

THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

COVERING SINS

A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
PART SIXTY FOUR OF SIXTY FOUR

"My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19,20).

These closing verses of James' epistle contain several important lessons. It is clear that children of God can so sin as to be lost. Despite the efforts of Calvinists to prove their misconceptions concerning "once saved, always saved," no passage makes the possibility of apostasy clearer than this. Who is the subject? "Any among you" can only be those in Christ. This one errs "from the truth" so as to need to be converted. When conversion takes place a soul has been saved from death. The only death that can possibly be is spiritual death. It is the same death in sin from which they were initially saved when they were baptized into Christ (Eph. 2:1,5).

Clearly James stresses our need to seek our brethren who have gone astray. How do we "convert" a sinner from the error of his ways? The method is the same whether the sinner is one who has never been converted or one who has fallen away from the faith. We must use the word of God. "The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul" (Psalm 19:7).

All sinners need to be brought to their senses and made aware, not only of their condition, but also of God's love and provision for their redemption. The only way this can be done is by obeying the teaching of God's word. The plan of the fallen is different from that of the alien. The fallen is to repent and pray (Acts 8:22; I John 1:9). The alien sinner must believe, repent, and be baptized (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16).

James speaks of sins being covered, even multitudes of sin. This is another way of saying that sins are forgiven. This figure of speech is found in the Old Testament. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin" (Psalm 85:2). When something is covered it is not seen. When God forgives us of our sins, He remembers them no more (Heb. 8:12). We cannot cover our own sins. We may seek to hide them, but this is impossible (Heb. 4:13). We cannot do a good deed that will cover a wicked one. We must appeal to God's grace to cover our sins by doing what He instructs, not what man or some church says.

(B. G. Echols)

(Editor's Note: This is the 64th and final lesson drawn from the epistle of James. Our prayer is that it has done and will continue to do good.)

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