

Letter 167.

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the profound spiritual liberty found in Christ, especially during trials and tribulations.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5, Romans 8:17, Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Corinthians 12:9

Topics: "Spiritual Liberty", "Tribulation And Grace"

Description

James Bourne, in a letter to a friend, expresses gratitude for the comfort found in spiritual liberty through Christ Jesus, despite facing severe trials and despair. Reflecting on the struggles and temptations faced, Bourne finds solace in the shared experiences of those who have gone before him, realizing the need for tribulation to humble the soul and appreciate the grace of the Savior. Encouraging his friend to trust in Christ amidst difficulties, Bourne emphasizes the importance of learning to prize both the person and grace of Jesus, even in moments of despair and hopelessness.

Transcript

[To the Rev. W. Maddy.] Stapleton, 9 August 1839.

My dear Friend,

I must thank you most sincerely for your kind intelligence from time to time. I have been exceedingly comforted with my letters from London, and hope you will be able to get out of the bondage which has so long held you. I feel the bias of your legal spirit even in your earnest seeking to break forth into spiritual liberty. The moment you write what poor Mrs. Jones dictates, it is all laid aside, and you write a pure language. The liberty that we have in Christ Jesus is a wonderful, mysterious, and powerful thing. See how it supports her under all her severe trials! She feels that dying is a dark valley; but the spiritual liberty which she finds in Christ Jesus supports her, and removes her fear and dread. It is this liberty in Christ Jesus that counter-acts despair in my soul, and causes hope to be as an anchor both sure and steadfast. I often say to myself in secret, All but gone; but here in this time of extremity the dear Lord Jesus whispers, "No more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ;" and a joint heir with Christ. This is liberty indeed, and humbles the soul to the dust in self-abasement.

Lamenting the sad discovery of ten thousand evils which are more or less bringing a continual cloud over my mind, I found these words very sweet in my family reading this morning - "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea" [1 Cor. x. 1-4]. I replied in my mind, Then why should I

complain and despair, seeing this is the way that all have gone before me? For surely I have eaten of "the same spiritual meat," and drunk of "the same spiritual drink," and that is Christ. We soon begin to think it strange if we fall into temptation, and forget there is a continual need for it, that our topsails may be lowered. I never should have chosen such a path of tribulation as I am generally walking in; my natural inclination would have been for something more easy and dignified. But I now believe with all my heart that there is a need for it; first, that I may be brought as a beggar to the Lord Jesus Christ (we hear of none else being in Abraham's bosom); and secondly, that I may know how more to prize this blessed Saviour, who has brought me up out of such deep and desperate places. Hart says,

"Could we his person learn to prize,

We more should prize his grace."

The Lord is determined we shall learn this lesson more or less; he therefore suffers us to fall into all sorts of difficulties, and sanctifies them, so that, like Paul in the shipwreck, all hope of being saved seems taken away. Then, my dear friend, what think you of Christ? O what inexpressible grace! As poor Frank said, when black despair was close at hand, then it was he "against hope believed in hope," and found Christ, the resurrection and the life. May you be able thus to prevail, and then you will know what true spiritual liberty means.

[August 11.] I have come with much fatigue to Sukey's today, and I write this at her house. The Lord has been very precious to me here, and Prov. iii. 1-20 has been most sweet; the power of the words "MY SON" was more than I ever felt; the endearing epithet quite broke my heart, and brought me into the sweet liberty I write about at the beginning. Under the power of this liberty I could trust to the Lord with all my heart, and not lean to my own understanding; and by this sweet and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ all depths of sorrow, hardness, and impenitency, were broken up, and the clouds dropped down the dew. May the Lord grant you a portion of the same, and set your soul free in Christ.

Your affectionate friend, J. B.

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