

# Silver City Youth Conference

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[ 0 : 00 ] The first thing we need to see as we come to this final conclusion is the reality that any of us can be wondrous.

We're not talking here about the stumbles and the failings of day-to-day Christian life and the sin that traps us as we walk along the pathway catches us out, we trip, we stumble and we get back on the pathway and we continue to walk along the way.

We're talking here about wandering from the pathway. We read in verse 13, is any among you suffering?

In verse 14, is any among you sick? Who can that apply to? Is anybody suffering this evening? We won't ask for a show of hands, but there would be many hands that would go up if we asked that question.

It can apply to any Christian. Any Christian can experience suffering in life. In the same way, is anybody sick this evening?

[ 1 : 17 ] Are there those who we know, part of this fellowship, who are not able to be here this evening? Because they are sick, of course. That's the case.

Sickness can affect any Christian. And James brings the same message regarding wandering. My brothers, if any among you wonders. It is the perversity of our hearts to believe that that cannot happen to me.

It is a perversion of our thinking. A bit like burglary. It always happens to somebody else, until it happens to me.

The reality that James wants to confront us with is we can wander from the pathway. Any of us are prone to wandering.

[ 2 : 23 ] That's you and that's me. We are prone to spiritual wandering. Asa Alonzo Allen was converted in 1934.

After some time he settled into pastoral ministry. Small church in Texas. 1949, after some ten years of ministry, he was taken along to a meeting and was affected deeply by miracle ministry teaching. He became well known for telling his followers that he could command God to turn dollar bills into twenties.

He had a new anointing and a new power to lay hands on believers who gave a hundred dollars towards the support of his ministry outreach. That was his claim.

After a while he was kicked out of the assemblies of God when he jumped bail for a drink driving charge. But he continued in itinerant ministry.

[ 3 : 38 ] In 1970, listeners to his radio program heard these words. This is Brother Allen in person. Number of friends of mine have been inquiring about reports they have heard concerning me that are not true.

People, as well as some preachers from pulpits, are announcing that I am dead. Do I sound like a dead man? My friends, I am not even sick.

Only a moment ago I made a reservation to fly into our current campaign. I will see you there and make the devil a liar. At that very moment, as that broadcast was going out, police were removing his body from a hotel room, littered with pills and empty liquor bottles.

He died from liver failure, brought on by acute alcoholism. Oh, that's extreme.

If he'd walked closer, then that would never have happened. Take the warning from Matthew, where Jesus speaks to his disciples, and he says, this very night, you will all betray me.

[ 5 : 06 ] This very night, you will wander far from the pathway. Take the warning that that small step can move further and further and further away.

We are all prone to spiritual wandering. There's another kind of spiritual wandering that exists.

There are those who wander backwards and forwards across the pathway. Come into contact with truth. Hear it now and then.

Dabble with it. Experience it for a short time. Consider it. Find it appealing. And then wander away again from the pathway. Younger folks, I don't know whether that applies to you tonight.

Have you come along with your family? You've done it many times. You've heard the message. You find it appealing at times. And then you wander away.

[ 6 : 17 ] Your mind is somewhere else. Your heart is somewhere else. Your desires are somewhere else. And then in a few months' time, you might wander back across the pathway. You've been coming to church regularly, but it's been blocked out.

It's not been touching you. Not been affecting you. You come into contact again as the word of truth penetrates your mind and your thinking and your heart.

And again, you wander. After a short time, you are dabbling. James wants to make it really clear to spiritual wanderers that they are in danger.

But what is spiritual wandering? What is it? Well, James tells us, my brothers, if any among you wanders from the truth, the pathway which is laid before us is a pathway of truth.

There is truth and there is error. Now that is a most objectionable concept in the world in which we live today.

[ 7 : 35 ] The idea of truth and error is unacceptable in our modern, post-modern thinking.

Where what we believe is based on our own assumptions and the generation of our own thoughts and your view is as good as my view. Your experience is as good as my experience.

Truth is what we make it. James wants to make it clear there is a pathway of truth. That is the foundation by which we define a wanderer.

Truth is the direction in which we are heading our first reading from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus speaks about a wide gate and an easy pathway that leads to destruction.

and a narrow gate with a narrow pathway one route Jesus Christ the truth one way is the pathway that defines a wanderer.

[ 8 : 50 ] If you are on the pathway which is defined by the truth in Jesus Christ you are not in error. If you are anywhere else you are in error.

James has defined already this very definition of the truth. He says in chapter 2 and verse 1 my brothers show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord of glory.

How does James describe the truth in that sentence? as you hold the faith as you proclaim and placard to this world the faith which lives inside you by the power of the Spirit and that faith is in the Lord Jesus Christ and then he uses a phrase the Lord of glory.

The first century reader of this letter they would read that and see one thing James is claiming that Jesus Christ is divine.

The Lord of glory speaks of one thing Jesus Christ is divine God himself that is the truth that James has defined that is the pathway which he has defined as truth and anybody who steps off it is wandering so unacceptable to claim that there is one way so unacceptable to claim that there is only one truth so unacceptable to claim that there is one means for us to gain eternal life in our definition or spiritual satisfaction as others might sadly describe it but there is another way in which this message is totally unacceptable to our society spiritual failure or spiritual success success

[ 11 : 34 ] James says if you are on this pathway you are not failing if you wonder you are failing and we live in a world where that definition is turned upside down completely actually spiritual wandering is the definition of success to have a little bit of this to go on the journey of spiritual experience a bit of that the bizarre of different religious experiences and so the words of our modern day poets come strikingly into context I still haven't found what I am looking for there is a world that is dabbling with spiritual experience tasting the trinkets of this world believing that they are on a spiritual journey and yet wandering and the blindness of this world says that the wandering itself is spirituality that is a good thing just to journey and James says no just journeying in different ways of spirituality is not good enough there is truth and anything else is failure anything else is a problem anything else leads as we now come to the next stage of looking at this final couple of verses spiritual disaster my brothers if any 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 sins it is desperately important that we see the reality of being off the pathway

James says if you wander from the pathway you are a sinner you have the potential of seeing your soul in eternal death and you have the reality of a multitude of sins upon your shoulders that's what it is to be off the pathway that's what you are mounting up for yourselves gathering up this multitude of sins from being outside of the pathway that has been defined but James adds another incredibly important pointer to us just before we come to that reality someone can bring that wanderer back to the pathway someone can do that doesn't say a church leader doesn't say a minister although a minister is included in that definition it doesn't say an elder although an elder is included in that definition it doesn't say a deacon although a deacon is included it doesn't say a group leader it says someone friends do you have that kind of concern for the spiritual wanderer you have that kind of burning heart for those who you know who have wandered from the pathway you have a responsibility and you have a hope

James is saying to you this evening you know you can bring the wanderer home you can do that obviously we know that by that is by the power of God and the work of the spirit James says there is someone who can put their hand on the shoulder of that wanderer there is somebody who can take them by the hand somebody who can lead them back to the pathway we are all accountable for each other now in the context of our opening in the reality that any of us can be spiritual wanderers that's a great hope isn't it if any of us can wander if any of us can fall into this category of straying further and further away then we can equally all take the joyful privilege of helping each other back to the pathway that's why

James speaks so much about not judging each other that's why James speaks so much in the line of Jesus in his understanding that sin as desperate as it is can be covered do we have that heart do we have that compassion do you know friends Christian brothers and sisters right now you can say I can see the first steps of wandering I can see that I can see the way wandering happens wandering starts with a single step and then another and then another and then we are far from Jesus

Christ and the pathway that we should be on but we can see it can't we this is precisely why James says earlier confess your sins to each other have that compassionate heart so that when you confess it's not met with judgment who are we to judge it's met with that compassion to say brother sister come back come back onto the pathway come back to the hope it is incredibly serious because of the destination of spiritual wandering a wanderer is a sinner a wanderer has a soul which is in mortal danger and a wanderer faces the peril of eternal death and the reality is that [19:02] A.A. Allen is not the only example that we have of spiritual wanderers just think back over the past five years ten years of your Christian experience how many wanderers do you know how many wanderers have you made sure you are still in contact with so that you can put your hand on their shoulder and lovingly encourage them back to the pathway do a good thing to do that and it is possible that we can because the word of God here says that we can this is why this letter is about rejoicing and joy because there is hope for the wanderer God doesn't look at the wanderer in this context and say once you've stepped off the pathway man that's it you've had it you've stepped out of line it's the end of the road you've gone too far there is hope for the wanderer whoever brings a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins a multitude of sins have you wondered are you wondering right now have you dabbled with the truth of the gospel of

Jesus Christ looked at it for a short time considered it and then wandered away are you deeply conscious right at this point in time that the life that you are living is not consistent in reality with walking on the pathway you might be here this evening every month everybody might look at you be very confident oh there's so and so who is walking on the pathway but you know deep down I am so so far away and deeply ingrained into our mind are the sins of that wandering what have you stolen what adultery have you committed what pain have you caused to another does that hurt deep down does that cause pain the very vision of you in that sinful situation is burnt into your mind and you say I am too far away

Jesus says you are not too far away the wanderer can come back to the pathway and no matter where you have been no matter what you have done you can come back and that multitude of sins can be covered that's joy hope that's hope that is the gospel of Jesus Christ it does not matter where you have been and we might think in our own minds and in our own thoughts well if they're out there they'll never come back hope but there is hope for the wanderer have you walked once and now wander far away the promise of Jesus

Christ is that the danger that you are in right now the mortal danger of your soul the reality of potential eternal death and separation from Jesus Christ can be resolved it can be dealt with there is hope but we need to come back to the pathway Paul said I have run the race I have finished the course I have kept the faith the definition of those who are truly on the pathway is that they finish on the pathway be warned about that come back you have not gone too far you can come back the multitude of sins that are weighing you down can be covered now before Jesus

Christ returns we look this morning that James wanted to make it very clear that we live between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ there is an end to this there is a point at which he is going to return it is very near he is able to say that because it is very near for all of us our life is very brief it is short it does not last and here we are wandering from the pathway of truth and potentially in danger of our souls being eternally lost what will you do what will you do when you stand before Jesus Christ as judge and you have wandered from the pathway what hope will you have where will your security be what will you do on that day

[ 25 : 29 ] James pleads with us come back come back to the pathway of truth come back to the reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ and your sin will be covered will you return or will you continue dabbling with truth or will you even consider yourself to be too far away you know the problem that we see is that those who wonder become increasingly stubborn and determined to be far away maybe rooted in that is the belief that

I've gone too far but I think more is the reality that our sin takes a deeper and deeper grip on us the great hope is that we know of those who have wandered far and yet have come back and James concludes his letter having opened up that there is greetings joy and rejoicing in the gospel of Jesus Christ by calling those who are wandering to come back and by calling us who have the responsibility of care for the wanderer to bring them back amen let's pray father we deal with awesome issues when we face the reality of the danger in which our souls exist when we are far from you there is one truth and that truth is found in our saviour

Jesus Christ there is one hope for this world and we pray that we might by your grace and by your mercy consider our standing before you tonight and if we walk on the pathway oh father we plead with you that you would give us hearts of compassion for those who wander that we might yet bring them back to the pathway in Jesus name amen Jesus says you're not too far away let's praise God in Psalm 36 from Sing Psalms Psalm 36 on page 44 and we'll sing from verses 5 to 10 those five stanzas where God's love and faithfulness and righteousness are compared to different things and yet these are just images

God's love faithfulness and righteousness is far greater even than those your steadfast love is great oh Lord it reaches heaven high your faithfulness is wonderful extending to the sky your righteousness is very great like mountains high and steep your justice is like ocean decks both man and beast you keep the tune is Huddersfield let's stand to sing grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is an awesome hope in a world without hope and you have loved us father enough to reveal to us the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that we might rejoice in his goodness his faithfulness his obedience and we might receive the clothes of righteousness which he wore in this world the grace extends to the reality that our sin is dealt with through his shed blood and we know this because the Holy Spirit has enlivened our hearts and implanted a word of truth which will continue to the end we give you the praise and we worship you tonight in Jesus blessed name Amen Amen mem Amen Amen Amen