

Letter 91

by James Bourne

James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual discernment and endurance for young ministers amid challenges and tribulations.

Topics: "Faithful Endurance", "Gods Presence"

Description

James Bourne, in a letter to a friend, encourages him to be cautious of flattery and false ministers, urging him to stay grounded in the truth of the Gospel. He shares his personal experiences of feeling the presence of the Lord and the despair when God seems distant, emphasizing the importance of seeking God's healing and restoration. Bourne also mentions a friend who found comfort and joy in God despite facing tribulations, highlighting the sufficiency of God's presence in times of need. He concludes by exhorting his friend to endure hardships as a faithful soldier of Christ and to share the true and living way with others.

Transcript

[To the Rev. B. G.] Bushey, 19 August 1835.

My dear Friend,

Many things have combined to prevent my writing to you before this. I was sorry I should be from home when you were in London. Your difficulties are often presented before me, either at the beginning or at the end of prayer. May the Lord reveal himself to you more and more, and make you alive to the various and peculiar snares that will be laid for your feet as a young minister. I would caution you against the flatterer; it is said, "Many shall cleave to them with flatteries." This is very ensnaring and enchanting; it requires great spiritual courage to resist this. Perhaps many may make suit to you, and seek for a confederacy; and it is not every one that finds power at once to resist a snare here, though the Spirit says, "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" [Isaiah viii. 12, 13]. There will spring up Gospel ministers here and there, yet let me beseech you to be sober, and receive not hastily every "Lo here;" for there are many false Christs, as well as false ministers; and many shall be deceived. You may generally know them by their great confidence, unshaken trust, unchanging love; fearless and presumptuous. While you are hearing their tale, you will find yourself ready to sink with fear, and conclude you know nothing, and have lost your way. You will wonder at their attainments, while their words work nothing in you but despondency and wrath. False religion always leads from God, till at

last you will find yourself compassed about with the fiery mountain, for God out of Christ is "a consuming fire."

I have had many changes since I wrote last - some refreshings from the presence of the Lord, and many castings down. It is a part of my happiness, that by the Spirit I discover his coining and going. I sensibly feel the light, power, and sweetness of his presence; his presence drives all evil beasts into their dens, and is "as the light of the morning when the sun riseth" - "clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" [2 Sam. xxiii. 4; Song. vi. 10]. I also perceive it worse than midnight when he withdraws. I know nothing so grievous to bear, as I am persuaded he never goes without cause; and when gone, I find nothing to supply the deficiency. O how I rue this unhappy part of my experience! It is putting on sackcloth with a witness; and my unbelieving heart cannot help poring over the sore that has made him depart, instead of speeding my way to the Good Physician, who can "heal our wounds with tenderness and skill." My sluggish, mulish spirit here always fills me with shame, and sends me further and further from the central point, till my case becomes desperate; and then, when the sack's mouth is opened, and the cup is found, I have nothing to say but mourning and lamentation. But blessed be God, that in this way you and I have, times without number, with the Publican, found our way to Christ. It is this way we must all come while here on earth, and him that cometh in this way, the Lord will by no means cast out.

Our afflicted friend Mr. Nunn is with me here; he has appeared once or twice to be near his end, but the Lord has had mercy on me, and has greatly revived him. The Lord graciously comforted him in his trouble, till his joy became almost too much for his weak frame; thus he has found that as his tribulation abounded, so did also his consolation. In this friend we see much of the goodness of God; though now for nearly four years the Lord has crossed all his natural wishes and delights, yet he has most graciously made up the deficiency by giving HIMSELF - "I am thy salvation."

I would press you exceedingly to learn, by prayer and earnest supplication, "to endure hardness, as a good soldier." "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." O do not turn back in the day of battle! It is said of many, "Ye did run well; who did hinder?" May the Lord strengthen you by the Spirit's might in the inner man, and make you a full partaker of the fruits; which will be so sweet and so enlightening, that out of the abundance of your heart your mouth will set before sinners that true and living way which you have found both safe and sure.

Yours &c. J. B.

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