

Letter 68

by James Bourne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of facing tribulations and afflictions in order to grow spiritually and become closer to God, and the need to maintain our love for God and others in the midst of difficulties.

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, John 15:12, John 16:33, Acts 14:22, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Ephesians 4:2

Topics: "Tribulation", "Unity With God"

Description

James Bourne emphasizes the inevitability of facing tribulations on the path to God's kingdom, highlighting the continuous challenges and afflictions believers encounter. He shares a personal experience of feeling God's presence and the struggle to maintain faith amidst darkness and confusion. Bourne encourages seeking joy in the scriptures and finding comfort in God's promises during times of danger and uncertainty. He stresses the importance of unity with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the church, urging believers to cherish and demonstrate love as a reflection of God's love for them.

Transcript

[To Richard Dore.] Woodham Mortimer, Oct. 1834.

Dear Friend,

As you and I are prevented having much personal intercourse on account of your deafness, I take this means of repeating what we have often considered before, with a full belief of the truth of it, that it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom. You know, as well as I do, that a cross prayed off yesterday will not exempt us from a fresh one to-day; that bonds and afflictions abide us in every place, and under all circumstances.

The Lord was pleased to whisper in my heart that he would be with me here, and I must declare that he has been nearer than I expected. I foolishly could not open my mouth wide enough, for surely he was ready to fill it. I think I never saw the word to sparkle so with glory as it did when I first came here for two or three days. Surely I know in some measure what the Apostle means by "joy unspeakable." Our poor words cannot possibly describe the love, the power, the glory, of Christ. The disciples could only say (what you and I have often said after them), "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" But alas, when all this subsides, then I find myself like Joseph and Mary, seeking him sorrowing in all directions.

I have still with me the promise of God, "I will be with thee;" and in all dangers, and wherever I go, I keep saying, Lord, "remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope" [Psalm cxix. 49]. Darkness covers me, and I cannot see my way as I did; but I perceive that he is with his people as a perpetual check to the violence of the old man, which we are so slow in putting off; He is with them in the furnace, under the rod, in darkness, in despondency, under manifold fears and temptations, even when we begin to think we have quite mistaken the way, and are for giving up, as if it were altogether a fruitless effort in the flesh that will end in confusion. At last he kindly whispers "Be of good cheer; it is I" - I that am humbling you, I that am correcting you for your folly, I that am breaking that cursed spirit of independence - "Be not afraid;" "because I live, ye shall live also." Thus upon every fresh manifestation of his Father's presence, we shall know that he is in his Father, and we in him, and he in us. [John xvii. 21-23.]

This is the union with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, that you and I must covet above all things; and it is also union with the church militant. Therefore let us be specially careful to maintain that love in all directions, as the peculiar fruit and effect of God's love to us.

You are now collected together for public worship, which I am deprived of, and not only so, but distracted with the song of the drunkard. We little know the violence we are redeemed from. The next room contains numbers of men who have not the decency of brute beasts; and what shall we say to this? "Such were some of you, BUT YE ARE WASHED" - naturally quite as vile; it is the grace of God that makes the difference. We who were alienated from God, and far off from him by wicked works, are now made nigh by the blood of our dear Redeemer, whose Name I often hear in this place cast out as evil; but he will one day make them to call for the mountains to fall on them and cover them from his wrath.

Do remember me in your prayers, that nothing may move me from the simplicity of the Gospel.

Yours in the Lord, J. B.

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