

# Letter 191.

by James Bourne

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*The sermon explores the depth of God's love for sinners and the transformative power of His grace in our lives.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:17, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 55:1, Ezekiel 16:6, Romans 5:8

**Topics:** "Gods Mercy", "Salvation Grace"

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## Description

James Bourne emphasizes the infinite condescension of God towards sinners, highlighting the need to humbly recognize our wretched condition and the immense mercy and love God extends to us through Christ. He points out that salvation is not achieved through self-righteousness but through God's grace and mercy, as seen in Ezekiel 16. Bourne encourages believers to meditate on God's love and the value He places on those who feel lost and forlorn, reminding them to seek God in times of trouble and trust in His faithfulness.

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## Transcript

[To M. G.] Fittleworth, 7 August 1840.

My dear Friend,

I was most glad at receiving the account of your visit to Mrs. Oakley. I trust I caught a spark of that heavenly fire which warmed my best affections towards the Lord Jesus Christ for his love to the chief of sinners. I must confess I felt myself very little while reading the account, and with shame I sought to take the lowest place, "in honour preferring others," for the work's sake. This I conceive is the unity of the Spirit, and a true test of the work being genuine. By it we perceive we are of one heart and one way. But alas! how often is this work sadly disfigured by the spirit of the world, the flesh, and the devil, so that we lose sight for the present of all that is profitable.

This morning, while meditating for my reading, Ezekiel xvi. struck me much. I wondered greatly at the infinite condescension of God to pick out such as are there described; and that we, in our wisdom and self-righteous spirit, should take such pains to be somebody before we will come to him, though he there shows us that his choice lies in no such way. "As for thy nativity," that was had. "In the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee, thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all . . . but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person." That is, When I picked thee up, thou wast not separated from the spirit of the world; thou hadst no water of life, no savour of grace in thee; born in sin, and shapen in iniquity. "And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in

thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live."

O what a blow ought this to be to a legal spirit? What can the self-righteous say to this? and yet how bound hand and foot they often are, and cannot see where they are held; nor are they able to see that the wretched condition here described is that which moves the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Not the righteous;

Sinners, Jesus came to call"

How true is what Hart says again

"A sinner is a sacred thing;

The Holy Ghost has made him so."

The Saviour further says, "When I passed by thee, and looked on thee, behold, thy time was the time of love" (we always think the first look means nothing but destruction; but not so - it is a time of love); "and I spread my skirt over thee" (that is, I covered thee with the robe of righteousness, so that thy nakedness did not appear); "yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest MINE." O what unheard of mercy and love, what inconceivable condescension, to choose such wretches, and tell them they are HIS! Then it is added how he thoroughly washes away their filth, and anoints them with the sweetest tokens of eternal life; the Holy Ghost thus testifying of the Father's eternal love to such sinners in his well-beloved Son. What more can we have? Is not all this far beyond the comprehension of the wisdom of the flesh, or the utmost bounds of the most refined reason? Do I indeed know anything about this? Surely I do. How came I acquainted with this wonderful and mysterious secret? Only by the sovereign grace and mercy of God. The world knows not anything of it, nor does it desire to know. We also were in the same condition, but the Lord picked us up, as described at the beginning. Only admire the love of Christ, and see the value he puts upon such miserable forlorn creatures. Consider this when you are in great straits and troubles; and if he establish the first, see whether he will not with himself freely give you all things, present help in trouble, hope, encouragement, revival in our bondage, and many little secret intimations that he has not forgotten us, nor ever will.

I think of you every day in my prayers, which sometimes gives me hope the Lord will yet appear for you, and your enemies shall be ashamed. I only fear your growing slack. The word is, "Give him no rest." It is not possible that the Lord should turn his back upon such. He is represented as inclining his ears, hearkening, and hearing. Is this to mock us? O no; but you and I have need of much humbling, and it is a great salvation. Consider redemption, how precious, how vast! Salvation cannot be attained to, but through fire and water.

Yours faithfully and affectionately, J. B.

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