

Mutual Confession and Prayer

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[0:00] James 5, beginning in verse 13. Please stand together with me for this reading from the Word of God. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us.

He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth, and someone should bring him back, remember this.

Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his ways will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. James chapter 5 and verse 16.

There's a Christian man in the first century, and he's praying. And we wonder why. And then we learn that he's just finished reading the letter from James.

[1:32] And it's had its effect upon him. It sent him running to God in prayer. And now we too have been reading and studying this letter, this same letter from James.

And we're down to this closing section. And in light of all that he said to us up to this point, he now says to us, Your great need, Christian, is prayer.

To lay hold of God himself in prayer. Not once, but three times in his concluding words. These crisp commands ring home in our hearts.

Pray. Pray. Pray. And James is saying, if you've heard what I've been saying in this letter, if you've really got it, if it's really sunk in, then whatever else you are and whatever else you do, you will be a man, a woman, a boy or girl of prayer.

That's why James had such calluses on his knees that they called him camel knees. You see, these realities that he writes about had gripped him and sent him running to the throne of grace.

[2:56] Made him a lifetime beggar at that throne where grace is dispensed. And if it doesn't do the same for us, then we're missing something. We've we've not yet really got James message to us.

You can measure your profit from this letter by the role that prayer plays in your life. And so as we come to the end of this, the final section of James letter, notice the three commands to pray.

Verse 13, is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. A beeline to God. There's all sorts of troubles.

And James has said a lot of them before us in this letter. All kinds of trials, the trials of poverty and riches, the lack of wisdom that we have in the midst of our trials and troubles, temptations that come to us from the devil in our troubles, temptations that arise from our own evil desires in our troubles.

A tongue that is a pipeline from hell that gets out of control with its slander and talking down others. It's grumbling. It's not letting our yes be yes.

[4:17] The trouble of favoritism. The trouble of favoritism. The lack of love for all men. Envy and selfish ambition and pride and fights and quarrels and self-indulgent use of riches.

The world's allurements and friendships. The world's pressures and persecution and patience running thin. Strength to persevere.

Running out. James addresses all these and more troubles in this letter. And here at the end, he says, are you in trouble? Are any of these things true of you?

Then pray. That's the answer. Personal prayer is where you begin. But you say, I am praying. And I find I'm no better.

And I'm wearing out. Well, then he asks, is any one of you sick? Verse 14. Any one of you weak?

[5:20] Feeble? Without strength? And I've tried to make the case last week that James is not even speaking in this passage about physical sickness, physical healing. As has often been

understood.

As has often been understood. But rather is speaking of a condition of spiritual sickness, spiritual weakness. The pressures, the difficulties, the troubles and trials of life have left this person weary and worn out so that he's now in a feeble condition without strength, impotent, unable to find help.

Even in trying to pray themselves, what are they to do then? Well, if anyone is anyone of you sick, weary, feeble, weak, then let him call the elders of the church to pray over him.

Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And so by prayer, doing for the soul what rubbing him down with oil would do for his body. And the prayer offered in faith will make the weary person well. The Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. And so I want to encourage you again to make use of your elders to come and to pray with you. That's a key part of our ministry to you and the body of Christ.

[6:44] So in your troubles, you pray. And if you're still weak, you call on the elders of the church for them to come and pray with you. And then thirdly, you make use of each other.

You make use of each other in the body of Christ to pray for each other. Now, as we come to verse 16, we notice there's a close connection with what goes before it.

The connecting link between verse 16 and the verses before is the word therefore. Therefore, therefore, what he's saying is therefore, since prayer is the way to deal with your troubles.

Since prayer engages the Lord to act in power, to restore the weary, the weak, to lift up those without strength. Therefore, since prayers of confession, move the Lord to forgive.

To forgive sin that is often a complicating factor of our spiritual weakness, if not its spiritual cause. Therefore, since God made such rich promises to prayer.

[7:55] Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed. Go confess your sins to your brother and sister and solicit their prayers to help you in the battle with sin.

It's not only the prayers of your elders that make it to heaven. Do you know that every redemptive privilege that the elders have at the throne of grace is the privilege of your brothers and sisters? So call on the elders to pray, but then confess your sins to each other and pray for each other and get other brothers and sisters to pray for you. The God who bends his ear to the elders bends his ear to all the righteous.

So confess your sins to them and get them to help you with their prayers. This is a one another in passage, isn't it? It's something you're to do to one another, to each other in the body of Christ.

It has nothing to do about confessing your sins to a priest. That all of you go to one man and confess your sins there. No, no. This is one another. Confess to each other and pray for each other.

[9:08] I want us just to notice and consider briefly the kind of confession, the kind of disease and the kind of healing that James is talking about. The kind of confession.

First of all, there are at least three kinds of confession of sin in the Bible. There is, first of all, confession to God. We are to confess our sins to God. After all, all sin is against him first.

So if you confess your sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive you your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. So whenever we sin, we say, Lord, what I just thought, if that's the sin of sin of thought, what I just thought was a hateful thought.

It was an unloving thought toward that person. It was wrong. It was. It was. It was. Not what you have commanded. It deserves your eternal punishment. Please forgive me and give me power to think pure thoughts about him.

I confess my sin to God. I agree with him as to what it is that I've done and seek his forgiveness.

But then there's confession to the people we've sinned against, because sometimes we've not only sinned against God, but our brothers and sisters or our neighbors, some other person.

[10:24] And so we must go and confess to them. Jesus tells us that, that if we're standing at the altar ready to make our offering to God and worship, and we remember that someone has something against me, I need to go first and reconcile with my brother and then bring my offering.

And so I go to my brother. And I say to my wife, dear, what I said was wrong. It was selfish. It was unkind. I'm sorry.

Will you please forgive me? And the wall that has been up between us is torn down by confession of sin. And we enjoy that fellowship once again.

So there's confession to God. There's confession to people that we sin against. And then thirdly, there is here in our text today in chapter five and verse 16, a confession to one another. It's another kind of confession of sin. Sin. It's that which is done to each other in the body of Christ for the purpose of soliciting their prayers for spiritual strength in the fight with sin and temptation. [11:32] And so you go to your brother and you say, I'm having a terrible problem controlling my tongue. It's constantly getting me into trouble at work and in my family. It's a disgrace to my Lord Jesus.

Would you please pray for me? I want to honor God by keeping my tongue bridled as he commands. So I wonder, Grace Fellowship Church, are we confessing our sins to God specifically, naming them before him?

Are we confessing our sins in which we've wronged our brothers and sisters and other people? And thirdly, I wonder now this morning, are we doing this kind of confessing of sin to each other and acknowledging our sin and weakness in order to gain the prayers of our brethren?

So we're talking about that third kind of confession this morning. And then what kind of disease is James talking about? Well, sin is the thing that weakens us spiritually.

We see that clearly. Sin leaves us spiritually sick. Sin is like a cancer that feeds on our vital spiritual organs. It pulls us down.

[12:49] It drains us of spiritual vitality. Indeed, the Bible says sin is the leprosy of the soul that makes us unfit for God and unfit for man.

That being the case, a healthy Christian must be constantly dealing and confessing their sins, bringing them to Christ for forgiveness and power to drain the life out of them.

There's no way to get rid of sin apart from confessing them to our Lord. It's what one writer called the vomiting of the soul. We're sick.

And until what's in gets out, we don't feel better. And we're sick with sin. And until we have that confession and bring out what's hidden inside and own what's inside and get it out, we will not be restored.

So the kind of disease that he's speaking of here is not physical disease, but the disease of sin. The sickness and weakness.

[13:57] That we're left in because of sin. And if the disease is sin, then the kind of healing that is being spoken of here is spiritual healing. Confess your sins to each other.

That's the disease. And pray for each other so that you may be healed. Now, this word for healing is a word that may be used of healing of the body.

It's often used in that way for the healing of the body. But it's also used for the healing of the soul. And in fact, many places in Scripture, the healing of the body is used as a metaphor for the healing of the soul.

I believe the context here points to spiritual healing. That all along in this section, James is not so much concerned with spiritual or physical sickness.

But spiritual weakness and sickness. It's the same word for healing that's used just a few pages back in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 13.

[15:00] He told them in verse 12, Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. And in verse 13 of Hebrews 12, Make level paths for your feet so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

The writer to the Hebrews is not concerned about here in this passage about Christians who had disabilities and were not able to walk. But he's talking about spiritually being disabled and stumbled. And rather than that, we want to so live our lives that that others are healed from their spiritual maladies. Even.

By observing God's dealings with us in ours. Throughout the Old Testament, God's prophet spoke of the need for spiritual healing.

We have that wonderful passage in Isaiah 53 and verse 5. But he, the servant of the Lord, he was pierced for our transgressions.

[16:04] He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him. And by his stripes, we are healed.

By his stripes, we are healed. And here is the answer to the predicament that Isaiah began in the very first chapter. As he's writing to this sinning nation of Judah.

Laden down with their sin and guilt. And he says to them in chapter 1 and verse 5 and 6. Your whole head is injured. Your whole heart is afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head. There's no soundness. No health. Only wounds and welts and open sores. Not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil. The disease is sin. And there's no spot of health on the whole body of Israel. Their sin sickness was such that only the coming servant of the Lord could cure.

[17 : 11] And it would be by his wounds that they would be healed. You see, it's spiritual healing. Yes, there's healing in the atonement as so many would trump up.

And much of that healing was demonstrated when Jesus was on the earth. And that's how it will be in his kingdom forever and ever. And you will find that there is a malady for every physical ailment that you have.

Through the wounds of Jesus. And we will no longer be sick. And we will no longer die. But primarily, the greatest sickness, the greatest disease, the greatest leprosy and cancer is that of sin. And by his wounds, we are healed. That's how Peter understood it. 1 Peter chapter 2. Again, just page or two from where you're at.

Flip to it. Back. 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 24. He himself. Jesus himself. He didn't send a representative. He came himself.

[18 : 21] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed.

By his bearing your disease to the cross. Taking your sin, that wretched leprosy to Calvary and there receiving the damnation it deserved.

In that way, you have been healed from your sin sickness. There is no healing. The sickness of sin. Except through the Lord Jesus.

And his blood. His spirit. He, the great physician who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.

Psalms 103.3. You've got to get to him. And you get to him how? By prayer. You get to the doctor, the great physician by prayer.

[19 : 23] So pray, pray, pray. And call the elders to pray. And confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. That you may be healed.

So, the sickness is spiritual. The healing is spiritual. Now, let's take up this confession of sin. Let's look closer at this. Confessing our sins to each other for the purpose of gaining prayer. Confession to God is already assumed. There's no forgiveness of sins apart from confessing to him.

But, in addition, James is saying there is to be this confession to each other. In the battle against sin, confessing to each other and praying for each other can be a major factor in gaining the victory. The lonely struggle against a besetting sin is seldom successful. Perhaps some of you have been trying to make it alone. And you keep failing.

[20 : 30] Humble yourself. Go to your fellow brother, your fellow sister in Christ and say, I am struggling and losing the battle over this particular sin.

Would you pray for me in this? Notice that confession and prayer go together. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other.

The very reason you confess your sin to your brother is to gain his prayers for you and your sin. That they might enter into our struggle with us via their prayers.

So, I am to confess to my brother in the congregation.

Who am I to go to? Well, this verse will end with a helpful pointer. The righteous. Since the prayers of a righteous man are powerful and effective.

[21 : 31] I want those kind of prayers. I want those kind of prayers. Don't you? So, we go to one who is righteous, who is godly. Who has a strong and healthy relationship with Christ himself.

Those who are serious about praying and know what it is to lay hold of God in prayer. Those you can trust to keep matters of confidence between you and to pray for you.

And to hold you accountable and to speak truth to you and to point you to Christ. Go and confess your sins to such a one. Now, we need to be careful in this matter.

It is true that this kind of confession of sin can go to seed. Has gone to seed. And has spilled over into all kinds of excesses that are not edifying but rather harmful.

Say, that's nothing new. Every virtuous practice that God has given has its counterfeit abuses. The devil will see to that.

[22 : 32] He takes what is good and would pervert it to something that's ugly. And there have been revival groups in church history who have encouraged all Christians to confess all their sins to all other Christians.

As if that's the sign whether revival is taking place in your soul. You can imagine. Some of the harm that's done.

To tell all to everybody. The result has been chaos and further sin. Spreading details of sin that should have been kept in the dark. For it is a shame to speak of those things done in secret. Most of our sins. Are to be confessed to God. And to God alone. Most of our sins. Are to be confessed to God alone.

And yet this command is here to be obeyed. It's not a suggestion. It's one of the 50 some commands in this letter. And it says to us there will be times when we are to seek out a trusted Christian.

[23 : 35] A praying friend. And confess our sin to him or her. And secure their help in prayer. There are times when it is appropriate in our prayer groups on Wednesday night.

To confess our sins to each other. And to solicit prayer from our brothers and sisters. Now there's a very clear rule given that will keep us on track here.

From going in the ditch on the left or on the right. Whether we're the one confessing or the one listening to confession.

We must be committed to the God given purpose for doing this. We're not only told what to do. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. We are told why to do this.

Confess your sins to each other. That you may be healed. A very specific purpose for which you confess and pray for each other. So that.

[24 : 33] It's a purpose clause. This is the reason you even think about doing this. It is so that you might be healed. That that problem of sin. Might be dealt the death blow.

So if you are the one confessing your sins to the brother. It means you want to be healed.

You want the sin cut out. You want it gone. You want it rid of. You want it mortified. And that's the reason you confess it to your brother. To get his help in prayer. That you may be healed from that sin.

The reason must never be. To make confession a stage for exhibitionism. And showing off. Your sins. Airing your dirty laundry.

You say. Why would anybody do that? Well. Some do find strange delight. In telling others bad things. That they have done. Without any hatred of it.

[25 : 38] Without any. Desire to be done with it. It's a sick sort of drawing attention to themselves. By confessing. Their sins. In detail.

No. There's one clear aim. That would shut that one down. In a moment. You're only to do this. If you want to be healed. Is that your purpose? I want to be done with my sin.

I want to be restored to spiritual strength. And usefulness to my master. And I want you to pray. To that end. I've been in prayer meetings.

Here. Where brothers have humbly. And appropriately confessed their sins. And sought the prayers. Of their brothers and sisters. In a way that was a glory to God.

And that at once. Wrapped themselves around our hearts. And pulled us in to pray for him. That's what James is speaking of. Confess your sins.

[26 : 39] To each other. And pray for each other. Here's a rule of thumb. That's helpful. The confession should not be so general. That it's meaningless.

Pray for me. Well there may be a place for such prayers. But. The Bible talks about specific prayers. For specific needs. And.

That's what I believe James is talking about. So the confession should not be so general. That it's meaningless. And yet not so detailed. That it is harmful. And so the goal must ever be pursued.

I'm out. To be cleansed from this sin. And the same reason must direct any. Who are the ones listening. To another. Confess their sins. We must listen with the sole purpose.

So that we can pray. Knowledgeably for them. And see them spiritually healed. Restored. Forgiven. Back on their feet. And so I. I've not listened.

[27 : 39] In order to pass on. Privileged information. As gossip. I've not listened. To satisfy my curiosity. To know what other people's. Personal matters are. I'm not.

Listening. To take sinful pleasure. In hearing. Of the forbidden things. That other people have done. To enjoy sin. Vicariously. As we may do. When we read explicit. Accounts.

In the news. No. No. Never. That's not to be. Why we listen. We listen. To pray. And see healing. Come to my brother. And to my sister.

And so a brother comes to me. In the midst of our fellowship. He said. I've blown it again. This week. With my wife. Well I listen. Not so I can go home.

And spread the gossip. To my wife. Not for any other reason. So that I can pray. For him. And seek to help him. In seeing that sin gone.

[28 : 35] And health restored. To his heart. His marriage. And that relationship. With God. Confess your sins. To each other. And pray for each other. So that you may be.

Healed. It's a one anothering passage. I said. And because it is. Something that we are to do. To each other. It's a reciprocating thing.

I'm not always going to be. In the state of listening. To confessions. There's going to be a time.

When I'm to be the one. Confessing. And seeking. The prayer. And I'm also going to.

Need to aim. To be that kind of person. That others. Would feel comfortable. In coming to me. And saying. John. This is my sin.

Would you pray for me? Are you that kind of person? Is there anybody here. That. You have drawn up. With concern. And love enough.

[29 : 32] That they would. Come to you. Say brother. This is. This is where I'm stumbling. Would you pray? The command is a two-way street.

And I must be ready. To go both ways. Confessing my sins. And hearing. Others. Confess theirs. That we might. Pray. And lay hold of God. For healing. Now.

The benefit. To the. To the person. Is clear. So they may be healed. Spiritually restored. The Lord. Lifting them up. But there's a host.

Of good things. That come from this. Confession of our sins. To each other. As well. There's positive results. And benefits. That flow. From it. First of all.

It shatters. The myth of legalism. And self-righteousness. The notion. That I can keep the law. Well enough. Myself. And that. Imagine. Self-righteousness.

[30 : 30] Brothers and sisters. Is deeply embedded. In our soul. And it must be. Continually. Renounced. Continually. Trampled on. That thought. In my head. That I'm pretty good.

And God. Ought to think so. Confessing. My sin. To another. Helps put this. Lie. To rest. I am saying. I am not good enough. Brother. If I got.

From God. What I deserve. For this sin. I would be in hell forever. Would you pray for me? I am just that weak. I am just that sinful.

It's a good thing. When self-righteousness. Is openly. Renounced. Because self-righteous. Religion. Is probably.

Damning. More. Than true religion. Is saving. So. Here. In confessing our sins. We're getting out in the open. That there is no form of legalism.

[31 : 30] There is no form of self-righteousness. Whereby I'm expecting God. To. Enter. Open heaven's gates. Because I am such a good. And. Squeaky clean. Christian. And that leads to the second.

Openly confessing to our brother. Lays our pride in the dust. This too is deeply embedded in us. Isn't it? Our pride does not like. To see the false front.

Dismantled. You ever seen the TV sets. For some of your favorite shows. And it looks so real. As a kid perhaps. And. As that. Gunslinger was walking through the city.

And you saw all the. The saloon. And the jail. And all the stores. And. And then one day you went. And you saw. It's just a facade. It's just a front. There's nothing behind it. Just a room.

And then. Then nothing. Maybe sometimes. Just the front itself. And we keep fronts like that sometimes. And. And we make others think. That we're better than what we really are. And we.

[32 : 30] We massage that front. And we keep it up. And we keep painting it. So that. That others will. Will think. More highly of us. Than what we know we deserve. And the impression is.

Is that I have it all together. That I don't struggle with sin. Like you do. That I've reached a higher plane. Oh we may never say such. With our lips. But our silence.

Sometimes says that. Our silence. Our lack of confessing. Our sins. Sometimes. Says. I am not struggling. With sin. Like you are.

It's a very humbling thing. To confess my sins. To another. Have you found that. That it's easier. To confess your sin. To God. Than it is. To another mortal.

Something's wrong. With that. On the face of it. It's just unbelief. I mean. We should find it. Ten times harder. To confess to God. If we realize. Who he is. I mean. In one sense. Granted.

[33 : 27] If we also know. How gracious he is. Maybe that's easier. Than confessing. To some people. Who are not so gracious. But. Still. He's the majestic. God. And. But I have found.

That I can confess. My sin to God. With my. Pride. Still intact. Because nobody else. Knows about that.

But when I have to go. To a brother. Say brother. This is my sin. And I need. Your help. Would you pray. I'm ashamed.

I'm humbled. I'm brought low. And could it just be. That God finds. Such pleasure. In our humble. Brokenness. For sin.

That he pours out. More grace. For the killing of it. We do know. This. Don't we. From James. And Peter. And elsewhere. In scripture. That God. Opposes the proud.

[34 : 25] But gives. Grace. To the humble. And when the Lord. Sees us. Humbling ourselves. Before another. And confessing. Our sin. And asking for prayer.

He gives more grace. God's grace. Is like the rain. That makes its way. To the low ground. And confessing. Our sins. To each other. May just. Help us.

To get low enough. For more grace. He delights. In the broken. And contrite heart. He takes pleasure. And he shows that pleasure.

By dumping. More grace. Our way. Our confession. Points to our constant need. Of the grace. Of Jesus Christ. It makes much of him.

Doesn't it? Nothing of myself. I'm saying. In my confession. Brother. I believe. There is grace. In Jesus Christ. For this sin of mine. Would you pray.

[35 : 18] With me. That I might. Experience. And see that grace. And Jesus smiles. And sends. Greater measures.

Of sin. Killing grace. To our hearts. And I say. Anything that promotes. Humility. And shatters. My pride. Is a good thing. And that's one of the benefits. Of confessing.

Our sins. To each other. Shatters. Legalism. And self-righteousness. It shatters. Our pride. And then. Thirdly. Others are encouraged. To see that they're not.

The only ones. Struggling with sin. And. And sometimes. Losing. The battle. We can give that. Wrong impression. Here at church. Can't we? That we are so holy.

That we don't sin anymore. Again. Not that we would ever say that. But our lack of. Ever confessing our sin. Maybe saying that. Loud and clear. And folks wonder.

[36 : 12] Why they're the only ones. Struggling. With sin. And then a brother. Comes up to them. And says. Brother. I'm struggling.

With this sin. In my life. Would you pray for me? And he sucks in encouragement. And. And he's so encouraged. Not to go on sinning.

Because you're sinning too. But just to know. There's grace in God. To help him. With his sins. And there's grace in God. To help me.

With mine. And so. Other struggling Christians. Are encouraged. And that's why. We must know. That there's no temptation.

That's taken us. But such is common to man. Don't let the devil. Lie to you. And then. This open confession. To another. Has another benefit.

[37 : 07] Such humble honesty. About our sin. Promotes more concern. For each other. We see. Other people's. Real needs. And as I said earlier. Our hearts. Are moved. To pray for each other.

It promotes. True fellowship. This kind of a church. Is a hospital. Where wounded soldiers. Are healed. As we pray for one another. And then return. To the front lines.

And it also. Opens up. Opens us up. To accountability. You know. We easily deceive ourselves. When we're. We're just struggling. With this little sin. We're all by ourselves. No other human. Knows about it. And we go on. Lying to ourself. About it. No one will know. I can get by. With this sin. Or. I'm too far.

Gone. In this sin. I've tried before. It's hopeless. And those lies. They. They just. Kill us. As long as we keep. Our sin. In the darkness.

[38:06] But when we. Confess. To another. Father. Well. It's now. In the open. The cover is blown. There's now light. Where before.

There was darkness. Sin loves. To stay in the darkness. Of privacy. Where it thrives. And it beats up. On you. All alone. But then.

When a brother. Steps in. Says. Oh. There is hope. Brother. Jesus Christ. Says. That the blood. Of Jesus. Cleanses. From all sin.

That's your sin. If we confess. Our sins. He's faithful. And just. To forgive us. And to cleanse us. From all right. Unrighteousness. So. The lie.

Is brought into the light. And there's accountability. I'm praying for you brother. Remember you told me. About this sin. How's it going? And. God giving strength.

[39:05] You setting up any guards. Any hedges. To keep you from that sin. And. We begin. To help each other. Obviously.

The greatest. Benefit of all. Is that it promotes. Healing. And spiritual health. Confess your sins. To each other. Pray for each other. So that you may be healed. And the healing comes.

In this way. James says. So here are many benefits. To the one confessing. To the one listening. To the whole church. And yes. We could even say. To the world. As the church.

Is put back together. Soldiers are healed. And go back into the fray. Blessed man or woman. Who is not left alone. In the fight against. Their sins.

Blessed. Christian. Who has brothers and sisters. Who will pray for them. In their battles. With specific. Sins. And hold their feet. To the fire. Blessed church.

[40:02] Where the gospel of grace. Is so preeminent. In our hearts. That people. Are free. To open up. And own what they are.

And to ask. For prayer. Where confessions. Do not create gossip. Or condemnation. But deeper concern. For each other's holiness. And humble prayers.

That lead to spiritual sickness. Is being healed. And sins forgiven. And conquered. And spiritual health. Restored. That's true fellowship. That's the shared life.

In the body of Christ. Does your fellowship. Ever go that deep. Does mine. James is stretching us. This morning. With this word. This is a church.

Mighty in power. Because they're mighty. In prayer. It's a church. Moving forward. In ministry. To the lost. And needy world. Because her soldiers. Are being healed. They're being made healthy.

[40:57] And strong. For the battle. When they're weary. And battle shocked. They come in. And they find brothers. And sisters. To turn them back out. Refreshed. Built up.

Encouraged. That they're not fighting alone. When they get that way. That is healthy. And they stay that way. In no small part. Through confessing.

To each other. And praying. For each other. Now such an ending. To James letter. Is consistent. Isn't it? With the overall theme. Of James letter. Which is what?

To urge us. To. The all out. Pursuit of holiness. The all out. Killing. Of sin. And here at the end. He tells us. That we are to do this.

We are to pursue holiness. On our knees. And arm in arm. With our brothers. And sisters. There's a corporate sense.

[41:51] To our pursuit. Of holiness. So the question. That meets us again. In chapter 5. In verse 16. Is how serious. Are you about pursuing holiness? How badly.

Do you want to see your sins. Put to death. And spiritual health. Restored. Where you're sick. Bad enough. To confess your sin. To another. Sister. And to ask. For her prayers.

For you. In the battle. To receive accountability. And encouragement. And help. Hope. Are you that desperate. In your pursuit. To see that sin.

Mortified. James says. We ought to be. We ought to be. Have we really got it yet? Have we really understood. How important.

This whole letter is. Then. We ought to be praying. We ought to be seeking. The prayers of others. The confession of sin. To another. Has often been the instrument. God has used.

[42:46] To break the back. Of some nasty. Addiction. To sin. A sin. That proves. Unyielding. When trying. To go it alone. And so.

James is telling us. Here at the end. Of this letter. That we're to be. Pursuing holiness. And we're to be doing it. Together. Together. Not only pursuing. My holiness. I'm pursuing yours. As well. And you. Are pursuing mine. We help. One another. With our sympathetic. Prayers. In high school. Sunday school.

Class. We. We've been. Considering. Second. Timothy. 2. 22. It tells us. To flee. The evil. Desires. Of youth. Run away.

From them. And instead. To pursue. Righteousness. Faith. Love. And peace. And not. To be. Running. From. The evil.

[43 : 38] Desires. Of youth. And running. For. Righteousness. Faith. Love. And peace. Alone. But. Along. With. Those. Who call. On the Lord. Out of the pure. Heart. We're not. To be running.

This race. Alone. We're to be. Running. Arm. In arm. With others. Who are pursuing.

Righteousness. Seeking. Holiness. And so. James.

Is telling us. We're not. Fighting sin. As a single. Soldier. But arm. In arm. With a whole. Troop. That's committed. Equally. To each.

Other's. Holiness. The command. Is against. That unhealthy. Isolationism. Whereby. We cut ourselves. Off. From the help. Of our brothers.

And sisters. You may be sitting. Beside them. Every week. In worship. And still. Cutting yourself. Off. From their help. You never turn. To any one of them. Your wife. Your husband.

[44 : 33] A close friend. In the church. You never turn. To them. And say. Brother. I'm struggling. With this sin. Will you pray? That's an isolation. That cannot stand. Before this text.

Is there anyone. With whom you share. Your struggles. With sin. Your weaknesses. And cry out. For their help. In prayer. Pity the Christian. Pity the Christian. Who has no one like this. In their life. To share. And confess. And pray with. The wise man says.

Two. Are better than one. Because they have a good return. For their work. If one falls down. His friend. Can help him up. But pity the man.

Who falls. And has no one. To help him up. You can be in the midst. Of a church. Of 200 people. And be alone.

[45 : 28] When you fall. With no one. To lift you up. Because you haven't told anyone. That you've fallen. There are brothers.

And sisters here. There are elders here. Who know what it is. To fall. And be restored. By grace. And by prayer.

And accountability. Seek them out. Seek them out. Tap into all the grace. That God has for you. In the battle against sin.

And in the pursuit of holiness. That he has for you. In the corporate body. Of Christ. So confess your sins. To each other. And pray for each other. That you.

May be healed. For the prayer. Of a righteous man. Is powerful. And effective. We'll have to. Wait for that. Next week.

[46 : 22] But that's the reason. It's so important. For you to pray. In your troubles. Because prayer. Is powerful. And effective. And that's the reason. Why you call up your elders. And ask them to pray for you. Because the prayer. Of a righteous man. Is powerful.

And effective. And that's why you go to your brother. And confess your sins to him. And ask him to pray for you. Because the prayers of a righteous man. Are powerful. And effective. They get done. What you need to get done.

So when you go to the Lord. In prayer. Will you mention me? Poor needing me. Before that throne. That rules the universe. That pours out grace. And help. For our times of need.

I don't know how spiritually sick. You are. But there is healing virtue. And power flowing. From Jesus wounds. That will cleanse you from sin. And will heal you. Hosea 14. 4 says.

I will heal their waywardness. And love him. Love them freely. Isn't that something? This great physician. Heals our waywardness. Waywardness. That waywardness.

[47 : 20] Is that. That tendency. To go out of the path. And go astray. And he not only. Has power. To put our feet. In the right path. But to heal.

The very waywardness. Of our hearts. That makes us want to stray. How's that for physician?

How's that for cure? Yes. By his wounds. We.

Are healed. I will heal their waywardness. Get to this great physician. You get to him by prayer. You know.

If I didn't have the gospel. I wouldn't obey this verse. It is the gospel of Christ. That enables us. To obey a command like this.

Because the gospel says. It's not the righteous. But sinners. Jesus came. To save. The gospel says. That I'm not saved. Because of righteous things. That I have done.

[48:15] But because of his mercy. The gospel says. Come just as you are. Owning what you are. Trusting in Christ. To save you. And he will. Well. It's in the gospel.

That Jesus says. You bring me your sins. And I'll give you my righteousness. Just as you are. You don't come. You don't need to put on any front. And that's why I say.

It's the gospel. That helps us believe. And obey this promise. We don't have to pretend. Like we never sin. Because we have a savior for sin.

We can own our sin. We don't have to try to polish some image. There are only sinners. That Jesus has saved. In his church. And they go on sinning.

And they go on coming to Jesus. For cleansing. So if any of you have had any other thought. About the church. Let it be shattered this morning. We all continue to sin. We are struggling with sin.

[49:13] Now that we didn't struggle with. Before we quite enjoyed. Going our own way. But we are all struggling with sin. And it's a savior who forgives sin.

That enables. That cuts us free. To come to a brother. To confess what we are. To ask for prayer. Oh let us drink deeply of the gospel.

Sinner friend. The way to receive forgiveness from God. Is to condemn yourself. I know that's backwards. To your way of thinking. You think the way to save yourself. Is to speak up for yourself. I'm not that bad. I'm better than him. And I haven't done that yet. And you think that by speaking up for yourself. You'll make your way into heaven better. I'll tell you. Until you condemn yourself. You cannot be saved.

You must own what you are. A sinner deserving hell. Casting yourself. Upon God's mercies. In Jesus Christ. God be merciful to me. The sinner.

[50:11] For Jesus sake. That's it. And he'll save you. He'll heal you. He'll cleanse you. Do you want to be healed this morning? Go to him.

Dear Christian. Brother. Sister. You struggling with a sin. You've been struggling long. And falling. Back. And back. And back. Find one.

Find one. To confess your sin to. And to. To beg their prayers. To help you. And what do we find. When we go. To him. We find one who is gracious. Full. Of love. Delights in mercy. Let's sing of him.

432. And your hymn. No it's not the. Hymn I had selected. Cindy. But 432. And we'll sing it to the. The second tune. We find one. Who is plenteous.

[51:10] In grace. What do we do. When we. Come to. The Lord Jesus. We find the lover. Of our soul. Who delights. To forgive sin. Oh Christ.

We thank you. That we have never. Come to you. And found you. To be short. On grace. With us. You have said. That your blood. Would cleanse us. From every sin. And we have found.

You're willing. To do just that. You said. If we would come. That you would turn. None away. Thank you Lord. That whatever the. Spiritual sickness.

Is this morning. If one has never. Trusted in Christ. We thank you. That you stand ready. As the great physician. To heal them. By your wounds. Come and draw them.

To yourself. For that brother. Or sister. Who's worn. And weary. Of the battle. Who's weak. And without strength. Come.

[52:05] Heal the sick. And restore the sight. And strengthen. Their faith. Their love. Their courage. And we will give you.

All the praise. We. We may go to a brother. A sister. But we don't go to them. For forgiveness. And for strength. In the sense. That you're the only.

Fountain. We go to them. To help us. Get to the fountain. And to receive from you. All that you have. For our need. We gladly.

Confess you. As our Savior and Lord. Do us good then. According to our need. This morning. We ask in your own. Precious and holy name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.