

...**friendship** with the world (cf. 4:1-4)
...how we **respond to God** (cf. 4:5-10)
...how we **plan for the future** (cf. 4:13-17)
...how we **wait for the future** (cf. 5:1-12)
...how we **respond in prayer** (cf. 5:13-18)

e.g. applied to **trials**

If **the truth** of trials is that (1) they're an inevitable and regular part of life; (2) they are intended by God to function as a test for our faith; (3) the testing of our faith is intended to result in steadfastness; and, (4) they are a significant factor in us becoming spiritually mature...

Then, to **wander from** that truth means that (1) we reject or doubt most if not all of these (the above) truths about trials; (2) we spend our time in our trials grumbling or complaining; (3) we do whatever we can to avoid trials or fight against them when they come our way; or, (4) we redefine joy (and, maybe even maturity) and pursue it elsewhere or think that it's simply a lost cause as long as we're facing a trial.

- Note all of the statements of reality and, especially, the references to God and His ways (e.g. word, law, Scripture) in James's letter.
- Note also all of the encouragement to demonstrate genuine faith and, especially, the commands that are to be obeyed in James's letter.

What does it mean to bring back a wandering brother?

- The wandering brother is personally responsible to turn;
- And, God is consequentially sovereign in their potential turning.

But, anyone among us can:

- (1) **pray** for them (cf. James 5:15, 16)
- (2) **identify** that it is the truth they are wandering from
- (3) **consider** his own adherence to the truth
- (4) **approach** the brother, intending to listen well (cf. 1:19-21)
- (5) **bring the truth** to bear on the brother and himself
- (6) **demonstrate** genuine love for them
- (7) **conduct** himself in wisdom, even asking God for it
- (8) **watch** carefully what he says and how he says it
- (9) **encourage** them to respond rightly to the Lord
- (10) **submit** to God, His role and timing, and their responsibility

Using James as an overlay, are you proven to have a genuine faith, are you presently in danger of wandering, are you personally needing to bring back a brother?

Does the way you have faith and hold that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ prove that it's genuine?

Sunday, July 27, 2025
Danny Capon, *Pastor*

PROVEN—The Letter of James
A Faith That's Practical, Prudent, and Patient
No. 23 | Bringing a Brother Back from Wandering
James 5:19-20

Review

James writes, in the early years of the church, to help believers understand the dynamics of a proven faith—a faith that's practical, prudent, and patient in and throughout all of one's life, which includes:

Responding to Trials (1:2-15)

Responding to the Word (1:16-27)

Holding faith in Jesus Christ in a way that's consistent with true faith (2:1-26)

Showing true faith in Jesus Christ by demonstrating works (3:1-18; 4:1-12)

- By taming the tongue (3:1-12)
- By discerning who's wise (3:13-18)
- By addressing the source of conflict (4:1-12)
- By not boasting in pride—self-determined living (4:13-17)
- By not boasting in earthly riches—self-indulgent living (5:1-6)
- By being patient until the Lord's return (5:7-12)
- By responding in prayer (5:13-18)

What is James talking about in the passage before us (5:19-20)?

How should we understand this passage?

- This passage (5:19-20) functions as its own paragraph (literary unit), set off as it is by "My brothers" (v. 19), a typical way James has often indicated transitions (major and minor) in his letter.
- This passage, at the same time, still follows very closely the previous passage (5:13-18), both with its continued use of "anyone" and "among you" (5:19, cf. vv. 13-14) and its reference to a sinning brother (v. 20, cf. vv. 15-16).
- This passage addresses all believers generally, but especially encourages believers ("brothers") who "bring back" other believers from wandering; while seemingly abrupt, it functions as a very fitting conclusion to James's letter.
- This passage and its flow of thought can be summarized as follows:

(v. 19) The believer who brings back a wandering believer...

(v. 20) ...must know that he will save his soul and cover many sins.

- These two verses don't address everything.
- But, they do address somethings, and the rest of the letter addresses more.

^{ESV} **James 5:19** My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

How should believers respond to other believers who wander?

By bringing back a wandering brother

What does this mean?

“**My brothers...**” (v. 19)

anyone among you

someone (from among you)

“**...if anyone among you wanders from the truth...**” (v. 19)

if

anyone among you

wanders (cf. James 1:16, “deceived”)

from the truth (cf. James 1:18; 3:14)

“**...and someone brings him back...**” (v. 19)

and

someone (from among you)

brings him back

(from his wandering)

“**...let him know...**” (v. 20)

he needs to know (imp.) that (cf. James 1:3; 2:20)

whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering

will save his soul from death and (cf. James 1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:15)

will cover a multitude of sins

Possible Chiasm?

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 and will cover a multitude of sins

- wanders
- brings back

(e.g. This word is often used to convey the *movement* of repentance, cf. Mt 13:15; Lk 1:16, 17; 17:4; 22:32; Acts 3:19; 9:35; 11:21; 14:15; 15:19; 26:18, 20; 28:27; 2 Cor 3:16; 1 Th 1:9; 1 Pt 2:25)

Hebrew Parallelism?

anyone among you **wanders** from the truth
=
a sinner from his **wandering** (lit. way)

- Wandering from the truth is sinning (cf. James 1:15; 4:8, 17; 5:15, 16)
- Wandering from the truth is way of life.

What does it mean to wander as a believer from the truth?

wander = generally, giving oneself (being led) to think and believe that which is not true (cf. James 1:16); specifically, giving oneself (being led) to pursue and behave in ways that don't accord with the truth.

the truth = generally, that which is true (accords with reality, cf. James 3:14); specifically, that which is believed and is a part of the means of a believers new life (cf. James 1:18), and that which sustains such new life and encourages formation of conduct accordingly.

We could be in danger of wandering (from the truth) in relation to...

...our response to **trials** (cf. James 1:2-4, 12)
...what **makes most sense** (wisdom) to us (cf. James 1:5-8; 3:13-18)
...**success** as defined by the world and in this world (cf. James 1:9-11)
...our struggle with **temptation** and **sin** (cf. James 1:13-15)
...the reality, character, and activity of **God** (cf. James 1:5, 16-18)
...moral purity and **ongoing change** (cf. James 1:19-21)
...the **word** of God (cf. James 1:16-25)
...how we **treat other people** (cf. James 1:27; 2:1-13; 4:1-2, 11-12)
...**practicing** our faith (cf. James 2:14-26)
...how we use **our tongue** (cf. James 1:26; 3:1-12)