

# James the Just: Come Home

Christianity is a religion that changes lives. When you have faith in Jesus, His death, His resurrection, you have hope in a world that looks more hopeless every day.

I have experienced first hand the saving grace that Christ extends to us, and I've also experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in my life that is continually changing me, shaping and molding me, into a more Christ-like person every day.

I've also seen this miraculous change in the lives of others. It's honestly the most beautiful thing you can witness. As much as I love to see children grow up and mature into awesome young adults, it's even more wonderful to see people grow in spiritual maturity, becoming more like Jesus!

The church loves when people are growing spiritually. We celebrate them, brag on them, encourage them, and rightfully so. But what about when someone is taking a step back, or the dreaded word.....backsliding.

Backsliding simply means to relapse into bad ways or error, so a person may not be growing in their spiritual life, and they need help. I would even group people who are complacent in their walk in the backsliding category. When it comes to your spiritual life, you are either moving forward or backward. There is no standing still. You are closer to God or farther from God.

Maybe you know someone in this state, maybe it's even you. What do we do in these situations?

## **James 5:19-20 (HCSB)**

19 My brothers, if any among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back, 20 let him know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his life from death and cover a multitude of sins.

The first thing we must recognize is that Christians CAN stray from the truth! It's right here in James 5:19.

There are debates in Christianity about whether you can lose salvation or not, whether you are chosen by God or you choose God. It's not a bad thing to wonder these mysteries of God but don't get hung up on them and miss the point of salvation and grace.

Sure I have opinions on these, but I honestly don't care which is right. It's a divine concept that I am probably incapable of figuring out and fully understanding in this lifetime!

What I KNOW is that I've seen people seeming love Jesus and then walk away and return to their old ways. I have done it myself!

I first came to this church 16 years ago, got married here, served in ministries, went to Sunday school, bible studies, quit drinking, cussing, improved my attitude, genuinely was a better person and became more like Jesus than I was when I got here.

And then I wasn't..... I stopped coming to church. Started all the things I stopped. Was nothing like Jesus anymore. I knew the truth of God's Word, who Jesus was, what He had done for me. But I relapsed into bad ways and error. I was backsliding.....

Was I never saved to begin with? Did I not really understand the love of God and Christ's sacrifice for me? Or.....was I saved the entire time under grace and God knew I'd come back was just waiting for me to figure it out?

I've thought about these things since I came back, my conclusion.....WHO CARES! I had strayed from the truth and needed turned back!

Sometimes we use the Word of God as an excuse to NOT do something. Let me show you what I mean:

**Romans 8:38-39 (HCSB)**

38 For I am persuaded that not even death or life,  
angels or rulers,  
things present nor things to come, hostile powers,  
39 height or depth, or any other created thing  
will have the power to separate us  
from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

This verse does NOT mean that a person can't backslide. There is not one thing that can separate you from the love of God. It is always there, He's always there, and always available to you. BUT.....YOU can refuse it, YOU can deny it.

There is no outside power that can come between you and God. But there IS and inside power that can.....it's called your will. YOU can decide to turn from the love of God and to instead chose a life of returning to bad ways and error.

**John 10:28 (HCSB)**

28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand.

Again, no one can snatch you from the Lord's hand. But YOU can jump out and run away. This is what it means to stray, it's to fall away from the truth, to be led away into error and sin.

You can error in your actions but also in your thinking. How does this happen? What causes people to be led away into error?

## **1. Bad Company**

Consider this.....you are influenced, in some way, by every single person in your life. You may not think so, you may not realize it but you are. And the more time you spend with them, the more they will influence you.

If they are having a negative influence.....RUN! Separate yourself from them. Come out from amongst them.

### **1 Corinthians 15:33 (HCSB)**

33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals.

Here's another way of saying it....Don't be a fool and think you are the exception, association with troublesome, destructive people will **destroy** your good character, beliefs and behaviors.

This is the work of the enemy, satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy anything good about you and if you allow destructive people to have voice in your life it may eventually cause you return to a place of error.....possibly even destroy you and your faith.

Destructive people destroy things! Bad company is BAD!

### **2 Peter 3:17 (HCSB)**

17 Therefore, dear friends, since you know this in advance, be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stability.

Don't let bad company lead you astray, be on your guard so their ways don't influence you!

## **2. Love for the things of the world**

Consider this.....you will hunger for the things that you feed on. The things you give your time to will have an impact on your spiritual life. If you live life just to please yourself, it can lead you astray!

### **1 John 2:15-17 (HCSB)**

15 Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. 16 For everything that belongs to the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's lifestyle—is not from the Father, but is

from the world. 17 And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does God's will remains forever.

This is when worldly things have our heart instead of Jesus. When you first come to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is working sin out of your life, the scales start to tip from heathen to saint. Things are glorious, your love for God is unlike anything you've ever imagined.

Then the honeymoon phase comes to an end. Your love for Jesus is still there, but other things begin to catch your eye. They become the things you think about and the things you pursue instead of Jesus.....the scales begin to tip back the other way....

This is where we see people walk away from the church, when it's no longer more important than their hobbies, recreation, or their work (gotta make that money).

Don't let your love for the things of this world, temporary things, lead you back to bad ways and error.

### **3. Giving in to Sin**

Consider this.....sin only gets the best of you when you let it. Even if you struggle with things, the only time you lose is when you quit trying!

Sometimes people get tired of trying. Sometimes people feel that it's too hard. Sometimes people just don't have what it takes to keep fighting.....

This is what I talked about last week. This is why you NEED to be plugged into a local church body. Ask someone to help.

Know that it's never too late, know that Jesus is ALWAYS waiting and willing to forgive and heal.

#### **1 John 1:9 (HCSB)**

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Don't let sin win. Don't let it drive you back to bad ways and error!

People do backslide. Not everyone, but some do..... When this happens, what are WE to do?

#### **James 5:19 (HCSB)**

19 My brothers, if any among you strays from the truth, and someone turns him back

WE are to turn him back! The Greek word here for back is epistrephō (e-pē-stre'-fō) - to return to the love and obedience of God.

We are supposed to go on a rescue mission. Our God is a rescuing God and we are to be a rescuing people!

What would motivate us to be rescuers? It has to be a love for God and a love for people! Because I love God, I love the people He created. Because I love God, I desire to see hurting people healed. Love MUST be the motivation.....

If you love someone, the first and best thing you can do is PRAY.....

**Ephesians 6:18 (HCSB)**

18 Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.

Pray, genuinely for the person. Pray for God to help them persevere. Pray that God would use YOU to help turn them back. Pray that God would help you see them as He does, to love them, to show them grace.....

The biggest mistake people make is a failure to show grace to someone who has messed up. This is something God has supernaturally gifted me in on multiple occasions and really He has just grown me tremendously in this area. We've got to get this, if you can't show them grace AND love, you can't be the one to turn them back to the love and obedience of God!

Romans 2:4 tells us that it's the goodness of God that leads people to repentance! What a person needs when they are backsliding, is to see the goodness of God. They need to see His goodness through YOU!

**1 Thessalonians 5:14 (HCSB)**

14 And we exhort you, brothers: warn those who are irresponsible, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

Lord, help us be patient! Don't grow weary warning, comforting, and helping people. Again, they need to see God's goodness, love, grace.....

**James 5:20 (HCSB)**

20 let him know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his life from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Understand this, to return someone to the love and obedience of God, you have to turn him from his own thinking and feeling. It will only come from a spiritual impact on their life.

The Word of God has to be involved. Prayer has to be involved. You have to love, forgive, encourage, by the power of the Holy Spirit!

If you can bring them back to the truth, you save them from danger, from destruction, from death....and cover a multitude of sins.....because when a person is right with Jesus, their sin, errors, mistakes, are covered.....in Christ, they are hidden!

When the Father looks at you, He sees His Son, perfect, holy, righteous.....

**Colossians 3:1-3 (NKJV)**

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

A person either walks in God's truth, or they walk in their own way....*"the error of his way"*

Don't ever judge someone harshly, always seek to forgive and encourage. Christians should be in the business of HELPING people!

If you are a wanderer, God wants you to come home.....He loves you. He is waiting!

He hasn't given up on you and neither have we!

Intercede for those who need to come home.