

Letter 169.

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the necessity of looking to Jesus for strength and guidance amidst personal struggles and the importance of humility and accountability in faith.

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Romans 8:28, 1 Corinthians 10:12, 2 Corinthians 10:4, Galatians 6:3, Ephesians 6:10, Philippians 4:13, Hebrews 12:2, Hebrews 12:11, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Faith And Endurance", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

James Bourne reflects on the challenges of maintaining a continual sense of God's presence amidst various struggles and fears, acknowledging the need for divine intervention in his life. He emphasizes the importance of humility, caution, and reliance on God's power in spiritual battles, recognizing the necessity of being deeply humbled and aware of personal weaknesses. Bourne shares about a recent burden lifted by God's kindness, leading to a deeper trust and confidence in God's providence. In his sermon on Hebrews 12:1, Bourne highlights the significance of fixing our eyes on Jesus to overcome obstacles and run the race of faith with endurance, cautioning against self-reliance and emphasizing the transformative power of true faith in Christ.

Transcript

[To Mr. Nunn.] Stapleton, September 1839.

My dear Friend,

I find many things combine to exercise my mind here, and it is no small difficulty to keep a continual sense of God's presence with me. Perhaps God is pleased to make use of these as a means of bringing me to himself, for with all my vain attempts I cannot do without him. I am often cast down and much laden with inexpressible fears and misgivings, having at times such discoveries of what is within that I cannot help thinking there are none like me. I think I could enter into your letter, and feel the difficulties with which you are surrounded.

You will see by the accounts I have sent, that I cannot mould all to my pattern, nor can I frame a pattern by the word of God that shall suit the precise case of every one. I perceive many things must be taken into consideration. First, "TAKE HEED." This is loudly spoken upon my heart, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall;" therefore I am led to be very tender and serious, that I may not judge according to outward appearances, and that our pulling down weapons be not carnal, but mighty through

God. The strongholds of Satan can be destroyed by God's power only, and not by my caprice. I may boast of the authority which God has given me; but if I do, I had need to take heed that I stretch not myself beyond my measure, for not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth. This makes me to move with great fear and many prayers, and I trust the Lord having given me prudence has overruled all things for the mutual humbling of every one of us.

The poor people here find I am not come to trifle, but that both they and myself are accountable for both hearing and speaking; and our consciences I trust are kept alive, by the Lord's making us susceptible of the importance of the word spoken. As a wise author says, Have we no cause to fear? Have we no need of caution? The better your opinion of yourself is, the closer ought "your search to be. For it is not said, Let him that made a slip take heed; but, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall;" for many live in a form; that is easy, but there is no dying in a form. Therefore it is necessary to be deeply humbled with many fears respecting myself and a sight of the difficulties to which I am exposed, in order to set before these poor creatures the conflict as well as the conquest, He is "the God of all grace, who calleth us unto eternal glory by Jesus Christ;" and by the power of this grace he will effectually instruct me how to be sober and feed the flock, and not lord it over them, that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, he may crown both them and me with that glory that fadeth not away.

I had been burdened for two or three days till yesterday with a very grievous load upon my spirit. I mourned and cried under it, and could get no relief; but the Lord appeared last night in reading, and gave me a sense of his kindness and goodwill, and showed me that he always had a good will towards me, but that there was a need for this heaviness to keep down my proud and foolish heart. O... how low these visits make me to put myself, and what a holy trust and confidence I place in him in all his dealings and dispensations! At such a time I know that all things are intended, and do work, for my good.

My subject today was Hebrews xii. 1. I found my heart deeply affected with it, and told the people there was no setting aside dead weights, and besetting sins, and no running our race with patience, but by looking unto Jesus; and that nothing else would strengthen the hands that hang down, or make the knees to bow before God. Many professions are entered into, but in the end prove unsound; for those who hold them look to themselves and not to Jesus, and therefore their faith Christ will not own, being neither the author of it nor the finisher. Look diligently to this, for it is not he that thinketh he standeth that shall prevail; but, as Hart says,

"A wounded soul, and not a whole,

Becomes a true believer."

Sukey Harley said she found the word searched her beyond expression; "I know," she said, "that the Lord is with you, for I wanted to put away many things, but my Redeemer would not let me; and at last he gave me power to fall, and there I find my comfort. But, O Sir, what shall I do when you are gone? I shall feel my need more than ever; O how I pray for you, and that the Lord would bless you at home!"

Yours &c. J. B.

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