

A Conclusion of Conviction # 21

James 5: 19-20

Tonight we have come to the concluding passage in our study of James. I think you will agree this has been a challenging study as we have been forced to examine our personal walk with the Lord and the difficulties we all face living in a body of flesh. James began with a very practical approach to the Christian life and he maintained that approach throughout the book. Much of what we have studied has been simple, and yet very profound. The passages we have considered remain as relevant and needful in our day as they were the day James penned these enlightening and eternal words.

As we have come to expect in recent months, James continues his straightforward approach in his closing comments. I have said that James would not likely be called upon to preach many revival meetings in our day. He spoke truth without apology and confronts believers where they are. His exhortations and admonitions were seasoned with grace, but he was never afraid to reveal truth or challenge error among the church.

This approach is no more popular today than it was then, but it is needful. We desperately need those who will stand upon the Word, confront sin, and exalt Christ from a heart of love. I am convinced this book needs to be preached and taught in every congregation throughout the world.

In his concluding words, James reveals the need to confront sin and the benefit of responding to godly conviction. In concluding our study I want to examine the [imperatives](#) disclosed as we think on: [A Conclusion of Conviction](#).

I. The Position Revealed – As we begin this evening, we need to be reminded to whom James is speaking. He addressed this letter to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, writing a personal letter to believers. He has addressed the attitudes and actions of non-believers, but the focus of this letter is aimed toward the Christian. These concluding comments are no different. He continues to address the [Brethren](#), speaking to those who are born again in Christ, part of the church.

- James was inspired of the Holy Spirit to write these words, but I am certain there were particular people and situations that came to mind as he penned them. As I studied this passage, I was reminded of the need for us to approach Scripture in search of something specific for our lives. I have preached messages before and heard comments like: “Boy, you ought to preach that one on Sunday morning when those that need to hear it are here.” Why do we tend to assume that particular messages or certain portions of Scripture are always meant for someone else? (I know that we must rightly divide the Word; i.e...There are passages that are particular to Israel, and not meant for the church.) However, we need to approach the Bible seeking to hear from the Lord, gaining insight and instruction for our lives.

- He has something to say to us, regarding our lives and the struggles we face. There are passages that deal with the sin in our lives! James wanted the church to know this was given to them, and it is for our benefit as well.

I. The Position Revealed

II. The Possibility Revealed (19a) – [Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth...](#) Keep in mind he has again addressed the believer. James reveals it is entirely possible for a believer to err from the truth, to wander or stray from the truth and ways of God. We tend to categorize it as “backsliding.” Surely he had known those who had made professions of faith in Christ, their lives were being lived for the Lord, bearing fruit for Him, and yet there came a time when they strayed from the truth and embraced the ways of the world.

- We would do well to bear in mind that we too could stumble and err from the truth. No doubt we have already experienced seasons in life where we have strayed from the Lord and our lives were not lived in light of His righteousness. We live in bodies of flesh that are prone to sin. We face temptation on every hand, and if we aren’t very careful, we will submit to those temptations and stray from the Lord.

- It is dangerous to assume we could never err from the faith or suffer spiritual defeat. *Edinburgh Castle was captured only once in the whole history of Scotland. Its defenders thought that the steepness of the rock on one side made it inaccessible and impregnable, so they put no sentries there. In the gray mist of the early morning a little party of the enemy crept up the precipitous slopes and surprised the garrison into surrender. It was captured at its strongest point.*¹
[2 Pet.3:17 – Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.](#) [1 Cor.10:12 – Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.](#)

III. The Persuasion Revealed (19) – [Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;](#) James speaks of the obligation to confront sin and the benefit of godly conviction. I will admit this verse has caused trouble and confusion for some. There are those who suppose James is speaking of a believer that was once saved, losing his salvation, and being converted to the faith again. This view is in error. The word convert means “*to turn toward or turn back.*” Clearly there would be application for a lost sinner realizing the error of his ways and turning toward the Lord, turning back from the life of sin. However, we must always keep Scripture in context.

- Keep in mind James is speaking to the brethren, those who have already placed their faith and trust in Christ, receiving salvation. He is speaking of a believer who has erred from the truth, straying from God, realizing his error, and turning back toward God and away from sin. In essence James speaks of biblical repentance. There can be no genuine repentance if one refuses to turn from their sin toward the Lord.

- Before we move on, we need to understand the involvement of other believers in the repentance of one who has strayed. We see an admonishment to do all we can to persuade those who have erred from the truth to return to God and forsake their sin. This is not being nose-y of getting in someone else's business, but admonishing them in love to abandon their sin and return to God. Here we discover a biblical mandate to reach out to those who have erred from truth, seeking to help restore them to a right relationship with Christ. **Matt.18:15 – Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.** Gal. 6:1 – 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.

I. The Position Revealed

II. The Possibility Revealed (19a)

III. The Persuasion Revealed (19)

IV. The Prevention Revealed (20a) – **Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death.** We must bear in mind that James is speaking of a wayward believer that has returned unto the Lord. Thus he cannot be dealing with spiritual death, that eternal separation from God in hell. I am convinced James is speaking of premature death due to unrepentant sin in the life of a believer. No doubt many have been taken out of this life because they refused to repent of sin, continuing in activity contrary to their relationship with Christ, and bringing reproach on the Lord and His church.

- We live in an age where society is dominated by sin. It has become so prevalent that many have become accustomed to it, numbed by to the devastating effect it has on personal lives and society as a whole. We must bear in mind that God is holy and will never condone sin. He views it as abomination and will deal with sin, whether in the lives of believers or unbelievers. We must never assume that we can continue to sin and never face the chastisement and punishment of God for our sin. I was loved of my parents, but there were boundaries set by them. When I stepped outside those boundaries, I faced the consequences for my decisions, often being punished for my behavior.

- God loves us too much to allow us to continue in sin without chastisement. Christ loved the church enough to die for it, and has no desire for his bride to be contaminated by sin. We can rest assured, God will chastise those who willfully engage in sin with an unrepentant heart.

I. The Position Revealed

II. The Possibility Revealed (19a)

III. The Persuasion Revealed (19)

IV. The Prevention Revealed (20a)

V. The Profit Revealed (20b) – *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 comfort we discover in the closing words of James. When wayward believers return to God, a multitude of sins are covered. The word *hide* literally means “*to cover; to do away with.*” We can rejoice that our sins are covered in the blood of Christ. When repentance is made, sin is done away with. The wayward believer can be completely restored to fellowship in Christ, having his sin covered and put away, never to be remembered again!

- The sins committed in the past are forgiven and possible sin in the future is avoided. The wayward believer has been restored in fellowship and no longer seeks the ways of the world. He now enjoys fellowship with Christ rather than bringing reproach to Him.
- What profit we discover in obedience. We need to do all we can to help restore the wayward to fellowship with Christ. I have never met a believer who had peace apart from a right relationship with the Lord. Their fellowship can be restored, bringing peace again, and future hurt and damage to the body of Christ can be avoided. May we live our lives in such a way to challenge others to walk in fellowship with Christ!

Conclusion: The conclusion of James has challenged my walk with the Lord. I hope we understand that we too are vulnerable to temptation and prone to stray as we walk through this life. None are above sin, and none live perfect lives. We need the presence and power of God continually if we are to live lives pleasing unto the Lord. Simply, we cannot make it on our own. We need the Lord to guide and strengthen us each moment of the day.

Living in a body of flesh we are prone to sin and wander. The believer has the benefit of the indwelling Spirit to guide our path. We would do well to heed the direction of the Spirit. The lost do not enjoy the indwelling Spirit, but they do experience conviction from the Lord. Where are you in the journey today? Are you walking in fellowship with Christ, having trusted Him as your Savior? Maybe you are dealing with the conviction of God, but you haven't yet responded to His gracious offer of salvation. If so, I would urge you to come to Christ in salvation. The lust of the flesh and lure of the world are strong. You cannot make it apart from Jesus!

¹ Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James.