

Letter 3

by James Bourne

James Bourne reflects on his spiritual struggles, the nature of afflictions, and the longing for God's presence amidst doubt and conflict.

Scripture: Romans 7:21

Topics: "Spiritual Struggle", "Gods Presence"

Description

James Bourne writes to his sister expressing his struggles with spiritual darkness, unbelief, and a sense of unworthiness, yet desiring the presence and favor of God. He acknowledges the inner conflict between his sinful nature and his desire to serve God, recognizing the need for purification and surrender to God's will. Bourne finds comfort in the fact that afflictions draw him closer to God, leading him to cry out for mercy and seek the light of God's presence despite his shortcomings and fears.

Transcript

[To his Sister E.] - December 1807.

Dear Sister,

I promised to give you an account of my visit to Manchester, but I must defer it till I see you. When the mind is dark and the soul barren, it is hard work to spin out anything that will be profitable; but as I desire the glory of God when I write, so I hope he will stop my pen when it is no longer profitable to you. I am so bewildered as scarcely to know what I am about. I am ready to say, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" My days seem to consume in vanity and trouble. I know that the Lord hath done great things for me, and it is my grief that I have not a heart to thank him for it. My unbelief is greater than anything, and I am ready to say, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Can he give me the bread of life, who am so barren? Thus my unbelief brings the sensible anger of God upon me. O that I knew where I might find him! for there is nothing in this world that can satisfy my soul. I feel the conflict is begun, and begin to understand something of those words, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." We carry about a body of sin, and this pulls one way, while the renewed man will not agree to it, and pulls another way - "With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin." I am proud, self-willed, perverse, and I know God will bring all this down. Into the furnace I must go; and I tremble lest I should be consumed, though the word of God tells me I shall come forth purified a vessel meet for the Master's use.

It is certainly a token for good, when afflictions make us cry to God, and produce a longing after him and a waiting for him; while others are made to call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the wrath of God and of the Lamb. The one sort cry for mercy, while the other flee from his presence; I am sure I am of the former number; have no desire to flee from his presence; it is his presence I want, and the sense of his favour; for it is only in his light I have light; of myself I am total darkness, and can only complain of my detestable ways. I have a keen and sensible fear of God, and would not for the world (when in my right mind) offend him; but the old man of sin and the devil are so combined and strong, that faith seems often almost out of hearing.

Yours affectionately, J. B.

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