

# Letter 192.

by James Bourne

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*James Bourne emphasizes the necessity of a constant ministry and the dangers of spiritual complacency in his letter to a struggling church.*

**Scripture:** Joshua 24:15, Isaiah 30:20, Romans 8:37, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Ephesians 6:18

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Eternal Life"

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## Description

James Bourne addresses the distracted state of the church, urging them to seek a constant ministry focused on the faith once delivered unto the saints, rather than on disputes over chapel rights and headship. He warns of the danger of not coming to a decision in the fear of God, emphasizing the need to endure reproach for the sake of eternal life. Bourne encourages spiritual growth, likening it to reaping the fruits of labor, and urges vigilance against allowing distractions to choke the word of God's truth.

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## Transcript

[To Mr. J H.] Fittleworth, 8 August 1840.

Dear Friend,

I thank you much for your very friendly letter, as well as for your very kind invitation. I often think of the distracted state of your little church, and wonder some of you are not anxious to bring matters to an issue. All things are possible with God. I fear that as a body (if I may judge by the spirit of some amongst them), they are left to wander in dark places; but I see not why such as fear God should wander with them. I wonder that some of you who really thirst for the waters of life are not anxious to have a constant ministry, though it may not please all. Why should not the few, who cannot live without the word, seek out by prayer and supplication a little place where some one might be found to be their constant minister, and not contend for the rights of the chapel, and headship, and the rest of it, but contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints? This might be profitable, seeing how long you have been unsettled, and how short life is. Is there none, among all the children that your church brought up, that could thus dispense the truth, and leave the mixed ministry to them whom it may concern? I fear you are not aware of the danger to which you expose yourselves as a body; and how, by not coming to a decision in the fear of God, the glory of God may depart. I found several amongst you that manifested much tenderness; but there is a promise that says, "Yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers" [Isaiah xxx..20]. This evident withdrawing of the Lord from amongst you is a dark mark, and the clouds may gather thicker and faster than you are aware of Samson wist not that the Lord was

departed. Such are sad times, for it may be long before he returns. There must be much reproach to endure in such proceedings, but eternal life is at stake; and we are told we must and shall be hated of all men for Christ's sake, and by none more than those who have a name to live, and yet are dead. It is a great mercy to be brought to this point - "As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord" [Josh. xxiv. 15]; and that through evil report and good report; being accounted deceivers, though true in Christ.

Tell your dear wife to be much in earnest to watch the fruit of those good things she told me of. You farmers know full well you must not be always ploughing and sowing; you expect to be reaping the fruits of your labours; so spiritually we are not to remain always in the same state. Watch and see that the grain of mustard seed grows according to God's word, and that the briars and thorns choke not the word so that it become unfruitful.

Remember me also affectionately to Underwood. I hope he will never tire and faint in his long afflictions, but that the Lord gives him a spirit of grace and supplication; and that he is led to watch over you both, and set before you the way of the Lord, a path of great tribulation, but a path the Lord's people have trodden in all ages, and by which they shall still come, and by no other way. But they all shall be more than conquerors through him that loved them; and shall have no conflict without obtaining sooner or later a conquest.

I hope the Lord will enable you to lay to heart the things I have written, and not suffer you to settle anything by human wisdom or carnal reason. Bear in mind that the counsel of the Lord alone shall stand; but this counsel is to be sought for and obtained by much diligent and earnest prayer; and the Apostle says, "your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." The Lord direct you both.

Yours faithfully in the Lord, J. B.

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