

James 5:19-20  
Convert the Straying Believer

**Introduction:** Review the entire book. This is an “if ... then ...” thought to follow.

**1) A hypothetical situation—5:19**

- a) **Misdirection**, a straying brother: <sup>19</sup> *My brothers, if* (3<sup>rd</sup> class, probable) *anyone among [evn] you wanders/is led astray [aor. pass. subj. plana,w] from the truth [avlh,qeia]*
- i) To wander is to reject the revealed will of God and to act contrary to it, either through willfulness or the deceit of others (including demonic powers (Peter Davids)
    - (1) It is a serious departure from the truth that leads to significant danger.
  - ii) They had been warned about this in 1:16.
  - iii) Similar to walking on a path in a county or state park and getting off the path.
  - iv) As Alec Motyer states: Departure from the truth, and from the life that accords with the truth, gives a revealing testimony to how things really are and calls forth a spirit of concern in every truly Christian heart.
    - (1) This is a **doctrinal** failure that leads to **moral** failure.
  - v) It is difficult to distinguish between the believer who is struggling with sin and the individual who is walking away from the truth and does not belong to Christ at all. We don't know their hearts.
- b) **Redirection**, restoration by a brother: *and someone brings him back* [aor. act. subj. evpistre,fw],
- i) This is not about evangelism but compassionate restoration.
    - (1) There is no command for restorative action. It is assumed.
  - ii) Similar to a park ranger helping you get back on the right path.

**2) Theological ramifications of restoration—5:20**

- a) Something to learn: **(then)** <sup>20</sup> **let him** (the restorer) **know** [pres. act. impv. ginw,skw] *that whoever brings back* [aor. act. ptc. evpistre,fw] *a sinner from his wandering* [pla,nh] ...
- i) An echo from 1:3
  - ii) It is no small thing to bring someone who has wandered from the truth of the Christian faith back into that truth. (Douglas Mangum)
- b) What the rescuer needs to know:
- i) They accomplished a **spiritual rescue**: *will save* [fut. act. ind. sw,zw] *his soul from death* ...
    - (1) Negative: Delivered him from danger
    - (2) Positively: and restored him to a place of safety
    - (3) Death: a reference to both physical and eternal, spiritual death

- (a) There is a sin unto death for believers (1 Cor. 5:5; 11:30; 1 John 5:16-17)
- ii) They accomplished a **spiritual forgiveness**: *and will cover* [fut. act. ind. kalu,ptw] *a multitude of sins*.
  - (1) These sins are covered because when one turns away from his wandering, these sins are forgiven. (A. Fruchtenbaum)

**3) Things we need to remember:**

- a) Other NT writers spoke of this. (cf. Gal. 6:1; Heb. 5:2)
- b) Remember Peter's restoration (Luke 22:32).