

A Call to Rescue the Wanderer

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of actively seeking and rescuing those who have wandered from the truth within the church community. It highlights the duty of every believer to confront and bring back those who are straying, focusing on preventing them from facing eternal consequences such as spiritual death and judgment. The sermon encourages believers to be vigilant in identifying and addressing sin and false beliefs among fellow members, emphasizing the need for truth, love, and accountability within the body of Christ.

Scripture: James 5:19, Ezekiel 3:18, 1 Timothy 4:16, Galatians 6:1, Jude 1:22, Matthew 18:15, Amos 3:3

Topics: "Restoration", "Accountability in the Church"

Description

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Transcript

Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to James chapter 5. We're going to consider a ministry. You could say that every single one of us should be participating in. Throughout this letter, James has sought to deal with some from among them who have erred in different ways from the truth, specifically, the practice of the truth, more so than a doctrinal error.

And now at the end of this letter, James gives this closing exhortation and a closing call to action in James 5, verses 19 and 20. That's what we'll be looking at this afternoon. So let's read those verses.

Verse 19, my brothers, my brothers and sisters, my brethren, if anyone among you, among us, even here today, wanders from, not the meeting place, but the truth, and someone, that's one of us, brings him back, back to the truth, verse 20, let him who brings this person back know, so let him have knowledge, what knowledge should he have, what motivation, that whoever brings back a sinner from his wondering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. Let's pray. Father, Lord, I thank You for these verses.

Lord, I pray that I'd be able to drive them home in a way that is faithful to Your Word, and that leaves an impact in my brothers' and sisters' hearts and in my own. Lord, that we would all the more be those who go out, even within here, Lord, rescuing the perishing. Lord, we want to be better at rescuing those who wonder from the truth.

And so Lord, I pray You would just work that in us, in this hour, in Christ's name, Amen. So he gives this call to action. A call to action at the end of this letter to bring back, to take part in a rescue mission to prevent people, as we're going to see, to prevent them from ultimately going to hell.

That's what I believe. Save his soul from death. Do not believe that's referring to a physical death that could come prematurely because of sin in the person's life.

A person takes the Lord's Supper wrongly, God judges them and kills them, they had an early physical death. But here it's not talking about save his body, it's just save his soul. Seems like what he's talking about here, it's a person's eternal, never dying soul.

And from death would imply the second death, hell. We gotta have a right doctrine of hell in order to be gripped with what he's telling us and calling us to do in this very passage here. So this epistle does not end with a blessing, but with an exhortation, a call to action in order to get people to the final blessing, the final benediction, the final statement from Christ, well done, good and faithful servant.

I mean, that's where we're all headed. That's where we're all on a road to. And so brethren, bringing people back to the truth is a mutual church ministry that all of us should be partaking in.

This is a mutual church ministry. As you and I, and James, he turns to the fellow believers and he tells us we need to intervene in the lives of those who are floundering in the spiritual realm. We need to do something about it.

He doesn't say we need to call the search and rescue. He says we are the search and rescue. This is not calling the fire department.

It's us getting out our trucks, us getting out our ladders, and us going to rescue these people who have wandered. And James is even here letting us know this is going to happen. There are going to be people among you who will go out.

Not even physically, necessarily. The issue is not they wandered away from the gathered assembly. The issue he focuses on is what they wandered away from was the truth.

You can wander away from the truth and still attend this meeting every single Sunday of every single month. James is letting us know people are going to go astray. They're going to wander.

Another place that word wander is used is they're going to get deluded. They're going to get deluded. They're going to err.

And the text says that you and I are the means. We're the means. God uses means.

And God uses us to bring back a wanderer. Talk about a responsibility. We can't dismiss this.

The text doesn't just say the pastors in the church, they go after those who wander from the truth. No, it's a call to all of us. This is a mutual ministry that all of us are partaking in.

And so I've got basically four points I want to consider and then some application. And in the midst of this, there are certain doctrines we've got to understand or you will find it difficult to understand what's being talked about in this passage. And so we're going to look at a few briefly in the midst of this message.

But here's the first point, the first question. How is it possible for those in the church to wander and lose their soul at death? To death? How is that even possible for that to happen? He says here we need to save their soul from death. And so as I mentioned a moment ago, does that mean we save them from having a premature physical death? Or does that mean they are saved from the second death, for example, hell? The lake of fire.

And as I already mentioned, he says save his soul. What's the soul in danger of? Hell. This isn't about the body.

This is about the soul. The soul facing death. And in the same letter, if you go to James 1.15, the author says, then they desire when it's conceived gives birth to sin.

And sin, when it's fully grown, it brings forth death. What follows physical death? What follows a life of committing sin and physical death? It's the future misery in hell. That's what's implied in Romans.

The wages of sin is death. It's not just physical death. It's ultimately an eternal death that people face who are outside of Christ.

So, is this person who wonders, are they saved, lost, or undetermined? I mean, it says here, my brothers, right? Verse 19, my brothers, if anyone among you wonders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know whoever brings back, and he calls him now a sinner, this person is committing sin, from his wondering will save his soul from death. Isn't it interesting? James here does not say my brothers, and there's not an asterisk there. That you go down in your footnotes and you read in the footnotes, well, they all weren't really true Christians.

He doesn't say that. The Bible speaks about how things appear. These people are saying they're brothers.

The Bible addresses them as brothers. You go to the book of John, people believe they're addressed as believers, even though some of them did not genuinely believe, and even though some of them were not genuinely brothers. But the Bible doesn't put an asterisk here.

The Bible doesn't say my brothers, well, not all of them are really Christians. It speaks in this way to us. But we need to understand here the doctrine of perseverance of the saints.

We need to understand here the reality that there is a final salvation. Not just you're saved, we're being saved, and ultimately we are finally saved. Let me just read these three verses to you that speak of this reality.

The Bible speaks that you have been saved in the past, you're being saved in the present, and ultimately you're going to be saved in the end. Ephesians 2.5. It says, and when we were dead in our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

So something happened in the past, salvation. First Corinthians 1.18, for the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. That's what's happening to us here.

We are presently being saved. Then Matthew 10.22, and you will be hated by all for my namesake, but the one who endures to the end will be saved. If you've been saved, you're being saved, and you will be saved.

You've got to make it to the end. You've got to say as Paul, I fought the good fight, I finished the race. Many people start, but not everyone finishes.

Even in this same letter in James 1.12, he says, Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him. You've got to stand the test. You've got to persevere to the end.

So we have to understand that. If you don't get this doctrine, the teeth of this warning are going to be totally removed. You're going to dull the edge of the warning, and at the same time, you're not going to see the seriousness of needing to go after people.

If we just look and we say, well, everyone here believes in Jesus, and we've all been saved, and we're all good to go because the imputed righteousness of Christ has been given to us, and no one can separate us from the Father's love and the Father's hand. No one's going to pluck us out from the Father's hand. So when that guy goes and he wonders, no big deal, he's going to make it.

God's going to make sure he's going to make it. No, no, no. Paul says you're actually to view that person as in the process of a race, and you ultimately don't know where he's at.

But you are a means of God to go to him and to give him truth, to correct him in his error in the hopes that he will turn and be kept from his soul perishing on that final day. So this does not undo eternal security. God absolutely is sovereign.

The Lord says in John 6, 37, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. When you've come to Christ, you're not going to be cast out by Christ. The Bible speaks about the Lord keeping us, but at the same time, the Bible speaks about we need to keep ourselves in the love of God through praying in the Holy Spirit, it says in Jude.

And the Bible speaks about us being saved. The Bible doesn't speak of it as being a done deal, that you're forgiven and it does not matter how you live, it does not matter if you go into gross sin, it does not matter. No, the Bible says you've got to make it to the end.

Are those who are really saved going to make it to the end? Yes, this does not undo eternal security. The Bible does teach the true Christian that they can't get unborn again, they can't be unjustified, but the Bible also teaches that many have a false profession, and they prove to be so. So we might have a hard time harmonizing all of this together.

We might look at the sovereignty of God, we might look at man's responsibility, we might look at the reality that we need to persevere, and we might say, how do I harmonize all this to get it perfectly together? I'm not saying you can harmonize it to get it perfectly together. What I'm telling you is you don't want your understanding to be wrong where the teeth of this text are removed, and it prevents you from intervening in someone's life when they are wondering from the truth, because some idea pops in your mind that, well, I know they're a Christian, and they've been in the church for 20 years, and they clearly have good theology, so they're going to make it. The Bible would say, no, you should be concerned as they're wondering from the truth.

Concerned enough to do something about it. So James is saying it's possible for someone from among us brethren to wonder and end up in hell. And I mean, if you've been around the church long enough, you know that's the reality.

There are people who make a profession, they're here for many years, and now they do not believe in God, and they're in their sin. And if they do not repent, they're going to perish. And God is not going to be mocked.

They have sowed and they're going to reap what they have sowed. So, we need to understand the Christian life, it's not just you're once saved and it does not matter, nothing else matters. No, no.

We are in a race, we've got to persevere. I mean, even in the very text that was read in Hebrews, was it Hebrews 2, it says right there at the beginning, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. People drift.

Verse 3, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? Okay, second question. What does it mean here, they wandered from the truth? He says here, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death. The truth.

If you look at James 3, he uses that same phrase, James 3.14, he says if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, this is a worldly arrogant wisdom, he says do not boast and be false to the truth. False to the truth. So there is a conduct that's true of the Christian, that's true of someone who's been transformed by the gospel.

That you can wander into a conduct that is contrary to what is true of the truth. That happens. And think of this letter as a whole, what is the main error that James is trying to correct in this letter? If you think of the whole letter, what was the big misunderstanding that these people had? What was one of the big misunderstandings? They did not understand the place of works in salvation.

They're trying to remove works from salvation. And look at James 2, very well known passage in 14, he talks, what good is it my brothers if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If you're going in this life saying it does not matter how I live, works are irrelevant. Is that faith going to persevere you to the end and ultimately save you? James is coming along and he's saying absolutely not.

You're misunderstanding that true conversion. It's not just God changes you and forgives you, but there will be works that will prove that the faith is real and genuine. So when James says here they've wandered from the truth, throughout this letter he's mentioning specific ways they've morally left conduct that is consistent with the truth.

And you have one of those, chapter 1, verse 26, if anyone thinks he's religious, so this guy thinks he's really religious, he thinks he's godly, he does not bridle his tongue. He's deceived. His heart, this person's religion is worth less.

He's got a religion that's worth nothing. He's left the truth. He doesn't understand that true Christianity changes the life.

It says in chapter 1, verse 21, We're to put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls. The Christian has God's Word and His Spirit implanted in them. This is an allusion to Jeremiah, it's an allusion to the New Covenant.

And it says in Ezekiel 36, he says, I will cause you to walk and obey my statutes. So the true Christian, they want to obey the Lord and the things of God. So Galatians 2.14, it says their conduct was not in step with the truth of the Gospel.

And that's what you have going on in this letter. People's conduct is not in step with the truth of what the Gospel message teaches and what true faith will do in someone's life. And throughout the letter, James is trying to correct these different misunderstandings and we'll look at some of them in a moment.

And so they had a theological error. They didn't understand the place of works in the believer's life and the outcome was all manner of sin. And so it was happening in their lives.

And this letter is full of specific rebukes and commands that focus on James trying to bring the people to a place where they are doers of the Word and not hearers only deceiving themselves. It's like James had all these people who are hearing the Word, but they're not obeying it. They're deceiving themselves.

They're saying they have faith. But their faith is not producing anything. And James is just not real faith.

This church had worldliness. It crept in. It says in 1.27, he said religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit the orphans and widows in their affliction and is to keep oneself unstained from the world.

He says in chapter 4, verse 4, you adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is an enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. And yet these people would say, well, we believe God is one. Well, guess what? He says even the demons believe that.

They've got all this theology, but they've abandoned the truth of this reality that true, genuine faith is going to produce something in their life. If God's Word has been implanted in them, they've been born again, given a new heart. This is not a dead, lifeless religion where you just make a profession and that's it.

So let's even consider some of these examples of how were these people abandoning the truth of the gospel. Go to chapter 1. Let's just look at some of these real quick. Because when you think about how these people were wandering, these are some of the specific ways in the context of the letter by which these people were wandering.

And he's calling the church to go and bring these people out of those ways. This is not so much the idea that it's people out there as it is it's people among us who are starting to drift. Yes, there's a wrong doctrine.

They're not understanding the place of works in salvation, but at the same time that's leading them to all sorts of sin in their life that is dishonoring God. And they need to be confronted about that. And so throughout the letter, he deals with all manner of different things.

In 1.6, people are asking and doubting. He says they're double-minded men, unstable in all of their ways. In 1.13, he says, let no one say when he's tempted, I'm being tempted by God.

It seems like some were blaming God for sin in their life and they weren't taking ownership for that. He says in 1.19, know this my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. What's the big deal? Verse 20, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

You see, there's sin. There's moral failings in these people's lives that need to be addressed. Verse 22 of chapter 1, be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves.

I mean, these people are looking in the mirror, verse 23 says, they're seeing what's wrong and they go away and they do nothing. They forget. They forget what they saw.

Verse 26, we already looked at that, they cannot control their tongue. Think of that. Someone's inability to bridle the tongue is them getting away from the truth.

He says here, they're deceiving themselves, their religion is worthless and he's calling us to say something about it. They say they're a Christian and you hear them use profanity. They're wondering from the truth and you do something because you realize they could lose their soul.

That's where this could indeed lead, is to destruction, because they're being saved. They're on the progressive path to the end. They've not yet obtained final salvation.

If they're the true Christian, they really will make it there, but God uses a means to keep them in. And what that means, and we go and we exhort them. In 2.1, it's amazing, look at the sin of partiality that was happening.

Verse 2, if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly and a poor man in shabby clothing comes in, and what was their sin? If you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and you say, sit here in a good place, while you say to the poor man, you stand over there. Or sit down at my feet. Have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, God has not chosen those who are poor, and he goes on.

But that's wandering from the truth. In the context of this letter, he's giving this exhortation to us, to go to these people who are wandering away from the truth. And that's another example.

These people are giving in to sinful partiality in their life. And James doesn't look at that and say that's a small thing. James doesn't look at their inability to control their speech and say that that's a minor thing, that that's a small thing.

He says they're deceiving themselves. He says you've got to be a doer of the Word, not a hearer, only deceiving yourself. It's these little practical things of practical lived out righteousness that are not present in their life.

Because they've got some idea that it's just faith solely and works are no proof of that. Jesus said in John 15, bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciple. The fruit is just proof that the Word of God has been implanted in us.

That we've actually been changed radically by the Lord. Throughout this letter, some had selfish ambition in 3.14. Look at 4 verse 1. What's another issue that was going on? What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have.

So you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

And what does he say to these people? Verse 4, you adulterers, adulterous people. Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Wow. So here we are.

We find there's certain quarreling that starts taking place within the church. And there's certain fights that are taking place. And we look at that and we see that is not a righteousness consistent with the truth.

Right? This selfish ambition, this is not of the truth. And these people are boasting, he said in chapter 3. So they're saying this is true of them. That they're of the truth.

And he's saying no, no, no. This isn't consistent. And he's saying we've got to do something about it.

Here this person is. My brothers, if anyone among you wonders from the truth, by engaging in all manner of quarreling, someone needs to bring him back and let him know. Whoever brings back a sinner, because that's sin what he's doing.

And he just called him in chapter 4, adulterous people. Why? Why do we need to interfere with this? Because we could help save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. Have safety at the judgment in this person's life.

Because if they continue in their sin, it's not ultimately going to be well for them. No matter what profession of faith they had in the past. So he mentions in 5.9, incredible.

He says, Do not grumble against one another, brothers. Now what's the big deal about grumbling? Go ask the Israelites or read the rest of the verse. So that you may not be judged.

Behold, the judge is standing at the door. What? Do not grumble against one another so that you may not be judged? Behold, the judge is standing at the door? It's a big deal. It's such a big deal.

God killed all manner of Israelites. Is my grumbling according to the truth? Or is it me wandering away from a practical righteousness that is evident of true truth being believed in? It's contrary to the true truth. It's contrary.

One other thing, 5.12. He said, but above all my brothers. So above patience, above not grumbling. He says this, do not swear either by heaven or earth or by any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no.

What's the big deal? Why should I keep my word? So that you might not fall under condemnation. What's the big deal with keeping my word? Now whatever your take is on what he means by condemnation there, the point is this person that's going away from the truth. His conduct is not in step with the truth.

And he's saying he has faith, but the righteousness in his life, the lack of righteousness is given. There's no evidence here that he has genuine faith. So, the place of works in the Christian's life.

Do you understand that? The works do not save you in the justifying sense. You're not going to be declared righteous based upon a work, but the work will prove that God has actually saved you. As I quoted John 15, bear much fruit and prove to be My disciple.

Or as he deals with in James 2, he's just constantly saying, can that faith save you? If you don't have works. And he says in verse 17, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, it's dead. Now, some want to say in this letter, James is contradicting Paul.

Some want to say that so much that people like Martin Luther wanted to rip out the book of James from the Bible. But you've got to understand the key terms they use, like justification, are used with different meanings. James is more speaking of being vindicated.

Your works are vindicating and proving that the faith is genuine. Paul in Romans, his whole idea is not your faith is vindicating, but that faith in Christ is declaring you righteous because you're getting Christ's righteousness imputed to you. James, he speaks about your faith being proven real by your works.

And you've got to realize this, James and Paul, they were dealing with opposite issues. These guys did not have the same issues in the group of individuals that they were addressing. Paul was primarily dealing with Jews, relying on law-keeping for salvation and people putting too much focus on works.

Yet, James deals with the opposite. People not putting enough emphasis and therefore, he must put forward the importance of it. You see, the whole Christian life and even the Bible, all these letters that so often are correcting an error.

It's amazing how it's like trying to keep you balanced. I mean, you're literally, as Conrad Murrell said, we're walking on a razor blade. And you could so easily fall off to the left, fall off to the right.

It says in 2 Timothy 4, for a time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching. They'll have itching ears and they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth. And they will wander off into myths.

And that happens all over this country. There are loads of people who would look at James 5.19 and this whole idea of being actively engaged in rescuing people and keeping them on the path, and they would not feel any weight of that because they have a false understanding that because of the prayer I said ten years ago, all my sins are forgiven and it matters not how I live. And they put all that false hope in that.

There's no sense of working out. There's no sense of enduring. There's no sense of pressing on in the way they think.

We don't want that thinking to be among us. At the same time, we don't want to go to the other extreme where the thinking is so works-oriented where you fall into a works-based salvation. So there's all these ditches we've got to avoid.

So to what extent did these people wander? His final exhortation in the letter after giving all these examples, people quarreling, people being selfishly ambitious, people not knowing how to guard their speech and their tongue. He's saying all of these things, and then he says, my brothers, if anyone among you, meaning the people he's just been addressing on these things, they wander from the truth. You get the idea that these people, they're not the ones out the door.

He's not talking about the people under church discipline. He's talking about people much earlier on in the process. He's talking about us getting to them prior to them not being among us.

But getting to them while they're still with us. You see, we often think, well, once they're gone, I wish I would have done more. James is saying, yeah, do more.

Do more now. Don't wait. And even you could say, James is saying don't minimize this reality of how it's no big deal.

It's no big deal that person doesn't keep their word. It's no big deal that they threw out that profanity word. It's no big deal that they're quarreling all the time in a bad way.

It's no big deal that they read their Bible two hours a day, but they don't really obey the Word. It's no big deal. It's no big deal.

It is a big deal. James is saying our souls are at stake. So we have a duty.

We have a duty. That's the third thing here is our duty. We are responsible to go and rescue those who wander.

And why do we need to understand our responsibility? In order to get us to act. I'm telling you, if in the mind, you're thinking someone else is going to do it, the pastors are going to do it, another person is going to do it, you won't act. I mean, when you get a door into someone's life, a window into their life, and you see them wandering away from the truth, it might be wandering in doctrine.

More than not, it's wandering in some moral area. Sin has crept in. And it might very well indeed be rooted in a misunderstanding of some truth.

We've got to do something about it. We have a responsibility. Paul said this idea is throughout Scripture.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9.22, I become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. Paul does not mean he pays for their sins. Paul means he is the means God uses in the final salvation of this person's soul.

1 Timothy 4.16 Keep a close watch on yourselves, yourself, Timothy, and on the teaching. What's the big deal? Persist in this. For by so doing, Timothy, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

It's incredible. What an uncomfortable statement to many. Like what I'm doing right now preaching to you guys is actually this verse.

I'm seeking to save both myself and you guys. That's what I'm doing. Not just trying to edify.

Not just trying to sanctify. I'm bringing a message on this text because no doubt, maybe some in here are wondering from the truth. They're still among us.

Their doctrine's becoming off. Their moral life. They've got sin creeping in.

And here I'm preaching this. So if someone hears it and the person has a window in someone's life, they realize I need to go do something about it. I was waiting.

I was procrastinating. I thought it was going to resolve itself. And they realize no, I've got to do something about it.

And this is a reminder to me. It's for me too. This is for my own salvation.

This is working out this perseverance to the end by being reminded of these truths. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist.

Persist in this. The Hebrews 2 passage. Pay careful attention.

You see, the Christian life is not something by which we allow passivity to set in. Where we just kind of become passive and everything is going on around us and there's no activity. We are engaged in helping each other finish the race and get across the line.

It's amazing. Hebrews 3. It says we must take care lest any of us fall away from the living God by an evil, unbelieving heart. And then what does he mention in that? What's the next thing? What does he say to do? But, in contrast, what are we to do? Exhort one another every day as long as it's called the day so that none of you are hardened by deceitfulness and sin.

We're called to exhort. That's what this guy is doing or woman is doing. When she goes to that sister who's wondering from the truth and she's exhorting her, she's trying to keep that person's heart from becoming hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Because it's amazing, once you start committing sin and you let a little sin in your life and it might just be quarreling, it might just be selfish ambition and pride, it might be not keeping your word, but you do that, you let that creep in, it's amazing the snowball effect it creates and before you know it, you've got all sorts of things going on. You shipwreck. You slowly, but surely, head towards the rocks and crash.

So exhort one another every day. The writer of the Hebrews is saying something very similar to what James is saying right here. This reminds me of Spurgeon's well-known quote.

He said, if sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions and let no one go unwarned and unprayed for.

You know, I think about that quote in regards to us. This passage is not about evangelizing the people downtown. That's not the focus of it.

The focus of James is, my brothers, if anyone among you, it's about us here. You could say it's about evangelizing one another. Evangelizing in the sense you're taking forth the truth.

You're bringing truth. Why not obey this? I mean, it's very uncomfortable. Someone else will probably talk to the person.

I do want to tell you, if you don't have the gift of confrontation, then you're exempt. You don't have to worry about this passage. So yes, pat yourself on the back.

God didn't give you the gift to confront anyone. That's going to be a valid excuse. No, that's not.

No one has the gift. If you have the gift of confrontation, then there's probably a problem. Confrontation is tough.

We don't find there's, it's really, this is about love, right? I mean, that's what it comes down to. Even the reality of needing to know the doctrine of hell. Save his soul from death.

He says, verse 20, let him know. And he gives two things. Two things that push the individual into action to do something about it.

And a right understanding of hell is one of those. So you can imagine Spurgeon's quote. This is, I love motivating this.

So James is pursuing his readers to, encouraging his readers to pursue those who are straying. So here the fourth thing is, the two truths that the rescuer needs to know for motivation. And we find those here.

He says, we'll save his soul from death. And the second truth will cover a multitude of sins. So here the first question is, whose soul is being saved from hell? Whose? Verse 20.

You guys tell me. Let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his. So who's the his? Is it the sinner? Will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Now I believe it is the sinner. But the way the Greek is rendered, Douglas Moos says you can't tell who he's talking about. And there are people who believe it's actually referring to the person who goes out to get the wanderer.

But if you took that view, it shouldn't actually trouble you. And it bothered me how many commentators would say, there's no way it could be that. Because it's such an unbiblical idea.

Really. Maybe some of you remember a sermon I did on Ezekiel 3 and the watchman months back. Ezekiel 33, if I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way.

The wicked person shall die in his sin. But his blood I will require at your hand. Okay, and then he restates it.

But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. So he talks about my responsibility as a watchman to do something. By not doing that, I don't deliver my soul.

What do you mean? The reality is, this is a work that if not done, is a sin being committed. And if one habitually lives a life of sin, where's that ultimately in? This is the same letter that says in James 4.17, if you know the right thing to do and you fail to do it, it's sin. This is the same letter that says in 2.13, for judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy.

So you don't go show mercy to people, you're going to get judgment without mercy. So the Greek language does not help us here. It's totally ambiguous at this point, allowing either phrase to be applied to the one who sinned or to the one who converted the sinner.

And Paul again uses this language in the New Testament in Acts 20. He says, I testify to you this day, I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. 1 Timothy 4.16, we've already looked at this.

Paul is told by faithfully preaching, he will save both himself and his hearers. So some would take it, that's what he's saying here in verse 20. Let him know.

There's something that the author wants the person to know. Meaning it wouldn't be that obvious to him where he would know it initially. Let him know that as he goes and does this work, it's part of his own salvation.

That's how some would take that. And if you took it that way, I'm not going to say to you that that's totally an unbiblical idea. Because Paul says by preaching, you save both yourself and your hearers.

Us bringing people back from sin is not spoken about having no benefit to us. And this is the same letter that says if you hear the Word and not do, you deceive yourself. So yes, there should be a sting here.

That if you find it within yourself to have no care for people who wander from the truth, and you have no love within your heart to do anything to stop them from going to destruction, you just love to hear the Word, but you're not doing it. You're not doing this command. You're not doing this verse.

James would say you could be deceiving yourself. That lack of love. Thank you.

Lack of love. It says we all stumble in speech in many ways. So, is James trying to exhort the believers by giving this reason? Is this actually supposed to be a motivating factor for us that this is part of our salvation being worked out? Is this warning those who are wondering? Again, you could take it that way, or the reading more commonly taken, let him know, so you're letting him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save the sinner's soul from death.

From death, meaning the person they're kept back from falling away by the means of you saying something to them. God uses that to keep them going to the end. To keep them going.

Or if you didn't do it, they could have fallen away. They would have fallen away, and they would have gone to hell. Look how involved we're to be.

It's incredible. It's incredible. James is saying that as you go after those who wander, they're wandering into sinful speech, unconcerned about others, the widows and the orphans, they don't care about.

They're becoming worldly, friends with the world. They're quarreling. They're arrogant.

They're full of selfish ambition. He says that you seek to bring them back. You are a means of God to prevent them from willfully going on in sin.

That their soul will be saved from hell. Not that they now get converted, but they will now persevere in their genuine faith because they hear the warning, because they are partakers of the New Covenant, and they have God's fear within them, Jeremiah 32 says, so that they will not turn away from Him. And you know, we need to understand hell.

If we don't understand hell, hell, it won't motivate us. I was back there with teaching the children this morning, about 30 of the little ones. And you just look at the kids.

And it's like, okay, they're all there. They're dressed nice. I mean, you can't imagine one of them burning in a furnace.

You just can't imagine it. Yet, one of the ways the Old Testament talks about the wrath of God, which that's what's in hell. That's what you need to be saved from.

The wrath of God abides on you. Ezekiel 22 says one gathers silver and bronze as one does this. And they put them in a furnace to blow fire on it in order to melt it.

He says, so will I gather you in My anger and in My wrath. And I will put you in and I will melt you. I will gather you and blow on you with fire of My wrath.

And you shall be melted in the midst of it. The silver is melted in a furnace. So shall you be melted in the midst of it.

Look, that little thing in Ezekiel describing one way of God's wrath being illustrated, that's nothing compared to hell. The unquenchable fire. The worm that never dies.

The smoke that ascends forever. That's where people are going. You feel that what Spurgeon is saying.

Let them jump over us. Grabbing onto their legs. Grabbing onto their cell phone and texting them and messaging them.

Stopping by their house. The more we have a reality of hell, the more we're going to be gripped to do something here. So may God work that in our souls.

Again, like Craig said, even seeing Eddie's brother. Eddie's brother lived with me at the Grace House. He's gone.

And there the dead body is in the casket. And seeing all the little kids back there. And I hope that God has been so kind to us as a church there have not been little children that are dying among our congregation.

You just can't imagine a little person, life taken. No breath before the Lord. So He gives a second truth to motivate us.

Number one, you're involved in the greatest mission ever. Saving someone's soul from death. Or you could take it as you're involved in working out your own salvation and doing a work you know is right in order to persevere yourself.

Either way, He says He wants us to know. And then He says secondly, and you will cover a multitude of sins. You'll cover a multitude of sins.

Now some would say that means, well, they get converted and it prevents a multitude of sins from happening. You know, they got saved. Wow, imagine if they didn't get saved.

All the sin they would have done. I don't think that's the reality here. He's talking even about some who are already true Christians.

It seems the focus is that the sins being covered is that they won't face judgment and be condemned as an apostate, but they're going to have safety on that day. And it reminds me of a man named Nathan who went after someone who had wandered from the truth. This man confronted the person who had wandered.

The man had murdered. The man had committed adultery. The man had pride.

And this man, King David, his soul was saved. And he says in Psalms 32, after God's brought him back, he says, blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man

against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

I mean, this person who wondered, they're brought back, they experience the joy of having forgiveness. I mean, when you're in sin, you feel it like David. He felt the hand of God heavy upon him.

His strength is being dried up just by the heat of the summer. And think of this, it says here, a multitude of sins. There might be some among us today.

You maybe have a multitude of sins right now in your life. And the text says those sins can be covered. That's incredible.

He doesn't say one or two. He says a multitude. And if you're lost, of course, come to Christ and be cleansed.

But how many people, have I committed the unpardonable sin? Have I gone too far? All these emails. I checked my phone this morning and we have two new emails on I'll Be Honest. People thinking they can't be forgiven.

And here he says to cover a multitude of sins. It's like the Lord is saying, come back. Come back to Me.

And you can say as David, my sin is covered. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven. I mean, what a reward there to be involved in someone coming back from wandering from the truth and them rejoicing in the blessedness of the forgiveness that they have in Jesus Christ.

What a joy to be a part of that. This passage, it should make you ask the question, to what degree can a Christian backslide? A true Christian. What degree? Am I too quick to write certain people off? James does not automatically conclude a person is lost if they wander.

And a brother and I recently were talking about 2 Timothy. We were looking at 1 Timothy on Tuesday nights. Brought up 2 Timothy 2. It says here Paul's saying to Timothy, correct your opponents with gentleness.

Your opponents. These false teachers. Why? God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.

And they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil after being captured by Him to do His will. What Paul? You have hope? You have hope for these people that they could actually come to the truth? I feel like we need more hope. Again, I'm not absolutely... Think about those who've gone out from among us.

But the passage is not dealing with that primarily. These people are wandering from the truth. They're believing things that are errors.

And that starts in this building. It starts in our grace groups. It starts among us.

That's where that happens. That's where he's calling us to deal with this. Obviously, you could apply that to going after the wanderers who are out there who used to be among us.

But often, you're going to find from them nothing but hatred for the truth. That doesn't mean we should lose hope. But there's a lot more hope when this is happening right here and you get it before it goes too

far.

You cut it off before they go down that path. So, the person who's wandering, they might not truly be saved. They might get saved as you're talking to them.

At the end of the day, were they saved? Were they lost? What happened to them? That can be hard to discern. The bigger thing is are they following Christ today? Are they following Christ today? Okay, well, a few just closing questions right now. Who brings these people back? My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone... Someone.

You. You. I mean, that shouldn't shock us, right? But how much do you think about that you are actually a member on a search and rescue squad in the spiritual realm? Do you have your badge on? Do you partake of that? Or do you dismiss it and let it go to the others who have the gift of confrontation? You know what? What information do you have and do you know that I do not know? I cannot go to that person who's wandering from the truth because I don't know that they are wandering from the truth.

The providence of God in allowing members of a body to be aware of certain sin and falseness that people are giving to in their mind. You're now responsible. You know the right thing to do.

And James 4.17 says if you know the right thing to do and you fail to do it, you've sinned. You're transgressing God. You're sinning by not loving them, but by loving yourself.

So who brings them back? You. This is what you bring to mind. Matthew 18, if your brother sins against you, you go to him.

You tell him his fault. Between you and him alone. If he listens, you've gained your brother.

Or Jude 1.22, and have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To others, show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Or Galatians 6.1, Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. I mean, Paul in Galatians, he doesn't care about man's approval. He's not seeking to be approved by man.

And he's going and he's dealing with Peter, who's wandering away, in this case, clearly from doctrinal truth in his conduct. And he's confronting him. He's wanting to keep him on the path.

How do we bring him back? Someone says, well, how? Alright, I've got a rescue badge. I'm part of the search and rescue team of GCC. How do I bring him back? Well, if they wander from the truth, well, obviously, you bring them back with the truth.

And you think of whatever truth is applicable to their situation. And throughout the letter of James, you've got sin, and then you've got truth applied. He's constantly bringing in the truth.

It's the same thing. Here a person is. They're saying they're religious.

They cannot bridle their tongue. The truth is their religion is worth nothing. They're deceiving themselves.

You warn them. And then you talk about how to bridle the tongue. And no man can.

It's ultimately the Lord. You need the power of God. You're bringing specific truth for the error to keep them from wandering.

Here a question is to you, believer. Are you wandering in sin right now? And none of us know about it. Or, man, what's going on? I mean, there are things happening in the church right now that Craig, Jeff, and I have no idea.

It's always the case. It's part of the church. The Lord knows.

And if the Lord knows, and He allows someone else to know, do something. Do something if someone is wandering from the truth. And if you're a Christian, I beg of you, get in the light, whatever it is.

We don't want to see your soul face the eternal death and hell. We don't want that. We want to be involved in saving your soul.

We want to be involved in seeing you be saved finally on that final day. To the lost, have you never come to Christ? Have you always been astray? Isaiah 53 says, all like sheep, we've gone astray. We've wandered.

We have turned everyone to His own way. And what did the Lord do? The Lord laid on Him, on Christ, the sin of us all. Your sin can be covered.

You can be saved from the furnace of the wrath of God and the lake of fire and hell. You can have your sins covered. You can be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

There's one way and it's Christ. You can have God's laws written on your heart. Don't try to save yourself by your own works.

Trust in the work of Christ and you'll want to do good works because He's prepared you good works to do beforehand. It's in His plan. It's in His purpose.

Another application. Another question. So who is wandering right now that you know of? And what are you doing about it? What are you doing about it? On the news, there was this sad story years ago.

A lady named Joyce Vincent, she was found dead and alone after three years. Her life and death remain a mystery that may never be solved. The details of her situation, why she chose to isolate herself, how she could have died of natural causes at such a young age, who her boyfriend was at the time, and how not a single soul felt determined enough to find her even though they knew where she lived.

She died and her body laid on her couch for three years until they went to evict her and they found her body was there dead. It had been rotting for three years. No one cared enough to bust in the door.

Her family sent her letters. They thought she had cut the relationship off. My point is this, look, you know how essential it is to be a part of a church? This text screams to you be committed to a local church.

Because being committed to a local church means you're being committed to have people here who are going to go after you if you wander from the truth. And that's huge. That's essential.

That's vital. So is someone wandering right now? And again, when I say wandering, I don't mean they're denying the Trinity. That could be it.

I mean in this letter, James is dealing with people the way people wandered practically by allowing sin in their life and a lack of righteousness because they did not understand the place of works in the Christian's life. You say, yes, people wander from doctrine? Absolutely. You've got to do something about it.

But here, we're dealing with sin it seems of character primarily. This doesn't mean we're not to be gracious with people, but God forbid we say we're gracious and then don't confront something and it turns into something far worse than we can ever imagine. You know, how many churches? You get these guys and girls.

One of the pastors or someone on church staff, people start seeing them talk alone with a woman who's not their wife. And what do they think? Well, they're a leader. It's no big deal.

I'm not going to say anything. And then before you know it, boom. Adultery has happened.

Their hearts got emotionally attached and then physical adultery follows and people think, oh, we should have done something. But I mean, they're our leaders. I mean, we just assumed they're beyond that.

Have you wondered? Do you see what James is saying? You can come back. You don't have to perish. You can have a multitude of sins forgiven.

You can have them covered. You'll have safety on judgment day. Now, what about those under church discipline? This is not a call for you guys to go call up those under church discipline.

The Bible actually says to not associate with them and to not call them. We've put them out for a reason. Leaven, that can damage you.

And so you wonder from the truth by going and associating with those put out of the church. That's a way you can wonder from the truth. And as Craig shared weeks ago on Wednesday night, he brought out from 1 Corinthians 5 how that's wrong.

That was Craig seeking to get people to not wonder from the truth in that way because you could end up being corrupted by them. Do we pray for those who are put out? Yes, but we're praying that God would do a work in them and if they come to us, we will gladly meet with them and examine them to see has there been real repentance in their life. Think of this.

The conversation you have today could be the means God uses to keep someone in the race. Do you come to church thinking that? Do you pray, Lord, give me the right conversations? Or is it just kind of aimless? A conversation you have today could be used of God to save a soul from eternal hell by God using you as a means to keep them persevering in the race. Are they ultimately going to be kept by God? Yes, but God uses means.

That's you. That's me. We need to go after the wonderers.

And this is just imitating the character of God. Right? The Lord is a Lord who seeks and saves the lost, and we His people are to do the same thing. Absolutely, go after the lost out there.

But go after those who are wandering in here. Christianity is not just about initial conversion. Some of you saw that church intro video we made years ago.

I shot that video. And I'll never forget, in my mind, I thought, there's no way anyone here would ever depart. And before you know it, to take the video down, some people left and went to another church and they're pressing on with the Lord.

Some of those people, they're lost. They wandered away from the truth. They're headed to destruction.

That was a wake-up call for me as a new Christian. This is a race to persevere. Kept by the power of God, yet keeping ourselves in the love of God through praying in the Holy Spirit.

Keeping ourselves by being involved with going after those who wander from the truth and saying something to them with the gift of confrontation that all of us have been given. Say something. Let's pray.

Father, oh Lord, I want to see... Lord, I don't want to see the precious people here end up like some of those that 10 years ago I never thought would go down the path they did. And Lord, we step back and we realize this isn't just a matter of us doing nothing, but You've called us to actively be engaged. And so Lord, I pray if any here right now are wandering from the truth, Lord, we know where that ends.

It ultimately ends in wandering from the meetings and not being among the brethren and then eventually wandering from You. Lord, they're departing from You all along the process. Lord, I pray.

Lord, You do use means. But we find examples in the Bible where You go and You do something completely on Your own. Lord, I pray You'd do that.

I pray You would supernaturally, miraculously confront and deliver any here who are being diluted right now. Lord, they might slowly be being diluted. And a slow amount of poison is being injected.

And they don't even recognize what's going on. They're starting to drift. They're starting to sift.

They're wanting things that tickle their ears. False teaching. They don't have a clear conscience.

Lord, I pray, would You do something in their lives so that they'd be able to praise You to have their sins covered. To have those sins not be judged with condemnation on that final day. But absolutely to have forgiveness.

And Lord, we know there's only one way forgiveness is in Your Son. And we thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, help us to be like Christ.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/dYcsJabm1gk.mp4>

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