

Turning the Sinner from Death James 5:19-20

James 5:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Introduction

Two of the most severe warnings in the Bible have to do with turning from the truth. One warning pertains to the unbeliever who has heard the truth and rejects it and turns away. The other pertains to the professed believer who has the truth, knows the truth, and leaves the truth.

The rejection of the unbeliever can lead to ultimate hardening and eventual death in Hell.

The rejection of the truth by the professed believer can lead to apostasy and death and a more severe judgement by God.

I honestly do not know of anything more important to the life of the church than to understand

her mission in this world regarding the right response to the truth.

And I'm not talking about just any truth.

Although truth in any area is a good thing.

Truth about food you eat is a good thing.

Truth about your medical condition is important to know.

Truth about politics, if that were ever possible, would be nice.

Truth in a mechanic shop is a good thing to have.

Truth about your finances is important.

Truth about gravity will help you know not to jump off of tall building.

Truth about germs will help you wash your hands.

Truth in war can save lives.

But nothing comes close to what the truth of the gospel can do.

Responding to the truth of the gospel in genuine belief and repentance will lead to eternal life, becoming a new creation and the forgiveness of all sin. Being made righteous in God's sight and being exempt from the wrath of God.

Nothing is as important as that!!

But not responding to the truth of the Gospel in faith and repentance but rather unbelief and rebellion, will lead to death, and not temporary but eternal death and destruction from the presence of God in Hell.

So it could be accurately stated that the church has in her possession the most important truth known to man. When everything else dies and decays The truth of the gospel and your response to it will be all that matters.

Our passage today is the concluding 2 verses of James. It is one of the most important and sobering passages in all the book. Although some commentators have criticized it for the abrupt ending. It gets your attention and rightly so.

This passage has been debated as to who James is talking to and who is he talking about.

A. Some believe he is strictly talking about sinners in general, lost people, non-christians who have heard the truth and don't repent and it ends up leading their soul to death, (i.e. second death, hell). But if any of you turn the sinner from the error of his way, he could be saved.

Those who hold this view say the reason are:

1. My brethren, can and is used in an generic sense of Jewish brethren, not just the saved only. It is used

this way a great deal in the previous book of Hebrews.

2. This is indicated also by the way James warns of faith without works in James 2:14 and following. It has a particular Jewish bent with reference to

A. Believing in One God

B. The faith and works of Abraham

C. The faith and works of Rahab.

James was specifically noting that there were some Jews among them that were trusting in their orthodoxy without having orthopraxy. They had a dead faith that could not save because it was a faith that did not transform the conduct.

3. The use of the word sinner indicates that James is talking about lost people. The word sinner is almost exclusively used of lost people in rebellion to God and disobedient to the law of God.

“James defines the wanderer from sound doctrine and godly living as a **sinner** (see comments on its use in 4:8)—a word used in Scripture of the unregenerate (cf. Prov. 11:31; 13:6, 22; Matt. 9:13; Luke 7:37, 39; 15:7, 10; 18:13; Rom. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:9, 15; 1 Pet. 4:18), not believers. The term **sinner** frequently describes hardened unbelievers, those who openly, defiantly disregard God’s law; those whose evil character is apparent to everyone; those whose wickedness is common knowledge. Genesis

13:13 described the men of Sodom as “wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.” The opening verse of Psalms declares, “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!” (Ps. 1:1). Verse 5 of that same psalm adds, “The wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.” Sinners are defined in Psalm 51:13 as those who need to be converted to God, while Proverbs 11:31 contrasts the wicked sinner with the righteous.

In the New Testament the term **sinner** invariably describes those outside the kingdom of God. Jesus declared in Matthew 9:13, “I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Sinners are those whose repentance causes joy in heaven (Luke 15:7, 10); it was when he cried out “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” that the tax collector “went to his house justified” (Luke 18:13–14). It was “while we were yet sinners” that “Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8); indeed, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15).

A **sinner**, then, is someone who is without God and Christ, and so in need of salvation; it is a word of characterization. The apostle John writes, “The

one who practices sin is of the devil.... No one who is born of God practices sin” (1 John 3:8, 9). While Christians may sin, sin will not be their continual, unbroken practice; it will not characterize their lives. A **sinner**, on the other hand, is one who continually, habitually practices sin. Such people John declared to be children of the devil, not of God.”

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 286–287). Moody Press.

4. The words “the truth” are truth specific. The definite article “the” helps us identify that a this is not just any truth and not just scripture truth in general or theological truth in general, but rather it is “gospel centric”. This is saving truth and the specific truth that saves. So this is not just dealing with a believer wandering into doctrinal error but a unbeliever turning from saving truth.

5. The use of the term in verse 20,

“he who turns a sinner from the error of his way”

this is the delusion of his own thinking. The product of a blinded mind. He is following his own path, his own thinking, his own darkness, his own logic, and his own fallacies. This is indicated of the lost around us, who don’t follow the Way of Christ,

but rather their own ideas about God, and who he is and how to get to heaven and what righteousness is.

6. The use of the word “save” often in a context like this refers to the saving of the sinner from hell. It is salvific. Not just helping you from falling into error or false doctrine but rather saving from sin, death, hell and judgment.

7 The use of the word “soul” mean more than the physical life. It is that eternal part of you that will live in eternity somewhere, either heaven or Hell. He is not talking about saving the physical life from physical death, in the sense of chastisement, like I Corinthians 11 where some died from abuse of the the Lord’s table, or the man in I Cor. 5 who was delivered over to satan for the destruction of the flesh for unrepentant sin.

8. The reference of “covering a multitude of sins”

“Unrepentant sinners face eternal death weighed down with a **multitude of sins**. Since even one sin damns the sinner to hell, James’s use of the word **multitude** emphasizes the hopeless condition of sinners. Throughout their lives they accumulate a weight of sin that ultimately will pull them down into

hell. In Psalm 5:10 David wrote of the godless wicked, “Hold them guilty, O God; by their own devices let them fall! In the multitude of their transgressions thrust them out, for they are rebellious against You” (cf. Isa. 59:12; Jer. 5:5–6). “Because of [their] stubbornness and unrepentant heart[s they] are storing up wrath for [themselves] in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5)”

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 288). Moody Press.

So you can see how some could easily see this passage as more of an evangelistic passage to call the sinner back to God in salvation. The emphasis being placed on the one doing the turning a sinner back and the reward of him not perishing in his sin.

B. But others see this more as a brother pursuing another true believer who has wandered from the truth into doctrinal error. The the urgency of the passage is that we should pursue such a brother to help him get back on track, so he does not destroy his life here or risk the severe chastisement of God which could result in his physical death. (i.e. I Cor 11 and I Cor 5)

They sight reasons for interpreting the passage this way because,

1. My brethen

“Adamson concludes that the picture of the “wandering brother” in these verses is best understood as emerging “from the content of the Epistle as a whole.” Martin agrees and remarks, “The thrust of the entire epistle has been to prevent any Christian from wandering from the truth; if there is a lapse, he should be brought back.”⁴ Ropes notes that only here and in 2:1

James 2:1 (NKJV)

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality.

.....does the direct address, “My brothers,” stand first in the sentence (in the Greek) and asserts, “In both cases there is an abrupt change of subject.” There is no connecting particle that requires a close formal connection. It therefore seems more natural to assume that this reference at the very end to one

who has erred is best understood in the light of the various evils that James has censured in the entire epistle.

“My brothers” (*Adelphoi mou*) marks this concluding thought as expressed with loving warmth and sympathetic concern. James has the good of the Christian brotherhood at heart; he has spoken many sharp words of censure, but his aim is not to condemn but to restore. He is prompted by the obligations of brotherhood toward the erring brother.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 306). BMH Books.

2. The phrase “if anyone among you” seems to be indicate a more intimate knowledge of these people. Since they are part of the body of Christ, the church in that area.

3. The phrase if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, indicates, he had the truth, knew the truth, and can be turned back to what he once had.

4. The word “sinners” does not necessarily have to be confined to the lost alone.
as in

James 4:7–8 (NKJV)

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

I argued extensively that this is a a believer who is making himself an enemy of God by his love of the world.

And Paul identifies himself as as sinner. Not that he was a sinner, but he says I am a sinner.

1 Timothy 1:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

While it is true that 98% of the time the word “sinner” refers to the unregenerate lost man, and could be 99% of the time if you take the 2 times in James to refer to the lost man, it nevertheless could be used to refer to a believer wandering from the truth.

5. The word “soul” can refer to a believer need to turn back to the truth as it is used in James 1:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

6. The “covering a multitude of sins” could just be the forgiveness of sins of a believer who has wandered from the truth in to error and immorality

So which is it?

Is it the unregenerate lost man who has heard the gospel but walks away and needs the evangelistic effort of Christians to turn him back to salvation?

Or

Is it the believer who has wandered from the truth into error and perhaps immorality and needs the loving care of the fellow christians to come can call him back and get him to turn from the error of his way, so he won't experience the most severe chastisement from God?

Well, personally, I believe the right interpretation lies somewhere in the middle.

I believe this is a person who is part of the believing community by profession. He is or has been part of the visible church. He has known and learned the

truth. He has practiced it for some time. He had participated in the ministry and attended the assemblies of the church. He heard the gospel, He had a visible response to the Gospel. Everything doctrinally and practically seemed to be in order. He may even have been enthusiastic and brought his family to church, evangelized his friends, left tracks in the Hebrew language for his friends. He may even have experience being unsynagogued and lost friend and family relations because of it. He may have been initially enthusiastic about hearing the words of James and the other Apostles read in the church. He may have had doctrinal debates with his brethren over the Old Covenant verses New Covenant and the place of circumcision.

In other words, by all appearances, he seemed to be a true christian..... but, he wanders from the truth and goes his own way. He starts listening to the world and the false teachers that say works are necessary for salvation or is seduced by the Gnostic heresies being spread in the early church. Or he feels the luring temptations of the world and all that it has to offer and begins to lean that direction.

Or another way of saying this, there is the potential for apostasy.

He could walk away from the only truth that saves.

I wish I could say that this is highly unlikely and rarely occurs, but the opposite is the truth. This is the most common problem in the evangelical church. Daily people are walking away from a once professed faith. They are leaving the church, leaving the christian community, leaving the truth they once claimed to be true. And not all are leaving for a life of immorality or sinful living. They just don't believe it anymore or it is not important to them anymore. Living your life in your own way is more truthful to you and more fulfilling.

There is a term that has become popular in the last couple of years because of the abundance of departure from the church and the faith. It's call deconstruction. It is a practice of deconstructing your faith. Undoing what you believed. Readjusting your world view. It can include God or it can exclude God. If it includes God, it will be a wholesale attempt to redefine Him according to your own standards or by some new philosophy of life or immoral practice.

It's not called Apostasy which is understood as a bad thing.

It's repackaged into a positive. You are not abandoning the faith, you are deconstructing your faith and getting rid of all the things that are bad for you.... so you believe.

The reality of this should shake us to our very core. We see it all the time. You have seen it in your family or among your friends, or in the church. And even more troubling you may have see this in yourself. You are prone to wander.

There are 2 things happening this this passage and both are of extreme urgency and importance.

1. The First is the severe warning of what happens to a soul that does not turn back from the temptation to apostatize. Who does not turn back from the error of his way, but ends up with his soul in death.

2. The urgency of the need to realize the God has purpose you to go after them. That God desires that you pursue them, call them to turn back, persuade them to turn around, lest they die.

We don't need to recategorize them as deconstructed but we need to recognize the need to evangelize the sinner to turn him from certain death.

The warning of this apostasy are replete in scripture.

In every church there are those who make shipwreck of their faith by straying from God's truth. "They went

out from us,” wrote John in 1 John 2:19, “but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”

..... Such defectors from the faith they claim to believe are to be warned relentlessly, as illustrated in the epistle to the Hebrews MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 287). Moody Press.

Hebrews 2:1–4 (NKJV)

2 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. ² For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, ⁴ God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

Hebrews 3:7–15 (NKJV)

⁷ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

*“Today, if you will hear His voice,
 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
 In the day of trial in the wilderness,
 9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,
 And saw My works forty years.
 10 Therefore I was angry with that generation,
 And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,
 And they have not known My ways.’
 11 So I swore in My wrath,
 ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ ”*

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called *“Today,”* lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said:

*“Today, if you will hear His voice,
 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*

Hebrews 4:1–2 (NKJV)

4 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. **2** For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard

did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*.

Hebrews 5:12–6:8 (NKJV)

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

6 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. ³ And this we will do if God permits.

⁴ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for

themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

⁷ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; ⁸ but if it bears thorns and briers, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.

Hebrews 10:26–31 (NKJV)

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

³⁰ For we know Him who said, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord. And again, "*The Lord will judge His people.*" ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Jesus warned of the same problem

Mt 13:18–23

“Therefore hear the parable of the sower:

- 19** When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand *it*, then the wicked *one* comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside.
- 20** But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;
- 21** yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.
- 22** Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.
- 23** But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

This fake faith that doesn't last has been a theme in the book of James. His warnings and teachings have leaned heavily upon the reality of some in the church who may not be real,

James 1:12 (NKJV)

¹² Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

James 1:22 (NKJV)

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

James 1:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

James 1:26–27 (NKJV)

²⁶ If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless. ²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

James 2:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

James 2:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! ²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

Now at the end he gives warning the the outcome of one who wanders from the truth and does not turn back the then calls on the

True believers to pursue those whose faulty doctrine and sinful lives give evidence that they have departed from the true faith

I. The Concern

II. The Commendation

I. The Concern

¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth,

or as verse 20 says

the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

if anyone among you—-3rd class condition. Hypothetical but a real practical possibility.

It could be anyone of you. It has been my sad experience to say that some of the brothers I have known through my ministry have surprised me as I watched them walk away from the faith. I had a dear friend who I went to school with who had a energy and enthusiasm for the faith and his Christian walk that I could only hope for, We did a lot together. Bible college together. Work together. Fished together. My wife and I spent time with them as 2 young couples. I preached in his church he pastored a number of times. I walked with him

through the early years of difficulty he experienced in ministry... and through the years, we lost contact, he had his wife had moved away, and then I attempted to pursue getting in contact with him only to find out that he had left the ministry, divorced and remarried, and was totally out of the church.

I have seen this so many times. And it will be shocking to you as to how many of them will be among you.....your church, your family, or your friends.

wanders from the truth,

the word is middle/passive. If middle, it is reflexive and means he was the one wandering away of his own accord. If passive, it could mean, he was being led away.

The aorist tense verb (*planēthē*) denotes an occasional rather than a habitual occurrence. The verb may be interpreted as either passive or middle in force. If passive, the meaning is that the individual is deceived and led astray by others; if middle, he went off of his own will. Some, like Alford, hold that the force here is

strictly passive and should be rendered “be seduced.” Then the power of worldliness and heretical or demonic allurements is prominent. But in classical writings and in the Septuagint the aorist passive also was used with a middle force, giving the meaning “to go astray, wander away.” The force is probably middle, denoting personal accountability on the part of the erring. Under either view there is a serious departure from the path of rectitude, placing him in grave danger. Moo concludes that “wander” here “should not be restricted—as the English word could be—to an inadvertent or unconscious departure from ‘the truth’; it was widely used to describe any deviation from the ‘way of righteousness,’ whether willful or not.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). *James* (Revised Edition, p. 307). BMH Books.

• **πλανᾶω *planáō***; contracted *planṓ*, fut. *planēsō*, from *plánē* (4106), a wandering. To cause to wander, lead astray, with the acc. In the pass.: to wander, go astray.

(I) Particularly of persons (Heb. 11:38); of flocks (Matt. 18:12, 13; 1 Pet. 2:25; Sept.: Gen. 37:14; Ex. 23:4).

(II) Figuratively, to mislead, cause to err.

(A) To deceive, cause to err. Act.: to err, mistake, form a wrong judgment (Matt. 24:4, 5, 11, 24; Mark 13:5, 6; 1 John 1:8; 3:7; Rev. 13:14; Sept.: Prov.

12:27). Pass.: to be deceived, misled (Matt. 22:29; Mark 12:24, 27; Luke 21:8; John 7:47; 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33; Gal. 6:7; Heb. 3:10; James 1:16).

(B) Act., to seduce a people into rebellion (John 7:12; Rev. 20:8, 10); from the truth (2 Tim. 3:13; 1 John 2:26 [cf. 2:21, 22]). **Pass., to be seduced, go astray** (James 5:19; 2 Pet. 2:15). **Part., *hoi planómenoi*, those seduced, gone astray** (Titus 3:3; Heb. 5:2). Specifically, to seduce to idolatry (Rev. 2:20; 12:9; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3; Sept.: 2 Kgs. 21:9; Ezek. 44:10, 15).

Deriv.: *apoplanáō* (635), to mislead; *planētēs* (4107), a wanderer; *plános* (4108), a deceiver.

Syn.: *apatáō* (538) to seduce; *exapatáō* (1818), to seduce completely, and *phrenapatáō* (5422), to deceive mentally; *dolióō* (1387), to lure; *dolóō* (1389), to ensnare; *paralogízomai* (3884), to beguile; *deleázō*

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

πλανάομαι^b; ἀποπλανάομαι: to no longer believe what is true, but to start believing what is false—‘to stray from the truth, to wander from the truth, to go astray from.’

πλανάομαι^b: ἐάν τις ἐν ὑμῖν πλανηθῆ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας ‘if anyone among you should stray from the truth’ Jas 5:19.

ἀποπλανάομαι: ἀπεπλανήθησαν ἀπὸ τῆς πίστεως ‘they have wandered from the faith’ 1 Tm 6:10.

Though in some languages one can preserve the figurative meaning of ‘to wander’ or ‘to go astray’ in connection with truth, it is not possible to do so in many languages, and therefore it may be necessary to spell out in some detail precisely what is involved, for example, ‘to stop believing what is true and to start believing what is false.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 373). United Bible Societies.

1 Timothy 6:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have **strayed** from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Proverbs 19:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ Cease listening to instruction, my son,
And you will stray from the words of knowledge.

1 Timothy 6:20–21 (NKJV)

²⁰ O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane *and* idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—
²¹ by professing it some have **strayed** concerning the faith.

Grace *be* with you. Amen.

2 Timothy 2:16–18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. ¹⁷ And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, ¹⁸ who have **strayed** concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.

31.68 ἀστοχέω: to go astray as the result of departing from the truth—‘to abandon the truth, to lose one’s way.’ οἵτινες περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἠστόχησαν ‘some have lost their way with regard to the truth’ 2 Tm 2:18.

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 373). United Bible Societies.

2 Pe 3:15–17

and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you,

16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

17 You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;

[The New King James Version](#) (2 Pe 3:15–17). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you **wanders from the truth,**

or as verse 20 says

the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

πλάνη *plánē*; gen. *plánēs*, fem. noun. A wandering out of the right way. In the NT, used only figuratively meaning error.

(I) Delusion, false judgment or opinion (1 Thess. 2:3; 2 Thess. 2:11; Sept.: Jer. 23:17).

(II) In an active sense, deceit, fraud, seduction to error and sin

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

πλάνη^b, ης *f*: (derivative of πλάνη^a ‘to deceive,’ 31.8) the content of that which misleads or deceives — ‘misleading belief, deceptive belief, error, mistaken view.’ ἵνα μὴ τῇ τῶν ἀθέσμων πλάνη συναπαχθέντες ‘so that you will not be led astray by the error of lawless people’ 2 Pe 3:17.

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 366). United Bible Societies.

When the false believer strays from God’s saving truth, he enters **the error of his way** [lifestyle, pattern of living]. *Planē* (**error**) is the noun form of the verb *planaō*, which is translated “strays” in verse 19; false faith results not only in an errant theology, but also an

errant lifestyle. Those who reject God's Word also reject the principles of godly living it teaches and shun the only power for obedience. Truth and virtue go together, as do falsehood and evil behavior. Despite any outward profession of faith they might make, those who live in open defiance of God's revelation in Scripture do not belong to Him. In the poignant words of Jesus, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). If they do not repent, such people will one day hear from Jesus the shocking words "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 286). Moody Press.

Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)

¹² There is a way *that seems* right to a man,
But its end *is* the way of death.

Proverbs 12:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes,
But he who heeds counsel *is* wise.

Proverbs 30:12 (NKJV)

¹² *There is* a generation *that is* pure in its own eyes,
Yet is not washed from its filthiness.

Matthew 7:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Psalms 1:1 (NKJV)

¹ Blessed *is* the man
 Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
 Nor stands in the path of sinners,
 Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

Psalms 1:6 (NKJV)

⁶ For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
 But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you **wanders from the truth,**

or as verse 20 says

the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Without correction, it will lead to death and the unforgiveness of sins, which is eternal death in hell with you paying for your sins for all eternity. No other option, if you reject the only way to salvation through Christ.

I. The Concern

II. The Commendation

¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, **and someone turns him back**, ²⁰ **let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.**

turns him back, — — from wandering from the truth

turns a sinner — — from the error of his way.
ἐπιστρέφω *epistréphō*; fut. *epistrépsō*, 2d aor. pass. *epestráphēn*, with mid. meaning, from *epí* (1909), to, and *stréphō* (4762), to turn. To turn upon, toward.

(I) Trans., in a moral sense, to turn upon or convert unto (Luke 1:16, 17; Sept.: Ezra 6:22 [cf. Mal. 4:5 where is found the verb *apokatastései* {the fut. of *apokathístēmi* (600), to restore}). In the sense of to turn back again upon, to cause to return from error, with *epí* (1909) and the acc. implied (James 5:19, 20; Sept.: 1 Kgs. 13:18–20).

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

ἐπιστρέφω^c: to cause a person to change belief, with focus upon that to which one turns—‘to cause to change belief, to cause to turn to.’ πολλοὺς τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐπιστρέψει ἐπὶ κύριον τὸν θεὸν αὐτῶν ‘he will cause many of the people of Israel to turn to the Lord their God’ Lk 1:16

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 373). United Bible Societies.

This is not something you can make happen. It is a spiritual turning. It requires the grace and power of God through the convicting and converting of the Holy Spirit.

But please notice, the personal involvement here. It isn't, just praying for him and turning him over to God. There is a personal involvement here.

There could be a number of things happening that cause him to turn.

1. **Confrontation**.—-Speaking truth in love.
2. **Convincing** —of the truth through argumentation, persuasion, and evidence.
3. **Compassion**—-. A genuine love for the person that come with weeping
4. **Continuation**— not giving up. Continuing to meet with, and spend time with this person calling them back to Christ.

We need to remember, that God uses you to accomplish his plan of redemption. He could use Angels and lightening and miracles or he could just convert everyone instantly but He has chosen not to operate that way. He has chosen you as a vessel in the masters hand to speak the truth the to persuade men of it.

2 Corinthians 5:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 6:1 (NKJV)

6 We then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain.

Acts 18:4 (NKJV)

⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 19:24–26 (NKJV)

²⁴ For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. ²⁵ He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. ²⁶ Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying

that they are not gods which are made with hands.

Colossians 1:28–29 (NKJV)

²⁸ Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

What is the result if successful
The best possible outcome.

v. 20 the saving of the soul from death, — —
eternal death and the forgiveness of all sin.