

August 28

Scriptures: Read James 5

Key Verse: "... Whoever turns a sinner from the error his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (James 5:20) (NIV).

Overview

In the context, the key verse is the continuation of a sentence which begins, "My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this:..." The sinner who is being turned "from the error of his way" is someone who has formerly embraced the truth. He/she is probably someone who, for whatever reason, has grown negligent, discouraged, or bitter. Somehow, the light of Christ no longer shines brightly for them. Sin, decay, and death have regained a grip. They're drowning.

So how do we go about bringing the light of Christ back into the backslider's life? Certainly not with condemnation and finger pointing. "I told you so" doesn't do it either. Whatever we do, we must do with wisdom — a heavenly wisdom that "is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere" (3:17). And if you feel anything but wise, why not "ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault..." (1:5). Notice that God Himself gives generously to our inadequacy and does so without laying on any guilt trips ("without finding fault"). He gives graciously, and so should we.

That's why the "grace" we show others "covers a multitude of sins". We forgive rather than condemn. In so doing, the backslider is attracted rather than blinded by the light. The sinner sees himself in the overwhelming presence of grace (from us) and Grace (from God). His sins lose their power, and new life enters in — both for him and for the one "saving" him.

For when we share God's love with someone overwhelmed by sin, we're "only a beggar telling another beggar where to find some bread."

Prayer

Lord, help us today to point someone to You. You are the giver of life "more abundantly" here and now and, in the world to come, life everlasting. May we not be so selfish as to keep the good news of Your salvation to ourselves.