

Being Your Brother's Keeper (lesson #13)

James 5:19-20

Theme of this epistle: The day-to-day living of true religion, the showing—in a practical way—what following Christ is all about.

The scriptures clearly teach that a Christian can fall from grace; he can “err from the truth” & be in a condition of spiritual death (2 Pet 2:20-21).

Satan does not give up on a person when he/she becomes a Christian; if anything, the Devil becomes fiercer in his attempt to overthrow one's faith.

James, like the apostle Peter, reminds us that a terrible fate awaits the child of God who departs from the Truth & refuses to repent of sins.

In this matter, James makes it clear that we are our “brother's keeper”; we have a duty to humbly exhort an erring brother to come back to the Lord (Gal 6:1).

By the way, where did the phrase “brother's keeper” originate? (See Gen 4:9)

1. Does the one who “wanders” in verse 19 refer to a child of God?

Yes! This one was “among” them, & he had “erred from the truth” (Jn 17:17).

a. Then explain the KJV use of the words “convert him”.

“Convert” (kjb) – epistrepho (ep-ee-stref'-o); to revert – strepho (stref'-o); to twist, i.e. turn quite around or reverse.

Thus, later translations read, “turns him back” (nkjb; nasu).

This is not the attempt toward someone's initial conversion to Christ.

2. What does *conversion*, in this case, accomplish?

It “will save a [his] soul from death” (Eph 2:1, 5; Col 2:13; Isa 59:2; Ezek 18:4, 20; 1 Jn 3:4; Jn 8:34).

It “will...cover a multitude of [his] sins” – **God** takes account of sins; **He** adds them up; **He** does not release anyone of the guilt of any sin until he has turned from it (**Isa 30:1**).

3. What must an erring Christian do to be converted?

He must repent & pray in confession of his guilt (Acts 8:22; 1 Jn 1:9; Jas 5:16).

What is the difference between repentance & conversion?

Peter stated that repentance will come before conversion, whether that be initial conversion as in (1 Thess 1:9), or conversion (or turning back) to the Lord (Acts 3:19 – one could argue that the Jews had turned away from the Lord having once been in fellowship with Him).

4. What is the church’s duty toward the erring that will not be converted?

1st – We must be observant to their needs (Phil 2:4).

Out in the world people are selfish, self-serving, self-interested, often pushing others down & delighting in their fall.

2nd – We should pray that they would be spared from further temptations & spurred to come to repentance one day.

We cannot pray that God would forgive them apart from repentance (1 Jn 5:16).

3rd – “And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person & do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet do not count him as an enemy, but **admonish him as a brother**” (2 Thess 3:14-15; Matt 18:15; **Prov 9:7-9**; Psa 141:5; Ti 3:10; **Prov 25:12**; see also Matt 5:23-24; Mark 11:25-26)

5. Where do we most often fail in this process?

1st – Observing the need?

2nd – Remembering to pray for their repentance?

3rd – Admonishing them to pursue right conduct?

IN SPITE OF ALL WE HAVE STUDIED IN THIS LESSON ABOUT OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO RESTORE THE ERRING, THE ERRING ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN RESTORATION.

6. Explain the process of repentance in the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:17-21).

1st – HE UNDERSTOOD HIS STATE – “He came to himself”

He admitted his lost & unhappy plight.

He yearned for home & Father.

He repented of having sinned against His Father.

2nd – HE RESOLVED TO CHANGE HIS STATE – “I will arise & go to my Father”

He did not say, “I know I should go to my Father, but....”

He did not hesitate; he held nothing back.

He made a firm decision to be converted (change) his state.

3rd – HE CARRIED OUT HIS RESOLVE – “He arose & came to his father.”

Good intentions are to no avail if the resolution is never carried out.

4TH – HE CONFESSED HIS SINS & ASKED FORGIVENESS – “Father, I have sinned against heaven & in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son”

He made no excuses; He did not rationalize his misconduct & try to justify it in some way.

He did not slip in the back door & pretend as though everything was back to normal.

CLOSING

The epistle of James is what Christian living is all about.

1. It means taking heed 1st to one's own heart & life, guarding his own commitment to the Lord against the temptation to do evil in any form.
2. It means looking then to the spiritual needs of others who are children of God but are struggling under a heavy load of difficulty & discouragement.
3. It means loving these people enough to stand with them & bear their burdens as best we can.
4. It means lifting those who have already fallen beneath the weight of care & walking with them until they have recovered their spiritual strength.

It is by these means that the world will come to know that we are truly disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ ([Jn 13:34-35](#)).

Let each one of us resolve to NOT be among the number of those who “wander from the truth”, but let us resolve to live a godly & faithful life.

Let us live so as to be able to say, “we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” ([Heb 10:39](#)).

Furthermore, let us love our brothers & sisters in The Faith to the degree that we will encourage the faithful & strive to reclaim the unfaithful.