

# Letter 65.

by James Bourne

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*The sermon emphasizes the necessity of going through trials and hardships to refine us, to teach us humility, and to make us more like Christ.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 86:13, Malachi 3:2, Matthew 7:14, Hebrews 12:6, 1 Peter 4:12

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Suffering And Trials"

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## Description

James Bourne preaches about the necessity of going through trials and sufferings as a means of spiritual refinement and growth. He reflects on his own struggles with sin, pride, and unbelief, emphasizing the importance of daily crucifixion of the flesh and dying to self. Bourne encourages his cousin to embrace the conflict and suffering that come with following Christ, highlighting the preciousness of faith trials and the deep work God does in the hearts of His people through the furnace of affliction.

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## Transcript

[To M. B.] Chelmsford, Sept. 1831.

Dear Cousin,

My letters must appear very melancholy to my friends, my spirit seems so full of fears lest the Lord should execute upon me those judgments which are threatened upon his people that depart in heart from him. It has not been till of late years that I laid to heart such expressions as these - "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" - "He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." Fury, rebukes, chastisement, horror, captivity, destruction, death, all these things for some time passed over my head as belonging to the false church, I did not see that the body of sin within needed them all, and a daily crucifixion. My mind ran much upon the words, "Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," but not upon the means that go before [1 Peter v. 10], and I looked for all the comfort and prosperity which is set forth in the Word; so that when I was first cast into spiritual prison, which I soon found was for a debt I could not pay, I was almost ready to charge God foolishly, and to think him a hard master. It was long before the Lord showed me that I was covering my sins, and therefore could not prosper [Prov. xxviii. 13]. The greater part of my airy confidence stood not the furnace. He is a jealous God, and will bring down the high tree, and exalt the low tree, and will dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree to flourish; "I THE LORD HAVE SPOKEN, AND HAVE DONE IT" [Ezek. xvii. 24]. So he confounds the wisdom of the wise.

When I look at the case of-- , as well as my own, though I tremble under the hand of God, yet I feel it safe and sure ground. The whole tenor of God's word shows that "man in his best estate is altogether vanity;" he is worse than a brute, he can only do evil, and that with all his heart. I also perceive that as our Lord Jesus Christ had a sore baptism for us, so we must be partakers of his sufferings; if we are rightly taught, our sin will daily bring on this crucifixion; if we are tenderly led, we shall die daily to those abominations within and without, that are as a wall of partition between God and us. Pride, unbelief, independence, fullness of bread and spiritual idleness, very quickly grow rampant; without the rod, the furnace, and the sword of the Spirit, we should grow to that spiritual deformity of being all head, and this sentence would be pronounced, "Depart from me, I know you not."

Which then would you choose, the sore conflict, with many sweet hopes at times, or an easy path only for a season? I verily believe there will now be no hesitation here. You know as well as I, what manner of persons the Lord says we ought to be, and he will make us to be; and you also know, as well as I, that there is no other means of bringing this about but through the furnace.

The Lord has been pleased to set forth in his word, in many different ways, how PRECIOUS is the trial of faith. Sometimes it is said, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you;" sometimes, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my Name's sake," that the poor and feeble may come after with some encouragement and hope. All this is to teach us, in some small measure, how exceedingly hateful sin is in the sight of God, and how deep the stain is upon our hearts. It is for no small cause the Lord Jesus left his glory, and shed his blood; and he will make us feel this truth. He has made me many times, since I have been here, cover my face for the shame I felt under a discovery of my sin as hateful to God. With what awe I thought of our poor friend, and with many prayers, and some sweet ones, begged the Lord to favour him, and to help me.

In the twenty-four hours, how little time is occupied in communion with God! Yet I am sure there is a nature in me, called the new man, that delights in that communion more than in any-thing else. Then how rampant a principle is the contrary which domineers so much as to have the pre-eminence so long! Does not this open our eyes to the necessity of the furnace? Can we not justify God when he comes with the rod? Does it not stop your mouth from muttering perverseness? It does mine; and I am enabled at times from my heart to utter the prayer, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

These are my latter days; I feel a great desire to have clear work, not contending against God, but falling under every conviction, and seeking God's remedy in his appointed way. However desperate my case or yours may seem, we have an example and encouragement in the word, "Thou hast delivered my soul from the LOWEST HELL" [Psalm lxxxvi. 13]. This, I believe, was written for our learning, because the enemy is ever telling us that our case is worse than any. I must finish my letter with Hart's words

" That foe can't boast of much

Who makes us watch and pray"

Be sober, be vigilant, and hope to the end; and believe the cross and the crown inseparable.

Yours &c. J. B.

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