



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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STUDY 44: RESCUING THE PERISHING

James 5:19-20

James 5:19-20 “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”.

What a fitting way for James to end his epistles to the scattered brethren by reminding them of their responsibilities towards one another. This elevates man from spiritual blindness and shallowness induced by self-centeredness to recognising and discharging his God given mission on earth. Right from the time of Cain and Abel, sin has been waging relentless battles for the souls of men “... sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Genesis 4:6-7). Cain’s “Am I my brother’s keeper?” response to the divine question “where is thy brother?” is evidence of ignorance and irresponsibility from a self centred, narrow minded and blind individual who has lost the battle for his soul. Here we notice that God Himself set the example by warning Cain. As children of God we must follow in the footsteps of our Heavenly Father by warning those who may not realise the danger they are in. In this study, we see both the believers’ responsibility towards erring souls and the gracious means for rescuing souls back to the right path.

RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THOSE WHO ERR FROM THE TRUTH

Writing to the Roman believers (Romans 14:7-8,13-17) Paul succinctly pointed out that “... none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself...” and used this as an opening gambit to warn believers not to “... put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” as that amounts to not walking charitably and has the potential of ruining the work of Christ. This highlights the awesome responsibility that man has towards his fellow pilgrims on this terrestrial ball while on their way to eternity.

Jesus acknowledged the fact that in this world offences will come, but He also points out not only the believers responsibility but also the practical steps he must take toward enabling his fellow man recognise his faults and be restored back to fellowship (Matthew 18:15-17). A number of scriptures make similar demands on believers regarding their responsibility towards one another. A few examples are:

1. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; **considering thyself**, lest thou also be tempted. **Bear ye one another’s burdens**, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:1-2).
2. “**Look not every man** on his own things, but **every man** also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:4).
3. “And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:22-23).
4. “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:25-26).
5. “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he

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shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul" (Ezekiel 3:17-21).

RESTORATION OF THE LOST FROM ERROR TO THE TRUTH

James also pointed out the duty and benefits of converting sinners from the error of their ways. As the Grace of God still abounds to save sinners (Romans 5:20-21; 6:1) we must avail ourselves of this grace to rescue the perishing. In the following scriptures we find examples of the means of grace that aided the restoration of the lost from the error of their ways to the truth:

1. The love of the father restored the prodigal son back to the safety of the father's home "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. (Luke 15:17-24).
2. The prayers and timely warning of Jesus kept Peter's faith from failing under satanic attack, as well as paved the way for his conversion. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me" (Luke 22:31-34).
3. Jesus' loving look of reminder brought Peter back to senses / repentance - "And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:55-61).
4. Jesus' poignant response to questions and preaching enlightened those in error – "Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:29-32).