

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Notes

Sermon notes for November 25-26, 2000

"Saving a Soul from Death"

James 5:19-20

Dale Whitehead

James wrote this epistle to call professing believers to examine their faith and to make sure it was real.

To help people avoid being deceived, James has given a series of tests by which one's faith can be evaluated.

True saving faith is marked by a proper response to trials which we called the "response to trials test" in James 1:2-18.

True saving faith is marked by a proper response to the Word of God which we called the "response to the Word test" in James 1:19-27.

True saving faith is marked by its proper response to people of various social classes which we called "the impartiality test" in James 2:1-13.

True saving faith is marked by its manifestation in righteous deeds which we called "the works test" in James 2:14-26.

True saving faith is marked by righteous speaking which we called "the speech test" in James 3:1-12.

True saving faith is marked by wisdom from above which we called "the wisdom test" in James 3:13-18.

True saving faith is marked by not being a friend of the world which we called "the friendship with the world test" which extends from James 4:1 to 5:12.

This friendship is shown to manifest itself in four different ways in this particular section. Friendship with the world reveals itself in selfish strife in James 4:1-12, in an attitude of presumptuous self sufficiency in business planning in James 4:13-17, in wrong reactions to experiences of injustice in James 5:1-11 and in self-serving oaths in James 5:12.

Finally true saving faith is marked by prayer which we have considered in James 5:13-18.

Hopefully after this examination had taken place the vast majority of his readers would have had their faith confirmed. But what about those few readers who did not have their faith confirmed?

Christians can be instrumental in restoring straying brothers (James 5:19).

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Notes

Wandering brothers who are restored by caring Christians are saved from death (James 5:20).

This word "sinner" refers to the unsaved in the Scriptures (Proverbs 11:31; 13:6, 22; Matthew 9:13; Luke 7:37, 39; 15:7, 10; 18:13; Romans 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:9, 15; 1 Peter 4:18).

By choosing to call professing believers who stray from the truth "sinners" James in effect is calling them unsaved.

Are all those who stray from the truth unsaved? I don't believe so. Certainly we know that Christians sin and to the extent that they are sinning they are straying from the truth. But this does not mean that they are unsaved it only means based on the visual evidence, they look unsaved.

How would James have us view those professing believers who have strayed from the truth? As saved or unsaved? Unsaved. Why? Because based on the visual evidence they look unsaved.

While Christians may sin, we would not expect their sin to be unceasing sin or that sin would characterize their lives (1 John 3:8-9).

Though we should view a professing believer who has strayed from the truth and living a life characterized by sin as unsaved we are to treat him as saved. In other words we will not be trying to explain the gospel to Him which he already understands and professes to have embraced but rather we will be trying to get him to live a life consistent with that profession (2 Corinthians 7:8-10).

Straying from the truth does not appear to be something that happens overnight. We need to be alert and act quickly. It can be nipped in the bud.

It is not enough for us to say that we are a Christian. Our profession of faith must prove itself to be genuine by the way we live our lives.