

# Letter 180.

by James Bourne

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*James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine faith and the necessity of repentance amidst trials and afflictions.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 64:6, Matthew 3:12, Luke 13:6, 1 Peter 1:7, Revelation 3:19

**Topics:** "True Repentance", "Spiritual Growth"

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## Description

James Bourne delivers a heartfelt message to a woman, urging her to reflect on her spiritual journey and the dimming of her faith. He questions her commitment, kindness, and spiritual growth, warning her of the consequences of a shallow profession of faith. Bourne emphasizes the need for true repentance, humility, and a deepening relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ to bear fruit and withstand the refining fire of God's judgment.

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## Transcript

[To - ] Hertford, 25 March 1840.

Madam,

It is now nearly seven years since you first came amongst the little despised flock in which you now rank yourself as one. In the first letter I received from you I thought I discovered much tenderness and humility, which led me to hope that the Lord had been pleased to take you in hand, and bring you down before him as a lost sinner. Where is all that appearance now? What is become of that little light you once possessed? Where is that appearance of steadiness in your purposes? Where is that kindness towards the people of God, which once seemed to be the effect of spiritual union? How or why is this fine gold become dim? Dim it is in the worst sense; for you are not aware of the thick darkness that covers your mind.

You say, none know your afflictions; nor is there any necessity that any should. God knows them, and has placed you in the midst of them, to make manifest whether that light profession you have hitherto walked in be "wood, hay, stubble," or what it may be. If GOLD should at last appear, that stands the fire. You are aware that the Lord has "his furnace in Jerusalem," to purge away the dross of that gold; and though you may find terrible work in that furnace, the Lord will be all-sufficient for you.

I fear the complaints you now make of your trouble are the lashes of God's anger for the spirit of the world in which you live; so that when you come amongst the people of God you know nothing of that language of Canaan which is peculiar to those who live there. Your mind is so flitting that there is no such thing as to keep your attention to any solid, sober, momentous subject; which always betokens an unbroken heart. You are not aware of your continual. attempts to point out your terrible difficulties, nor of your light manner of justifying yourself in everything, and then as if to appease your conscience, adding a few words to represent something of spiritual labour; which I fear in the end will only prove natural conscience lashing you for your light, very light, profession.

I am old, and must soon put off this tabernacle; it therefore becomes me to be faithful to the uttermost; and the more so because of the especial situation in which you and the rest of the friends here have placed me. My manifold afflictions by the blessing and management of God have brought me very low; and I often look, at the Lord Jesus Christ in terrible majesty, "who shall judge the quick and the dead," and "who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire." I say, this look brings me down to nothing, and neither paint nor paper can divert my afflicted troubled heart, but I am forced to put my mouth in the dust, as a guilty, guilty, sinner; and wait to see if the Lord will have mercy upon so base a sinner as I. I dare not, I cannot, utter one word about my difficulties, my sins do so stare me in the face as my very own; and I am forced to clear the Lord when he judges, and cry, "Unclean, unclean."

There is but this way set forth in God's word; all other ways lead to death. Your half profession will one day prove a burden to you that you will not be able to bear; and then you will remember that once you had a faithful friend. Make not light of this, but, like Manasseh, humble yourself greatly, and beg of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop the withering which has already begun, and to dig about the barren fig tree, and dung it, if haply it may bear fruit another year.

That the Lord may cause you to lay these things deeply to heart, is the prayer and sincere good wish of

Your aged friend in the path of tribulation,

J. B.

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