

Letter 17

by James Bourne

James Bourne shares his personal struggles with spiritual coldness, despair, and desperation, but ultimately finds restoration and a deeper understanding of God's kindness and will.

Scripture: Psalm 34:17, Psalm 51:10, Psalm 119:71, James 1:2, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Spiritual Struggle", "Gods Mercy"

Description

James Bourne shares a heartfelt letter expressing his struggles with illness, spiritual coldness, and the fear of death, yet finding comfort in God's mercy and kindness. He acknowledges his need for God's guidance, mercy, and instruction, recognizing the depth of sin revealed during his trials. Through his sharp conflict, he discovers a newfound sincerity, honesty, and earnestness in seeking God's will for his life.

Transcript

[To Mr. Nunn.] Hampstead, 1823.

Dear Friend,

I am truly sensible of the kindness God has put into your heart towards me. I have found much fellow-feeling in your sufferings, and also in a measure have been made partaker of those comforts that you have had. If the Lord shall enable me I will tell you honestly the things I have lately been through, and beg that God for Christ's sake may have mercy upon me, and show me if I am wrong.

I thought I saw much of the mercy of God in all my stay at Peper Harrow. After I had finished there, I remained a short time in the country on some further business, and was taken so ill that I despaired of ever returning home; but my spiritual coldness was by far the worst grievance. I seemed to sink without measure, and groaned most earnestly that my life might be spared to return. I seemed to get worse every day, and the more I cried to the Lord, the more gloomy everything seemed, and what would become of me I knew not. I did from my very soul justify the Lord in his dealings with me, and agreed that my afflictions were due to my folly. The night before I came away I fainted, and the next morning was hardly able to prevent fainting again, and put up many earnest petitions that the Lord would enable me to get home to die. Now, I think, if ever, I was made honest and tender and sincere. I longed to see some of the friends, yet dared not send for them, thinking God had bid them stand aloof from my sore, and being made willing, even if I perished in the contest, still to cry mightily to God to help me, for I knew that my evidences must be something more than the kindness of friends. God knows how glad I was to see you when you called.

On Wednesday night when alone, I read the Word of God, and prayed and cried most bitterly, that he would look with mercy upon me, for I had no strength to contend with the various assaults I met with, and the fear and horror of death in such a state seemed to drink up my spirit. The Lord was pleased to soften my heart and made me feel much meekness and patience, and a sweet sensation of his kindness towards me. O how I begged that he would be with you all at chapel, and with the preacher that he might abound with blessings for himself and the people. My heart was truly with the work, and I could hear witness in my soul that the Lord was with us. But this only continued till next day. I began again to sink into all the horrors of darkness beyond what I can express, and gave up everything. I was so ashamed I knew not where to hide my face. No guilty condemned wretch could fear death more than I did; and so I continued till Sunday morning, when I found much encouragement and was sweetly refreshed.

How mightily I feel all matters relating to the soul With me it is a case of life and death. Though this conflict has been, is, and I fear will yet be, very sharp, I have at times a sweet secret hope that he is doing me good, and intends to give me an expected end. Dear friend, I believe my sharp conflict has made me more sincere, honest, and in earnest than I ever felt in my life. O what a depth of sin has been discovered, which in the day of prosperity was never suspected! May you be led to pray for me, that the Lord would be with me to instruct me, and to work in me all the good pleasure of his will.

Yours &c. J. B.

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