

---

# Words of Truth

---

## What Does It Mean Not To Err?

By: Brian A. Yeager

James wrote an epistle to the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad (James 1:1). Such language indicates these were Jewish saints during the time the church in Jerusalem was facing persecution (Acts 8:1-4). He wrote about the temptations and trying of their faith (James 1:2-3). He taught them to endure (James 1:4). He taught them to pray for wisdom if they were lacking (James 1:5), as wisdom was a gift from the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3-11). He taught them not to be double minded (James 1:6-8). He taught, contrary to carnal wisdom, about the exaltation of the poor and the humbling of the rich (James 1:9-11). Then he addressed not blaming God for temptation nor giving into temptation (James 1:12-15).

While writing about temptation and being drawn away by one's own lusts, he penned the following statement: *"Do not err, my beloved brethren"* (James 1:16). The Greek word translated "err" [πλανῶ] has this definition: "(properly, cause to) roam (from safety, truth, or virtue): — go astray, deceive, err, seduce, wander, be out of the way. To cause to stray, to lead astray, lead aside from the right way; to go astray, wander, roam about. Metaphor - to lead away from the truth, to lead into error, to deceive; to be led into error; to be led aside from the path of virtue, to go astray, sin; to sever or fall away from the truth; of heretics to be led away into error and sin" (Strong's # 4105). So, James wrote that brethren should not go astray, be deceived, be seduced, wander, be lead into error, sin, etc.

When you look at how this word is used in other Scriptures and in their contexts you get a good idea of what James meant. This term was used in talking about sheep going astray (Matthew 18:7-14; word appears in verses 12-13 translated as "astray"). The Sadducees had approached Jesus and twisted the Scriptures in a question they asked Him. Jesus told them that they erred because they did not know the Scriptures (Matthew 22:23-33; word appears in verse 29 translated as "err"). When Jesus foretold of the destruction of Jerusalem and then taught about the end of the world (Matthew 23:37-25:46), He warned about deceivers (word appears in 24:4; 5; 11; 24 translated as "deceive").

When Paul wrote the congregation in Corinth he warned them, in different contexts concerning different matters, wherein this Greek word was translated "deceived" (I Corinthians 6:9-11 and I Corinthians 15:33). The churches in Galatia were warned about being deceived (Galatians 6:7). Paul told Timothy of those whom would be deceived and deceiving others (II Timothy 3:13). When James used this word again in his same letter it was also translated as

“err” (James 5:19). When you read that passage in context you learn that those that “err” are lost and need to be converted back to the Lord. That Greek word is also translated “out of the way” (Hebrews 5:2), “wandered” (Hebrews 11:38), “astray” (I Peter 2:25 and II Peter 2:15), and “seduce” (I John 2:26). Most often, the word is translated “deceive[d]”. Whether that deception comes from within ourselves or from someone else, we are taught not to be deceived. Sin is deceptive (Hebrews 3:13). So, take some time to think on this. What can you learn just from our brief word study? Consider a few, brief applications.

### **Some Applications**

If I had a thousand pages to write on this, that would still not be enough. What I will do with my limited space is attempt to help you jumpstart your mind with some things you can learn from James’ instruction in James 1:16. In thinking about James 1:16 in context, I think about something Paul said to the congregation in Colosse. Think about this: *“And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”* (Colossians 2:4-8). In what you just read, the tool used for deception is being beguiled through “enticing words” and being deceived by “philosophy” and “the tradition of men”. Those of us who have been in Christ for some time know and can tell others how often we’ve seen people fall from the faith because of these things. Think about how you can guard yourself not to fall from the faith because of human ideology or traditions (Mark 7:1-23).

In thinking about James 1:16 in context, I think about deceitful lusts (i.e. Ephesians 4:22). When Obadiah wrote concerning Edom, he spoke of their being deceived by the pride of their hearts (Obadiah 1:1-3). Great men have fallen because of pride (Daniel 5:18-20). As most students of the Scriptures know, *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall”* (Proverbs 16:18). Think about how you can work on yourself and keep pride from deceiving you (I Peter 5:5-6).

### **Conclusion**

The word of God teaches, in varying phrases and terms, that we are not supposed to err from the faith (Romans 6:1-23, II Corinthians 6:14-7:1, Ephesians 4:17-5:11, Colossians 3:1-17, I Thessalonians 4:7, II Timothy 2:19, I Peter 1:13-16, and II Peter 3:10-18). What that means is that we are supposed to always, in every situation, do what is pleasing unto our Heavenly Father (Colossians 1:10 and I Thessalonians 4:1-2). We can and must always be obedient to our Father’s will (Philippians 2:12). That’s what it means not to err!