"FAITH WITH BOOTS ON"
BIG IDEA . . . Part 15: Restoring the Wandering (Jam. 5:19-20)

INTRO: These verses contain James' final instructions. He has profoundly spoken on the *behavior* side of faith (Paul the believing). The thrust of James from start to finish is to encourage and instruct Christians to flesh-out the faith. His skillful instructions have been clear and practical. He has spoken about everyday living. REVIEW . . . His final appeal is no less practical or profound. Having addressed healing of the body (13-18), he speaks to the more important matter of the healing of the soul

The *key concept* in these verses is *conversion* – v. 19 "bring back" and v. 20 "turns." Conversion is expressed two ways in Bible. The *lost*, unsaved person needs to be converted (Acts 3:19; 15:3) – from death to life, hell to heaven. The *already saved* person also needs to be converted – those Christians who have strayed need to return to the Lord (Lk. 22:32). James addresses this second group (v. 19 My *brothers*, . . . *you*). This has referred to Christians every time so far (15 total, . . . 5:7, 9, 10,12). James is not referring to evangelism, but restoration. In James' last appeal, he calls every believer to the important work of "Restoring the Wandering." He *presents* two *truths*.

I. WANDERING IS A DEFINITE POSSIBILITY (v. 19)

A. *Possibility* – "should wander" suggests strong possibility. "Wander" (planao) – The ancient Greeks believed the planets were fixed at creation but became "wandering stars" after the Fall (Jude 13). Christians do wander at times (Jam. 3:2). Some wander farther and stay longer. James calls the wanderer "a sinner." OT term was *backsliding*. Many Biblical examples: Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samson, David, . . . John Mark, Peter, . . . even many personal examples come to mind. Jesus Himself spoke of this in John 6:66-67 . . . How did this happen?

B. *Process* is usually gradual like path of worldliness (4:4). Psalm 1 described as a slow downward path of walk, stand, and sit. Two examples:

1. Lot (saw Sodom, moved near, then into, and Sodom into Lot).
2. Demas (fellow worker, just Demas, then "has deserted me in love of this world"). Know someone?

C. *Place* "From what do we wander?" *From the truth* (belief) – from prescribed course or standard, not ours, but those contained in the Word (Jn. 14:16; 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). James is not talking about wandering from knowing the truth, but from living it. He's taken detour on wrong road (v. 20 *way-behavior*). The issue is not ignorance, but disobedience talking about a gradual moving away from the will of God. What is to be done?

II. RESTORING IS A DIFFICULT RESPONSIBILITY (v. 20)

A. *Normal Reaction*, sadly, is to judge, condemn, criticize, ignore, gossip, embarrass, etc. Should pray for and go to.

ILLUS. – H. Hendricks story . . .

B. *Ministry of Restoration* – We need to "bring him back" and "turn from the error of his way" (this is restoration). Jesus to Peter . . . Several factors in this:

1. The *Person* of restoration (*whoever)* - includes all of us who know Christ. Paul defines further in Gal. 6:1-2:
   - *spiritual* – Spirit filled (controlled) – Not perfect
   - *gently* – in love, not hammer
   - *humbly* – lest you also fall
2. The *Power* of restoration -
   - *save him from death* – Who's him? The sinner not the restorer. What kind of death? Addressing Christians so not spiritual or eternal death – must be premature physical death (1 John 5:16-17).
   - *cover multitude of sins* – whose sins? The wanderer (Pro. 10:12; 1Pet. 4:8). Now this one is physically alive and spiritually clean.

ILLUS: Restoration is hard, timely, tedious work. Furniture restoring . . .

CONC: Straightforwardly, James' final instructions are: wandering is a possibility and restoring is a responsibility. God is in the saving and restoring business. He uses believers in both! James (supported by Paul and all scripture) plainly says, "Yes!" Restoring the wandering is a great and a needed ministry. Am I speaking to a wanderer? gone astray? ready to come home? For those who faithfully stayed home, what are you doing to restore the wandering? This is what I want you to do:

1. Think of someone you know who has wandered.
2. Start praying for them daily by name.
3. Write or text them a note of love, encouragement, your prayers . . . tell them you'll be in touch.
4. Call and invite to lunch (you pay) – be spiritual, gentle, and humble.
5. Wait for God to move.

ILLUS: Noah's sons . . . need more Shems (cover) and less Hams (that expose (Gen. 9:18-23).