

# Letter 166.

by James Bourne

---

*The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of tribulation and the comfort found in God's promises and community support.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 119:71, John 17:21, Romans 8:16, Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:14, James 1:19

**Topics:** "Spiritual Struggle", "Christian Humility"

---

## Description

James Bourne, in a letter to Mr. James Abbott, shares about his personal struggles and experiences of despair, fear, and moments of God's comforting presence. He reflects on the lessons learned in the path of tribulation, emphasizing the need to humble oneself, avoid hasty judgments, and seek unity through the love of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Bourne expresses a deep longing for eternal glory and the unsearchable riches promised to believers, highlighting the importance of holding onto the precious inheritance in Christ despite doubts and fears.

---

## Transcript

[To Mr. James Abbott.] Stapleton, 1 August 1839.

Dear companion in the path of tribulation,

Since I have lately from time to time heard of your conflicts, you have been much in my heart and affections. I have scarcely found any that have been so long and so deeply involved in those despairing feelings with which I have been exercised through the last twelve months. The great goodness and mercy of God has been very conspicuous in visiting my soul with exceeding great promises; yet my returning so quickly into misery and fear has caused me to think at times there must have been some fatal mistake in my experience. I have often wondered at the forbearance of God, for I have felt anything but a trust in him. Fear, and sometimes terror, took hold upon me; but at times I saw the Psalmists were in like troubles, "Chasten me not in thy hot displeasure." Many such sentences in the word of God kept my heart crying to him. His word was very precious to me, and I can say with truth that he sometimes visited my soul with some word, some hope, or some sweet meditation of his friendship towards me, not less than four or five times a day. These words were very comforting at one time, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee . . . The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Notwithstanding these very sweet renewals of God's favours in Christ Jesus, I continually returned, like Abraham, to my old place, and the Lord left off communing with me. I found the

ministry exceedingly profitable the greatest part of this period, and sometimes knew not where to hide myself because of the Lord's love and sweet presence. At these times you always gave out such hymns as exactly suited my case, so that the whole worship seemed on purpose for me.

I think I hear you ask, Are you any the worse for your troubles and exercises? O no! I have found out by God's grace that the prosperous poor and afflicted people of God must pass through much tribulation; and my heart trembles now, while I write, for I know not what is before me in order to cut down that vain conceit of knowledge and judgment, which is so rampant in us all.

In this path of tribulation we learn many things which we never properly understood before; this for one - "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." It makes us perceive that all wisdom does not dwell with us, and that there is a very hasty deciding upon cases where God never sets us to judge. There is also a great readiness to think we must be always talking, and to condemn the attentive listeners for not talking, though I have ever found, even in the most profitable talkers, that the greater part has been about nothing. The furnace makes us feel that we are very very poor, and then by the mercy of God, a few words from a tried saint sink deep; and we are glad to hear in silence what the Lord will say to us by another. Then something is drawn out of our hearts which seems so small that we hardly dare speak of it; and this is what God prospers and owns and honours; and one poor creature and another comes and says, I am thankful to God that you spoke, I am greatly comforted or encouraged; and you scarcely believe that such as you can be profitable, and therefore readily give God the glory.

Hence comes a sweet and divine unity; no boasting, no empty talking, no brawling; but the Holy Spirit bears witness to this sort of communion, and (like the disciples of old) our hearts burn within us, while we thus talk by the way. In this union, which the Spirit of God works in the heart, there is evidently also something further that is sweet and establishing to the soul; even the love of the Father shed abroad in our hearts, the love of Christ manifestly constraining us, and the love of the Spirit testifying of the same; and that with such clearness and sweetness that we perceive it is what the Lord speaks of in John xvii. - "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." What religion is worth having with-out this? Besides the Lord says that he will give us his glory, which the Father gave him, that we may be all one, as the Father Son and Spirit are one.

You and I must wait till we arrive at eternal glory before we can fully understand these unsearchable riches, to which we are born again. This is my hope; this is what my very soul is set upon; and when my evidences and title to this beautiful inheritance become beclouded, I fear and tremble, for I cannot bear the loss of such a rich treasure.

Remember me to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

Your affectionate friend, J. B.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-bourne/letter-166/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**