

Letter 76

by James Bourne

In 'Letter 76', James Bourne emphasizes the necessity of fearing the Lord, recognizing spiritual delusion, and the call to forsake all for a genuine relationship with Christ.

Scripture: Psalm 33:18, Isaiah 8:11, Matthew 5:11, Matthew 25:34, 1 Corinthians 6:19

Topics: "True Repentance", "Holy Spirit"

Description

James Bourne, in a letter to M. G. in London, 1835, emphasizes the importance of true repentance and surrender to God, warning against delusion and false piety. He urges M. G. to be cautious of returning to a deceptive profession and to seek guidance from the Word of God and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Bourne encourages M. G. to be willing to give up all for Christ, even if it means being hated by others, and reminds them of the eternal reward awaiting those who endure persecution for the sake of righteousness.

Transcript

[To M. G.] London, 1835.

Dear Madam,

"Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine" [Psalm xxxiii. 18, 19]. When I read these words my mind was looking straight towards you; since which time I have seen your letter, and am exceedingly desirous, if the Lord should enable me, to write to you what has been much impressed upon my mind.

Last night I lay sleepless with the thought of your cases; I was much struck with the sober account you give of your feelings under the present dispensation, and the acknowledgment you make of the dangerous delusion in which you have been wrapped up. One of you in a measure brought out by the rod of God's power; another looking on and trembling for fear of his judgments; and another, like the Queen of Sheba, coming to hear the wisdom and power and glory of God amongst a poor and despicable people, no better than the broken pitchers which held Gideon's lamps.

You say, "Fearfulness and trembling did truly take hold upon me." Your sister's affliction, temporal and spiritual joined together, confirmed it, and there remained no more strength in you. You say further, "This hath God wrought." I do not see why you should add, "All this is purely natural," for I conceive you are not a proper judge; nor do I see any cause for trembling, if it be not at God's anger against your sin. Then you

question whether you can give up all for Christ; and add, "ALL must be forsaken." What is this ALL, or what is a part of it? I suppose in general terms, that inefficient profession you have hitherto lived in, in which are included many erroneous and fatal heresies, disputing the sovereignty of God and his eternal choice of his people, and the final perseverance of the saints, depending on the immutable purpose of God in Christ Jesus. Your religion was not the religion of the Bible, for these truths, or some or them, were left out of your creed, and instead of them were put in what is called "deep piety" - that is, dissembled love - sober looks - many works of outward kindness towards the dead professing church. I believe the sight of these things was the cause of your trembling, and brought the fearful judgments of God into your conscience. Many more things might be added as causes of the misery and fearful exercises you have lately fallen into, and are yet likely to be involved in, perhaps more deeply than you are aware.

I would have you very tender of God's teaching, and not hold fast that which he bids you let go. Let the word of God be your rule; it will make a straight line for your feet, and teach you well to ponder your path. How can you touch pitch, and not be defiled? Withdraw from that which you see was your downfall. "Say ye not, A confederacy" [Isaiah viii. 11-13]. Remember, "You are not your own. You are brought with a price." Ascertain by earnest prayer whence your profiting is to be derived; and let me again entreat you to watch the secret teaching of the Spirit upon your hearts, and consider that if HE has brought you from a delusive profession, his sacred teaching will not guide you again to the desperate place of danger, the sight of which spiritually made you all to tremble. Take heed of the dangerous and stupifying effects of remaining in the use of such means as you have seen by the Spirit's teaching to be delusive. Be very cautious how you trifle here; for if the Lord has in any measure opened your eyes, it would be attended with very dangerous consequences to return, like the dog to his vomit, or the sow to her mire. Such often get their "bands made strong," and it is sometimes long enough before the Lord returns to a soul that has thus slighted his condescending teaching. I know the perplexing fears and dark mistrust that you must feel; and if under these dark sensations you are led to an ungodly compromise, you will perceive the Lord will show his displeasure by double darkness, and confusion that may be felt.

I desire to write most cautiously and tenderly, yet I dare not hide all I know. If you are determined to live godly in this present evil world, you must be hated of all men, and be a living reproach to all the dead professors about you. If you love this world, and the applause of those that walk in what is called deep piety, you will never know when real good comes, but will be like the barren heath. Let me entreat you all not to trifle with the light and convictions you have, but to be much in earnest with the Lord to arm you against all enemies, and make you willing (as you say) to give up all for Christ. It will be presently noised abroad that "Mercy also is gone on pilgrimage." Let them say all manner of evil against you falsely for Christ's sake - you shall rejoice in your portion when the King says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," though now covered with nothing but reproach.

Yours in the Lord, J. B.

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