

Letter 87

by James Bourne

The sermon encourages believers to rely on the Spirit of God for true spiritual understanding and growth, rather than on their own reasoning or legalistic approaches.

Scripture: Proverbs 14:12, Isaiah 21:10, John 14:6, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Timothy 2:24

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Humility"

Description

James Bourne preaches about the importance of not opposing oneself and falling into false reasoning that hinders spiritual growth. He emphasizes the need for a humble, meek, and patient approach to instruction, guided by the Spirit rather than man's devising. Bourne warns against the dangerous condition of a legal conscience that leads to spiritual death and highlights the value of an enlightened ministry in leading souls to the true knowledge of God's ways.

Transcript

[To the Rev. W. Maddy.] Bushey, 12 July 1835.

Dear Friend,

You were brought strongly upon my mind in reading the following words; "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" [2 Tim. ii. 24, 25]. I said, How often my friend has opposed himself, and what false reasoning he makes use of, to quench that little spark of fire, which I trust is yet in the temple of his heart, and will be found a fire that shall never go out, but is kindled to eternal life! If you could fully enter into that which the devil brings upon us while we listen to our carnal reason, you would tremble at the load of darkness and confusion he thus lays on. I have often been greatly surprized in my conversations with you, at the turns you have given to some of the simplest things in experience that a child of God is instructed in, saying, I have no real spiritual life, or, I do not read the Bible enough, or, I have too much to do in the World - therefore I cannot attain to what I want. If this or the other were better managed, you seem to think, then your prayers might be heard. True; this is a way of man's devising; but not the way of the Spirit. Mourning, self-despairing, trembling, fearing, crying, lamenting, all denote the state of a coming sinner - one that supposes himself to have neither life nor light, yet pines for the mercy of Christ. Such obtain help in time of need, and make it manifest that this is the true teaching of the Spirit of God. Such find (more or less) union with the church of God, and a receiving of God's word by the mouth of his servants, and by these means are enabled, sooner or later, to recover themselves out of the snare of the fowler.

The Apostle then speaks of many things that I trust will never be laid to your account, any more than as being the true character of the old man of sin; and adds, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." I am sure that herein is set forth the dangerous condition of a legal conscience, that puts a false colouring on God's way of saving sinners, while perfectly unacquainted with it, and unconscious of the fatal error. "There is a way that seemeth right to a man," but the end thereof shows the danger, for it is death - spiritual, temporal, and eternal. [Prov. xiv. 12.]

You are not sufficiently aware of the value of an enlightened ministry, and how, if neglected, it increases God's judgment upon us. "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people"--"a people that do err in their heart" - that cannot find their way to the city. Such is the character of God's nominal people, amongst whom are a few Joshuas and Calebs. O my dear Sir, what will become of us, if we are not among this number? Will reason save us in the time of extremity, death, and judgment? Oh, let us hasten our escape, for the windy storm of temptation will come upon us, and who can help us but the Lord Jesus Christ?

It is a miserable life, to have just conscience enough to feel death and destruction is in the way of the world, but not life and power enough in the soul to come forth of them all, and live sensibly on the infinite fullness that is in Jesus Christ. O how was that fullness made manifest to me this day, when the Lord came into my soul with these most tender words, "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor!" [Isa. xxi. 10.] A personal interest in Christ made it most sweet; for as we are partakers of his sufferings so also shall we be of the consolations. This holy anointing is what I wish you to be partaker of; for because of this, every yoke (even the yoke of legal striving) shall be broken. Here only can we say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Here we lose sight of the things that the natural eyes delight in, and are enabled spiritually to behold the things that are invisible, In this way only I find sweet and safe sailing to our heavenly port. May you be enabled to receive and comprehend this way, for it is the King's highway of holiness, happiness, and eternal life.

Your most willing servant in the Lord, J. B.

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