

The Joy of Responsible Ministry
James 5:19-20

I. Introduction

- A. The Christian life as a race – Hebrews 12:1-3

II. Proposition

- A. As Christians, we have a responsibility to encourage one another to persevere in the marathon of faith and to call one another back to path of faith if and when a brother or sister wanders from the truth.
1. In other words, we are to encourage one another to finish the race.
 - a. Contrary to contemporary culture

III. Exposition

A. **The possibility of wandering from the truth (5:19a)**

1. Scripture reminds us that there is a real possibility that those who profess to follow Christ may wander from the truth.
 - a. Jesus' warning - Matthew 24:3-8
 - b. Paul's warning – 2 Timothy 2:14-19
 - c. Peter's warning – 2 Peter 2:12-22
2. The errors may be either doctrinal or moral.
 - a. James is concerned with making sure that those who profess faith in Christ have a genuine faith that is evidenced (marked) by an obedience of faith that expresses itself in love for others.
 - 1). James concerns; Royal law – love one another
3. What we believe about eternal security:
 - a. Those whom God saves, He also sustains and keeps until the end.
 - 1). Some of these may fall away temporarily, but they will return.
 - b. Some who profess faith in Christ are not genuine believers.
 - 1). These fall away and never return.
4. The problem: Among those who profess Christ there are genuine believers and false professors, and we cannot know which professor is real and which is not; however, as Christians we have a responsibility for all who profess faith in Christ to make sure that they not only start the race, but finish the race.
5. What is our responsibility as brothers and sisters in Christ to one who wanders from the truth?

B. **The responsibility of Christians to one another (5:19b)**

1. This is the responsibility of gathered Christians (i.e., the church) to one another:
 - a. Preaching – 2 Timothy 3-4
 - b. Formal church discipline:
 - 1). 1 Corinthians 5
 - 2). Matthew 18
 - 3). Galatians 6:1
2. This is the responsibility of Christians to one another in small groups (four aspects):
 - a. Progressive sanctification – Ephesians 4:11-16
 - b. Mutual care for one another - Prayer – 1 Corinthians 12
 - c. Biblical fellowship – all the one another passages
 - d. Expression of spiritual gifts – 1 Corinthians 12:
 - 1). Encouragement & Exhortation – Accountability
3. This is the responsibility of individual Christians to one another.

- a. Just note all the one another passages in Scripture.
 - b. To encourage one another to continue in the faith!
 - c. To encourage those who stray to return to the faith!
4. We have a responsibility to spur one another to finish the race.
- a. ILLUS: Alexandra skiing – pizza, French fries
5. Contrary to what many church-going people believe, the practice of church discipline is motivated by love, is meant to be redemptive and it's goal is the ultimate joy of believers.
- a. 1 Peter 4:8 – “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”
 - 1). Love covers a multitude of sins is a quotation of Proverbs 10:12.

C. The joy of responsible ministry (5:20).

- 1. The joy of regaining a brother or sister in Christ so that they don't face eternal punishment.
 - a. Death – equals the final phase of where sin leads (James 1:15)
 - b. There is great joy in those who turn someone away from death.
 - c. There is great joy in those who have been turned away from death.
- 2. The joy of the returning brother or sister in receiving Christ's forgiveness.
 - a. Covering sin – equals forgiveness (Psalm 32; cf. Proverbs 10:12; 1 Peter 4:8).
 - b. There is great joy in those who lead others to forgiveness.
 - c. There is great joy in those who have received forgiveness.
- 3. James 5:19-20, expose what has been James purpose in this letter.
 - a. Now, he invites us to do likewise and encourage one another to persevere in a faith that works and to turn those who wander from such faith back to Christ.
 - b. He who perseveres in following Christ is wise.
 - c. He who fails to follow Christ is a fool.
- 4. There is great joy in finishing the race.
 - a. ILLUS: John Stephen Akhwari

IV. Conclusion

- A. Have you entered the race? Are you running with endurance? Have you wandered from the path?
- B. 1 Cor. 9:24-27 (ESV) Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

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