

Letter 35

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the necessity of seeking God's guidance and the power of prayer amidst life's distractions and trials.

Scripture: Genesis 46:3, Psalm 28:1, Proverbs 13:4, Philippians 1:9, James 4:7

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Prayer Life"

Description

James Bourne shares a personal letter reflecting on his journey and struggles with scattered thoughts, distractions, and temptations, emphasizing the importance of committing one's way to the Lord and prevailing in prayer. Despite feeling disconnected and facing inner turmoil, he finds solace in God's mercy and experiences a profound moment of repentance and assurance of God's favor. Bourne encourages his cousin to remain diligent in spiritual growth, reminding them of God's presence and faithfulness even in unfamiliar and challenging circumstances.

Transcript

[To M. B.] Derby, 29 August 1829.

Dear Cousin,

I left your party reluctantly, but I saw the providence of God open another way; and I hope ever to be found above all things watching the Lord's leading. "Who shall harm you, if you be followers of that which is good?" I was very low at the thoughts of coming here, and wept when I left my door in Somerset Street, fearing many things, especially lest I should have to perform my journey at my own charges; yet seeking to commit my way to him, in whom alone is safety. It was chapel night, and my heart was there; I seemed torn from the people and worship of God. When I arrived at Lad Lane, a band of music struck up, to entertain all the mails on their departure. The whole world seemed intoxicated, and because I wanted a Saviour, and desired to be sober, I seemed as strange as Christian and Faithful in Vanity Fair. However, I was brought to much contrition and godly sorrow, wondering at the mercy which left me not in a giddy world to sorrow out my days in lying vanities, and despair at last; and in this frame I felt more satisfied to start.

I have met with the most comfortable lodgings that can be, private and airy; but my exercises have been new and strange to me. My thoughts became so scattered and unsettled that I could not read a line in the Bible with my mind upon it. As soon as I made the attempt I was gone upon some idle wandering. The

same in prayer; not one sentence from the heart; as soon as on my knees, my thoughts were gone; and when recovered, not retained one moment. This went on till Friday evening, and I wondered whereto it would grow. Though all power of seeking deliverance seemed taken away, I did not give up, but in the lamest way possible begged mercy and showed the Lord Jesus my trouble; and the first sensation of relief came in reading these words - "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my Rock; be not silent unto me, lest if thou be silent unto me, I become like them that go down into the pit" [Psa. xxviii. 1]. It was this silence that I feared, lest the Lord would not speak to me, either reproof or encouragement. But now he was pleased to whisper that he was not far off; I found the word sweet, and not so sealed. But the next morning the temptation returned more than ever, and I was greatly troubled, for my will was not with my wandering. I had light left to see the hypocrisy of uttering words and having my heart at the ends of the earth. I spent much time in prayer, continually begging that this temptation might be removed, but all with scattered thoughts, and wondering where it would end; at one time resolutely bent that by the help of God, I both must and would pray myself out of this wretched state; and then again so confused in my mind as if the enemy were resolved I should not. At last Saturday evening came, and bedtime, and I said, Lord, give me patience, but must I go to bed, and this night too, and have no look nor smile? And while on my knees by the bedside the Lord was pleased to come, and drive out all these occupiers of his temple, and give me such holy repentance, and such assurances of favour as I cannot well describe. Glory, glory be to his Holy Name, for such a Saviour? How I pity those who are left all the year round in the place I have been in! My temptation proves to me my weakness and sin on every side; it also shows me the privilege and absolute necessity of prevailing with God in prayer.

I hope I shall hear that you have proved the truth of this scripture, "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Pray let not your eyes and heart be caught by the vanity of the place you are now in. If God has sent you there, prove it by an increase of spiritual growth. I know you cannot by any other means be sure that it is God who says "Fear not to go down into Egypt . . . I will go down with thee" [Gen. xli. 3, 4]. Mind the last sentence, and see that you find the fulfilment of it, without any ifs or buts; and let your profiting appear. May the Lord bless you.

Yours &c. J. B.

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