

# Letter 71

by James Bourne

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*James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the necessity of spiritual affliction and brokenness for true growth and deliverance in Christ.*

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 2:19

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Godly Humility"

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## Description

James Bourne preaches about the spiritual journey of facing deep inner struggles and the process of God breaking down our pride and revealing our hidden sins, leading to a place of desolation and spiritual mourning. He emphasizes the necessity of enduring the refining fire of God's judgment, acknowledging the bitterness of sin, and allowing God to break our spirits to transform us into vessels fit for His presence. Bourne encourages embracing the process of spiritual labor and correction, trusting that through the humbling dispensation of God's judgment, deliverance and eternal life will come.

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## Transcript

[To M. A. H.] London, 25 November 1834.

Dear Friend,

I was sorry to find you were so cast down as not to be able to come amongst us last night. If you had come you would have found that it was no strange thing which had happened to you. You with the rest of us have been building with hay and stubble, with the stones of emptiness and vain conceit; and the good Spirit is come to discover the work to the foundations, and the appalling discovery turns your comeliness into corruption; for here the Lord is said to break our graven images to pieces, and makes us to know that childhood and youth are vanity. This cannot be known but by means of the furnace, in which God burns up much goodness which we thought would stand the test; and instead of it, nothing is left but desolation. In this naked state, in which you now are placed, you (like myself and others) believe your wound to be incurable; and so God designs that you should believe. Here there will be a secret spiritual howling and wailing and mourning, like that you now express. The Lord calls it JACOB'S TROUBLE, and declares there is none like it, "but he shall be saved out of it" [Jer. xxx. 7]. You are ready to say, Aye, but mine is different from yours, there is so much sin discovered against light. True, I admit this; but God says to every one that comes into spiritual trouble, There is no trouble like yours, yet, notwithstanding this, You SHALL BE DELIVERED.

I have told you before, that for want of the spiritual labour in which you now are, there have been so many abortive births. New wine in old bottles will not endure. Emptying from vessel to vessel is in experience a painful operation. Consider what a broken spirit means; when you break the spirit of an unruly child you know it is by much correction and many stripes; yea, a long perseverance in opposing all those natural inclinations and pursuits in which the child promises itself much happiness. So spiritually you must now expect more or less of this, lest through your independent spirit you should learn to live without God in the world. Besides, God delights in them whose spirit he breaks; they become, under his divine management, fit temples of the Holy Ghost. Such also learn that sin is exceeding sinful; and it is God's design that you should know what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against him [Jer. ii. 19].

Without this work, you would, like the unruly horse, rush into presumption, or like the stubborn mule, lie down in your sin unpurged. All the children of God have a principle of Esau within them, as well as of Jacob; and we would naturally desire that these might dwell together without being disturbed. If this were suffered Jacob would soon be silenced, and must never have a word for God, nor show his head at any time; but not so. The Lord steps in, and behold, "How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!" The deception is discovered. These Esaus would eat up all the spiritual bread of life, and would soon wound you and leave you for dead. But the Lord comes in that day, the day of Jacob's trouble, and will destroy the wisdom of these Edomites within, and for his violence against his brother Jacob, Esau shall be "cut off for ever." This is the labour you are now under, and I do not wonder at your dismay. You could not make the work manifest if you were at ease. "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance." When? When the humbling dispensation you are under has had its due effect, and when you dare not so much as lift up your eyes to heaven for shame. It is under this judgment of God against the Esau within, that the kingdom of Christ is set up in our hearts; for the new wine being now in new bottles, both are preserved to eternal life. [Obad. 6-23.]

You will one day bless God for all the labour and sorrow you have had in this long night of affliction. "Let patience have its perfect work;" in due time you shall reap if you faint not. I am often overpowered by weariness, but in my mourning and lamentation for the cause of my sorrow, which is sin, the Lord speaks to me in much compassion, telling me that he is touched with the feeling of my infirmities, and knows both how to deliver, and also the best time when. My prayer is for you, with much encouragement, that you may patiently endure, but give him no rest until he make you "a praise in the earth."

Your affectionate friend in the Lord, J. B.

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