

Bring Back Wanderers

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[0:00] James 5, beginning in verse 19. My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth, and someone should bring him back, remember this, whoever turns a sinner from the error of his ways will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

And then Matthew 18. Gospel of Matthew 18. We'll read verses 10-14. See that you do not look down on one of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?

And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way, your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

Perhaps we say it too often, but I feel like we're saying goodbye this morning to an old friend, a good friend.

[1:14] We've been walking with James, the half-brother of our Lord, for almost a year now. And we come to the end of his letter today, verses 19 and 20 of chapter 5.

And what we note, first of all, about this closing is what's missing. There's not the usual concluding greetings as are found in most of the New Testament letters.

There's no benediction. There's no doxology. There's no final farewell. Instead, he leaves us with one last pride to holiness. But I say, isn't that just like James?

Isn't that what we would expect from him as we come to the end of his letter? Nothing must be allowed to remove anything of the effect of these closing words.

These are the words then that he wants ringing in our ears as we walk away from this letter and go back into our world. So their importance can hardly be overstated.

[2:14] Now in the immediate context, James has been writing about Christian casualties in the spiritual battle. Those who have been wounded in the troubles and trials and temptations of life such that they're left in a spiritually weakened condition.

They're without strength to fight or they've fallen before some sin. Well, what are they to do? Well, they're to confess their sins to one another and to pray for one another that they may be healed.

They're to pray themselves and to call others to pray with them and for them. And they're to treasure the prayers of the righteous because they are powerful and effective.

But this does not cover all the situations that exist. There may be one who is spiritually weak. Yes, he's going through persecution and suffering and all kinds of things hurling at him from the world.

Yes, he's fallen into sin and even wandering off the path, but who has no desire to seek out help. What then?

[3:34] Well, my brothers, if someone, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this, whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

When we see a brother or a sister wondering from the truth, we ought to bring him back without waiting to be asked.

And so we have these concluding words about our mutual responsibility to bring back wonderers. Let's consider two main points from this text.

First, our danger. Second, our duty. First, our danger. And under this, we have the first observation. And it's that brothers may wonder from the truth.

Do you see that? Brothers may wonder. My brothers, if one of you should wonder from the truth, verse 19 says.

[4:45] We're not talking about the worldlings out there. No. We're talking about brothers in here, in the church. Not all who get onto the straight and narrow path stay on that path.

Some wonder off of it. And it is one of the frightening realities found in Scripture just how far off the path true brothers can stray.

Whether we be thinking of Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, or Lot, or David, or Peter, or some of the churches to which the apostles wrote in the New Testament.

Remember Paul writing to the Corinthians and how far off some had wandered there in Corinth. And in chapter 10 he's calling these Christian brothers in Corinth to a self-controlled running of the race of holiness.

And he warns them by pointing to Israel's history. Remember what happened in our history, in the history of Israel. How these in the Old Testament church wandered off the path into idolatry or into sexual immorality or into grumbling and testing the Lord such that the Lord struck them dead in judgment.

[6:09] And in case you, you brethren at Corinth think that you're above such things, he says, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls.

Let him who thinks he's on the straight and narrow take heed lest he wander off. No believer is so strong is to be beyond this danger. My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth.

Second observation from the text, it is all too easy to wander from the truth. And we get that from this word wander. It means to roam, to go astray.

It's often used of sheep. That's how Peter used it in 1 Peter 2 and verse 25. You, you were like sheep going astray.

There's our word wandering off. But now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. You see, the sheep did not mean to fall off the cliff to its death a mile away from the flock.

[7:14] No, no, he had no way of knowing that that's where his wandering would lead him. He just saw some good looking grass over there outside the fold and he thought, I want to get some of that for me.

And off he wandered. And from there he saw a little butterfly and it caught his fancy and he followed it for a while over there and then some more greener grass over there and soon he's lost and in strange territory falls off the precipice to his death.

he wandered he roamed and like sheep we wander off little by little step by step and it's all too easy.

The hymn writer says, I was a wandering sheep. I once preferred to roam. Yes, we were all wandering sheep. We had all gone astray from God.

We had all chosen our own way. But the hymn writer says that even as a believer yet I find a part in me that still wants to wonder.

[8:24] Prone to wonder. Lord, I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart. Take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above.

Thomas Manton says a wandering heart needs a watchful eye. And I would say yes, Thomas, but James would say eyes, plural, because that's his point.

A wandering heart needs the watchful eyes of the whole congregation. And we'll see that point made in a moment. Our license plates used to say wonder Indiana, didn't they?

I know some folks who enjoy doing just that. Loading up the car, heading out without any plans, any final destination in view and just wandering, just enjoying the sights along the way.

And one sight leads to the next and on and on and on they go and they just enjoy wandering Indiana. Aimless drifting, meandering.

[9:31] That's the idea here, in wandering from the truth. He didn't plan to divorce his wife. He was just going to have a little joy in the office by getting to know her and share a joke together.

And one thing led to another. And that's the way wandering works. It doesn't all happen at once. Nothing real deliberate.

There's no sudden U-turn into the other direction. It's not that we're one day walking with the Lord and the next day we're wandering with our backs to the Lord.

We don't wake up one day and just say, I'm out of here. I'm no longer going to follow Christ. No, it's little by little by little by little like a boat that's cut loose from its moorings and the shoreline.

And so it's drifting, but ever so slightly, ever so slowly that you don't even realize you're moving. Like the hour hand on the clock, you don't see it moving, but it is moving.

[10:45] So it is with wandering. It's all too easy to wander. Pilgrim's Progress, Christian and Hopeful, were on a rough section of the straight and narrow, and they spotted another path just on the other side of the fence.

oh, that sure looked a lot smoother going than it was over here in the narrow road. And oh, how handy, there just happened to be some steps here to lead us over to that little path.

And it's called Bypath Meadow, but it's going the same way, Christian says to Hopeful. It's heading the same direction, so I think we're safe.

And over the wall they scramble. But once they got out of the narrow road, ever so slightly, little by little, Bypath Meadow started to wind around away from the narrow road until they were lost and it got dark and they were far from the way.

And Christian says, who would have thought that this path would lead us away from the road? It looked so good, it seemed so right, but it was out of the way.

[12:03] It's easy to wander off the road, off the path. It's difficult to stay on the path. Indeed, it's impossible without resources from heaven.

The third observation, there are many different ways to wander from the truth. Different ways, many ways to wander. First, let's get this, that Jesus himself says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. John 14, 6. So all wandering from the truth is wandering from the Lord Jesus. We're straying from him. If we stray from his words of truth, we're straying from the truth himself.

You see, it's a personal thing to wander from the truth. We need to see that. But now notice that there are at least two different ways that men can wander from the truth.

We can wander in doctrine or in practice. We can wander from the truth in doctrine. Do you know that many people who used to be good orthodox Christians holding to the truth are now holding to heretical doctrines?

[13:18] They're no longer holding to the truth as it is in Jesus. They're holding to soul destroying, soul damning doctrines.

And so we're warned about this over and over in scripture. We're told about two men, especially in 2 Timothy 2.17 and 18, that their teachings will spread like gangrene.

Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus who have wandered away from the truth. There's our word. They've wandered, the whole phrase, wandered away from the truth.

Well, this is doctrinal drift because he goes on to say that they're teaching, they're saying that the resurrection has already happened. The final resurrection, what we're looking forward to when Jesus comes.

It's already happened. It's over with. And so they lead many astray. That's doctrinal drift. That's wandering from the truth in doctrine.

[14:18] And the relativism of our day downplays the importance of doctrine. And every poll that I've ever read recently shows that the modern church is not doing a good job of rooting and grounding their people in Bible doctrine.

What does the Bible say? What are the Ten Commandments? Maybe the Christian church can name three or four.

What are the Beatitudes of Jesus? And on and on we could go. That's a perfect setup for wandering from the truth. That's one way you can wander.

I don't believe it's the primary way James is referring to here. Because there's another way to wander from the truth and that's from the practice of it. We wonder from the truth in conduct or in practice.

You see truth is not only something to be known it is something to be walked in. We are to speak the truth. We are to do the truth. We are to practice the truth.

[15:20] We are to live the truth. Indeed the Bible speaks of the truth as a way, as a road, a path to be walked in. Isaiah 35, 8 says a highway will be there and it will be called the way of holiness.

And you see the Bible is that way and it marks out the way and it says here is the way, walk in it. And we can wonder from that by denying the teachings or we can say amen, preach it brother, that's the true word of God and in our lives not obey it.

And I ask you, was that not one of the main concerns for which James writes this letter? That we not just be hearers of the truth and so deceive ourselves but be doers of it.

It's possible to wonder from the truth simply by not doing it. Okay, I heard that sermon, that was a good one, but it doesn't change the way I speak, doesn't change the way I treat people who are

different from me, I still show the same favoritism, doesn't change the way I spend my money, the way I spend my time, my anger and on and on.

That's straying in practice and it's far more common than most of the church would acknowledge.

[16:55] We either live in the truth or we wander from it. Some were claiming to have a saving faith but they had no holy life. James says you've wandered from the truth because true saving faith always produces the holy life.

Some people claim to have religion but it was without the practice of truth and so he tells them your religion is worthless and unacceptable to God. They were wandering from the truth because they didn't order their lives according to it.

There's all sorts of ways to do that and James has filled five chapters on that very topic. You want to know how to wander from the truth? Read the book of James.

Read everything that comes before chapter 519. I believe the whole book he's addressing the Christian congregation brothers and he's saying these are the ways people are wandering.

Are you one of them? Wake up. Come back. many ways to wander. Point three. The last point under our danger is that this danger of wandering from the truth is a serious thing.

[18:12] James knows it and he wants us to know it. Already in this letter he has spoken about a dead and useless faith that will not save anyone. So if you're claiming to have a faith that is useless and dead because there's no holiness with it, you better wake up.

That will not save you. Such people are in serious danger. They're deceiving themselves. But even here in this last verse, he shows us how serious it is because in verse 20 he says that wandering leads to death and to sins being left uncovered.

What consequences from wandering to be left in death and to have your sins left uncovered. You see, if such a person is brought back from wandering, they will be saved from death and they will be saved by having their sins covered over.

But this wandering leads to death and uncovered sins. Because that's what wandering is. It's going into our sins. We wander from God's way of living into our way, our sinful way.

And those sins go uncovered. And the wages of those sins is death, the Bible says. And when James here speaks of death, he's not talking about physical death, but eternal death, the second death, the lake of fire, forever death, that John speaks of in Revelation 20, that Paul speaks of as the wages of sin, not just physical death, but eternal, spiritual death, God's punishment in hell forever, separated from God and all good.

[20:02] That's the death to which wandering leads. James already told us that in chapter 1. Remember the connections in the chain in James 1, 14 and 15?

Don't blame your temptations on God. You're tempted when by your own evil desire you're dragged away and enticed. And then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.

The actual doing of the sin. And sin, when it is full-grown, leads to death. Because the wages of sin is death.

Kids, that little kitten looks so cute and cuddly, but it's a lion kit, and it will grow up and lead to death.

However, innocent sin looks. However small, Satan says, this little bit of wandering, it's harmless.

Don't believe it for a moment. All sin leads to death.

[21:06] That's the connection. That's where it's going. It would take you by the hand and lead you to hell. That's where every sin is going. And unless grace intervenes and brings the wanderer back to repentance and confession of sin, sin, he will not be safe from death and his sins will not be covered.

How is it that sins are covered? Well, they're covered when we confess our sins to God. Without any repentance, there's no forgiveness.

And we want our sins covered. Covered. isn't that a beautiful word? Covered over. Wouldn't it be wonderful that all my sins, those things that make me blush to think about, to think that you would ever know that I sin in that way, that all those sins could be covered over in the blood of Jesus.

That's the only way they can be covered, is through the blood of Jesus. But outside of Jesus and outside of his blood, there is no covering. Oh, blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered.

And they get covered, not by works of righteousness that we do, but by trusting in Jesus. God justifies the wicked. And in all my wickedness, he covers me over with Jesus' blood.

[22:39] That's a wonderful teaching of the scripture. That's the good news of the gospel. He covers us in the robe of Christ's righteousness so that when God looks on me, he sees me as as righteous as Jesus Christ is righteous.

Because he's put Jesus' righteousness over me like a covering. But if I wonder from Jesus and I go my way and turn my back on Jesus, I repudiate that covering.

And those sins are left uncovered and I'm ready to stand before God without a covering for my sin. I'm ready to face judgment and to hear the sentence death to him.

The stakes are high. They couldn't be higher. The danger is serious. Eternal life, eternal death. Covering for sin or sins uncovered.

Now, this is not something we can just shrug off by saying, well, once saved, always saved. Once saved, always saved. James is saying of this wondering, professing brother that his strain will lead to death unless he is turned back and brought to repentance.

[24:01] Either the wanderer will return to the Lord, showing that he truly is the Lord's who renews their repentance and keeps his own from finally falling away.

Or, the wanderer will continue wondering from the truth and so prove that he never did truly belong to the Lord.

As John says in his epistle, 1 John 2, 19, they went out from us. They were with us and they wandered off and went out from us. But they did not really belong to us.

For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us, but their goings showed that none of them belonged to us. This is a real warning of hell, of sins left uncovered, unforgiven.

Brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth, we've seen the danger, its reality, its seriousness, the many ways that it can happen.

[25:11] We come now to the answer. What's to be done about it? Our duty. First of all, first observation, believers are to try to bring back the wanderer and they're not to wait for the wanderer to ask them for help.

They're to go after him. They're to go after him and bring him back. In the words of verse 19, we are to bring him back. He's wandered off. We bring him back.

In verse 20, we are to turn him from the error, the wandering of his way. He's no longer going God's way. He's turned to his own way.

Well, we've got to get him out of his own way, turn him away from his own way back into God's way. So straying brothers are to be brought back by another brother who goes after him and turns him from the error of his way.

Notice it does not say the elders are to bring him back. Now, he's talked about the elders in this passage, hasn't he, in verse 14 and 15.

[26:15] But he doesn't say the elders of the church are to bring him back. That is one of the responsibilities of elders. But what I want you to feel from James is your own responsibility.

If you see a brother wander off, you are responsible to bring him back. Notice it's indefinite both times.

If one of you should wonder from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this, whoever turns a sinner from the error of his ways.

We all share this responsibility to bring back the wondering brother. What an ending to this letter.

He leaves us with a sense of our accountability to one another and recovering each other when we stray.

The church is to be a redemptive community where we do not shoot our wounded soldiers or just leave them to die in their blood. If the Marines have a wounded man down, they don't go home and say, well, too bad.

[27:26] No, they don't go home until they've done everything possible. people to go get him and to bring him back, to see him restored and returned to the fray.

And that's a picture of the church and seeking out the one who is straying toward death. we bring him back.

We don't ride off the straying sheep. We don't just let them go and roam until they fall off the precipice into hell. We go and we try to turn, turn, brother, turn.

This way is not going to heaven. The road you're on is going to destruction. You think it's the right way for you. It's the way that seems right, but it ends in destruction. Brother, turn back.

And that's the way Jesus dealt with us when we were wandering. And that's what that little parable of Jesus was all about in Matthew 18.

[28 : 33] That you've got this shepherd with a hundred sheep and ninety-nine of them are right there in the fold, but one has wandered away. There's our word. And the shepherd doesn't yawn and say, well, it's only one, I've still got my ninety-nine.

He leaves the ninety-nine and he goes after the wandering one. And he does not rejoice until he can put it on his bosom and bring him back to the fold.

Folks, that's what Jesus did. When he saw us wandering from his ascended throne in heaven, he did not yawn. All heaven was astir as the Father sent his Son and created a human body, a human personality for him, that he could enter this world on this saving mission.

It was mission recovery, to recover that which was lost, that which had strayed. And the whole point of that parable there is to say, now you do the same for your wandering brethren.

You have the same heart as Christ has. And none of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed, or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through, ere he found his sheep that was lost.

[29 : 56] He entered into the darkness of hell, of that forsakenness of the Father, in order to bring back one strange sheep.

He would have done that if you were the only one. Such was his desire to recover the wandering one. Lord, whence are those blood drops all the way that mark out the mountain's track?

They were shed for one who had gone astray, ere the shepherd could bring him back. And we're to do the same. It's hard work. You say, that's not easy.

And James would say, where did we find easy in the Bible? It seems that's that broad road that's leading to destruction. No, it's not easy.

But Jesus has done it for our souls. And we are to do the same. So James closing words are a rousing call to action to bring back those who've wandered from the truth.

[31 : 01] And it grabs me at the end of this book. I mean, I've been busy with my own sins for five chapters, haven't you? We've been addressed on all these issues of holiness, and this is what it looks like in a practical way in life.

And I say, oh my, Lord, forgive me, Lord, help me. And then I get to the end and I say, John, you're not only to have that concern about the ways that you have personally wandered, but what about your brothers and sisters?

And that's the way you are to read the book of James. I told you last week, pray through the book of James because the prayers of a righteous man are powerful and effective to do what you can't do otherwise, and we can't do James 1-5 without God, and so we pray.

But I challenge you to go back this week and pray through James, the book of James, for your brothers and sisters who may be straying in those very areas that James is addressing.

What is your response when you see a brother wander off, off, away, into sin?

[32 : 17] Do we treat it as if it's no bother of mine? Am I my brother's keeper? James says, yes, you are. That's his closing words. Yes, you are. Do we derive some sick pleasure from his fall and from telling others about it?

then we have our own wandering from the truth to confess. Does it make me feel good about myself to see them fall in ways that I haven't?

Does it lead me to treat them with contempt as beneath us, to condemn them when they've wandered? This closing word from James rebukes all such attitudes and behavior.

Rather, our instinct should be recovery mode, bring him back, bring him back. Isn't it something in Exodus 23, 4?

If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. If it's our duty to bring back an enemy's straying donkey, how much more a brother when he goes astray?

[33 : 26] That's the first observation and way of our duty. Believers are to try to bring back the wonder. Secondly, the results of recovering the wondering one are staggering and should motivate us to do so.

The results of recovering the wondering one are staggering and should help us with this difficult duty. It seems that in the very last verse, James may be taking a general or a faithful saying that applies to any sinner who is going his own way, and he applies that verse to a wondering brother.

Maybe this is one of those faithful sayings. Remember this, he says, that whoever turns a sinner from the air of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

And he takes that. That's true of any sinner who's wondering his way, whether he's ever professed to be a Christian or not. That's true. And he takes that verse and perhaps he's applying that to the specific setting of a brother, a man who calls himself a brother who's wandered off and now needs to be brought back.

And whether it's the brother who's wandered off and is brought back, or it's the person who never claimed to be a Christian, who still has their back toward God.

[34 : 50] We all, like sheep, have gone astray and turned each one to his own way. This is true, that whoever turns the sinner from the error of his way, here's the result.

He will save him from death and he will cover over a multitude of sins. Amazing. Two results. Save him from death. He's off the straight and narrow that leads to life.

He's turned from that and now he's going his own way that leads to death. life. Do you believe that? Do you really believe that?

There's only one way that leads to life and only those who persevere on that way will make it to eternal life. hell. And those who turn their back on that life and go their own way are going to hell.

No matter how many times they were baptized and how many years they've been a member of a church. If we do believe it, we'll jump as a church into recovery mode of those who are wondering.

[35 : 57] We must bring him back. You're on your way home at midnight in a terrible thunderstorm. And it's raining so hard you can barely see the road in front of you and you're buzzing along.

You want to get home. You're going 55 and suddenly a lightning flash reveals that the bridge just ahead has been entirely washed away.

It's gone. There's nothing but a chasm and rushing water below. And it was the flash of lightning that enabled you to see it and slam on your brakes and screech to a halt.

just before falling over into your death. Well, now what do you do? I've got to get home for sure.

And you go back and look for a different way around? No, you don't. You think of somebody else that may be barreling down that highway at 55 miles an hour.

[36 : 57] And you realize that without that lightning lighting up the danger, you would have plunged into your death. So you turn your car around and get in the other lane and you come back a safe distance and you turn your flashers on and you go out and stand in the rain and you're getting all wet and you're just waving your hands at the next car coming because you want him to know that this road leads to destruction.

destruction. And I'm saying if we see a wonder from the truth, turn their back on Christ, whether that be in doctrine or in practice of true religion, should we just yawn and keep silent and proper and say nothing while they plunge into eternity without Christ?

Or should we not at least straddle the road there on and say, listen to me. Brother, you claim to be a Christian. You claim to have saving faith, but James tells us here in his word, if you don't have holiness of life, you don't have control over your tongue, you don't care about the widows and the poor and the needy and the orphans, and you don't have the religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless that keeps yourself from being spotted and polluted by this world.

My friend, the bridge is out. Hell is waiting for you. Oh, turn, turn. Why will you die? Why will you not rather turn and live?

We go to them. We call them to repent, which is to turn. We kindly warn and entreat them and urge them, get off this road. You are living.

[38 : 49] going your own way. Come back to Jesus and his way. Whoever turns a sinner from the wandering of his way will save him from death.

And the second glorious result is that they will cover over a multitude of sins. you see, what James is telling us is that we go to the wandering one with the gospel, the gospel, and call them to faith in Jesus Christ.

There is only one way for sins to be covered. And that is in the blood of Jesus. You try to cover them and it won't work. Whoever tries to conceal his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

That's the only way. Bring them to Jesus and let him cover them with his blood. And so James says we go to the erring one, the straying one, and we seek to bring the wanderer to Jesus, who alone can save them from death and cover over their sins.

And we tell him that no matter how many sins you have committed, and no matter how long you've wandered and how far you've strayed, if you will turn this moment from your own way and seek the Lord Jesus.

[40 : 12] He will have mercy on you, and he will freely pardon you, and he will cover the whole multitude of your sins with his righteousness, and he will blot out your transgressions and remember them no more.

Done deal. Come to Jesus. Jesus. We go with the gospel that urges sinners, you could start all over today.

That slate of sin that's filled with a multitude of marks could be wiped clean in the blood of Jesus. He's ready to start all over with you. If you are, I say to you, you've been wandering, you've been off on your own, the way of Christ, his commandments, you've had your back that way, you've gone your own way.

Come back. Come back. He's ready. He'll take you this moment. You'll leave with your sins washed away. We go with the gospel of Christ. Wondering brothers and sisters need the same message as any sinner going his own way.

The message of the gospel. Repentance. Turn from your own way back to God and his way. Faith inviting them to trust in Jesus Christ alone for the covering of their sins.

[41 : 37] That's the only way you'll ever be saved from death and from uncovered sins. Now that's the result. That's amazing, isn't it?

Don't you find that when you go after the straying person and you bring them back? That's what happens. The jaws of death clamp down on air, not your brother.

And the sins that had been a multitude are gone. Oh, should we not do a whole lot more of this business of bringing back the wandering?

What a privilege to be a worker together with Christ. You know, those results are impossible with man. And yet James says the one, whoever he is, who turns the sinner from the air of his way, shall save a soul from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

That's because he's he's a co-worker with Jesus. Jesus is the only one who does that. What a privilege. James is telling us of our high privilege. We're called to this business, bringing back wonders, disappointing death, covering sin.

[42 : 49] Point them to Jesus. be an instrument of his salvation. One of the highest pleasures on earth to partner with Christ in seeking and saving that which is lost and wondering.

Yes, it's hard work, but we do it for love, love for their souls, love for Christ, who here gives us the assignment.

And so, lastly, all of our attempts at recovery, number three, must be bathed in powerful prayer. He's just spoken of that in verse 16 and following, because we need a prayer beyond our own to bring them back, to make them see where the road they're traveling is going, and to make them see that Jesus is a willing and able Savior.

We can say those words to them a thousand times, but until Jesus opens their eyes and makes them see. So we pray, we pray with powerful, effective prayer.

[43 : 51] If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray, and God will give him life, 1 John 5, 16. Sin is after them. It would have them.

Death would have them. Pray that God will give them repentance to escape from the trap of the devil who has taken them captive. to do his will.

In a word, I believe James is simply saying to us at the end, you do to each other what I have just been doing to you. For five chapters, I have said to you, my brothers, about this particular wandering from the truth.

And he has put his finger on one thing after another. Now you go. And when you find someone that's turned their back on Jesus and is wandering away from the truth, you do the same.

In other words, our pursuit of holiness is not to be merely an individual thing. We're to run together. someone saw three runners in Mishawaka.

[45 : 01] Maybe it was an athletic team. Here's three guys out running. Nothing unusual about that. But what was unusual this day was that together they were carrying along two by four.

And so the three of them are running together. Now, I'm not sure exactly of all that that exercise is meant to teach, but the picture seems to say at least that no one will be lost in this jog, will they?

No one will lag behind and be forgotten. No one will stray from the path and just be ignored. Lord, we're running as a team.

We will continue as a team. We will complete the race as a team. In Grace Fellowship Church, we must have that same spirit about us.

We're pursuing holiness as James has told us, but we're pursuing it together. My brothers, if one of you should wonder from the truth, and someone should bring him back, remember this, whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. [46 : 24] Amen. Thank you, Father, for such a gracious promise. I want to come myself again and ask that you forgive me for my sins, the sins that I have seen in the book of James.

Wash and cleanse them with that crimson blood that washes white as snow. Turn me from my own wanderings. Restore me to that great shepherd and overseer of my soul, the Lord Jesus Christ. And give us help as a congregation that when we see one wandering from the truth, that we might be your voice in calling them back.

And that we would call them back with our prayers as well as our words. And Jesus, that you would speak in us and by us and through us with such a voice that wakes the dead, that opens up the blinded eyes, the confused, the wayward, and brings them to yourself.

Help us to point them to you. Oh, how we thank you for receiving us, that you're willing and ready to receive any sinner this morning. Do your great work and we'll give you praise in Jesus' name.

[47 : 46] Amen.