

“Loving Those Who Wander”

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Scriptural Foundation: James 5:10-20, ESV

The Prayer of Faith

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.

When my nephew Aaron was two years old he and his family lived in Baden, Austria, serving as missionaries to refugees. Jim and Kathy resided with their sons, Aaron and baby Micah, on the fourth story of an apartment building. One wintry Saturday, Kathy was laboring to put an uncooperative Micah to sleep for his mid-morning nap. Jim had been talking to a missionary friend who had stopped by to visit him. He was saying good-bye to his missionary friend and Jim told him he would walk him down the stairs and out to his car. So, he put on his coat and, with his friend, walked down three flights of stairs, opened the heavy front door, and walked around the apartment building for his car was parked on the other side. Jim said good-bye and he walked back and trudged up those three flights of stairs. When he arrived he was eager to play with Aaron so he called out to him, but he did not answer. He looked around and he was no where to be found. Suddenly his heart skipped a beat and he realized, “Was it possible Aaron followed me out?”

Jim recognized when he came back into the building there was a maintenance worker who had propped the heavy door open, which a two-year old could not have escaped from, as he was working on this heavy door. Jim rushed down the stairs and he asked the maintenance man if he had seen his little two-year old boy. The maintenance man said, indeed he had. He didn’t think it odd a two-year old boy would walk out an apartment building on his own.

In front of this apartment building were four streets which went in four different directions. He looked quickly down each of the four streets, but he could not find his son. He had to choose one and he realized most often they would go to the train station so he decided to take that road, praying all the way God would help him to find his two-year old son.

In Aaron’s mind, as he tells us, he was sitting in the apartment and seeing his dad and his friend walk out, he thought, “I want to spend some time with my dad.” He knew it was cold out and his dad had told him often, when he goes out in the cold weather, he needed some gloves on. He could not find his own gloves, but he found his dad’s gloves and he found his dad’s hat. He put on this big, massive hat and the gloves which came up to his biceps and he walked out, seeking to find his dad.

Jim, as he was running to find Aaron, came upon an intersection which was dangerous even for an adult to cross. It was four lanes of traffic and very busy. Cars were just zipping by; “Aaron couldn’t have possibly made it safely across this intersection.” Jim rushed across the intersection, continuing to run, and shortly he looked ahead and he saw this set of gloves and hat bobbing up and down. He ran to him, grabbed him in his arms and he said, “Aaron, I love you. I love you.” Aaron was a bit surprised at all of the affection he was getting and he said, “I love you too, daddy.” The whole way back, as they walked, Jim grabbed Aaron to himself and said, “I love you, Aaron. I love you, Aaron.”

God had brought a wanderer back and it gave great joy to a dad’s heart to be the instrument God used.

What does love do when someone precious to us wanders? That is the question James addressed in Chapter 5 of his letter. Love goes after them. Love seeks them out. Love calls them back home.

In the last two verses, James urges the church to seek out those who wander from the faith and attempt to try to bring them back into the truth, and I believe the modern church sorely needs to hear James’ old message. Too often we neglect this call to love those who wander from the truth. Many wanderers have been allowed to stray without anyone seeking to help them find their way back home and finding their way back to safety. These who wander are in greater

peril than any two-year old boy crossing a dangerous street in a foreign country. I believe Bethany Baptist Church needs to listen to James' message.

I know, in my seventeen years of pasturing here, we have had many who have wandered from the truth. I wish I could say I, personally, and we, as a church, have done everything we possibly could to lead each one of these back to the truth. I cannot say that we have and this grieves me deeply. I want to be able to say that we will by God's grace and for His glory, we will. Can we commit ourselves to that ministry?

Too much is at stake to neglect James' exhortation. James begins Verse 19 with the words, "My brothers". These two verses are written to everyone in the church. These verses are not just written to pastors and elders, but to every member in God's family. The church is to be a family which cares for one another and we do not let our little ones wander outside the safety of God's grace without making a massive effort to bring them back to God Himself.

Let us remember the context of these two verses. James has been encouraging those who were suffering to pray fervently for God's strengthening grace. In Verse 13, we read,

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

The hurting person has a responsibility to call out to God in the midst of the painful trials and sufferings they are experiencing. Painful trials bring certain temptations and they need to call out to God for spiritual strength to hold onto God so they will not doubt Him, become angry with Him, and rebellious toward Him, but they would still be soft and pliable, even in the midst of the trial, so they would respond rightly to God. Then, in Verse 14, we read,

¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him...

James moves from addressing those who are suffering to those who now have become in a spiritual or physical state of great weakness. They are hanging on to hope and to obedience by a thread and by just their fingertips. James says, "Is it not time to call in others in the church who are spiritual leaders to minister to your heart and to your life? Let them pray over you so then you might be healed and you might be made whole and you might be strengthened and you might be able to walk in the faith and you might be able to put on the full armor of God and experience the grace of God as you overcome and make your stand against the evil one."

In Verses 19-20, James addresses those who did not pray when they were suffering. He addresses those who did not call on the elders to pray for them when they came into a period of great weakness, and as a result of their lack of personal, fervent disciplined prayer, and as a result of a lack of humbly seeking out other spiritual leaders who might be able to come along side of them and minister to them, they grew so weak they succumbed to temptation. They either wandered from doctrinal integrity and the right understanding of the true God, or they wandered away from God in their lifestyle and their practice.

What should we do for the person who neglected to pray and who neglected to call on the elders and as a result wandered away from the truth? Should we say to that person, "Too bad, you should have prayed! It is your fault. You should have called the elders. We wash our hands of the responsibility for you. You should have known better. You were taught better." Is that the way we should respond? No, James calls us to loving action.

We what to think about those who wander from the faith and how we, as a church and as individuals, can be used by God to bring them back to the truth. There are four parts to this discussion of wandering from the truth. The first is the possibility of our wandering. The second part is the problems which entice us to wander. The third aspect is the plan to help those who wander. Fourth, we will look at the promises for those who bring back wanderers.

We first want to consider the possibility of our wandering. In Verse 19, James beings,

¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth...

This person who wanders once claimed to be a believer and they were once a part of this fellowship. This person at one time was an active member of the church and they regularly attended the worship services. They sang the hymns with the others. They were part of a small group. They publicly shared their testimony of faith. They were baptized.

Perhaps, they taught a Sunday school class. They appeared for a time to possess a genuine, authentic faith by those who were looking from the outside, but now they have wandered from the truth.

James says, “if”, and he is saying that it is likely that some within the church will become part of that company. He is not giving a possibility which likely would never happen. He is giving a possibility which is probable and certainly possible.

I wish I could say that every friend of mine, who used to talk about honoring Christ with their whole lives, had continued in that commitment, refusing to live in overt, ongoing sin. I wish I could say that, but it is not. I wish every friend who used to proclaim boldly and loudly to me and to others the Lordship of Jesus, had continued in that proclamation, never denying the majesty and deity of Jesus. I wish that were the case, but it is not. I wish every friend with whom I used to have sweet fellowship and prayer I could still have that same fellowship because they are still walking in the truth. I wish that were the case, but it is not. I imagine you, too, have some friend, or perhaps friends, who at one point proclaimed to love the Lord Jesus, but who now love this present world instead. Do you? I imagine that is true for every one of us because it is not an uncommon occurrence.

The word “wander” means “to go astray”. It suggests a gradual moving away from God and from His glory; from a God-centered life. Seldom does a person wander from the faith in one big, giant step. Most often this wandering is a series of little steps away from God.

When I was little, my pastor used to use the word “backslider” to describe those who wander from the truth. That word is not used much any more. I used to think when my pastor used that word, “backslider”, he was talking about those who are sitting in the back pews of the sanctuary. (Laughter) I felt a little embarrassed for those poor souls back there, because the pastor was calling them out and I would peak over my shoulder to see who he was talking about, but my pastor was not talking about those sat at the far reaches of the sanctuary, though. He was talking about those who had turned their backs on God. They had fallen away from their commitment of obedience and commitment of faith in Him. This is very easy thing to do; a little indulgence here, a little compromise there, a little doubt of the truth here and soon a person, step by step, has completely wandered from the truth. Later James tells us that the outcome of this wandering is spiritual death and it is eternal separation from God. Nothing could be more serious then the ultimate outcome of those who wander and never return. This is a deadly straying James is referencing.

Jesus uses this word “wander” when He talks about one sheep which goes astray. Remember the shepherd who had one hundred sheep and one wandered? What did the shepherd do? He put the ninety-nine in a safe place and he went out, over hill and valley, and over mountain to find the one which was lost. He went out to seek and to save the one who had wandered from the fold.¹

Jesus uses this word again when He warns his disciples in Matthew 24,

⁴ And Jesus answered them, “*See that no one leads you astray.*”

When a person wanders there is often human or demonic instruments involved in that wandering.

We are responsible for ourselves in this matter. We do not want to read these verses in James and think, “Others are responsible for me if I wander. I really do not have personal responsibility. That is the responsibility of spiritual leaders and others in the church.” No, it is a dual responsibility. We are primarily responsible for our won souls. We cannot blame another for our own straying.

True, when someone wanders from the truth, usually the Devil has his agents working on the person to deceive them and to entice them, but this does not excuse us. We are called to persevere in the faith, to endure and hold onto Christ as our Savior and as our Lord; the One who delivers us from our sin, for He is faithful.

I love what Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2,

¹ Matthew 18:12

¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us...

We are responsible to endure and persevere through the strength God supplies. Notice James' concern is that we not wander from "the truth". The truth is God's Word. The truth is the Gospel. The truth is Jesus Himself. All these are wrapped in what it means to wander. We do not wander from one without wandering from the other. If we wander from God's Word, we are also wandering from the Gospel, and we are also wandering from Jesus. If we are wandering from Jesus we are wandering from the Scriptures and from the Gospel itself. James tells us not to wander from the truth, which is the Lord Jesus Himself who is the Truth. He is talking about God's Word which is the Truth. He is talking about the Gospel which is the Good News and the Truth to our souls.

The evidence of wandering is a departure from the Bible, a straying from the Gospel, and a loss of Jesus at the very center of our lives and of our thinking. As such this wandering can be doctrinal, that is to say it is possible for us to live moral lives, and yet wander from the Truth and wander into doctrinal error and to believe ideas about God which are not worthy of Him; to believe ideas about His plan of salvation which are not worthy of God's glory. God calls us to hold onto the Truth He has presented and revealed to us in the sacred Word so we might worship Him rightly and we might not become idolaters.

This wandering can also be practical. It is possible for us to keep a doctrinal statement sound and we check off all the right boxes in regards to what we believe about God, about God's Son, about the Holy Spirit, about salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus alone. We check off all of the Truths and we affirm all of these things, and yet we wander from the Truth by the lifestyle we have chosen. We disobey God's Commandments. We walk away from practical righteousness and practical holiness. Our lifestyle becomes filled with the love of this world and the things of this world, and a love for sin itself.

This wandering can be doctrinal or it can be practical, or it can be both. I believe it most often is both; a loss of doctrinal integrity and a wandering away from the doctrines of the Gospel cause us, ultimately, to wander away from the practice of the Gospel. Or, conversely, the choice to live an immoral life causes us to doubt all of the Truths God has presented to us in the Bible, so this wandering can also be both doctrinal and practical at the same time.

I wonder if there is anyone among us who is wandering from the Truth. Friends, I must tell you, wandering is a mark of an artificial and dead faith; a faith which will not bring the forgiveness of sin, a faith which will not bring God's salvation and God's joy and the hope of Heaven. Genuine faith believes God's Truth and it holds to God's Word and it meditates on it day and night. It embraces Jesus as Savior and as Lord. He is the Truth we commit our whole life to and which we center our life upon. We cling, in love, to Him.

If you are wandering from the Truth, God's remedy for you is His call for you to turn, repent, and humble yourself before Him. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.² That is His promise to you. There is, therefore, now no temptation which has taken hold of us which is not common to man, and God will, with each temptation He allows, provide for us a way of escape.³ That is not to say we cannot move our lives toward a temptation because it is foolish to enter into it and we will succumb to it, so we say, "Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the evil one."⁴

Satan is too powerful for us to resist on our own and that is why James, in Chapter 4, has already addressed this issue, when he said,

⁷ ...Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

This is first in the context of a life which has drawn near to God. We must not be so proud as to think that we, as a result of our own convictions and of our own strength and in our own accord will be able to protect our souls from wandering. In 1 Corinthians 10, we read,

² James 4:7, 8

³ 1 Corinthians 10:13

⁴ Matthew 6:13

¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

We ought not to have that kind of self-confidence. Remember Peter was self-confident before he denied the Lord Jesus three times; “I will never deny you. I will die before I deny you.”⁵ We have to be diligent about our own faith! We cannot think because we prayed a prayer when we were little and then we experienced some emotional joy in our later years during a church service we are safe. Satan prowls like a roaring lion and God calls us to persevere in the faith which rescues us.

Let’s turn to 2 Peter 1. There is a long passage because it is helpful for us and it teaches so much about the issue of perseverance and we do not have to fear wandering when we stand firm in the strength God supplies because God’s strength is sufficient and enough for us,

³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, ⁶ and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, ⁷ and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. ⁸ For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...

¹⁰ Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. ¹¹ For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Is this person who wanders from the Truth, in James 5, a true believer or not? We do not know, and no person who is currently wandering from the Truth can know or be assured of their own salvation; they cannot. The only way to evaluate and be able to validate genuine faith is through the present workings which are happening presently in our life. This is James’ warning and concern: if you rescue this person and bring them back you will rescue their soul from death.

Let’s look at the problems which entice us to wander. Why would a person wander from the Truth? Let me offer you four problems which lead to wandering if we do not address them in our lives. I get these from Jesus’ parable of the soils.⁶ Perhaps there are more problems, and undoubtedly there are which would lead us to wandering, but I believe these are the ones Jesus presents in this parable.

The first problem is willfulness. Remember from the parable the seed is God’s Word and some seed fell along the hard path and birds came and snatched it away. This represents the person who has a hard heart. The Word of God comes and rests upon that hard heart and Satan comes and takes the Word away from us and we wander from the Truth. We are susceptible to wandering when our heart becomes hardened to God’s Word and when we are not soft and pliable like clay in God’s hands, but rather we become willful and stubborn. We will obey God if we agree what God says to do would be good for us, but if we do not think what God says will be good for, or if it does not make any sense to our natural reasoning, we are not going to do that and we will find another path. We become very selective in the Commandments we obey. That is a willful and stubborn heart which leans on its own understanding and one which does not trust in God, acknowledging Him and all of His ways.

In Verse 20, James says,

²⁰ ...let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering...

The New American Standard and New International Version translations are more literal,

⁵ Matthew 26:35

⁶ Luke 8:5-8

²⁰ Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way...

James is talking about a person who has “his way” and that way is the way they are following. They are not following the Lord’s way. Sometimes his or her way intersects with the Lord’s way, but they are really following his path or her path.

James addressed this problem of willfulness again in Chapter 4 when he says,

⁶ But he gives more grace... ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

The second problem which leads us to wandering is neglect. The seed sown in the shallow soil first sprouted, but then burned up when the heat of the sun caused it to shrivel up because it could not sink its roots down deep into the soil because of the rockiness of the soil. This represents the person who first receives the Word of God with joy, but then suffering and affliction hits them and they become angry with God and they doubt His goodness and they fall away from the faith because their faith has no roots because of the neglect of throwing their roots deeply into God and into His Word.

We are in danger of wandering from the faith when we neglect the means God has given us to grow the roots of our faith deep down. God commands us to discipline our lives for godliness. He calls us to be fervent and persistent in our prayer, to be continuous in our meditation upon God’s Word. This is where the disciplines of a godly life are so important. He calls us to a weekly commitment of worshipping together and a commitment to continue to fellowship with God’s people. He calls us to a bold witness and confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. These are the means God uses to deepen the roots of our faith so as to provide stability and security in the midst of affliction and great pressure; then our faith can survive.

We cannot rely upon our past disciplines for present depth. Some who wander, at one time put their roots deep, but then they stopped continuing to water and they stopped allowing the means of God’s grace to deepen the roots of the soil of their hearts to be used, and those roots began to shrivel up to the surface again. We need, daily, a lifelong discipline of receiving the grace God has for us through the means He provides.

How are you doing in the area of spiritual disciplines? If you are weak there, you are very susceptible to this wandering.

The third problem is fear. The seed sown among the weeds is choked by the weeds. The seed is sown in the heart, but then other things come and choke that Word out. The first weed identified by Jesus in that parable is the weed of the worries of this life; we are afraid and we fear we will be ridiculed if we stand up too tall for God. We will be knocked down and people will not like us. We will lose our standing in society and perhaps we will lose wealth we could acquire.

Remember in the days of Jesus’ earthly ministry it was said some believed on Him, but they *feared* to confess Him lest they be put out of the Synagogue.⁷ They did not want to be thrown out of respectable society for the cause of Jesus. Then it said this, “for they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.”⁸ Fear will lead us to wandering and we have to decide, which do we yearn for more: the praise of man or the praise of God.

Friends, are we hesitant to commit ourselves to Jesus because we wonder what our friends will think? Do we wonder how He will change our lives so radically? “Fear not!” God says, for He will be with us and He will carry us all the way to glory! He is the source of joy.

The last problem which entices us toward wandering is the problem of worldly pleasures. Jesus identifies the other weeds as “riches of this life and the pleasures of this life”. I have observed the college years are wandering years for many young adults. This is the time during which they are tempted to pursue wealth. Even the very respectable and

⁷ John 12:42

⁸ John 12:43

upright college students are tempted to think, “How can I make a good life for myself. I want to be able to retire as early as I can and I want to accumulate as much wealth as I possibly can. That is why I am going to college, so I can do that.” Their focus becomes their pursuit of their love for money. Jesus says that is a recipe for wandering. It will choke faith.

It is not only a love for money, but it is also a love for pleasure. I believe sexual temptation robs more young people of spiritual life than anything else. Fueled by alcohol, pornography and vain philosophy, our world is awash in sexual impurity. Sexual sin becomes an expected pattern of life for young adults. It becomes expected by family members, by professors, and by the college student body abroad. The odd balls on campus are the ones who devote themselves to purity. The word “virgin” is one of the greatest put downs the world gives to a young man or young woman looking for social acceptance.

Friends, this world has it all wrong, and you have to decide it does. If you do not decide this world has it all wrong, from the beginning to the end, then you will be enticed to wander and you will be in danger of losing your soul.

Some of you may be saying, “It is too late. I am already wandering!” Friend, it is never too late to humble yourself before God and seek His mercy. In Hosea 14, God says,

⁴ “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely...”

That is the kind of God who reveals Himself in the Gospel. Turn to Him now.

Now let us consider the plan to help those who wander, as we read Verse 19,

¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back...

Who is this “someone” who is responsible to take this person and to help them back to the Truth? Is it the pastor, the elders, or the deacons? Paul say, “No, it is anyone in the church.” The church is to be a spiritual hospital and a place where those who are sick and weak and wondering can come and immediately there will be people who are willing to get busy and commit themselves to helping bring that person back into the Truth.

A hospital, however, is not a place where sick people should be allowed to come and remain sick with no one attending to them; “I like my sickness, now leave me alone!” This is not the place for you, because the hospital is supposed to be a place where, if you come and you are bleeding all over the place, immediately there are going to be people who will be active to help heal you, whether you want it or not. I fear the church has become a place, rather than a hospital to help those who are sick, where sick people go to suffer and die because no one is willing to risk coming up to the person and saying, “Let me bind up your wounds,” because that person may not want their wounds to be bound up. Someone may say, “It is better they are here bleeding than out in the world and bleeding.”

If the church is not a place where the Holy Spirit works in their life and they become convicted and they need to be healed and they have those spiritual wounds addressed, where else will they be helped? The plan is for us to help.

Is that my business to go out and bring back those who are wandering from the faith? If you love them, yes! They once called themselves “Christian”; you once prayed with them and you once walked with them. It is our business to rescue that person, just as it was my brother’s business to rescue his two-year old son wandered out of the apartment building. He did not think, “Well, maybe my son wants to go for an afternoon walk through the city.” No, he said, “I must go rescue him because he is out there in the midst of danger and he could die out there.” It is our business.

How often should we warn one another of the danger of wandering? Every day! Hebrews 3 says,

¹² Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³ But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today”...

This idea of the attempt of the church to bring back those who are wandering is supposed to be part of the natural warp and woof of the church. It should not be surprising to those who wander the church is coming after them to attempt to help them come back to the Truth. This should become a part of who we are as a church that this is a

natural response we have and everyone in the family would know that is what would happen if they wandered. I believe they actually want it, even if they protest.

Someone may say, "That person may reject me and no longer be my friend if I try to lead them back." You are right! I have had people who were once very close to me who will not talk to me anymore. They will refuse to take a phone call from me today because I attempted to bring them back after they wandered. I know that is a possibility and I know that hurts. I do not like that prospect, but that is true. I would much rather have attempted to lead them back so they could have a spiritual life and ultimately have them not take my calls today, than to have never tried and never sought to reach out to them and still be in conversation today. I would not have helped them.

The goal of this ministry is to bring that person back, to change his heart, and have a conversion. James instruction is not a license for us to confront someone we are angry with. His instruction is for us to patiently and gently go out to the one who is wandering and see how the best way is to lead them back home. We are not to rail against their sin, but we are to remind them of God's mercy, for their need of God's grace, and call them back to the joy of the Lord.

What is our first reaction when we hear someone has wandered from the truth? Is it to pick up the phone and talk to someone else about how that person has wandered from the Truth? Or, is it to pick up the phone and talk to that person and say, "I love you."

Now we turn to the promises for those who bring back wanderers in Verse 20,

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.

James is talking about the danger of soul death. He is talking about the prospect of eternal separation from God. He promises those who enter into this kind of ministry and work have the prospect of saving a person's soul from death.

There have been those who have looked me in the face, in my attempts to bring them back, and have become angry, but thankfully there have been those whom, God in His grace, have humbled themselves, brought repentance, and they are walking in the Truth. There is no greater joy than to see a person on a path to eternal destruction to become on a path, and remain on that path, of life itself. The joy is in being used by God to accomplish an eternal blessing for someone we love.

Little Aaron was largely ignorant of the dangers the world outside his apartment building posed him. He needed someone else to come along side of him and be willing to love him. When Jim discovered his son gone, he did not shrug his shoulders and say, "Well, let me pray for Aaron right now." Oh, he prayed, but he prayed while he was running down the stairs, taking action. He did not say, "It serves the little kid right. If he foolishly wanders out of the apartment building, and we have told him not to, it serves him right." No, in mercy and in love he ran to find his son who wandered. That is what love does.

Do you know anyone in your life who is wandering in the Truth today? At one time they professed Jesus and at one time perhaps you prayed with them and worshipped along side of them. Now, either through doctrine or through their practice of life, they are wandering from God. Do you know such a person?

What are we going to do about James 5:19-20? What is the action point? I urge you to grab hold of this ministry God calls you to as a member of God's family. Practically, I urge you to call them up and say, "I have been concerned about you and I have been thinking about you and praying for you. Would you mind if I talked with you?" You do not have to begin with a finger-wagging in their face, but be willing to spend some moments with them. If they say, "Yes," plan to spend moments talking about Jesus and the Gospel; about the hope in it, the life in it, the joy in it, and the destruction sin brings.

If they say, "No," tell them you are still praying for them and you will continue to pray for them. Let them know you will periodically ask if you can talk to them because you are deeply concerned for their soul: "Would you mind if I wrote you a note?" In some way, take action. That is what love does.