

Letter 36

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon reflects on the profound experience of the Holy Spirit's return to a sinner's heart and the necessity of seeking God's grace and presence in times of struggle.

Scripture: Psalm 51:10, John 14:26, Acts 7:51, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 6:19, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19, Hebrews 4:16, James 4:8

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Repentance"

Description

James Bourne shares about the humbling experience of feeling the Spirit's return in a sinner's heart, leading to deep repentance and reliance on God's grace. Despite feeling separated from friends and the church, Bourne finds solace in the Word and the presence of God's sanctuary wherever he is. He emphasizes the importance of not resisting the Holy Spirit, as it leads to unnecessary struggles and distance from God's light, urging others to seek after Him wholeheartedly.

Transcript

[To Mr. Nunn.] Derby, 6 September 1829.

Dear Friend,

I know nothing more endearing than those secret intimations of the Spirit's returning into a sinner's heart, after a long and laborious seeking him. O what humbling sensations it produces! How low we lie at the footstool of Christ, and adore him for his great condescension! How wretched we feel our lost condition, and can only wonder at the merciful contrivance of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the salvation of such sinful worms! I am ashamed and confounded at my unfaithfulness in every direction, and I think a sight of this keeps me feelingly crying to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy and help. I often fear he will never soften my hard heart any more, and I am quite astonished at the means he makes use of for that purpose, which is a deep sight of my nature's evil, mixed with sore repentance and a belief that I am gone for ever, unless his free, rich, and sovereign grace be bestowed upon unworthy me.

I am now separated from friends, and from the church, but not separated from the Word, nor from that "little Sanctuary" which God has promised to be to his people, wherever he carries them. Surrounded with temptations, and often feeling much distance, and many fears, I find it hard fighting, especially if the throne of grace is inaccessible. While that is clear, I feel power to cast my burdens upon the Lord, but if sin cause him to depart, then I seem to toil all night, and get nothing. As I think much of this, so I would counsel

every one to be very tender and fearful, that they do not bar their hearts against the Holy Spirit. I am sure it is hard work rowing against wind and tide. It doubles all our afflictions, and causes a wrong construction to be put upon all the dispensations of God; every thing has a wrong colouring, and we get further and further from the light, while we continue in this painful path. O what do some of our friends, who seem to be almost all the year round in this place? I wish they would believe me, that the Lord is very near, "if haply we feel after him," with all the heart. How often has he whispered peace to me since I have been here! I have to bless his Holy Name for ever, for what he has done for me; empty, void, and waste, he has really filled me with many good things. The more I see of the riches and vanity of this life, in the way of my business, the more I wonder at the discriminating grace of God; and while I pity the portion of the great, I do from my very soul adore Father, Son, and Spirit, for the great salvation brought home to my soul. Yes, not only "an inheritance that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven," but I have found him (blessed be his Holy Name) a help in trouble in this life, a good Physician, a rich Friend, a wise Counsellor, who has never left me to plead my own cause, or to pay my own costs. I know not how to stop, for my heart is much impressed with a sense of his goodness, and I really find the truth of his promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Do tell those friends that do not venture to come, tell them how kind the Lord is, more ready to hear than we are to pray. "The end of all things is at hand," and I am sure we cannot struggle through without his help; and (what is more) if we know how sweet his presence is we shall not wish to do so.

With every kind remembrance to the church, and the pastor at the head of them, who are I believe at this moment assembled for public worship, in which my spirit joins most sweetly and cordially,

Yours &c. J. B.

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