

Letter 66

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon reflects on personal struggles with sin and the transformative power of God's mercy through Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 136:1, Isaiah 41:10, Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Personal Repentance", "Divine Mercy"

Description

James Bourne shares a personal reflection on his journey, expressing his dependence on God's presence and guidance amidst difficulties and uncertainties. He contemplates on the consequences of secret sins and carnality in his life, acknowledging the need for repentance and transformation. Turning to the Word of God, he finds comfort in the enduring mercy of the Lord and the redemptive power of Jesus Christ, who sanctifies and offers freedom to those in distress. Bourne emphasizes the importance of earnestly heeding God's word and the profound impact of being called a brother by Christ, experiencing divine light and glory even in the midst of confinement.

Transcript

[To Mr. Nunn.] Woodham Mortimer, October 1831.

Dear. Friend,

Although I had solicited your company I could not feel disappointed when you fixed not to go, for as soon as we parted many difficulties arose in my mind, and I felt I must go alone; but though greatly cast down, I said, Lord, wilt THOU go with me? I dread my journey; I always find sorrow; and in a strange place all seems covered with darkness without thee. And presently something whispered, "I will be with thee." Lord, I replied, What does this mean? Is this thy voice? And it was repeated twice more before I reached Cavendish Square. Yet I began my journey much cast down, and was dull and sluggish all the way, and knew not how it would end, nor whether that very sweet sensation of contrition and peace that I felt when the above words were spoken, was not purely natural. I was filled with heaviness all the night, discontented with I knew not what. I took up Boston's 'Crook in the lot', but could find nothing for my case. I then turned to the Book of books, the Word of God, and there I found what never fails in time of extremity, and what I am not in the least able to set forth; but this I know, "His mercy endureth for ever."

In 2 Kings xvii. we are told, that Hoshea king of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and for many things he was shut up and bound in prison. This made me ponder, Why am I so shut up? A little

further it is said, "The children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God." Do I stand clear here? A believer rightly taught will not be found in open wickedness and profanity; I saw at once with much condemnation that that dryness and dullness of spirit which often comes over me, is one of the secret things that God hates. It soon alienates the affections from him, his word, his people, and his ways. No wonder therefore that we find ourselves shut up in prison. I also perceive to my sorrow a great deal of secret carnality in the whole of my life, going far too near the spirit of the world in maxims, and customs, and habits, covered well with a spirit that will justify anything we choose to walk in. This is a secret which it is a shame to speak of, and I have often been shut up for it. And we are not contented to be found here ourselves; but in this chapter we are charged with causing our sons and daughters also to pass through that fire. This too is covered with ten thousand excuses, but I know there are times and seasons when we are ashamed of the secret, and are shut up and bound because of it. There is no end of causes; my soul was this morning brought very low, fully justifying the Lord for all the shutting up I had known, and I only wondered that he would take any notice of me, the very portrait of Hoshea.

In this condition I turned to the Epistle to the Hebrews, to see what the Lord Jesus Christ could do for his people, or such as in distress call upon him; and there I saw that he upholds all things by the word of his power, that his throne is for ever and ever, and that he made heaven and earth. O, my dear friend, pray attend; Seeing we have such a Friend, "therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." What is such a worm or dead dog as I am, that he should be mindful of me, who have done so many secret things to displease him? What is the son of man, a corrupt lump of clay, that the Lord should visit him? See how beautifully the Apostle shows our condition; first, that man in the image of God had all things in subjection under him; then, that man having lost that image, has not now all things put under him. "BUT WE SEE JESUS," suffering death for us, and crowned with glory and honour.

I shall never in this world be able to set forth my sensations in reading the whole of this. O how sweet the tenth verse, and then the eleventh was as if it had been written thus on my heart - He that sanctifieth and I who am sanctified, are both one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call me his brother. "Behold I" (says Christ), "and the children which God hath given me." To be one of these, what in the world can be compared with it? To have that "merciful and faithful High Priest" to atone for our sins; and however shut up or bound in prison, to get one such word as this from him - "Say to the prisoner, Go forth!" Neither men nor devils can then hold the poor sinner any longer.

I have indeed proved that the Lord is with me; but I never expected such a ray of heavenly light to dart into my soul on this side of eternity. To him be all the glory.

Yours &c. J. B.

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