

Letter 45

by James Bourne

The sermon calls believers to seek God's guidance, embrace humility, and fulfill their responsibilities within the church as they grow in faith.

Scripture: Psalm 32:8, Proverbs 29:1, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 10:31, Hebrews 12:1

Topics: "Spiritual Guidance", "Faith Perseverance"

Description

James Bourne, in a letter to his cousin, emphasizes the importance of seeking God's guidance in all matters, warning against relying solely on personal judgment. He urges his cousin to humbly submit to God's will, recognizing the need for spiritual growth and dependence on the Lord. Bourne encourages his cousin to embrace their role in the church, setting an example through faith and perseverance, rather than being hindered by fears and feelings of unworthiness.

Transcript

[To M. B.] Tunbridge, July 29, 1832.

Dear Cousin,

You are often upon my mind, especially concerning those matters you have often spoken to me of. I am now residing with a very numerous family, and have wondered to see that whatever occurs to the children, they are perpetually running to their parents to tell them. Dr. Owen asks, "Do you distinctly go to God, upon all occasions, to have light and judgment upon the matter, or do you make use of that judgment which you conceive you possess?" On this hangs all the right and wrong. If you distinctly trade with God upon those matters, I tremble for the object that causes your distress; for the Lord is a jealous God, and will not suffer "his eye" to be touched with impunity. Neither his word, nor his people, can be profaned; and surely such as transgress will one day be caught in the thorns. "He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" [Prov. xxix. 1].

Then I would point out another view (which, however, by no means sets aside the first), and that is on your part: - Has nothing called for this dispensation? Is there to be no humbling before God? Has not a fretful and fruitless spirit invaded you? Have you not grown more upwards than down-wards? Does not the Lord check your natural or fleshly resting places by this? Independence cannot grow in so luxuriant a manner as it would, if such as these did not continually lay the cross upon your back. You see in them many things that are superabundant in yourself. You have now and then given me hints, not upon this subject, but

upon another, that have made me see what a necessity there is for us all to be closely pursued, and held in with bit and bridle. I dare not exclude myself in all that I have written, but out of the abundance of my own heart, and according to the way the Lord has led me, I write.

You are now no longer a child dandled upon the knee, but are called to fight; and, like Deborah, to go forth, and not turn aside when a little strong food is offered. You are now wanted in the church as an example in all things, and your carnal fears and carnal unworthiness must not keep you from showing your profiting in all things. I must say the Lord has dealt very graciously with you; but be not like the horse or the mule, and the Lord says, "I will guide thee with mine eye" [Psalm xxxii. 8, 9]. This eye means light, wisdom, understanding, discretion, sound judgment, in consequence of communion with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; thus will you be guided with his eye. I hope you will prove a good nurse to little children, and cherish them with divine and spiritual food; and not cast off the lame, but rather bear them on your shoulder. I have seen a quick retiring from them, when they have started aside a little; I think if we have ever received anything that has appeared in them, it should not be so hastily given up. We have a deal of fleshly feeling like this - It is so much trouble to be always at one that gives so little hopes. Ah! if the Lord were to say so to us! Parents must lay up for children. Meditate and look in all directions (both you and I) if God's long-suffering and patience have not been tried wonderfully towards us - yea, quite as much as with those children. Eternal things are at stake - then wherefore mind a little trouble?

I am ashamed of myself. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Something says, Not so; seek ease and quietness in the flesh. Thus I am beguiled often, and darkness covers me, and for awhile I am not able to go to God for instruction. O may the Lord be pleased to pardon all my blunders! Let the time past suffice, and let us be more and more in earnest, seeing the day fast approaches when we must finish our course; and that we may finish it in peace is the prayer of

Your affectionate cousin, J. B.

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