

Letter 173.

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the dangers of enmity and the necessity of love and holiness in our spiritual journey.

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1, Hebrews 12:14, 1 John 4:20

Topics: "Overcoming Enmity", "Spiritual Sanctification"

Description

James Bourne preaches about the danger of harboring enmity and prejudice in our hearts, emphasizing the need to put off these corrupt principles and pursue peace and holiness. He warns that enmity can hinder our relationship with God and urges the listener to constantly pray for those they are tempted to revile. Bourne encourages seeking deliverance from the snare of enmity through the lovingkindness of the Lord, reminding that enduring the cross and denying our lusts through faith and love is essential for running the race set before us.

Transcript

[To one who manifested enmity.] Stoke Newington, 9 December 1839.

Dear Friend,

There is not a more subtle corruption than prejudice, the offspring of enmity, a true child of the devil, which often influences and greatly affects that corrupt part which is found in the hearts of the children of God, and is called in Scripture "the Old man." We are told by the word of the Lord to put off, or deny, this corrupt principle; and to "follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

You have often given intimations of a work of grace upon your heart; and have spoken of troubles and deliverances which, if of the right sort, must of necessity humble the soul in the dust. The very distant suspicion of enmity in the heart towards any one, at such a time, would bring the soul into great consternation; and these words would stare the poor creature in the face, so that he would not dare to lift up his head, but cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner"- "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a LIAR" [1 John iv. 20]. This sentence would so burden and bind us, that we should never be able to approach a throne of grace, nor feel any other thing than that the Lord beholds us afar off, while we encourage the least ill-will or unkind thought towards any of the children of God. Divine charity "thinketh no evil; beareth all things; hopeth all things;" and it never fails, nor deviates from this rule.

I have always observed that such as are free to judge others, seldom judge themselves. You perhaps will ask, Why then are you so free? Because I do not so willingly judge, as I would admonish and caution; and because you have expressed much respect for me, and what I have said on these occasions. I therefore venture to show you that you will never be able to prove your footing upon the Rock of Ages, when the rains descend and the winds of error beat upon you, and the terrors of death assail you, if the least grain of enmity be encouraged.

If you desire the counsel of a friend, and tell me that you are under a sore conflict in this matter; that the temptation is so strong that you mourn under the weight of it, but it often returns; - then, I say, you are in the footsteps of the flock. We are all harassed in our turn by the violence of Satan. I would counsel you to pray incessantly for those whom you are tempted to revile. This is the way I have been led, and have found it the effectual teaching of the Spirit, and have received many blessings in my own soul, as well as found deliverance from the snare. He that will observe these things "shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord."

Thus we shall "lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets us." In doing so, we shall be the better able to "run with patience the race that is set before us." Enmity keeps us looking to the dark side of everybody and everything but ourselves. Instead of which, if by the power of God's grace we deny that, and look to Jesus, we shall soon understand that he is the Author and Finisher of that faith which will carry us through all our difficulties, as it did those worthies mentioned in Heb. xi. This faith will work by love, and teach us to endure the cross, and deny our lusts.

Therefore, my friend, "despise not thou the chastening of the Lord" for thy sins and pride; "nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." For only those whom he thus takes in hand he loves, and receives none but whom he scourges. [Heb. xii. 1-8.]

Yours &c. J. B.

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