

James 5:19-20

“Turn Them Back”

I. Introduction

- A. **My Brothers** — This is a message *to* the church; a message to those who remain faithful followers of Christ; *about* those who were once members of the church and have “wandered” from the truth.
- B. **If anyone wanders from the truth** — The old timers called it “backsliding.” It was a word used of those who have demonstrated faith in Christ but willfully chosen to live an immoral life. A child of God who has rejected God’s way of doing things and instead chosen a lifestyle of sin.
- C. **Truth** — The doctrines of the faith and the call of God to live a life worthy of the calling of Christ...to believe and live righteously...God's way.
- D. **(Aside) You cannot live this way and be at peace. If you are genuinely a believer in Christ you cannot live a lifestyle of sin and not feel the conviction of God.**
- E. **1 John 5:18** — “We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.”

- F. This verse means that if you are genuinely a believer you might enter a time of backsliding but you won't stay there. Jesus has you in the palm of His hand...He will keep the devil from stealing the soul and life of the genuine believer. We are protected.**
- G. Go After Them** — There is a **tenderness** in James' words here. **If you see someone wandering from the truth...go after them!** He is heart broken and conveys a sense of urgency.
- H. We should be broken over those who have chosen to reject Christ. We should have a sense of agony over the pain they bring to our God's heart and the destructive path they have chosen for themselves.**
- I. Matthew 18:12** — “If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?”
- J.** There should be an **urgency** to go after these formerly faithful brothers and sisters in Christ as well!
- K. Thanks to the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, everyone has heard of the "midnight ride of Paul Revere." But few have heard of Israel Bissel, a humble post rider on the Boston-New York route. After the Battle of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, Bissel was ordered to raise the alarm in New Haven, Connecticut. He reached Worcester,**

Mass., normally a day's ride, in two hours. There, according to tradition, his horse promptly dropped dead. Pausing only to get another mount, Bissel pressed on and by April 22 was in New Haven--but he didn't stop there! He rode on to New York, arriving April 24, and then stayed in the saddle until he reached Philadelphia the next day. Bissel's 126 hour, 345 mile ride signaled American militia units throughout the Northeast to mobilize for war.

- L. Should the urgency for souls be any less??? We MUST go after those who have gone astray! Pray for them, talk to them, encourage them, rebuke them. We must never give up on them...ever...we must pray, encourage, bless and love them back to faithfulness.**
- M. Bring him back — “Healed of his backsliding and reinstated again in the enjoyment of God’s favor and fellowship.”**
- N. The goal is to see them come to a place where they enjoy God. Where they value their relationship with Him above the sin that has tempted them away. To love God more than that which they wandered away to pursue.**
- O. This is an important note — When we go after the one who has wandered away we do so with a call to the joy of relationship with God. We can mention to them the wrongness of their sinful choices but the real motivation is the life found in**

Christ. AND if they are a true believer this should be the greatest encouragement we could ever offer them to repentance!

- P. We are bombarded with sin. We are emotional creatures with highs and lows. We are prone to wander and sin because we are still battling sin until we are taken into heaven where there is no more sin or power of sin working against us.
- Q. **We all need to be reminded of the joy and pleasure found in our relationship with Christ.**
- R. **Remember Hebrews 11:6!** If we pursue God we will be rewarded and that reward is Himself!

I. Two Things Happen If The Wandering Repent

- A. **If we have reached out to a believer that has wandered from the truth and successfully bring them back to a faithful walk with Christ one of two things as happened:**
 - 1. **Save His Soul From Death** — This can be understood in one of two ways...and both ways are valid interpretations of this passage: **The person was not a genuine believer and your pursuit of them has led them to true repentance and faith in Christ.** So they are rescued from eternal death in hell...**A second interpretation is that you rescued them from an**

early and untimely physical death. The Lord disciplines those He loves and if we will not repent He brings us on home. A stubborn, rebellious child of God receives the Lord's harsh discipline because He loves them.

a) **1 Corinthians 11:29-30** “For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and a number of you have fallen asleep.”

2. **Cover a Multitude of Sins** — Kept the believer from sinking deeper in his or her rebellion leading to more and more sinful acts...and the consequences these acts might bring.

B. The greatest act of the Christian is to worship God. There is nothing higher and nothing greater. Our worship is the highest priority of our walk with God.

C. The second greatest thing we can do as Christians is lead others to a relationship with Christ themselves. This is a *unique* opportunity in that we can worship God in heaven but we can never lead anyone to faith in Christ there.

D. Leading people to be saved and leading backsliders to repentance and rededication of their life in Christ are things we will not do in heaven for their will be no occasion for such.

E. So apart from worship should this not be the burning desire of our heart? To see people God created give Him the worship

that is due His name? To see lips that have yet to praise and bless our God do so? To see lost men, women and children know the joy of relationship and worship of our God?

F. Perhaps the most common fear Christians have with doing this work of evangelism and encouraging wandering believers is that of being rejected. Some years ago a survey was given to those attending training sessions for the Billy Graham crusade in Detroit. One question asked, "What is your greatest hindrance to witnessing?" Nine percent said they were too busy to remember to do it. Twenty-eight percent felt the lack of real information to share. None said they didn't really care. Twelve percent said their own lives were not speaking as they should. But by far the largest group were the 51 percent whose biggest problem was the fear of how the other person would react! None of us likes to be rejected, ridiculed, or regarded as an oddball.

G. We cannot allow fear to keep us from the urgency of the hour. Our time on earth is short and the privilege is an exclusively earthly one. We must call the wandering and lost to Christ while there is still time!

H. Some of us need to make this a serious matter of prayer...that we would overcome our fear and feelings of inadequacy and sense the urgency of the moment. That we would open our

mouth and share the Gospel...pray and have faith for those separated from Christ.

I. Conclusion

A. Robert Robinson was just a small boy when his dad died. In 18th century England, there was little in the way of a social welfare system and this meant that he had to go to work while still very young. Without a father to guide and steady him, Robert fell in with bad companions. One day his gang of rowdies harassed a drunken gypsy. Pouring liquor into her, they demanded she tell their fortunes for free. Pointing her finger at Robert she told him he would live to see his children and grandchildren. This struck a tender spot in his heart. "If I'm going to live to see my children and grandchildren," he thought, "I'll have to change my way of living. I can't keep on like I'm going now." Robert Robinson decided to go hear the Methodist preacher George Whitefield. To cover his "weak" urge, he suggested that the boys go with him and heckle the gathering. Whitefield preached on the text: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7). Robert left in dread, under a deep sense of sin that lasted for three years. Finally, at the age of twenty, Robert made peace with God and immediately set out to

become a Methodist preacher himself. Two years later, in 1757, he wrote a hymn which expressed his joy in his new faith:

- B. Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing
Thy grace Streams of mercy, never ceasing, Call for songs of
loudest praise. Teach me some melodious sonnet, Sung by
flaming tongues above. Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
Mount of Thy redeeming love.**
- C. But that is not the whole story. Years later there was a widely
circulated story about Robinson...A widely-told, but
unverifiable, story says that one day as he was riding in a
stagecoach a lady asked him what he thought of the hymn she
was humming. He responded, "Madam, I am the poor
unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I
would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the
feelings I had then."**
- D. O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be! Let
thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts
above.**
- E. All of us are prone to wander. All of us are tempted. All of us
have days of discouragement. All of us will suffer loss. We will**

find ourselves in need of encouragement...in need of someone to remind us of the joy we have in Christ.

F. All of us will all find ourselves with an opportunity to do the same for someone else.

G. This is the ministry of God's church...Worship God...to save the lost and be a ministry to one another. "Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength...Love your neighbor as yourself."