

## **CONVERTING A SINNER.**

**"He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."  
– Jas. 5:20.**

Some have supposed that this scripture conflicts with the teaching that there will be a restitution of all. They reason that if the converted ones are saved from death, then death must be the unalterable doom of all not converted. This seems a logical conclusion; but let us view the statement as it stands related to the context, and we will see that, instead of applying it to the world, James applies it to backsliders from the truth. This will be seen by reference to the preceding verse. It is more clearly expressed in the Emphatic Diaglott; therefore we quote from it: "My brethren, if any one among you wander from the TRUTH, and some one turn him back; know you that he who turns back a sinner from his path of error will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."

From this we may see that the converting, or turning back, is of one who has once been enlightened and tasted the good word of God – the truth – but who had wandered into error. If men had penned this they probably would have said, wander from morality, or wander into vice. Few would think of laying so great stress upon what some would term "merely getting the head wrong on some doctrinal matter."

It is far from our aim to speak lightly of vice, or to declare "that it matters not what a man may do if he has a correct theology"; but we do say that the two, faith and character, are very intimately related, and we caution all against the too prevalent view that "it matters not what you believe [truth or error] if you live morally."

This is a device and snare of the devil, by which he hinders many from searching for the truth, and thereby hinders the complete sanctification which is impossible without a knowledge of the truth.

Jesus attested that knowledge of truth was indispensable to entire sanctification; when he prayed the Father for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." And our text implies that to lose the truth, to wander into error, will result in the loss of the sanctifying power – hence a loss or cessation of their sanctification, which, if it continue – if they be not turned back from error – must result in death.

This does not apply at all to "the world of sinners." To turn such from a life of sin to one of morality and virtue would not "save a soul from death." No, none can thus save himself by a moral reform, for if so Jesus would not have died for our sins. It does apply to those who, having been justified freely from the Adamic sin and reckoned free from Adamic death (the first death), have become candidates for the divine nature and are reckoned as having begun life again as "new creatures." Yes, it is these, our "brethren," and it is the more impressive when we remember that it is the new life which might be forfeited, or the second death incurred, by turning aside from the truth.

Looked at thus, with what carefulness should we hold fast the truth ourselves, and with what earnest solicitude should we endeavor to help the brethren who have "wandered from the truth," and to shield the flock of Christ from the snares of error!

The word "wander" well expresses how all errors gradually grow and stealthily intrude upon the sanctified. Seldom or never does our Adversary commence with open error or direct infidelity; but the danger lies in the fact that Satan seeks to clothe himself with a mixture of truth, so that as "an angel of light" he may cause the unguarded to wander. (See 2 Cor. 11:14.)

While many are seeking to turn the world to God, few are claiming the promise of our text by seeking the wanderers of the flock.

While watchfulness against the encroachments of the enemy has been very necessary all through the age, it is specially so now. As a "roaring lion" he has gone about in times past terrifying and persecuting the Church, but they fought the enemy in the open field, and many sealed their testimony with their blood. But in these last times our enemy, still the same, pursues a different policy. Assuming the garb of an angel of light, a messenger of truth, he seeks to poison the food of the hungry household of faith. The slow and cautious steps by which error has been introduced indicates the subtlety of our foe, and should put all on guard and lead them to note with care all the warnings of the Word.

Those who are drawn into the "snare of the fowler," and who unwittingly become his agents in disseminating error, are doubtless honest in a way, being first deceived themselves ("deceiving and being deceived"). And since error fast subdues the new nature and brings into prominence the proclivities of the old, it will not be strange if the endeavor to pluck them from the net of the enemy and to expose the danger to others, will, at least for a time, be misunderstood and bring the wrath of the Adversary upon the faithful servants of God. But if in the face of the foe a soul may be saved from death (the second death) that should be sufficient reward.

We cannot better express our feelings here than in the language of Paul: "We would that ye knew what great conflict we have for you [whom we address through the Tower] and for them at Laodicea [the Lord's children still in the 'spewed out' nominal Church], and for as many as have not seen our face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto

all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God. ...And this we say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words: ...As ye HAVE RECEIVED Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him and established in the faith....Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ" (Col. 2:1-8).

We can readily afford to let the work for the world wait God's due time while we spend all our little talent in ministering to the pressing necessities of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10), in view of the fact that this age is about ended and that the testing and proving for the new nature will soon be over, and the opportunity for gaining the divine nature forever ended – in view also of the fact that the "overcomers" will soon be invested with power, and cause the knowledge of the Lord to fill the earth: thereby accomplishing the turning of all men unto God. In view of both these facts it is pre-eminently our privilege and work to use our utmost endeavor to turn back the wanderers to the truth, and thereby to the sanctification upon which the new life depends. While thus employed, we rejoice to know that some benevolent human hearts sympathize, and some loving hands minister, to the temporal necessities of the suffering world; now "groaning and travailing in pain waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." (Rom. 8:19-22.)

In conclusion, we remark that there are many truths. There are philosophic, and historic, and scientific truths, but from all these we may wander without loss of life. These are all good and valuable, and furnish excellent employment for the natural mind, and both in this and in the coming age will tend to bless and elevate. But these are not the truths commended to the sanctified in Christ Jesus. No, it is divine truth. "Sanctify them through THY TRUTH. Thy word

is truth." We question whether it be possible to be proficient in more than one line of truth. Hence the propriety of following the examples set us, and giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure, receiving truth, which working in us, will sanctify us to the service of him who is "The Truth."

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