

Acts 1:12-14 - The Work of the Holy Spirit

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[0 : 00] All right, good morning. Would you open your Bibles to Acts?

! Jesus has told the disciples to be in Jerusalem, to wait there for the promise of the Father.

And they've seen Jesus ascend into heaven with that promise from those two angels that he, the same way he's gone up, he will come down.

Every eye is going to see him. And that's our great hope, isn't it? And we're kind of talking about, you know, how we live in the not yet kingdom.

So that's kind of like the framer for the whole of Acts is Jesus has been he's resurrected and he is he's, you know, triumphed over death.

[1 : 14] He's triumphed over sin. And now he's ascended. He's gone back to the Father in heaven. And there will be a time when he comes back. And so everything he has done has really inaugurated the kingdom.

He is the king. There is a kingdom. And so we live in that kingdom. Absolutely. But that kingdom hasn't yet arrived in its fullness. We're still waiting for that. And so really, the book of Acts is really all about how do we then live in that interim period?

How do we live in the time where Jesus has ascended and Jesus is going to come back? And the answer is, of course, in verse one and verse verse verse four and verse six, you're going to wait for the promise of the Father.

You can't do anything without the power of the Holy Spirit. Bottom line. And, you know, I'm finding this. I'm assuming you're finding this, too, that really anything that we try in our own strength and in our own flesh fails very quickly.

And it leaves all kinds of fallout afterwards. And so we want to be people who are led by, inspired by, motivated by, filled with the Holy Spirit.

[2 : 28] That is the only way that we can live in this not yet kingdom. And so. This is the the instruction to the apostles. It's the instruction to us is to be people who are led by and filled with the Holy Spirit.

And so that's the that's the context that they've been given. And in verse 12. We pick up the story that then they returned to Jerusalem.

And so there's the obedience is right there. And actually, you know, Luke 24, 52, which is kind of the another parallel necessarily. But it's kind of the transition with this.

It says that they returned with great joy. You know, even even the Jesus had ascended. Now they're returning with great joy. And they returned with great joy to Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day journey away.

So the Mount of Olives is actually a two and a half mile mountain ridge that runs all the way from Bethany, where you remember Lazarus lived with Mary and Martha, their house.

[3 : 37] This this two and a half mile mountain ridge that goes from Bethany all the way to Jerusalem, which is why it kind of explains Luke 24, because Luke there, he says that they returned from Bethany.

And so that the Mount of Olives kind of covers that whole section. So the place they actually returned from, we're told in fairly good detail, a Sabbath day journey, which was the legal distance a Jew could travel on a Sabbath, which was about 2000 steps or so.

So that's how far, if you know, if you want, that's how far they traveled. 2000 steps about. All right. And when they had entered. Verse 13, when they had entered, they went into the upper room where they were staying.

Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus and Simon, the zealot and Judas, the son of James.

Now, this is probably the same place that the upper the the upper room where the last supper took place. You know, Luke just says, and when they had entered, there was an assumption that we would know where they had entered into the place.

[4 : 54] And tradition says that it is a upper level of the home of John Mark. Who owns this property, the same John Mark who wrote the Gospel of Mark.

That's tradition is really no way to verify that. But what we do know is whoever's house this is, it's a pretty big house. Because I've been to most of your homes and none of your homes, if I can remember, have a lounge that can seat 120 people.

I mean, with this, it may be a squish, right? You'd have to be real good friends. But, you know, verse 15 says that there's going to be 120 people in this room.

And so wherever this is, whoever it belongs to, it's a pretty big house. And all of these, and this is the verse I want to camp out into today. I had originally on my kind of my teaching plan put that we were going to finish the chapter today.

But this verse 14 kind of stuck with me and really started challenging me about it and us about it, about how we do this.

[6 : 16] So let's just read verse 14. Luke says, All these, so that's all of those apostles and disciples were with one accord, were devoting themselves to prayer together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers.

So just, I wanted to just, I just want to notice a couple of things and then I want to draw some, maybe some comparisons with or some, just draw some things out with the idea of being with one accord and devoting themselves to prayer and what that might look like and I think should look like in a local church in a local setting.

And so would you, if you just take a note or if you note your Bible, just notice those words, one accord, devote themselves and prayer. And those three things we're going to kind of focus down on.

So before we get to that, I just want you to notice one absolutely extraordinary thing. And this is the thing that struck me before anything else was that the list of disciples beforehand, we have Peter and John and James and Andrew and Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus, Simon, the zealot and Judas, the son of James.

And the extraordinary thing is, is that most of those disciples, most of those apostles are from radically different backgrounds. And you know, when we were going through Luke and you'll know from your own study going through the Gospels, is that these guys, for the most part, don't seem to get on.

[7 : 56] Or at least when they do get on, they're coming up with just ridiculous kind of scenarios or, you know, let's let's go and do this and, you know, those kind of things.

And. Yeah, what we have is that we have a group of men and women who are chosen by Jesus.

I don't think there are accidents or I don't think that they just kind of went, I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to follow Jesus. I think they were chosen by Jesus. We're actually told that he he prayed all night before choosing them.

So. And yet they're from radically different backgrounds. He didn't he didn't go into the, you know, the top Jewish university in in Jerusalem and write and say, well, I'll have I'll have that one, that one, that one.

Show me your grades. I'll have that one. I'll have that one. There's no way, Peter, get to the back of the line. Right. He didn't do that. He prayed all night. But look, they're from radically different backgrounds, but they're also from competing backgrounds.

[9 : 02] I mean, historically, I mean, just look at Simon the Zealot, for example. Simon the Zealot. The reason he's called Simon the Zealot is because of the zealots.

OK, I can see that hasn't helped. All right. So the zealots were a ultra nationalist group in Israel that were responsible for trying to overthrow the Roman authorities by force.

All right. So this is a military group who are underground, an underground resistance movement who make it a habit of killing people.

All right. So Simon the Zealot. Now, obviously, he came to Christ. He's a follower of Jesus. He doesn't do the zealot stuff anymore. But just think about that background.

And then think about this other guy who's mentioned in this list, Matthew. Yeah. Because we looked at Matthew before. Right. Matthew is a sellout to the Roman authorities.

[10 : 15] He's a Jew, but he's a tax collector. All right. And they're in the same room. And normally, Simon, the zealot, would be trying to kill Matthew.

So much so, you know, the Jewish authorities or the Roman authorities would put guards, give Jewish tax collectors bodyguards to protect them from people like Simon.

I mean, can you imagine that kind of just happening here? You know, whoever is your like the worst enemy that you can think of traditionally, background wise.

And we're getting on. And it's not just that we're getting on. These guys are called together to be the foundation of the church. Isn't that crazy? So that leads me to ask the question, what on earth happened to these guys?

What happened to these guys that they could do that? Well, look. Notice that Luke says that even, even. There's two, there's two brothers in this.

[11 : 25] I mean, for me, it's easier for a zealot and a tax collector to get on with two than two brothers. Right. So, yet Luke says they are with one accord.

And that Greek word, that Greek phrase is homo thumos. And it's literally a homo means the same. And thumos means the emotion of the mind.

Isn't that crazy? Just think about that. They had the same emotion of the mind. I like that. It's different from koinonia. It's different from fellowship. This is, they had the same mind going forward.

And look, that's an attitude. And it's an attitude that's mentioned again and again in the book of Acts. So Acts 2.46. We're told that day by day, attending the temple together, together, notice, and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with gladness and generous hearts.

They attended the temple with the same emotion of mind. It wasn't that they necessarily agreed on everything. They just had the same emotion of mind.

[12 : 35] What are you doing today, Peter? Says John. Peter says, I'm going to the temple. Me too. Let's go do this. Same emotion of mind. Nothing was going to get in their way. Acts 4.24.

Says when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God. They had the same emotion of mind. Acts 5.12. Many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles.

And they were all together in Solomon's portico. Acts 15.25. It seemed good to us having come to one accord. It's the same phrase that is translated for us, but it's the same in the Greek.

They having come to one accord, they chose men and sent them to you, our beloved Barnabas and Paul. So they were with one accord. They had the same emotion of mind.

They had the same kind of determination to do a single thing. Look at the next thing that Luke says.

[13 : 37] And look, that's a challenge for us right there, isn't it? Because can we all say, and this is, look, this is to us as a local church. We're going to look into James in a little while.

And James is addressing the local church. Paul addresses the universal church in many degrees. James is addressing the local church. And so we're going to look at both of those this morning.

And so can we say that we have the same emotion of mind? That when we, when we, when we, not even, let's just, let's just cut out six days.

Let's just talk about one day. Let's just talk about, let's just talk about Sunday. Can we, can we say that when we get up in the morning on a Sunday, we're like, you know what? I'm going, we're going, we're going to do this together for this one purpose.

Do we have the same emotion of mind? Look at the next thing he says. These were with one accord. What were they doing? They were devoting themselves. Now look, isn't that like so anti-cultural to devote yourself to something together?

[14 : 41] I mean, this is, I mean, this speaks into individualism completely, doesn't it? And you know, this whole message, this whole thing really brings down our ideas of we're the most important person.

It's all, everything's about me. And I'm only going to do something if I can get something out of it. All right. Luke says that they were devoting themselves. And I'd love to bore you silly with the grammar, the Greek grammar, but I won't.

So it's basically this, the idea of devoting. The prefix is peri. It means to go round and round. We got our English word peripatetic, to go round and round.

And that's what means devoting us to persistently engage in an activity. And then to do it again. And then to do it again. And then to do it again.

And so they did this. They devoted themselves for about 10 days. And so I think that this is instructive for us. You know, because there's no arguing here about who's the greatest.

[15 : 43] You know? All of that is over. There's one spirit who has been given to them. There is one mission that they've been entrusted to. They have a one mind that they are going to walk in that mission and be filled with that spirit.

And what a beautiful time this must have been. Right? Wouldn't it? I mean, I have rarely experienced this. Let me tell you. I have rarely experienced times like this.

But when I have experienced times like this, it's been wonderful. Take it out of a church context. You put it into a family context. You know, when your children. You know, the psalmist says in Psalm 133.

Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity. Brothers or sisters. In a family context. I can't tell you how beautiful that is. When the kids are not arguing or bickering.

It's wonderful. Can you imagine in a church scenario. And so look, I want to give you some things to think about when it comes to being with one accord and devoting ourselves.

[16 : 54] Being with one accord and devoting ourselves. So the issue of unity amongst us. And whether, you know, we really want unity. Whether we cherish unity.

And whether we're doing everything that we can to maintain unity and also attain unity, which we'll talk about. Are we doing everything that we can for that end?

And so and I'll tell you why I think this is important for us is because we have not always been united. And I think that there's probably it's true to say that there's probably part of part of us as a church that's still not united going forward.

And so. To speak candidly, I think we also face a challenge going forward. In this area. And so. And so.

We need to talk about how do we have this kind of unity, because I read I read this and I my heart yearns for this kind of unity. I want this kind of unity.

[17 : 59] And so how do I play my part? How do you play your part in in this kind of unity and this kind of devotedness and this self?

This other centeredness that is absolutely countercultural to the individualism that we see and permeates our church.

And so. I made mention of it before, but I think the answer to understanding unity is to understand that unity is not only a reality to be maintained, but it's also a goal to be attained.

So it's a reality to be maintained. We have to maintain unity, but also it's a goal to yet be attained. So it's almost like part of this now and not yet.

Yes, now we have unity, but we don't not yet have unity for all of those who claim Jesus is their Lord and Savior. We have unity.

[19 : 05] But we don't have complete unity. We haven't arrived there yet. Right. And so if you look at these two verses are going to be on the screen. Both talk about this maintaining unity and attaining unity.

So Paul says. That he uses that kind of language of the now and not yet. So Ephesians four, verse three, we talked about eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

So there's this idea that we have been given unity and we have to maintain unity. It's not something that we generate for ourselves. And I know that there's a lot of misconception about what unity is and how we get unity.

And I know a lot of churches have said, well, you know, we just have to agree with the lowest common denominator. You know, we just believe in God and that we must have unity. That's not that's not biblical unity.

And so he says we have to maintain something that's been given to us. But then also, would you look at verse 13 of Ephesians four, he says, until we all attain to the unity.

[20 : 14] So we we we maintain a unity that's been given to us. That's verse three. There's a reality to be maintained. But then also.

There is a goal to attain to unity. We have to work for it. We have to strive for unity. Now, look at why it's been it's it's it's got to be maintained and not created.

And I think this is this is important. Ephesians two, verse 13. Paul says, but now this is as opposed to what we were like.

We were sinners. We were unregenerate. We were going our own way. And the Lord saved us by his grace and he's brought us into a family.

And he says that. But now in Christ Jesus. And so that's the reason Jesus has created this unity for us. It's because now in Christ Jesus, we are in Christ Jesus.

[21 : 15] So, again, all who claim the name of Jesus, who follow him, who have repented of their sins by faith, following Christ. We we are in Christ. So. But that's something that Christ has done.

That's not something that we do. Right. And so he says, but now in Christ, you who are once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Now, that's not speaking necessarily to the individual, but it's speaking corporately.

Yes. Yes. Paul is saying, yes, you and you and you and you. But he's also saying you have been brought near. Right. For he himself, verse 14, is our peace who has made us.

Notice that he has made us. Who's made us? He has made us. So he has made us both one. And has broken down in his flesh the divining wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in audiences that he might create in himself one new man.

How many new men? Just one. In place of the two. So making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

[22 : 32] That's what Jesus has done. If you know anything of the gospel, this is this is what Jesus has done for us. Paul says that in a decisive act of redemption and reconciliation, Jesus has already made us one.

So can we just affirm that this morning, that if you are a follower of Christ, that is a reality that Jesus is one for us, that we are one. It's already been accomplished.

Well, he accomplished a calvary we should maintain until it is fully attained. And so. It is for us to live this out.

And the way that we live this out in full expression is in the local church. You can't. You can't. You can't. You can't.

Live this out and not be part of a local church. You really. It's a really difficult thing to to have unity and this kind of unity and flesh this kind of unity out without being part of a local church, by being involved in a local church.

[23 : 46] And so look with me. Look with me at these. There's some things that Paul says that we need in order to maintain, to attain. What do we need then to to do?

Well, look, Ephesians four, verse 13, where he says, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. Paul writes about the unity of the knowledge of the Son of God.

What do we what do we need to to maintain this unity? Well, we need to believe the same things about Jesus. Us.

To have any kind of unity, to maintain the unity that Jesus has won for us. We need to agree that Jesus has won it for us. We need to agree in the gospel.

We need to agree those things. We have to have common convictions about who Jesus is, what Jesus has done. But listen, also, Paul writes about unity of the faith.

[24 : 48] In the same verse, until we attain to the unity of the faith. And so we don't only believe common things about Jesus.

We also have to have common confidence in Jesus. So we don't just believe in Jesus. We have a common confidence in Jesus. We believe who he is, what he has done, and then what he will yet do in the future.

And what he is doing right now. Because let's not forget that Jesus is still at work. We have to believe that our hope is in him.

And we have to strive to put our hope in him. He also says in Ephesians 2 verse 14.

For he himself is our peace who has made us both one. Broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. And what I think Paul is saying is that there can be an end hostility. Right?

[25 : 49] Can I say that again? There can be an end hostility. Church disputes don't have to end up with people leaving the church. There can be an end hostility.

Paul is talking about the triumph of love over hostility. That's what he's talking about. And so to maintain, to attain, to maintain unity and grow in it.

Is to have a common conviction about Jesus. A common confidence in Jesus. And then a common care for each other. And the disciples had these things.

They'd been around Jesus. They'd been taught by Jesus. They had this hope in Jesus. And they're hanging out, even though they should not on paper, should be hanging out without someone dying.

Right? But would you also notice that Paul says one very important thing in verse 3 of Ephesians 4.

[27 : 00] Paul calls this unity, the unity of the Spirit. And so our reliance is on the Holy Spirit.

It's the Holy Spirit who reveals who Jesus is. It's the Holy Spirit who reveals what he has done.

It's the Holy Spirit, as we open our Bibles, who reveals these things to us. You know, Matthew 16, Jesus says, he's having this conversation with the disciples.

And there's all this kind of discussion about who Jesus is. And finally, Jesus turns to the disciples and says, well, who do you think I am?

And Simon Peter, obviously, is going to be the first one to pipe up. And he says, you are Christ, son of the living God. And Jesus answers, blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

[28 : 12] You know, for there to be a greater understanding about the personal work of Jesus, it doesn't come through studying more books. It comes through revelation from the Holy Spirit.

And I'm not against studying books, don't get me wrong. But we need the Holy Spirit to open our eyes. Paul said in Ephesians 1 verse 18, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened to, in order that you may know the hope of which he has called you to.

And so we not only need the Holy Spirit to show us who Jesus is and what he has done, but also the Holy Spirit to give us a hope and for us to understand that hope.

And so you may have a common hope and faith in Jesus and cry out to God with confidence. And it's the Holy Spirit that enables us to do that. Isn't that what Paul talks about?

The Holy Spirit is the one who helps us to cry out, Abba, Father, with that confidence that we know that we are sons and daughters of a living God. And so listen, without relying on the Holy Spirit, we can't know who Jesus is.

[29 : 26] We can't know what he has done. Theoretically, we can know these things. We can list these things. But without knowing, we want to know these things properly, right? And without the Holy Spirit, we can't have hope and confidence in God.

And certainly, you know, Paul says in Galatians chapter 5, that when we have the Holy Spirit, we grow in our love for each other. Because that's one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. And so this is why Paul says that this unity is based around the Holy Spirit.

It's a unity that the Holy Spirit brings to us. We have no, we really have no hope of maintaining, let alone attaining to unity without his help.

And as diverse, as different as they were, as the disciples were, they were also with one accord. They had this same mind, this one mind, this one purpose, devoting themselves again and again.

And would you notice, here is the how-to. Here is the how-to of unity. With one accord, devoting themselves again and again to prayer.

[30 : 38] Now, I know that's not like kind of university kind of level answer. That's just simple, isn't it? But how often we just get this wrong.

What does faith look like? So this second, what does confidence in God look like? I mean, if you was to describe that, what would it be? Let me give you the suggestion that faith and hope fleshed out is prayer.

Faith and hope fleshed out is prayer. If you don't pray, and this is going to be strong, but if you don't pray, you really can't claim to have faith in God.

You really can't. Isn't this what we learn in James? Let's go there, James chapter 5. There's some challenging things here about prayer.

And would you notice the first thing that James is talking about is talking about in the local context of a local church. How does the expression of the fact that Jesus has brought all those who claim to know him and want to follow him to him as one body?

[32 : 05] What does that look like in Southampton, in this area of Southampton with us? What does that look like in a local church? What does prayer look like in a local church? And again, so we're not talking about what you necessarily do each morning or each evening when you pray by yourself.

This is in the context of a local church. Being one accord together. What does that look like? Well, first of all, if we don't pray, we can't claim to have faith in God.

But look, there's some challenges here about prayer in James. And you'll remember that the original recipients of this letter from James were experiencing suffering. They were experiencing trouble.

They were also experiencing this same temptation of individualism. Saying, I'm more important than this person. I'm going to see this person.

There's a rich person coming in. Let's bring this rich person in. Let's put them at the front, at the head of the table. Because it's good for me. This is the challenge that James is writing.

[33 : 14] And listen, I think it's a challenge for our day. They were experiencing suffering. They were experiencing economic hardship.

Persecution for their faith. They were challenged by the challenge of individualism. And as this letter comes to the end, James is no doubt aware of their suffering and aware of their problems.

And he's saying simply this. If you don't pray together, you're not going to make it. And can I just reiterate what James is saying to us? That if we don't pray together, we will not make it.

And having exhorted them to wait patiently for the coming of the Lord in verses 7 to 11, he now gives them in each verse just a completely stunning invitation to come to God.

Out of all of the problems that James has written about, he finishes his letter and he says, well, why don't you come to God? Come to God. Come to God. Why don't you come to God together?

[34 : 19] This is togetherness. The outline is obvious. Look at verse 13. He speaks to those who are suffering. In verse 14 and 15, this is chapter 5.

So verse 13, he's speaking to those who are suffering. Verse 14 and 15, he's praying. He speaks of praying for those who are sick. And in verse 16, he is praying for, speaks of praying for our nation.

And in verses 19 to 20, speaks of praying for the wandering. And so James begins with asking a question of the praying Christian, of the praying church.

And let's take these questions on board. He says, is any among you suffering? And we know from what James has already said that many hands would have gone up.

But let me ask you this question. Would you know how to answer that question? Is there any among you suffering? Do you know that? Do you know whether the person next to you is suffering today?

[35 : 29] If there's a problem, we have an issue with answering that question. Listen, individualism has taken over this church. Do we know the people who are around us, in front of us, behind us?

Have we made their problems our problems? Have we made their struggles our struggles? Are we bearing with one another? And so James says, well, is any among you suffering?

And of course, their hands would have gone up. Well, I know this person is suffering. And maybe that person who is suffering doesn't have the ability to put their hand up.

They don't have the strength to put their hand up. And so then James gives us wise counsel as to what to do in that situation. And as you have come to expect, as we went through James, his answer is not only brief, but is also to the point.

And he says, well, here's the answer. Let him pray. Is there anyone among you suffering?

[36 : 37] Answer, of course, James. Of course there is. Well, let him pray. And the practice of prayer is a gracious provision for us.

Do you know that? There's a gracious provision of God that they desperately need, that we desperately need in the midst of suffering and in response to their suffering.

And look, the practice of prayer actually is distinctive for us. The Christian distinctive of prayer in the midst of suffering.

And more helpful counsel just does not exist. And this is far from the sometimes flippant response that we give when someone says, oh, I'm struggling.

And we say, well, bro, I pray for you. And we give it not a second thought. Spurgeon captured this sentiment well when he wrote, heaven's great harbor of refuge is prayer.

[37 : 48] Thousands of weather-beaten vessels have found a haven there. And the moment a storm comes on, it is wise for us to make for it with all sail.

What they need most, what you and I need most in the midst of suffering can only come from God. And God graciously provides what they need and what we need through the practice of prayer.

And I'm not suggesting that it is only individual prayer, or I am suggesting wholeheartedly that this is corporate prayer. This is where we gather around each other and we laugh with each other and we cry with each other.

And we bear the burdens of each other. Gladly. Willingly. Next question. Is anyone cheerful?

One person is cheerful to a man, right? I don't know what the in-between bit is from suffering and cheerfulness.

[38 : 57] If anyone is cheerful, let him sing praise. And so God is not only there for us in troubling times, but also in good times.

And the danger is that during those good times, we forget God. Very great danger.

But the response to cheerfulness is humility. Do you notice that? The response to cheerfulness is humility before God, because God is gracious.

And he invites you to seek him in your moments of trouble and in your moments of cheerfulness. You know, I just think if the Bible is true.

You know, if the Bible is true and the world is as broken as the Bible says. And nothing operates in the way that it's intended.

[40 : 08] And the fall has had the kind of effect that the Bible declares it has to have. Then, and in fact, the world is groaning, like Paul says in Romans chapter 8.

That the fact that every one of us is flawed. Because sin is in some way damaged every aspect of us. And if all of us are just kind of bumping around together, broken as we are.

Let me ask you a question. How in the world does anything good ever happen? Have you ever even asked that question? I mean, I know, I think I know some of my own heart.

And I know that when I think about my own heart, I think, how on earth does anything good come out of my life? We would argue that if we do know the extent of our own sin, this must be an utterly horrific place to live.

It should be an utterly horrific place to live. And yet, all of us, in one degree to one degree or another, experience joys.

[41 : 26] Don't we? We all experience wonderful things. And so listen to the truth. If ever in this fallen world you have reason to be glad, you are experiencing the grace of God.

It's God who provides for us. It's God who protects us. It's God who defends us. And so when we are experiencing good things, it is right to sing praise. It is right.

Because those good things come from the hand of God. Commentator Douglas Moose says this.

Great name, by the way. A reminder to turn to God is needed even more in times of cheer than in times of suffering. When our hearts are comforted, it is too easy to forget that discontentment comes ultimately only from God.

Why? Well, because James 1 verse 17 says that every good and every perfect gift comes from the Father above.

[42 : 32] And so if we are cheerful, it's good to honor and worship him, recognizing that he is the reason for it. Our lungs should be filled with praises for God.

Next question. Verse 14. Is any among you sick? Now, would you notice that he's going to say, is any among you sick?

Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him. Notice that James assumes that every Christian, each and every Christian is part of a local church where they know the leaders and the leaders know them.

That's the assumption that's made. And never do you see anywhere in the New Testament. Genuine Christians who are not a functioning part of the local church.

James frames this whole thing in a local setting. We are not individuals. We are not somewhere out there pioneering all by ourselves in the wilderness.

[43 : 43] We're not. We're not called to that. And the scenario here that is given is that there is someone who is sick. And they are so sick that they are not able to gather with the rest of the church when they gather.

And so they must call for the elders of the church. Is any among you sick? What kind of question is that, James? Because there's no one there sick who is not able to come.

How would you know? The assumption is that people in the church know that there are people who are missing this morning because they are sick. That's the assumption that's being made.

Do you follow? Which means we have to know the people who are around us or not around us in the case may be. And they are sick. And so what happens is that they call for the elders of the church.

And then the elders go and visit them in their home. They don't knock on the door and they're like, well, I didn't see that you weren't on the register.

[44 : 50] Or some churches do. I notice you haven't tithed this month. That's the only time the leaders kind of go around to their house.

No, no, no. If they're sick and you know someone who is sick and they can't come out to church, the church should go to them. That's what James is saying.

And what should the elders do when they get there? Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord and the prayer of faith. Notice the prayer of faith. This is a prayer of faith.

What was that second dynamic of unity? Confidence in God? I mean, where are you going to go? Listen, where are you going to go?

Even now. But think first century. Where are you going to go if you're so sick you can't get out to church? Who are you going to go to for help? Now, this is a difficult phrase because it's open to a fair amount of misunderstanding, right?

[46 : 00] On the face of it, it seems that James is offering a guarantee of healing. Or that you don't need to visit a doctor when you're sick. Because the elders will just come around.

Bit of olive oil. If you don't have olive oil, vegetable oil will do. If you don't have vegetable oil, just some marge. Just enjoy that picture.

And what I actually think it means, I think it means to clean them up rather than to throw oil over them. It means to clean them up. To help them. So James is not saying that you don't need to visit a doctor when you're sick.

Please, if you're sick, go visit a doctor. Firstly, what he's talking about, he talks about the prayer of faith. The prayer of faith that expresses trust in God.

A prayer of faith that expresses confidence in God. And submits to God's wisdom. And God's will. You see, what happens when you pray, and specifically when you pray together, is that you're not only taking on the burdens and the struggles and the things of the other person, and you're sharing and you're caring, but also collectively, your hearts are recognizing the sovereignty of God.

[47 : 29] That's what we do when we pray. We pray because we believe in God, right?

And we hope in God, and we have confidence in God. Otherwise, why would we pray? And so the prayerless person is the faithless person. When you pray, your heart is saying, God, you are sovereign.

I'm not sovereign. And I need this person who's praying for me. And this person needs me. Also. And we're submitting ourselves together again.

To you. Under your hand. And when you pray, you're recognizing that. You're recognizing that. You're recognizing the presence of God. Not just the sovereignty of God, but the presence of God.

You're recognizing the power of God. Because look, the local church isn't the solution to anything. You know that? Did you know that? Like, we can't fix anything.

[48 : 43] Sometimes we try. But the truth is, we can't. It's only God can fix things. And if you believe that, then why wouldn't you pray? Why wouldn't we pray?

Why wouldn't we humble our hearts under the sovereign hand of God? And say, God, whatever is good for us. Our hearts are saying, this is good.

And look, this is, again, this is so counter-cultural, isn't it? We live in a culture that says, well, we can fix it.

We can go and buy self-help books. We can go and even in the Christian realm, you know, we can have courses that we can send people on. And we can go to this conference and that conference, buy this book, this set of tapes.

Or not tapes anymore. Or they'd be download MP3s. Well, that dates me. Because you used to buy these tapes. Doesn't matter. Magnetic tape. Yeah, anyway.

[49 : 42] And look, that's all. I'm not saying that those are all very, very bad things. I'm just saying that they're not the most important thing. The most important thing is that when we pray, we're not only seeking God's help, but we are waging war against individualism.

That's what we're doing. We're waging war against what this culture, what society says is the way to go.

We're waging war, you know, not only because our culture says that actually it's up to you. And just be an individual. Stand up for your rights.

Be strong. Read this book better yourself. Get a good education. But listen, the other thing is it's a spiritual war. And what I mean by that is that, you know, if any time you've had a season of sickness or a moment of trouble, we're all tempted to think the same thing.

Is God really in control? Is God really, does God really have the power? Does God really care? Maybe God's not really near.

[51 : 05] And it's at that moment the local church assembles. And the local church prays for each other. And we're reminded again of the presence of God, the power of God, the sovereignty of God.

You see, we're warring for our souls. We're being reminded time and time again that God visits his people, that God is near to his people, that God is over his people.

Prayer graciously invites us again to embrace what he says about himself, to believe that it's actually true, and to put faith into practice and embrace the reality of the existence of God.

And then, listen, and then to rest. Then to stop. And that's what prayer does.

To act like God is the one who is ruling. To act like God is the one who is powerful. To act like those things that we believe are actually real. That's what it means to live in a kingdom that has come but has not yet come in fullness.

[52 : 13] That is what it means to maintain a unity and to strive for the goal of attaining unity. It's to pray for each other in a very real way.

And so these disciples coming together, back in Acts, these disciples coming together with one accord, believing this, they are embracing this together.

They're exercising their faith in God together. They have a confidence that when Jesus ascended and the angel said, he's coming back, they believed that.

And because they believed that, they believed that. They pray. And then do you know what they do?

They pray again. And they pray again. And then Pentecost happens.

[53 : 30] And their hearts are revived. And they're filled once again with the Holy Spirit. As they pray. And they pray. And they pray.

I want to encourage you this morning to pray. And I don't mean to pray by yourself.

I just pray by yourself. Let me make that absolutely clear. You should pray. But I want to encourage you to pray with someone, with others this morning.

is there anyone suffering? Is there anyone suffering? Is there anyone sick? Is there anyone cheerful? We should be praying for each other. We should be praising God for each other.

And so, look, the musicians are going to come up and lead us in a few songs. And we kind of, you know, did this a little bit last week. And I think it's just good for us to go for a season.

[54 : 33] We're not changing our services radically. This is not like forever and a day. But I do think that we need to purposefully take time to pray for one another.

It's good that we pray corporately at the beginning of the service. But, you know, there's lots of opportunities to pray corporately. We have early morning, Sunday morning prayer together here.

We even provide coffee to help you pray. Wow. You know, we pray corporately during a service.

Our Tuesday night life group, our Wednesday night life group is dedicated to praying for each other. And so, and there's the encouragement that you should be meeting up, you know, in connect groups, praying for each other.

But this morning, I want to take some time to pray for you. And I hope that you'll pray for me. As we seek to be united with one accord, devoting ourselves together to pray for one another.

[55 : 48] And so, I'm going to pray. Joe's going to lead us in a few songs. And I just want to encourage you to go and seek someone to pray with. Or, go and seek someone to pray for.

And again, I want you to be open to, if you want to move the chairs, I'm totally fine. You know, these aren't set in stone. We don't do pews here for a reason. Right? These are easily moved.

And I want to encourage you. If you are in that place this morning, where you either want to pray for someone, and the Lord's just laying someone on your heart to pray for, or you want to pray with someone, like you need prayer, please.

Several people around will pray with you. Don't be shy. You know, if everybody just starts singing, and you don't feel like your time has gone, please, let's pray together.

Let's seek the Lord's face together. Let's maintain, so that we may attain, the unity of the spirit together. Father, thank you for your word. Lord, thank you that it instructs us.

[56 : 57] Lord, thank you that it challenges us. Lord, would you forgive us, Lord, of all the times where we have not just been divided, Lord, but we have played a part in that division.

Lord, that may have been willful, or it may have just been through negligence, or we pray that you'd forgive us. Lord, would you, would you make the unity that we have a reality amongst us?

Lord, as we confess the things that we believe about you, as we confess the things that we believe that you have done for us and continue to do for us, Lord, would you turn our hearts to have faith and confidence in you?

Lord, would you turn our hearts to pray for one another and love each other as we are led by your spirit. Lord, as we are filled with the love and the peace and the joy that only he gives.

Lord, we, we want to be that church that Paul talks about in Romans 15, that we would together with one voice magnify the name of Jesus. So help us in that, we pray.

[58 : 16] Lord, we know that that is a difficult thing. Lord, and even in our hearts, there is a warring that needs to take place. And Lord, we ask that you would humble us this morning.

Lord, that we would seek you and we would seek you together. Lord, we pray, give us confidence to do that even now. Lord, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. You have been listening to a teaching ministry of Calvary Southampton.

For more information, go to www.calvaysotten.co.uk