Audio file

Study 38 Journeying with James Praying for the Sick Pastor G S Marley 8926gsm_james_5_v13-16.mp3

Transcript

00:00:00

Please come with me in the Scriptures to the epistle of James and chapter 5.

00:00:07

James chapter 5 and verses 13 down to verse 16.

00:00:20

James chapter 5 and verse 13.

00:00:28

Is any man among you afflicted?

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Let him pray.

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Is any merry?

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Let him sing psalms.

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Is any sick among you?

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Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

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And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.

00:00:52

And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

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Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that he may be healed.

00:01:02

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

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And the Lord will bless that word to our hearts.

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Now James here in this text is applying some principles that will help us to understand God's grace to those in need.

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Remember that James here is writing as a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

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He's a man of God.

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He's a man of prayer.

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He's a man of high esteem.

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And yet he's writing to believers who are struggling and suffering and going through great trials.

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And if you remember last time,

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We looked at the first part of this verses 13 and verse 14 and we looked at this under the title Prayer and Praise.

00:02:02

They are essential to the child of God.

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But they're also a demonstration of the work of God in a sinner's heart.

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Because naturally men and women

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do not worship God.

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They might worship something that attains to God, but they cannot worship God as the scriptures tell us in spirit and in truth because their hearts are not changed.

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Only those who know God and love the Lord because the Lord has loved them in the gospel and have trusted in Christ as their savior, their praise

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is the praise that James is speaking about in this text.

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But first of all, he deals with the sick or the afflicted.

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And this is another demonstration of being a believer.

00:03:02

Only those who truly know the Lord will seek the Lord and truly know the Lord's blessing in their affliction.

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There are religious minded people who will pray to God

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But are they speaking and praying to the right God?

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Do they know the God that they're praying to?

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Some of us come from very religious backgrounds and we would have said our prayers when we were in trouble.

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But we weren't really praying.

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We were just going through the motions.

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And sadly, friends, this is much more common than we might realize.

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It's amazing how many people when they're going through difficulty will ask us as Christians to pray for them.

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I do pray for them, of course I do.

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I can speak to my Heavenly Father and pray for them, pray for their salvation as well as for their healing.

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But I often say to them this, you need to pray as well.

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But you need to pray that you would know the God whom you're praying to.

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And sometimes they'll come back and they'll have a little conversation.

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Because most people presume that they can access God anytime, day or night, and in any fashion, in any way.

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And God delights to answer their prayers.

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God delights to answer our prayers, yes.

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But He looks to the heart of the praying person first.

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How many of us here can say that when we were afflicted, the Lord came to us in marvelous ways.

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When we were going through deep valleys, sorrow, grief, sadness, long-term illness, the Lord was very present.

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That's the testimony of a true Christian.

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That's the testimony, that's the witness of a man or a woman or a young person who truly has had the Lord with them in their afflictions.

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Well, I quoted a few well-known men and commentators of previous generations last time and I quoted

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various men from different eras and I just want to quote one man and last week as you might realize was Reformation Sunday and perhaps the most famous character in church history was Martin Luther and I don't agree with everything Martin Luther wrote and I certainly don't agree with everything that Martin Luther did but I do agree with him on certain things God's grace

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is necessary for the salvation from our sins.

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Christ's redeeming work at Calvary is essential to be forgiven and to be right with God.

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But Luther wrote many, many other things and he wrote this about prayer.

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I just thought I'd share something of it.

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He says, Luther to find prayer

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as calling in God's holy name.

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This is what he says, To speak to God means to pray.

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This is indeed a great glory that the high majesty of heaven should stoop to us poor worms and permit us to open our mouths to him.

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Then in another place he puts it like this, Prayer is a duty.

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But it is also such an incredible privilege.

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Has familiarity with this privilege bred contempt?

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Have we lost our sense of wonder that we poor worms are able to approach the King of Kings and speak to Him freely?

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See, although Luther was a complicated individual, aren't we all, he certainly knew what prayer was about.

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It's both a privilege and a duty.

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And if you remember last week we looked at eight elements of prayer and I mentioned four of them but let me just give you the eight now because some friends were saying well there must be more than just four.

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So here's the eight.

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These are the elements of prayer that would have been quite commonly used by our forebears in previous generations.

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They may not have been stated like this, but they were woven into their prayers, both in public and in private.

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You don't have to give the same amount of time to every area at every time you pray, but we should have all eight elements in our praying.

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All eight.

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The first is this, adoration, not thanksgiving.

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How many of us hear most today is the most common thing is we thank you God.

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That's not how we're taught to pray in scripture.

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Neither is it how we're taught to pray by our Lord Jesus Christ himself.

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He says our Father, which is a reflection of God in his fatherliness to his people.

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Adoration.

00:09:02

Worship.

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That's why we always begin with worship.

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Even in our public church services, even in our worship service.

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That's why it's called a worship service.

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We're worshiping God and we're not alone.

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We have brethren throughout the world this morning who either have worship or will worship and they'll begin their services with adoration.

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Why is this so important?

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Because is that not the flavor of heaven?

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Adoration.

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You read about the angels in the Old Testament.

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They're worshiping God.

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You read about them in the last book of the Bible.

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They are worshiping God.

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How we can encourage ourselves in that is by weaving into our beginning of our praying the characteristics of God.

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and name them.

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God doesn't need to be reminded of His own characteristics, but we do.

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Adoration.

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Secondly, invocation.

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That means calling on God.

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It changes the whole tenor of our praying when we realize that we need to call on God that He would hear our prayers.

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It gets rid of the most common tendency in all of our hearts, the presumption.

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O God, we call on thee that thou wilt bow thou thine ear and hear our prayers.

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Third, confession.

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That's not a Roman Catholic sacrament.

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That's a biblical concept.

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Admitting our sinfulness before God, but also including our own creatureliness.

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Our own creatureliness.

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That we are, well, Luther calls us worms.

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That might not fit too well in the modern 21st century, but you can see what he's saying.

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We're so small.

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Man thinks they're so important.

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That's the picture of a peacock strutting about and parading its feathers.

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That's mankind.

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That's the natural disposition of all men and women and children, sadly.

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But the Christian confesses their creatureliness.

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We confess our own faults and failings as well as our sins.

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Do you know what's marvelous about this?

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God is always ready to hear us when we admit our sinfulness.

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He knows it already.

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The fourth area is petition.

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Petition.

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This is general request.

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Lord, we need grace today.

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Lord, we need strength today.

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Lord, we need guidance today.

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These are general petitions that we're always needing.

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Lord, we need faith today.

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We need to be strengthened in our faith.

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These are common prayers that should be woven into every one of our praying times.

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The fifth is supplication.

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And that's concerning particular requests, particular areas of concern.

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Maybe someone here is going through a time of difficulty and trial.

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Our petitions.

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are general, but our supplications are almost tinged with a flavor of desperation.

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Oh Lord, I need, I crave, I long for thy grace or thy help in whatever situation it might be.

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The sixth is intercession.

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That's not praying for ourselves, that's praying for others.

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It changes the tenor of our praying when we're thinking of others and their concerns rather than all of ours.

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Yes, our concerns may be very deep and very present, but as one old preacher used to say, and his wife as well, there's always someone who's needing our intercessions.

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Sometimes they're going through far darker times than even we are.

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And they were going through some pretty dark times.

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One of them, I think it was the wife, was diagnosed with a serious advanced illness and she didn't have long.

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But you could hear her praying for others in greater need in her praying.

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her intercession, our intercession.

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Seventh, it's consecration.

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This is an old idea, but it's a biblical idea.

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It's self-dedication.

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Lord, I'm dedicated to Thee.

00:14:16

I consecrate myself to Thee.

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You read the Psalmism this week about paying their vows.

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Not just are they paying their vows in the temple worship of Old Testament times, but they're also paying, they're vowing something to the Lord.

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In its previous generation, there were many people who dedicated themselves to the Lord to serve the Lord overseas.

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What a change it is in our praying when we are dedicated to the Lord, when we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, when we say, Lord, I want to do this for Thee, for Thy glory, whatever it may be.

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And eighth, thanksgiving.

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Number eight, note

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The order.

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This is not random.

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This is important.

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Because we thank God, yes, but we leave it all the way down the list so that we've already dealt with most important things of all.

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Thanksgiving.

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And how thankful we should be.

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Every time we pray, we should have a note of thanksgiving for something in our lives.

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We might take things for granted.

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The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the place we live in.

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These are not by chance.

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These are not just because we have worked hard.

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They're provisions from the Lord.

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We should be thankful.

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We should be thankful for our health, whatever measure of health we have.

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There's so many areas in our lives we should be thankful

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Of course, we should be thankful for our redemption, thankful for our salvation, thankful for our Saviour, thankful for all that God has given us in Christ.

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So there's the eight areas.

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And that feeds into what we're going to look at this morning.

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Because in James he speaks about prayer and he speaks about praise.

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and we're going to look at one area of prayer we're going to look at praying for the sick it's really centered in verse 16 but of course it ties verse 14 sorry but it ties in with verse 13 is any of you afflicted that's a very general word

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That's a word of suffering and trial and torment.

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It can cover all manner of areas.

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But now James focuses in on one particular area.

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Is any of you sick?

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Here we have an example of someone who's physically sick, who may be seriously sick, who's perhaps failing

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And in those days, they didn't have the kind of technology we have now to diagnose illness.

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We forget.

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This is the first century.

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We're in the 21st century.

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But nonetheless, the pattern is the same.

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Is Annie sick among you?

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Is Annie sick?

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Is Annie failing?

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Perhaps the best known example in our Lord Jesus Christ ministry

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was Peter's mother-in-law and she was very sick she had confined herself to her bed Luke gives the impression that she was failing fast and of course in those days they didn't have the health systems that we have today and whatever it was

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she wasn't able to serve the Lord Jesus and His disciples.

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That's very significant because in that culture, that was a sign of their hospitality.

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That was a sign of their generosity.

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They may not have had great wealth, but they certainly had great warmth for their visitors.

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And no doubt Peter's mother-in-law was delighted to have the Lord Jesus in her home.

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No doubt

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She was looking forward to entertaining them in that sense and providing for their needs and providing a meal.

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Some of us come from cultures where you don't provide a meal for your visitors, you provide a feast.

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Maybe she was providing a feast but for whatever reason she was now confined to bed and she was failing fast.

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And when you read that account, you need to realize that Peter and his wife would have been very concerned for this lady.

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And yet the Lord Jesus comes into the situation.

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We're told this in Mark chapter one, verse 30, Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever.

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Of course, we take it for granted from the Bible, of course, that Simon was married, he had a mother-in-law.

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We're blessed to have mother-in-laws, but we only can have mother-in-laws if we're truly married.

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And here, this woman, she's very sick.

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And the Lord Jesus comes to her and He takes her by the hand in verse 31.

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He lifts her up and immediately the fever left her.

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And in those days, a fever could kill you.

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It was actually a response of the body just fighting some particular infection or some particular virus and if you had a fever and it wasn't cured, you would often die.

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You read about this in times in this country when people got a fever.

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But she's healed.

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She's wonderfully healed.

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Notice in James, is any sick among you?

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Let him call for the elders.

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And now what I'm going to do is walk through the pattern that the Holy Spirit gives us when it comes to the sick amongst us.

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The question is general, is any sick among you?

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But the first step is this.

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The sick person calls for the elders, not the elders visit the sick.

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We're not looking here at a healing ministry.

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We're not looking at some kind of faith healing band in the New Testament times.

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We're looking at this person at home who writes or maybe calls the elders, maybe gets somebody to go to the elders and say, come and visit me.

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How different this is.

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It shows order.

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And it shows the priority of the Holy Spirit, which of course is the priority of God.

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Let him call for the elders.

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The elders don't impose themselves on the sick person.

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The sick person calls for help.

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The elders don't tell the sick person to come to their particular ministry center so that they'll be healed.

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No, the sick person goes to where the elders are.

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The sick person calls the elders to where they are.

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The sick person calls for the elders.

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That's the first thing.

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Some of us were wrapped up in a healing ministry.

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And we had elders who told us that we needed to come to their particular place to get healed.

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That's not biblical.

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And it's also very concerning.

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I believe God can heal, but the scriptures teach us very plainly that we don't need a healing ministry to be healed.

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God can heal us anyway.

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Some of us who have been very ill, we tried to go through the usual channels of the health system and we were investigated and we were diagnosed and whatever and

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We continue to fail.

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What do you do then?

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Well, you do what James tells us to do.

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You call for the elders.

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The second step is this.

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The elders come at his invitation.

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The elders come.

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These are the men who have been appointed by the church to oversee the

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work of the church, the gospel work in a particular area.

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They are the elders, they are the presbyters.

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One of them will be the pastor but others will be men who will be spiritually mature.

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You'll read about this in 1 Timothy chapter 3.

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They know the scriptures, they know the doctrine and they know how God works through his people.

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If you like, they're practical theologians because they know their theology and they're able to put it into practice.

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That's the second thing.

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They come.

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Why do they come?

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They come that they might pray over the sick person.

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That's why they're there.

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And they also come to anoint them with oil.

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And I want you to notice this.

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They anoint the person with oil.

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What kind of oil?

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Well, it's not vegetable oil.

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It's not palm oil.

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It's olive oil.

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It's the kind of oil that would have been used for holy purposes in Old Testament worship.

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It was special.

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It was expensive.

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Now the oil didn't have the property of healing the person.

00:25:01

But the oil was a picture that God was in this place.

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That God was being sought.

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Some people would say that the oil here is a picture of the Holy Spirit, maybe.

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But they're to anoint the person with the oil.

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In Old Testament times, the prophet

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The priest and the king were all anointed with oil.

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And it was the first oil pressed from the oil harvest.

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The first was for religious purposes.

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The second was for, how will I put it, cooking purposes.

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And the last was for hygiene purposes.

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This oil would have been carried in a little cruet, a little jug maybe, or a little oil bottle and it would be brought and it would have been taken and maybe the person's head was completely anointed.

00:26:04

We don't know.

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The point is this, whose name they did it in.

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So they come to pray over the sick person and second, they come to anoint the man or the woman with oil.

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The third thing is this.

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Whose name do they anoint the person?

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Whose name?

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The name of the Lord.

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Not their names, not the sick person's name, but Christ's name.

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And that doesn't just say, well, we pray that this person will be healed in the name of Jesus.

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No, no, no, no.

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They are coming as representatives of Christ.

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They're not going to take this lightly.

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This is serious business, if I can put it like that.

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There's a beautiful name in the Scriptures.

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It's the name above every other name.

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It's the name of Jesus.

00:27:16

And the advice given to us young pastors when we were training, our young preachers when we were training for the ministry was this.

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If you can do something in the name of Christ, you're on safe ground.

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If you can't do it in the name of Christ, be very careful.

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In fact, you're on very unsteady ground.

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Too many things today are done in the name of the Lord that aren't actually

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to honor the Lord at all.

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In the name of the Lord, according to the purpose and plan of the Lord.

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The Lord has this dear person laid aside and the elders come and they anoint him with oil and they anoint him in the name of Jesus Christ.

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You know what's lovely about old hymns?

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They often weave in that little phrase, the name of Jesus.

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John Newton wrote these words, How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear.

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It soothes the sorrows, heals the wounds, drives away the fears.

00:28:29

Another writer puts it like this, There is a name I love to hear.

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I love to sing his words.

00:28:37

You can read in Scripture at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess and things in heaven and things on earth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

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At the name of Jesus every tongue confess.

00:28:56

You read those in the hymns.

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See friends, this is so important and it's so practical and it's so necessary.

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In Mark chapter 6 verse 13, I hinted at this.

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The record record writes and the court cast out many devils.

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This is about the disciples and anointed with oil and many that were sick and healed them.

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They anointed with oil.

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Many that were sick.

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This is a New Testament pattern.

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So the first step was the sick person invites the elders.

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The second was the elders coming as invitation.

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Once the elders arrived, the third step is the elders anoint the sick person with oil and they pray for the sick person in the name of Christ.

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The fourth step is this and this is where we'll conclude.

00:30:01

What was the outcome?

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Well, verse 15, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.

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And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

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And you might think, well, what has that got to do with sickness?

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Well, let's look at it for a moment.

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The prayer of faith shall save the sick.

00:30:26

Whose prayer?

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Matthew Henry puts it like this, We should observe the success of prayer.

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The Lord shall raise up, that is, if he be a person capable and fit for deliverance.

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And if God have anything further for such a person to do in the world.

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Remember, the raising up here is a picture of being raised up from their bed.

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These elders have prayed with the Spirit according to the word as well as the sick person.

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They prayed with understanding, not just feeling.

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They prayed in the Spirit of the God in the Psalms.

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Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and they praised and prayed with understanding and intelligible rational words.

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It's a prayer of faith.

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The man or the woman's faith is in the

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God of all grace, mercy, love and providence.

00:31:41

His or her faith is in the God who hears and answers prayer, as to it is for the elders.

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But suppose this person's sickness had come about because of their sinfulness.

00:32:01

James deals with that.

00:32:04

if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

00:32:09

Now that doesn't mean that every sickness we experience is because of our sinfulness.

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But if somebody has been committing sin and they've, like David, they've been under great conviction because of his sinning with Bathsheba committing adultery,

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and his bones are broken and his sleepless nights we call it insomnia and he's going through a great agony of soul then he was obviously sick but we know that he confessed his sin and you read about that in Psalm 51 and you see how the Lord restores him so it is for a believer maybe someone is going through

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a time of sickness because they were involved in some sinful activity.

00:33:02

Here's the hope.

00:33:03

Here's the assurance.

00:33:05

They shall be forgiven him.

00:33:08

You know, one thing about being a Christian is that we face mortal enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil.

00:33:17

And sometimes when we're sick, we think God is punishing us.

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That's not true.

00:33:25

God doesn't punish his own children.

00:33:28

He may discipline us.

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Sometimes it can be quite severe, especially if we haven't responded in humility when he first started afflicting us.

00:33:40

But God doesn't punish us.

00:33:41

There's another one who lies to us and tells us your sin can't be forgiven.

00:33:48

Your sickness is so serious that there's no hope for you.

00:33:53

And that's a lie too.

00:33:56

That's as great a lie as being told that the faith ministry or the faith healing ministry is able to save you or able to heal you.

00:34:06

It isn't.

00:34:08

God is the only one who can do this.

00:34:13

And how can we be forgiven of sin?

00:34:16

Well, the same way that the man or the woman began their Christian life, through the cross of Calvary.

00:34:24

through the Lord Jesus Christ.

00:34:28

You see, this is the picture.

00:34:31

Maybe there's someone who's lived a reckless life, indulged in all manner of drugs, sin, fornication, prostitution, and now they have health issues.

00:34:42

And the old devil comes back and he reminds us and he says, Ah, but look at what you did in the past.

00:34:47

You're unforgivable.

00:34:52

You need to tell the devil he's a liar.

00:34:54

He has been from the beginning and he always will be.

00:34:58

You need to tell him this.

00:35:00

Oh yes, I've sinned in the past, but God's grace is sufficient and Christ's atoning work at Calvary is the grounds on which I'm forgiven now.

00:35:12

Yes, my past has been dealt with at Calvary.

00:35:17

My sins were forgiven at Calvary.

00:35:23

The reality of Christ dying on Calvary was to save sinners from their sins and my past has been dealt with.

00:35:34

I no longer live.

00:35:37

Christ lives in me.

00:35:40

See, this is so important.

00:35:42

Let me quote it like this and we'll be almost complete.

00:35:45

At the cross, at the cross where we first saw the light,

00:35:49

and the burden of my heart rolled away.

00:35:52

It was there by faith.

00:35:55

I received my sight and now I am happy all the day.

00:36:04

That's where it began, friends.

00:36:06

That's where this sick person, they weren't always sick.

00:36:10

They became believers.

00:36:12

They trusted in Christ and His finished work at Calvary.

00:36:15

They know what it is to have their sins forgiven.

00:36:18

And if they have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

00:36:26

Not might be.

00:36:29

Not perhaps.

00:36:31

Not maybe.

00:36:34

There's not a scintilla of doubt here.

00:36:37

Scintilla.

00:36:38

Tiny, tiny, tiny minute portion.

00:36:45

When God forgives a sinner, they are forgiven and pardoned of their sin forever.

00:36:56

And even if we go through sickness, some of us have been to that place where we were at the end of ourselves and the doctors looked at us or the consultant looked at us and said, We cannot find a cause for your illness.

00:37:15

the weight is dropping off us.

00:37:18

What should we do now?

00:37:21

Well, the medics have all but said that you're incurable.

00:37:25

We don't know what the cause is, so therefore we can't even prescribe a course of treatment.

00:37:31

Then we can call on the elders.

00:37:34

And some of us are here this morning because the elders who came prayed, they were men of faith, they prayed to Almighty God, and we prayed as well,

00:37:44

And the Lord in His grace raised us up from our sick beds.

00:37:53

You go overseas and you meet dear believers in other countries who don't have the same provisions as we do, and they will have that testimony.

00:38:03

I was sick, I was very sick.

00:38:06

I was so ill.

00:38:09

And yet the Lord in His grace brought the, called for the elders, they came,

00:38:13

They prayed and now I'm standing here today.

00:38:18

You see, there's the testimony of God's grace in praying for the sick and in healing for the sick.

00:38:27

Amen.

00:38:30

O Lord our God, we thank thee for thy precious word.

00:38:34

We thank thee for raising up godly elders throughout the ages

00:38:40

Men who oversee the work of Christ in given areas and localities.

00:38:46

Men who are men of faith and men of conviction, but also those who are able to help those in need.

00:38:53

And we pray, Lord, for any who is in need here this morning or those who would be normally here and are unwell.

00:39:00

We ask, O Lord, that thou will draw near to them and thou wilt encourage them and strengthen them and remind them of thy wonderful promises

00:39:09

that indeed thou wilt keep thy servants in perfect peace whose mind has stayed on thee.

00:39:16

We pray Lord for Annie in our congregation who are going through great trial and difficulty and sorrow and suffering and as almost Lord as if they're enduring a great long term pain and suffering.

00:39:34

We ask O Lord that thy hand will be upon them and if it be thy will that

00:39:38

that those of us overseeing the work would be willing to come and pray with our brother or sister in their great time of need.

00:39:48

Oh, we pray, Lord, that Thou would raise up a generation of men and women who stand for the truth, who would stand for the gospel, and would stand for the wonderful work of Christ and Calvary.

00:40:01

We pray, Lord, part us with Thy blessing.

00:40:03

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

00:40:07

Amen.