

TURNING FROM SIN

James 5:19-20

As we complete our Journey through James, we are reminded of those who no longer walk with Jesus. So....NOW WHAT? Do we sit back & write them off as a lost cause OR do we go back in to rescue & restore those who have wandered off?

"James" is a letter written to Jewish followers of Jesus who are being asked to examine themselves and ask, "***Is my faith the real deal or just an empty shell?***". Throughout the writing, James (AKA Jacob) reminds followers of Jesus are to have **Faith That Works**, a faith that TRUSTS and OBEYS in the good times and in the tough times. Jacob demonstrates over and over again that there's a big difference between believing THAT and believing IN.

James 2:19 (NET) You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that—and tremble with fear.

There is a difference between believing THAT and believing IN Jesus. Even demons believe that Jesus exists & who He is, yet they don't believe IN Him - they don't TRUST Him.

Many people in our culture really believe it doesn't matter how we BEHAVE, as long as we say we BELIEVE. Where is THAT taught in Scripture? IT ISN'T.

IT'S NOT OKAY TO WALK AWAY FROM JESUS and be okay with Jesus.

☀ **Billy Graham** "*No man can be said to be truly converted to Christ who has not bent his will to Christ. He may give intellectual assent to the claims of Christ and may have had emotional religious experiences; however, he is not truly converted until he has surrendered his will to Christ as Lord, Savior, and Master.*"¹

Jacob (AKA James) had to make that shift from *believing THAT* Jesus existed to *believing IN* Jesus as **Lord of his life**. And that's how he kicked off this writing.

James 1:1 (NET) From **James, a slave** of God and **the Lord Jesus Christ**, to the twelve tribes dispersed abroad. Greetings!

More than a big brother, great teacher, or miracle worker, Jesus was the LORD over his life! James demonstrates how his audience can know that Jesus is Lord (e.g. authority) over their lives too.

Week 2: We asked a question - **Who Do You Trust?**

- **BIG TRUTH: Faith is more about WHO we trust than HOW we trust.**

One of the ways we can tell if our faith is real is by how we respond to suffering. Trials help us to reprioritize - to see what really matters most. Trials make us consciously aware of our need for God's presence and God's people.

TESTING ⇒ ENDURANCE ⇒ MATURITY

"When we see tough times through these lenses, the question changes from: ***Why must I GO through this to How will I GROW through this?***"

¹ Billy Graham, The Annals of America, Volume 17, p. 395.

Today's Teaching: **TURNING FROM SIN**

Sadly, many people just drift away without much effort to turn them back. Yet this is what Jacob closes his letter with - a challenge to do something many aren't willing to do, confront, correct, & restore those who have wandered away.

Wandering Ways

- 1) **Beliefs.** Twisting the Bible to fit Beliefs.
- 2) **Behavior.** Sinful actions get justified.
- 3) **Distance.** Darkness doesn't like to be exposed by the light. (Jn. 3:20)

James 5:19-20 (NET) ¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, ²⁰ he should know that the one who turns a sinner back from his wandering path **will save that person's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.**

This passage is referring to those who have been a part of the body of Christ - **anyone among you.** *Do YOU know anyone who has walked away from Jesus?* The first century leaders experienced it too. John writes about many who stand against Christ (i.e. anti-Christ) who used to be a part of the church.

1 John 2:19 (NET) They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us, because if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But **they went out from us to demonstrate that all of them do not belong to us.**

Paul writes about those who are no longer around, those he had to confront because of their blasphemous BELIEFS.

1 Timothy 1:19-20 (NET) ¹⁹ To do this you must hold firmly to faith and a good conscience, which **some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck in regard to the faith.** ²⁰ Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

Paul has used this phrase before regarding a man in with sinful BEHAVIOR.

1 Corinthians 5:5 (NET) turn this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so **that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.**

Paul IS confronting and correcting, but he is NOT condemning. His hope is that they would return to the Lord and be restored to the church family (Paul was practicing what Jesus had taught His disciples to do.)

The goal of confrontation & correction is RESTORATION, not condemnation.

According to Jesus, this is the preferable outcome.

Matthew 18:15 (NET) "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault when the two of you are alone. If he listens to you, **you have regained your brother.**

Paul longed to see this as well.

Galatians 6:1 (NET) Brothers and sisters, if a person is discovered in some sin, you who are spiritual **restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness**. Pay close attention to yourselves, so that you are not tempted too.

It seems that this man, whom Paul had the Corinthians confront & correct - the man who was "handed over to Satan" so that his soul would be saved - came back!

2 Corinthians 2:6-8 (NET) ⁶ This punishment on such an individual by the majority is enough for him, ⁷ so that now instead you should rather **forgive and comfort him**. This will keep him from being overwhelmed by excessive grief to the point of despair.⁸ Therefore I urge you to **reaffirm your love for him**.

You will experience both JOY & PAIN that results from confronting & correcting. JOY when another believer LISTENS and responds well. PAIN when anger is directed towards you. This is why most avoid confrontation. But there is an incredible payoff in helping others TURN FROM SIN.

James 5:20b (NET) The one who turns a sinner back from his wandering path **will save that person's soul from death** and **will cover a multitude of sins**.

THE PAIN IS WORTH THE PAYOFF!

- 1) **No eternal consequences of sin**. That person will experience eternal life with you!
- 2) **No more earthly consequences of sin**. Relationships (friendships, marriages) without sin are good!

The goal of confrontation & correction is RESTORATION, not condemnation.

Are you TURNING FROM SIN & helping others do the same? Is there anyone YOU KNOW who has walked away from the faith that you need to attempt to RESTORE? May God use us to help **turn a sinner back from his wandering path**.

Discussion Questions

1. How did today's teaching challenge you, encourage you, or stir up questions you need to have answered?
2. **Read James 5:19-20**. Why do so many avoid confronting & correcting those who have walked away from faith & obedience in Jesus?
3. Discuss how beliefs, behavior, & distance from growing believers are warning signs that a person has wandered from the truth.
4. Knowing it is God's will that we confront & correct, and trusting that He will work through us, what are the 2 possible outcomes & why would it be worth attempting to contact someone who has wandered away?
5. Remember today's BIG TRUTH? Fill in the gaps and talk about why this is necessary. **The goal of confrontation & correction is _____, not _____.**
6. Looking back through the passages about those who claimed Christ and needed to be confronted (*1 John 2:19, 1 Tim. 1:19-20, 1 Corinthians 5:5 & 2 Cor. 2:6-8, Matt. 18:15, Gal. 6:1*). How do these passages encourage you to about the importance of confronting & correcting for the sake of restoration? Share about a time when this was the outcome.
7. PRAY for one another & share any struggles you can help each other with.