

# Letter 38

by James Bourne

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*James Bourne's sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual health, trust in God, and the necessity of humility and prayer in our lives.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 34:18, Psalm 51:17, Proverbs 3:1, James 4:8, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "Spiritual Revival", "Faith And Obedience"

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## Description

James Bourne reflects on the struggles of a cold heart and the need for spiritual revival, emphasizing the importance of brokenness before God and the dangers of unbelief. He shares his personal journey of seeking God's guidance and finding comfort in the Scriptures, highlighting the significance of keeping God's commandments, trusting in the Lord wholeheartedly, and departing from evil. Bourne expresses gratitude for God's grace and mercy towards sinners, encouraging his friend to draw near to God through prayer, meditation, and watchfulness in anticipation of Christ's return.

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## Transcript

[To a Friend.] Sezincot, Oct. 11, 1829.

Dear Friend,

I was very unfit for my journey when I left home, but, thank God, my health is no worse, though my cold mends very slowly. But I find a cold in the heart once caught is both more lingering and worse to bear than the other. It seems to disarm me of all the means either of present cure or future prevention; and until it pleases God to quicken my soul afresh, I seem to lie in a stupor bemoaning my folly, and feeling that it has perverted my way.

The word I spoke to you the other night was very beautiful to me, "The Lord is nigh unto such as be of a broken heart;" but my heart was not sensibly broken; I saw and admired the rich fruit upon the tree, but there was a party wall between it and me. So I went my journey, sometimes hoping, often fearing, and feeling a great readiness to dishonour God by my unbelief. The evening I arrived here I opened the Bible, but thought I could find nothing new, nothing suitable, and that the Lord would not look upon me as he was wont. I opened at Prov. iii., and he was pleased to soften my heart greatly with these words, "My son, forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my commandments; for length of days and long life and peace shall they add to thee" - long spiritual and eternal life, and peace that passeth all understanding. And what are his commandments? "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee" - that is, Christ, "the way, the truth, and

the life." Slight him not by a carnal worldly spirit. "Love not the world, nor the things that are in it." Let faith as a chain grace your neck, let love keep him close in your heart. "So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man." "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart " - let not sin work faith out of your heart - " and lean not unto thine own understanding " - no, not in secret prayer. Let not your heart deceive you in partly seeking God and partly leaning to self. How wise and needful is this counsel, and how seldom watched! Neglect of this stops more prayers than we are aware of. But it goes on, "In all thy ways acknowledge him;" and then comes the promise, "he shall direct thy paths." These are the steps that never slide [Psalm xxxvii. 31]. O sweet Counsellor! heavenly Guide! thus to tutor and direct a worm. "Be not wise in thine own eyes" - in thine own fleshly conceit; but "fear the Lord, and depart from evil." And then the whole of it is summed up in this sweet spiritual and divine promise, "it shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones."

My heart really melts with love and gratitude for the Lord's gracious dealings with me, a poor abject and afflicted sinner; kept by the mighty power of God; regarded in the lowest place; picked up and restored like the lost sheep in the wilderness.

I have often thought of your case, and the trials you have lately been in. How little in our own eyes these things make us feel! How the Lord resents and resists flesh and blood in every direction! He breaks our hard and stubborn hearts, and gives us contrite spirits, and then shows us that he delights in such, and beholds them in Christ Jesus. May you and I be enabled to keep close to him by prayer and meditation, and be found watching when he comes. I feel my body mortal more and more daily, and have many serious thoughts of my latter end - how it will be; and the best way to meet it is to live a watchful life, and endeavour to keep up communion Now.

Yours &c. J. B.

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