

Letter 47

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of spiritual cleanness and abiding in Christ for fruitfulness and joy in the Christian life.

Scripture: Exodus 34:6, Isaiah 60:22, Isaiah 63:9, Ezekiel 16:6, John 15:3

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Gods Presence"

Description

James Bourne emphasizes the importance of spiritual cleanness and abiding in Christ to remain fruitful and experience His joy. He reflects on personal struggles with worldly distractions and spiritual barrenness, highlighting the need to constantly seek God's presence and maintain a close relationship with Him. Bourne expresses a deep desire to walk in the light, fearing spiritual decay and separation from the Lord, while finding comfort in God's mercy and redemption. He acknowledges the necessity of God's glory in his life and the assurance that God has always been with His people, carrying them through afflictions and showing love and pity.

Transcript

[To Mr. Nunn] Tunbridge, 26 August 1832.

Dear Friend,

It is with the greatest sincerity I acknowledge your kindness in writing from time to time, as I find your letters are a continual source of meditation and spiritual life to my soul, and keep alive and fresh that unity of the Spirit with the church of God, a sweet bond which I hope neither time nor distance will ever remove.

I have had some very sweet seasons in reading lately, especially in the consideration of being clean, through the word spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ [John xv. 3]. He speaks peace upon the heart. While we have this cleanness we are fruitful; lose it, and we are at once unfruitful. To abide in this, is the only means of keeping his joy remaining in us; to lose this, is to be cast forth as withered branches. There are more ways than one of being cast forth; it does not mean final destruction only. I am led to see and feel in myself what I have often seen and felt in others - how for want of this spiritual cleanness I have been cast forth as a dry, unsavoury, fruitless, useless branch, for a season. To my shame be it spoken, I have found the spirit of the world has gathered my affections from God for a season, until he has sent some heavy dispensation to teach me to ponder my way, and to show me that all this is come upon me for want of attending to this cleanness. I have left my abiding place, lost my cleanness, and in consequence, all

fruitfulness. It is the will of our heavenly Bridegroom, that we should always be where he is, that we may behold the glory of this great redemption, and hear him proclaim his great Name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" [Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7]; and that we may more fully enjoy the love wherewith the Father hath loved the Son, and may more sweetly comprehend the divine and spiritual union of the Trinity with the mystical body of Christ. The cleanness and the abiding in Christ are the same thing.

If you read John xv., you will find that all the sweet things that are there pointed out, are referred to in the last verse, as if it said, All these are and must be found in you, that you may bear witness to the truth. There must be no useless members in the body of Christ.

My desire is, that while I have the light I may walk in the light, lest darkness come upon me for my unfruitfulness, and lest after the Lord hath spoken these things, he should depart and hide himself from me. I assure you I move in great fear; and am sorry to say that with all my fears, afflictions, and crosses, the spirit of this world, and spiritual barrenness, and want of diligence and energy, continually come upon me. I begin to discern that it is the true teaching of the Holy Spirit to make manifest my corruptions in all directions, and to sanctify the sight, so as to lead me with double earnestness to Jesus Christ as my only remedy; and especially while I am here without the converse of the people of God, I seem to have a double jealousy over myself, and keep saying, How long is it since I had the last visit from the Lord? Is spiritual decay begun? What shall I do to regain my loss? And there seems no rest in my spirit if I find barrenness in reading, or any unusual dryness in prayer; or if I wake in the night, and my thoughts are lost in the world, or if in my walks I catch myself occupied on trifles. I fear all these things as so many tokens of the beginning of spiritual decay, and am led to be very earnest that the Lord would keep me while here, maintain my lot, and make it manifest I am not straying foolishly and perversely from his fold.

I also found yesterday Isaiah lx. very sweet, and after many things suitable to me and brought warm to my heart, this seemed to top them all, that the Lord should say that we are necessary for his glory, and to beautify the place of his sanctuary. This thought always breaks my heart, having such a sight of myself in my first birth, neither washed in the blood of Christ, nor swaddled in his righteousness, nor supplied by the anointing of the holy Ghost, but lying polluted in my own blood [Ezek. xvi. 3-6] - then for the Lord to pass by, and pity and save! And to tell me, moreover, that I am necessary for his glory! You and I can only say, "Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever amid ever."

It is always a comfort to hear of the goodness of God to his poor afflicted. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them." How sweet were these words to me to day, "In his love and in his pity he redeemed them." And now I bear on mind poor Mrs. T. It is no new thing he is doing for her; he bare her and carried her in his purpose from the days of eternity, and that is the reason his arms are now underneath her.

Yours &c. J. B.

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