

Letter 94

by James Bourne

The Lord's voice is a voice of salvation, and it is our purpose to be vessels unto honour, enduring trials and temptations through the power of God.

Scripture: Ezekiel 22:14, Malachi 3:2, John 16:12, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Divine Intervention", "Spiritual Refining"

Description

James Bourne, in a letter to M. G. Bushey dated 17 September 1835, shares personal experiences of being spoken to by the Lord through scriptures, emphasizing the importance of divine intervention in one's life for the purpose of salvation. Bourne recounts moments of deep affliction and despair, followed by divine reassurance and guidance, highlighting the refining process believers go through to bring glory to God and exalt the Savior. He encourages Bushey to remain watchful, prayerful, and humble, trusting in God's sustaining power amidst trials and temptations.

Transcript

[To M. G.] Bushey, 17 September 1835.

Dear Friend,

Your letter to your brother is now before me, and I am astonished and pleased with its contents, especially the three different scriptures which you name, as having been spoken by the Lord upon your heart, and the manner of their repetition; which no doubt was for the express purpose of claiming your attention. I cannot understand how such language can be spoken to any one towards whom the purpose of salvation is not intended; it must be the voice of a friend, not of an enemy, and therefore eternal life must be the issue.

Having this persuasion, I must tell you that the Lord has dealt with me in the same manner at different periods of my life; the last time about three years ago. I was awakened out of sleep with these words - "Son of man, what seest thou?" I saw a furnace smoking, such as metal is melted in, and replied, I see a smoking fiery furnace. It was repeated twice, and the vision withdrew, leaving me very cast down, in a horror of great darkness, believing in my conscience I was about to enter into deep affliction, which did indeed prove true beyond what I had ever known before. I seemed for some time to despair of all help, and thought these words were applied to me - "I will deliver you no more." I went about solitary, without any prospect of change, and, like Hezekiah, thought, "I shall go softly all my days, in the bitterness of my

soul." But one day reading in Psalm cxxvi., "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall DOUBTLESS" (this word seemed ten times as big as the rest) "shall DOUBTLESS come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" - this set my soul on high, and I could bless the Lord for the dispensation, which humbled me in the dust, and makes me to this day keenly to feel and "to remember the wormwood and the gall; my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled within me." I therefore can enter into your case, and tell you to be very watchful, for, as sure as you are born, the Lord will fulfil the words he has spoken to you. It appears he has already begun, but has not told you all, lest you should be disheartened and faint by the way; for so your first text declares, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" [John xvi. 12].

Then the second, "Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?" [Mal. iii. 2] is a little sharper and closer; your abiding seems threatened, but God's word is on your side, and therefore it is with you as Hart says in his hymn about Noah

"To make the preservation sure,

Jehovah shut him in."

You will have the waves of temptation and the winds of error, and all sorts of assailants, but the Lord has cautioned you to make use of him at all times. Keep to this very thing, even at the point of despair; still crying against every opposition within and with-out. All this is "like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap;" the qualities of which, spiritually, I am in a measure acquainted with, and know that no flesh living can abide them; but "all things are possible with God."

The last text, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?" [Ezek. xxii. 14] denotes the closest and hottest work of all, and calls for much humiliation, watchfulness, and prayer, with much confession, earnestly entreating the Lord for his Name's sake to keep your heart tender, and not suffer you in anything to choose for yourself. "All things are possible with God." Beg grace to keep this firm in your heart. I was once in a long trouble (perhaps seven years ago), and laboured long and seemed to gain but little help; but being in an agony, I cried sorely to the Lord to have compassion, and shall never forget the manner in which he spoke these words - I am touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and have been tempted in all points as you are. O how sweetly did this break my heart! I found myself so submissive, patient, and quiet, that I could have endured anything under this influence, knowing that he had endured much more for me. But a few days after-wards I again lost sight of his sweet presence, and gathered all my trouble together, and knew not how to bear up under it, until he kindly came again and told me that I should be more than conqueror, through him that loved me. These are things that reconcile us to the furnace, and lead us to acknowledge the necessity of it; for by his divine management it furthers the work, and brings glory to God; it abases the sinner, and keeps him in a low place, but exalts the Saviour.

I cannot but remark the many heavy charges laid in the chapter wherein your last scripture is found; and I say, "Can thine heart endure?" No; it cannot, unless the mighty power of God sustain thee. And I believe he will sustain you, and you shall know that HE IS THE LORD. All these terrible things are to show you that God hates a light professor, and that he is determined to make you a vessel unto honour. O take the counsel of one of old, "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." I believe he may not devour you, but the trial will make manifest. My prayer will be for you, as of one that has suffered like things, that you may prove "a vessel unto honour, meet for

the Master's use."The day of trifling is past, and it will now be seen of what metal you are.

Yours &c. J. B.

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