing; let them shout from the top of the mountains." With this not only was my hope restored, but a spirit of grace and supplication was given, and the Lord again talked to me in the word. Isaiah liv. became very sweet - "Fear not for thou shalt not be ashamed, O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! . . . In

righteousness shalt thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come nigh thee;" and the last verse of the chapter sweetened the whole.

These things came with great power, but I soon lost sight of them through fear and anxiety; my daughter's affliction often appearing too desperate for carnal reason or the most sanguine fleshly hope to think it could end in anything but death. We twice sat up to see her end; yet the Lord not only overruled it, but comforted her at times with the sweetest consolation. The work of grace growing still more evident, and the Lord confirming the same now and then by a word upon my heart, greatly helped forward my hope, and encouraged me to trust in him. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me, for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee."

All this greatly comforted and meekened my spirit, and kept me out of the spirit of the world. The Lord was very precious to me and endeared himself more to me than I can express. I think I never before felt to such a great degree the beauty, value, suitableness, and preciousness of a Saviour; nor can I possibly express what I felt of his infinite condescension and love to me and mine. 2 Cor. iv. was exceedingly precious. I could by faith "look at the things that are not seen" by the natural eye, and believe that the darkest dispensations, by God's allwise management, would work effectual good; so that I could leave all in his hands, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. I found I was enabled to do this even when he hid his face, so deeply had he impressed my heart with a feeling sense of his infinite wisdom and especial kindness toward me and mine.

I was one day after this greatly cast down, but earnestly entreated the Lord to help me; and he was pleased to make known to me that he regarded my troubles, and would take them in hand, and plead my cause. This wrought great contrition and weeping before him, and then I told him many things; but especially I said, Lord, what shall be done with my afflicted and sick child? and these most sweet words broke my heart - I WILL COMFORT THEE ON EVERY SIDE. I cannot describe the wonder I felt at these words, and the scrutiny I seemed to make about them with all reverence and tenderness; I thought them too much for such an one as myself; but surely the Lord owned them and confirmed them; and I have yet to hope and watch the final issue.

Yours affectionately, J. B.

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