A STUDY OF JAMES (20)

Bringing Back a Fallen Brother

James 5:19-20

The Book of James

- This lesson brings our study of James to its conclusion.
- We have addressed numerous practical applications.
- His audience was primarily Jewish converts who were scattered abroad, but the lessons apply to each of us, even today.
- In this lesson we want to address bringing back an erring brother. Consider **Luke 15:1-7** as we begin.

Our context? **5:19-20**

- *Brethren* – James begins with this term of endearment. We are family!
- *If anyone wanders from the truth?*
- Throughout this letter James has described HOW one ought to live to remain faithful. Sometimes applying what is taught is hard to do. And while we wish everyone would remain faithful – the love of many grows cold.

Our context? **5:19-20**

- *If anyone **wanders** from the truth?*
- Some drift from the truth – **Hebrews 2:1**
- **Matthew 18:12-14** – a sheep goes astray
- **2 Peter 2:20-22** – entangled again in the world
- **Galatians 1:6-7** – turning to a different gospel (cf. **Gal. 5:4**)
- **Hebrews 10:25-26** – they forsake their brethren
- There are many ways one may "wander" – false doctrine, returning to sin, failing to endure, losing one's love or commitment, etc.

Our context? **5:19-20**

- *From the truth* – the way of Christ.
- *And someone turns him back*
- If someone in family is in crisis, we care! We will not simply let them continue to deteriorate. We will take whatever measures we can to restore them.
- WHO is that *someone*? Is it you? **Gal. 6:1** – you who are spiritual.
- To *turn back* is to bring one to repentance – returning one to a state of faithfulness.

Our context? **5:19-20**

- *Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way…*
- Words of encouragement to one willing to put forth effort to save a brother. It does NOT go unnoticed! By the one restored, by others who were equally concerned AND by God and our Lord.

Our context? **5:19-20**

- *…will save a soul from death*
- This is spiritual death the result of sin (**Romans 6:23**)
- **Hebrews 10:35-39** – a warning to not cast away your confidence
- **2 Peter 2:20-22** – the latter end is worse…
- **2 Timothy 2:12** – if we deny Him, He also will deny us
- **2 Corinthians 13:5** warns us to constantly examine yourselves
- **Hebrews 10:26-31** – no longer remains a sacrifice
- **John 15:6** – if we fail to abide in Christ…

Our context? **5:19-20**

- *…and will cover a multitude of sins*
- Likely this is describing the one who is restored.
- He has been forgiven of ALL his sins as he/she returns to the Lord.
  - Also possibly future sins to be committed by the unrepentant will be avoided
  - Sins involving others, including brethren, etc.
- This is not about hiding what one has done.
- **Psalm 32:1-2** – *Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven. Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.*

How do we turn someone back?

- Since this is a goal, consider the following:
- **Galatians 6:1-2 –** One overtaken in a trespass
  - *You who are spiritual* – we need to be right with God ourselves. **Matthew 7:3-4**
- *With a spirit of gentleness* – mild, even tempered, controlled. While there are times for stronger measures this is where we want to begin. **Jude 22-23**
- *Considering yourself* – don't get caught up in sinful activities
- *Bear one another's burdens* – **James 5:13-16, 1 Thessalonians 5:14**

How do we turn someone back?

- Since this is a goal, consider the following:
- **2 Timothy 2:24-25 –** *able to each* (God's word has the answer)*, gentle, patient, in humility correcting.* This is not about your wants or ego.
- **1 John 4:20-21 –** *with love* – we care which is WHY we are trying to win one back.
  1 Peter 4:8 - *And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."*

How do we turn someone back?

- Since this is a goal, consider the following:
- **Matthew 18:15-17 –** a pattern to begin with!
  - Go to him alone
  - Then take one or two – trusted witnesses
  - Tell it to the church – before final action, have anyone who has influence try.
  - IF all else fails, withdraw from them. For the sake of the purity of the body AND with the hope of winning them back - **1 Corinthians 5:4-5**

  2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 – *admonish him as a brother*

How do we turn someone back?

- Since this is a goal, consider the following:
- What NOT to do:
  - Gossip – telling everyone else about it
  - Jump to conclusion without all the facts
  - Being a busybody and looking for or creating problems. **Cf. Matthew 7:1-2**
  - Public rebuke BEFORE private attempts (there are some exceptions to this – **e.g., Galatians 2:11-14ff, Matthew 23, etc.**)
  - Ignoring one's sins and struggles hoping they will go away.

Why the abrupt ending of James?

- We are not given the reason (by default)
- Perhaps his audience was impersonal
- Perhaps James was a man of few (but powerful) words
- The final admonition summarizes how to deal with those caught by the various things he has discussed
- The summary point reminds us that we need each other!
- The ending emphasizes a “business like” direction for these instructions (formal direction)
- Is this a call to those who are faithful to step up for the preservation of the body of Christ where they are?

Concluding thoughts:

- Much more could be said about this subject AND the book of James.
- It is my hope we have found reminders and greater insight concerning the various subjects James has addressed.
- But, even as James himself said – rather than just knowing these things, let us seek to APPLY them to our lives (**James 1:21-25**)
- To live as James has written is to be faithful to our Lord!

Are you a doer of His word?