

# Letter 75

by James Bourne

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*The speaker encourages the recipients to be contrite and humble, to cry to the Lord for help, and to maintain spiritual life through regular worship and Scripture reading.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 27:4, Isaiah 57:15, Ezekiel 11:16, Philippians 3:12, Hebrews 12:1

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Humility Before God"

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## Description

James Bourne addresses the spiritual struggles and need for humility, urging the congregation to embrace a contrite and humble spirit before God. He emphasizes the importance of continuous growth and pursuit of spiritual maturity, encouraging them to press forward in their faith journey. Bourne advises establishing regular times for worship, reading Scriptures, and prayer to maintain spiritual life and experience God's presence. He warns against spiritual complacency and distractions that may lead to spiritual death, urging vigilance and focus on seeking God's presence and guidance.

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## Transcript

[To M. J. and C. G.] London, 24 February 1835.

Dear Friends in the Lord,

I have had many anxious thoughts concerning you all, and many petitions have been put up in your behalf. Though now often visited with encouraging hopes, perhaps you do not find that clear coming forth which you expected. It is for the further discovery of that independent spirit which we all exceedingly like to live in. The Lord will make us feel our spiritual weakness, and teach us, by the inexpressible wants we fall into, to cry to him who alone can supply them.

The language of Scripture is everywhere to this effect - "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, WITH HIM ALSO THAT IS OF A CONTRITE AND HUMBLE SPIRIT, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." The Lord has been pleased to bring you in a measure to this, and here your lofty claims have been greatly changed, and for joy you have had great bitterness. Here I, as well as you, have feared destruction close at hand; but I found it was only to teach me that the lowest place best became me; and when there, I soon heard this language spoken to me - "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth;" and I perceived the word looked at me here and there with an encouraging smile. This did not lead me to conclude that all was settled and my conflict over, but rather caused me to press forward to make my

calling and election sure; therefore I say, whatever encouragement you meet with, remember what the Apostle says - "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus . . . forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." [Isa. lvii. 16, 17; Phil. iii. 12-14.]

This brings me to the purpose of my writing. You all complain of spiritual death, and the many difficulties that surround you under your peculiar circumstances. You find you cannot walk as you have done. Here lies the cross; will you take it, or leave it? Will you tenderly watch what the Lord will have you to do? Will you anxiously seek instruction? Can you with your heart seek so as to obtain, or do you seek that God would reconcile that to you which would be suitable and convenient to flesh and blood? I hope you are made willing with our hymn to say,

"Choose thou the way, but still lead on."

Till it please God to appear for you, I would advise you that seem united in spirit to fix certain stated times for divine worship, and let nothing interrupt you: reading the Scriptures, or some good author, beginning with one of Hart's hymns and prayer. I believe, if this be tenderly watched and diligently attended to, spiritual life will be maintained, and you will find the Lord as good as his word - "I will be to them as a little Sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" [Ezek. xi. 16]. If such measures as these seem to meet your wishes, may the Lord prosper them, and make manifest his approbation by his presence; but if a thousand excuses are made, I fear spiritual death will come on.

Your sister is every day with us at our morning reading. I am continually exhorting her not to be here for two, three, or four years, and then to leave us just as she came, but that she may be able, as the Apostle says, to make her profiting to appear. I earnestly desire she may be watchful and sober, and let no outward circumstances divert her attention from what the Psalmist sets forth - "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple" [Psalm xxvii. 4].

Beware of spiritual indolence; it is an enchanted arbour where we may sleep many days, and not be properly waked until the Lord, by some heavy judgment, rouse us under a deep and painful conviction of our treacherously departing from him.

Yours in the Lord, J. B.

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