

Letter 59

by James Bourne

James Bourne emphasizes the importance of relying on God amidst spiritual challenges and the dangers of human counsel.

Scripture: Psalm 46:1, Proverbs 3:5, Philippians 2:3, 2 Timothy 2:3, James 4:7

Topics: "Spiritual Endurance", "Humility In Faith"

Description

James Bourne preaches about the importance of enduring spiritual difficulties and remaining steadfast in faith, seeking refuge in the Lord amidst challenges. He warns against false friends who may lead one astray and emphasizes the need to rely on God's counsel in silence and privacy. Bourne encourages embracing humility and being willing to be nothing in the eyes of the world, as true safety and happiness come from complete surrender to Jesus Christ.

Transcript

[To the Rev. B. G.] London, June 22, 1834.

My dear Friend,

I would first consider the letter you have received, which appears to have been written with much kindness. If I were to answer it I would not advert to the outward circumstances, but if possible, with the utmost godly simplicity, declare that you are under spiritual difficulties, and are making the Lord your refuge; that you by no means dare to run from your post, where you believe that God is instructing you. What the Lord may do for you is yet undiscovered; but you mean not willingly to give offence, nor to flinch from the cross when offence is taken against the truth.

I judge that your influential friend has no God, or he would have directed you to him; but an arm of flesh is all he offers. Be as short in your answer as such received kindness will admit of. Be on the defensive, explain nothing, clear nothing, leave as much difficulty upon curious inquiries as you can. "Be wise as serpents." Make God your counsellor, keep very private, very silent. While you are secretly labouring with God, he will openly work for you. Deep piety, as it is called without meaning, will do you no good. Scrupulous tenderness must be given up, if it only leads us to be pleasers of men. To move out of the furnace before the Lord moves the cloud, would to me appear a very black mark. While you would be busied here and there, in other places, the Holy Spirit would leave you as barren as a potsherd, without knowing when he would in mercy return.

O my friends, remember Jonah what he suffered, and how he was forced to return and hear heavy tidings at last! May the Lord give you power to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and not suffer you to fall by the kindness of false friends. None so false as those who lead you to an arm of flesh. They kindly and tenderly hand you over the stile to By-path meadows, and leave you not till they fairly see you safe in Doubting Castle, under the charge of Giant Despair; and there his wife Diffidence will keep you from a Throne of Grace, and make you long rue the first wry step you took, in shutting your ears to the "still small voice," and in being enticed by the sweet things such false friends promise, but never mean to perform.

O beware! your conflict and danger are great indeed. But, "Fear not, thou worm JACOB" - while you are this worm, fear not - "I will be with thee." The waters shall not overflow thee, when thou passest through. All this will be proved, not in an obstinate and violent opposition, but in a secret feeling sense of sinking at Christ's feet as a condemned sinner. The Lord never makes his grace, mercy, and power manifest, but when we are nothing. He never displays his wonderful interference so much as when all, ALL is left, by prayer, at his disposal. A long experience only will bring us firmly to believe that "Safety is of the Lord." We may have some notion of it, but do not readily perceive in what state we find ourselves when the Lord does this mighty work. I always find it conies when all my might, my conceit, my wisdom, my contrivance, and, in short, when all the wonderful powers of the human soul are laid low in the dust at the feet of Jesus Christ. Then it is "the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." As I said in my last, "Venture to be nought;" It will do you both good. Therein lie your safety and happiness. The road to it lies through many prickly thorns to lose a good name to be counted a fool for Christ's sake to be hated for the same cause. Sometimes heaven and earth seem combined to bring on our ruin; and so they are; there must be a downfall of the old man; he must be crucified.

Till we come into this furnace (in which I have been, and am daily exercised) we have no notion what it is to be nothing; but here it is we are taught the nature of the apostacy of the professing church, and learn not to "say, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people say, A confederacy" [Isaiah viii. 11-12]. Here too you will learn not to trifle with the message on which God has sent you.

Yours &c. J. B.

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