

# Letter 25

by James Bourne

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*James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the necessity of seeking God privately and the dangers of spiritual neglect and contention.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 32:8, Proverbs 15:1, Isaiah 41:1, Habakkuk 2:20, Zechariah 2:13, Romans 2:4, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 4:29, Hebrews 12:6, James 1:19

**Topics:** "Private Prayer", "Spiritual Discipline"

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## Description

James Bourne emphasizes the importance of seeking God wholeheartedly, especially in private, to avoid spiritual death and confusion. He warns against giving to man what rightfully belongs to God, as it may lead to God hiding His face and causing darkness in our path. Bourne encourages minimal conversation, filled with godly fear and free from wrath and bitterness, to avoid contention and maintain righteousness. He shares his personal struggles with daily crosses and petitions to avoid backsliding, highlighting the acceptance of God's discipline and the renewal of strength through repentance and divine intervention.

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## Transcript

[To M. B.] London, July, 1828.

Dear Cousin,

What you say in your letter respecting the spending of your first Sunday, I quite agree with. Unless there is an entire seeking of God and giving yourself up to that service, when thus separated from the public means, I know there will be nothing but death and confusion. If we through fear give way, and give that to man which so justly belongs to God, we shall find God will resent it, by hiding his face and making our path dark. I hope God will give you courage to spend your Sundays privately, in seeking him; wholly so.

I am truly grieved for Mrs. --, you see in her the lamentable effect of living without the means, and having no converse with lively christians. I hope the Lord will be pleased to direct you in your conduct and conversation with. Pray do not enter into contention; watch the death that such things bring into the soul. Let his conversation be ever so exciting, beg of God that your words may be few, and those few attended with godly fear, not mixed with wrath and bitterness, for that will not work the righteousness of God. If the poor man knew the plague of his own heart, he would gladly hear the tale of those who have had their plague healed. He will look upon us as enemies; whereas it is not in the power of a carnal man to wish so well to him, as we in the fear of God most earnestly desire.

I have had various exercises; a deal of death, a daily cross, and many, many petitions put up, that I might not be left to backslide and grow indifferent. How unprofitable is a dead soul! All that such speak is like the white of an egg. When the cross pinches hard, many petitions go up. This was my case yesterday; and in my pleadings and acknowledgements I found by the power of the Spirit, a perfect acceptance of the rod, and such repentance unto life as I cannot describe. I could not help saying, "Behold the goodness and severity of God" - severity against this evil heart of unbelief, but goodness and mercy towards that principle of divine life planted in the heart. Meditating on the deadness and darkness I felt the day before, and fearing and wondering how it would end, the Lord applied with great power and sweetness these words - " Be silent," O Earth, "and let the people renew their strength" [Zech ii. 13; Hab. ii. 20; Isa. xli. 1]. At first I did not quite understand it, though I received it with much sweetness upon my spirit; but I soon saw that God, by his Spirit, silenced in my heart all carnal-mindedness, and all that was earthly, sensual, and devilish; and instead thereof, peace, tranquillity, and godly sorrow flowed in. By this my strength was renewed, and my spirit greatly refreshed. I then soon found out the spiritual meaning of the words.

This morning at chapel, I found the text most precious, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go," &c. [Psalm xxxii. 8-11]. The prayer was also very suitable to my wants and feeling of gratitude, and the whole a sweet anointing for my journey to morrow.

Yours &c. J. B.

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