

Letter 168.

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility in ministry, the comfort of God's chastening, and the power of hope in despair.

Scripture: Job 1:12, Psalm 34:17, Proverbs 3:11, 2 Corinthians 12:9

Topics: "Humility In Faith", "Transformative Hope"

Description

James Bourne reflects on the importance of humility and acknowledging one's own ignorance in the journey of faith. He shares his struggles in prayer, feeling unworthy to ask for great things but finding comfort in the Lord's presence and favor. Through a personal experience with Mr. Oakley, Bourne witnesses the transformative power of hope and the profound impact of encountering the love and sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, leading to a change of heart and a newfound calmness in spirit.

Transcript

[To Mrs. T.] Stapleton, 18 August 1839.

My dear Cousin,

I now feel the great importance of having to instruct others, because my own ignorance is so great. My difficulty in prevailing in prayer also keeps me from presumption. I am not without hope, but dare not ask for great things; every day convinces me of my extreme ignorance, and from my heart I am forced to acknowledge that I am the last and the least of all the Lord's people. When I returned home on Sunday after I had had the sweetest tokens of the Lord's presence and favour, I pondered the matter over and said, Was this indeed, Lord, spoken upon my heart for my encouragement, and may I receive it as a token of thy kind approbation? Something came so sweetly again into my heart with these words, As a father chasteneth the son in whom he delighteth, so only does he chasten you. This was just as I was going to bed, and being alone I gave vent to my feelings in acknowledgment of his wonderful care, kindness, and mercy, to me. I was now satisfied that the Lord was with me. "MY SON!" It is no mean thing to be thus chastened, therefore do not grow weary; love is in every blow. How these things make me to ponder my way and wherefore I am brought here. I dare not say it is in vain, the Lord is so with me; yet I am more weak and miserable in myself than I can express, fearing and trembling and watching and praying; and when I feel close to an overthrow, then the Lord appears to comfort me. Also he comforts me by some intelligence of good received through so weak an instrument.

Mr. Oakley is at times all but in despair, and now and then he seems to catch at something to hope upon. He still remembers "the crumbs that fall from the Master's table" and hopes to get some; but last night and early this morning he seemed past all hope, till at last he said, "I see the Saviour on the cross shedding his blood for me; I see his blood spilt for me; I have hope. I was in hell last night, but the Saviour tells me that his blood is sufficient for all my sins." Mrs. Oakley says that he never had such distinct hope, nor ever such deep despair, before I spoke to him, and that he has never since been so dreadfully outrageous; but his spirit is calm, and there seems a great change. He told me he had a soul to save, and then added, "for ever, and ever, and ever. O Sir, to go to hell is very terrible!" I have been able to persuade him to attend our family reading these last two days. What all this means the Lord will show in due time. One says, "Satan must ask leave before he smites Job, or sifts Peter."

Yours affectionately, J. B.

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