

Sermon Outline

BRINGING BACK THE WAYWARD *James 5:19-20*

Introduction

This is a call to believers to do evangelism in the church.

1. The evidence about this person.

- a) He is within the fellowship of the local church (*anyone among you wanders*, verse 19; cf. 1 John 2:19). *Wander* (Greek: *planeethee*) refers to the condition of the unsaved (see Mat 22:29 – Jesus says of the Sadducees that they are “*wrong*.” The word “*wrong*” is the same word as “*wander*”). He is called a “*sinner*” (verse 2). The term “*sinner*” is used only of the unregenerate (Mat 9:13; Rom 5:8).
- b) He wanders *from the truth* (verse 19). The “*truth*” is the Word of God (cf. James 1:18).
- c) He lives in *wandering* (verse 20) or *the error of his way* (KJV).

Alec Motyer: “Truth is a living thing; when it grips our minds it changes our lives. If we claim to know the truth, then the Bible would require us to prove our claim not only by reciting a creed and understanding it, but by the evidence of a way of life matching the truth.”

2. The danger this person is facing.

- Death (verse 20) – eternal death (see Rom 6:23).
- It is in a state of eternal torment in the lake of fire (Rev 20:14; Mk 9:48).
- Because of “*a multitude of sins*” (see Psa 5:10).
- His sins must be “*covered*.” May mean two things:
 - 1 Peter 4:8, “*Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*”
What we happen to know about each other’s sinfulness is quietly kept under wraps.
 - The idea of ‘cover’ in financial transactions. A totally sufficient payment, through the blood of sacrifice, by which God has dealt with our sin.

3. The instrument that God uses – “*anyone*” (verse 19).

- 2 Cor 5:18, “*All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.*” So if we were reconciled by God, then we have the ministry of reconciliation.
- It is the ordinary and general way of God to use instrument, though He does not need to.
- Instrumentality is very honourable to Him. Though it is bad instrument, it brings glory to Him and exalts Him (see 2 Cor 12:9).
- By using us, God confers on us the highest honour which men can receive.

4. **The objective and the aim.**

- The goal is to ‘bring back’ or to ‘save,’ to ‘convert’ and ‘cover the sins.’
- Whose sins and who will be saved from death, the Christian or the wandering sinner?
Answer: The wandering sinner. Our work will not anymore cover a multitude of our sins which have been forgiven by Christ on the cross.
- Can we bring the sinner back and save his soul from death? No, only Christ can forgive sin and save the sinner.
- Alec Motyer: “Though we cannot convert them, we must labour to do so. Though we cannot save them from death, we must strive for their spiritual welfare as if their eternal destiny rested with us. Though we cannot cover their sins, we must follow the example of the Son of God who can do so, and hold nothing dear to ourselves and no sacrifice too great if only they are saved.”
- It is the most difficult task because we are not in control of the outcome.
- Spurgeon: “If God in His mercy does not make us useful to the conversion of sinners, we are not therefore to say we are sure we are not the children of God. If I testify to them the Truth of God and they reject His Gospel. If I faithfully preach His Truth and they scorn it, my ministry is not therefore void. It has not returned to God void for even in the punishment of those rebels He will be glorified. And if He cannot get praise from their songs, He will at last get honour from their condemnation and overthrow when He shall cast them into the fire forever.”
- James exclaims, “*let him know*” or the better translation is “you know.” James wants you to know what the results of your labour of love are; what that will mean in the lives of those you rescue.

Conclusion

- Evangelism is not only in the church but also outside the church.
- Jesus said He came to seek and to save the lost. He sacrificed Himself for the lost and He rejoices even in the salvation of one soul (See Jesus’ parables in Luke 15).
- Is that also our desire? Is that our greatest joy? To bring someone to Christ?
- May “*the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised*” (2 Cor 5:14).