

# Letter 79

by James Bourne

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*In 'Letter 79', James Bourne emphasizes the importance of spiritual vigilance, prayer, and the need to cling to Christ amidst the deceitfulness of the heart and the dangers of sin.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 99:6, Ecclesiastes 9:12, Ecclesiastes 10:1, Ecclesiastes 10:8, John 13:14

**Topics:** "Spiritual Vigilance", "Godly Fear"

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## Description

James Bourne encourages his friend to be vigilant in their spiritual walk, warning against the deceitfulness of the heart and the dangers of breaking through the hedge of God's protection. He emphasizes the importance of seeking a clear work of grace in their hearts, being watchful of temptations, and avoiding spiritual complacency. Bourne uses biblical references to illustrate the consequences of straying from God's path and the need for a genuine fear of God in all aspects of life.

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## Transcript

[To C. G.] London, 1 June 1835.

My dear Friend,

I was much pleased with the sober manner in which you answered my last letter, and am greatly encouraged to believe the Lord will maintain your lot, and discover to you more and more the desperate deceitfulness of the heart, especially in being convicted of many things and purposes, the fountain of which you little suspected to be bitter, and to have need of healing. Be not disheartened at the sight of your weakness and irresolution, while it makes you tremble, and cleave the closer to Jesus Christ. Seek to be carried in his arms, and never venture to walk without his hand guiding you.

It is a sad thing to break through the hedge which the Lord has made; no doubt in this case the serpent will bite [Eccles. x. viii.]. I have to my sorrow often found it so. A viper can get through a very small place. We are apt to think little liberties, a little relaxation, a little holiday-keeping (spiritually), cannot produce much harm; but a certain author says, We may see the beginning of sin, but who knows the bounds or issues thereof? Therefore, let us take spiritual heed not to break through the hedge.

You are surrounded with snares and difficulties; and remember no man knoweth his time. "As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them" [Eccles. ix. 12]. Therefore be sober and watchful, and

continually be seeking to have a clear work of grace upon your hearts; and if insensibility or stupor comes over you, be much in earnest prayer and confession, until the blood of sprinkling heal you. In this line of walking you will find too much exercise to listen to the various temptations that attend your present circumstances. No doubt it was for want of some such spiritual labour that David was led in an evil hour to go upon his house-top, where the snare was already laid for him. It was an evil time, though very short; yet if you read the history, the sword of God never departed from him all his days. Moses and Aaron and Samuel are set forth as God's peculiar people, yet each of them fell into this net; and it is said, "Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions" [Psalm xcix. 6-8]. These things were written for our learning, and may you and I be found apt scholars.

It is said, "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour" [Eccles. x. 1]. Our perverse ways after that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious - the spirit of the world - communicating with erroneous professors - a lifeless walk in a true profession, and many more such things, are these "dead flies," and lead observers to ask, Is this the fear of God? O how little worth is our religion, if we have not the honour of God tenderly at heart, and seek continually to have our feet washed as the Lord washed his disciples' feet. When the Lord puts his fear into our hearts we become like a candle upon a candlestick, that all that are in the house may see it; and our mercy is to be very diligent that it may be so, that our profiting may appear, not in the flesh, but in making it fully manifest that we are (more or less) led by the Spirit, and do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

May the Lord direct all your steps, and put you in the "cliff of the rock," and make all his goodness pass before you, is the prayer of

Your unworthy servant in the Lord, J. B.

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