

Temptations of the City--a Lion in Olney

by John Newton

The sermon emphasizes the dangers of the city and the importance of relying on the power of God's grace to preserve one's spiritual health.

Scripture: Psalm 23:4, Ephesians 4:16, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 3:4

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Urban Ministry"

Description

John Newton writes a heartfelt letter to a friend in a far foreign country, expressing concern and offering spiritual encouragement. He emphasizes the importance of true spiritual connections formed by the bonds of faith, referencing Ephesians 4:16. Newton reflects on the challenges of living in a worldly city like London but finds solace in the presence of the Lord who can make any place comfortable, drawing parallels to Acts 16. He admires those who remain spiritually strong amidst the temptations and trials of city life, likening his own struggles to a tamed lion with occasional 'surlly fits' despite knowing and loving his Keeper.

Transcript

My dear Friend,

I know not that I have any thing to say worth postage, though perhaps, had I seen you before you set off, something might have occurred which will not be found in my letter. Yet I write a line, because you bid me, and are now in a far foreign country. You will find Mr. **** a man to your tooth, but he is in Mr. W*****'s connection. So I remember venerable Bede, after giving a high character of some contemporary, kicks his full pail of milk down, and reduces him almost to nothing, by adding in the close to this purpose; "But, unhappy man, he did not keep Easter our way!" A fig for all connections, say I, and say you, but that which is formed by the bands, joints, and ligaments the Apostle speaks of, Eph. 4:16, et alibi. Therefore I venture to repeat it, that Mr. ****, though he often sees and hears Mr. W*****, and I believe loves him well, is a good man: and you will see the invisible mark upon his forehead, if you examine him with your spiritual spectacles.

Now, methinks, I do pity you: I see you melted with heat, stifled with smoke, stunned with noise. Ah! what a change from the brooks, and bushes, and birds, and green fields, to which you had lately access. Of old they used to retire into the deserts for mortification. If I was to set myself a moderate penance, it might be to spend a fortnight in London in the height of summer. But I forget myself: I hope the Lord is with you, and then all places are alike. He makes the dungeon and the stocks comfortable, Acts 16:; yea, a fiery furnace,

and a lion's den. A child of God in London seems to be in all these trying situations; but Jesus can preserve his own. I honour the grace of God in those few (comparatively few, I fear,) who preserve their garments undefiled in that Sardis. The air is filled with infection; and it is by special power and miraculous preservation they enjoy spiritual health, when so many sicken and fall around them on the right hand and on the left. May the Lord preserve you from the various epidemical soul diseases which abound where you are, and be your comfort and defence from day to day.

Last week we had a lion in town. I went to see him. He was wonderfully tame; as familiar with his keeper, as docile and obedient as a spaniel. Yet the man told me he had his surly fits, when they durst not touch him. No looking-glass could express my face more justly than this lion did my heart. I could trace every feature: as wild and fierce by nature; yea, much more so; but grace has in some measure tamed me. I know and love my Keeper, and sometimes watch his looks that I may learn his will. But, oh! I have my surly fits too; seasons when I relapse into the savage again, as though I had forgotten all.

I am; &c.

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