

Acts 9:32-43

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 August 2016

Preacher: Clay Naylor

[0 : 00] Go ahead and open your Bibles up to Acts chapter 9. And before we get going this morning, I just want to confess to you that I have a very heavy heart for what we're going to talk about today.

! Cheers to hear from His Word today.

I had a hard time actually narrowing down what to say and what not to say. And I pray that as I go, I can continue to kind of do that. Just join me in a word of prayer.

Father, we come together as Your people, people that have been purchased by the blood of Your Son and who belong to You.

And God, we come to Your Word this morning. We love it. We respect it. We wish to obey it.

Because it is Your Word, it's not just a book with paper and print.

[1 : 15] It is Your inspired Word that is living and active. I pray it will work in our hearts today and that it would have its desired effect on each one of us.

In Christ's name, Amen. So, in Acts 9, we have been, the last two weeks, covering the conversion of Saul of Tarsus into the Apostle Paul.

And if you just look at verse 31, we'll kind of just start there. Just kind of walk through it together.

But just sort of an introduction, we see in verse 31, So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

It multiplied. So after this brief period of persecution that we read about, we've been looking at the last couple of weeks, after this period of persecution, it was more of a Jewish persecution.

That's what I've said before. It wasn't a persecution from the empire. And some of the political changes by Rome actually ended the persecution against the Christians. Because they just kind of saw it as, you know, the Jews are just making an uproar over nothing, quit causing trouble.

[2 : 32] And so more or less, the persecution ended. And then Saul was converted. And we see that they were walking in the fear of the Lord. The people were being built up, living before God.

And they were being comforted by the Holy Spirit. And it's always sweet to remember that after a time of trial or persecution, God always will come to you and comfort you.

And that's kind of what happens here. He's taking his people and building them back up after this trial that they have faced. And so we move on. And something that Luke does here, Luke, who wrote the book, the Gospel of Luke, also wrote Acts, if you don't know that.

He was a doctor and like a historian. So Luke shifts from Paul back to Peter and goes back to the ministry of Peter.

And Peter begins to leave Jerusalem to kind of go up to the coastal plain of Judea to kind of take the Gospel up there. And we first see that he kind of stops in Lydda, which is about 23 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

[3 : 39] And we witness then on up to Joppa, the big coastal city of Joppa. So he's kind of going traveling northwest along this road. And during this journey, God uses him to bring about two different healings, physical healings, miraculous healings.

So he records that. And so we're going to go on into verse 32. It says, So we first get a story, a picture of a man named Anais, and he was paralyzed.

And the idea that he was paralyzed for eight years kind of emphasizes the severity of how bad his paralysis was. As well as if it had been eight years, most people probably knew this guy and knew like how bad his infirmity was.

So he was known in that regard. So it wasn't like he got hurt yesterday and was healed the day after. He had been there bedridden for a long time. Anybody ever been bedridden before?

I definitely have. And it's a very disheartening, discouraging experience. And I was more or less laying in bed for about a month.

[5 : 26] And when I came to, I didn't have any memory of that month. But when I came to, like, you had to learn how to walk again. Like, you're just so disoriented. It's a very, can't move around.

A very disheartening thing. You're totally dependent on other people all the time to do everything for you. So it's a bad, bad thing to have. So he was bedridden.

And so Peter comes to him gently and compassionately, just like he has seen Jesus do over and over. He says, Anais, Jesus Christ heals you.

Rise and make your bed. And then immediately he rose. So not gradually, but like instantaneously healed. He stood up. So then, if you also notice, Peter kind of humbly points away from himself and points to Christ as the one who's actually healing him.

The reality of this, the authority of Jesus and the power of Jesus and to the glory of Jesus that he was healed. So in situations like this, Peter was aware that Jesus was spiritually present working in and amongst the situation.

[6 : 37] And we see the result. The result was overwhelming joy and celebration. And what was it? Residents heard about this and they turned to the Lord.

So like news spread about this. And that brought people to kind of come and see what was going on. The word turn to the Lord is really almost the idea of repentance. It means to turn around.

So it was like people came to hear the message that Peter bore. And they turned to the Lord. They believed in the gospel message. They had a change of heart and mind and became followers of Jesus.

As a result of him getting their attention through this healing. So then Peter gets up. And later on, we get in verse 36.

It says, Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which translated means Dorcas. Don't name your child Dorcas.

[7 : 39] It's just a rough name. One of the rough ones in the New Testament. So Tabitha, which translated in Greek, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.

In those days, she became ill and died. And when they had washed her, they laid her body in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, Please come to us without delay.

So Peter rose and went to them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing their tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.

But Peter put them all outside. And he knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes.

And when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

[8 : 46] And it became known throughout all Joppa. And many believed in the Lord. And he stayed in Joppa for many days with Simon, a tanner.

So, a second miracle. This one, almost more extreme, more dramatic than the first one. He raised someone from the dead. God used Peter to raise someone from death to life.

And if you think about this woman, Tabitha, she was full of good works and charity. She was that woman known in that city for kindness and reaching out to the poor and to the needy and the widows.

The stuff that the church is instructed to do, even today. And you see, the widows were weeping. So, apparently, she had a great desire to care for the widows in that city.

And widows at that time didn't have all the government support that they might today. But then they had no one to protect them, no one to provide for them. They were very, very weak and vulnerable and needy.

[9 : 52] And this woman was taking care of them, as it seems. So, that's why they were so disheartened. And it's like losing someone in your church or your community that meant so much, and now all of a sudden they're gone.

And you don't know, like, how to respond or who's going to take their place, so to speak. So, they call Peter. They say, come on, we're here. You know, you're nearby. So, he comes.

And they take him up into the upper room. And she's laying there. And I think it's very interesting that he kind of dismissed everyone. He sent everybody out. So, very, very humble. He didn't want to create a scene. He didn't want to put on a performance of, like, I'm going to rise this woman from the death. He kind of shut the door. And he got on his knees. And he asked God to heal this woman.

And, again, she stood right up. She was healed. And this idea for raise her up is the same New Testament word for resurrection. Like, he raised her up.

[10:53] So, Tabitha's physical body was restored from death to life. And immediately, right? Immediately, people heard about this. And they came more than likely to hear Peter share.

And it says they believed in the Lord. They believed in his power and his grace. And so, the church grew because of these miracles. So, Peter remained in Joppa.

And he stayed with Simon, who was a tanner. So, that didn't mean he owned a tanning salon. It meant, like, that he worked with animal hides.

Like a taxidermist, sort of. But, to the Jews, that was, like, a very nasty profession. Because you were touching, like, dead animals, unclean. So, you see the gospel breaking down the cultural barriers.

And he goes and he stays with this man who would otherwise have been dishonored. So, that is a quick little exposition of our text today.

[11:54] But we're going to go a little further. So, what about healing? It's clearly in our text today. How should you respond?

How should we respond? How many of you, if you were forced to give an answer, would say, I believe that we serve the same God and the same Christ who did these things we're reading about? Or is it more of like, well, that was cool that happened back then. And probably won't really happen today. I don't expect it to. How would you respond? Does God still heal people in the manner that we just read about?

And if you're a genuine follower of Christ, can he do the same kind of miracles in your own life?

What should you believe with all the hysteria in the church in regard to physical healing?

Or has the wonders of such things kind of ceased? Do they no longer exist? So, we're going to walk through this together.

[12:55] We're just going to talk about healing. Then and now. Like, where are we going? So, before we get going, I just want to say that the origin of sickness and suffering and disease, they are rooted in the fall of man into sin.

They're a consequence of sin. It was not meant to be that way. And so, because of sin, because of your sin and my sin, we all will endure this stuff.

If you don't now, you will. It's a promise. And then it goes on that all those who have suffered physically and eventually we will die. That's a part of the judgment on us because of sin.

So, the origin of sickness is sin itself. That's where it comes from. So, without giving you a full, full story, because I think a lot of you already know me and know my background, but I was born with a respiratory disease called cystic fibrosis.

I was diagnosed at age four, which is kind of late. They usually catch it a lot earlier now with babies. It's an upper respiratory disease that builds up abnormally thick mucus in the lungs.

[14:17] And it can also affect the pancreas and digestive system. I thankfully just had the respiratory part, the respiratory end of it. And for the most part, I lived my life pretty normal up until I was maybe 16 to 18.

And then I started noticing like a decline of like physical energy, stamina. I couldn't really keep up with the sports that I was playing. So, hopes of going to college and playing baseball kind of went down the drain.

Hopes of joining the military kind of went down the drain. And God was just slowly just stripping away like a lot of the things that I wanted to make ultimate in my life.

So, but throughout that time, even though I probably didn't become a believer until I was 18, my parents and my grandparents and friends, they were constantly praying for healing, for restoration of my health.

And so, all these questions are questions that I've asked. And if you go through some physical suffering in your life, like you'll ask them too. For most of you, you may be feeling great right now.

[15:28] And maybe those questions will just come later in life. But I think it's important now to begin building that solid foundation so when that time does come, you're not trying to just figure it out.

You'll have some stuff to stand on and be like, this is what God says. And you'll stand there. So, I've asked a lot of these questions. And as most of you know, I got very, very sick around the time I graduated from North Georgia around 2007.

Jeez, when you say it that way, it seems so long ago. And so, we used to have college Bible study and all that at Wes and Liz's apartment and Nathan and Sam's apartment.

And they would tote the oxygen tanks out of my truck so I could come to Bible study and be there because I was on oxygen during that time. And then eventually, I got on a lung transplant list at Birmingham at UAB.

And then May 25, 2008, I had a double lung transplant, which ended up bringing a whole other wave of suffering to really go through. But as a result, I'm doing okay today.

[16:37] Not fully up to par, but okay. Okay. So, what about healing? What about it? And I guess I decided to do this by just walking through just some questions and maybe trying to answer those.

First of all, what are some misconceptions about healing? We've got to start there. What is it not? What are some misconceptions about healing?

And there are two main groups that I kind of wanted to tell you to avoid because I think they're untruthful. They're not quite biblical.

But they probably are obvious to you. But one is an extreme group of charismatics in the church. The groups of people who seek to practice all the spiritual gifts in the New Testament, tongues, prophecy, healing.

But I do want to tell you that term alone and that idea alone is not what I'm talking about. It's another group inside that where there's various different views and they go to the other extreme with it.

[17:43] So, I personally am not against some of the stuff that you may see in some gospel-centered charismatic circles. But there is another extreme that I'm talking about.

And so, the term alone isn't bad, but it's kind of carried a little further by these other viewpoints. And some that are not biblical, they're dishonoring to God and they're hurtful to people.

So, really, they're the advocates of what we would call the prosperity gospel today. Which basically says God's main aim is to make you in this life as a believer, in this present life, God's goal is to make you healthy, wealthy, and just prosperous.

To help you live a long, successful life. Like, that's why God exists, is to kind of improve your life.

So, not just accompanying the gift of eternal life, but you also get to have eternal life here almost.

You get to enjoy all these things that God promises to literally heal you, to sustain you, to prosper you. It's a part of the package of becoming a Christian. And He promises it to you.

[18:54] It's like a guaranteed promise. So, healing is in our reach, but however, like we have to reach out and embrace that stuff. Like, all that stuff is there. Okay, I will read this briefly.

But it's summed up by one of his earlier popular teachers, Kenneth Hagin. This was back probably like in the 60s. But he said, Jesus came to redeem us from Satan's dominion over us.

True so far, right? We are to reign as kings in life. That means that we have dominion over our lives. We are to dominate and not be dominated.

Circumstances are not to dominate you. Disease and sickness are not to rule and reign over you.

You are to rule and reign over sickness. We are to reign as kings in life by Jesus Christ in whom we have redemption.

So, that movement has skyrocketed. And it's the kind of stuff you see on TV most of the time. It's TV celebrity preachers like Benny Hinn, Creflo Dollar, Rod Parsley, T.D. Jakes, Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen.

[20:10] These are all flashy, dramatic advocates of the prosperity gospel. And their main goal is the here and now. And they don't exalt Jesus Christ.

They draw attention to themselves and tell you what you want to hear. So, just very unlike Peter who is humbly healing someone off to the side in the background.

This is all for show. So, just know that like Satan, he likes to show off. And so, wherever there is healing that's being hyped up for publicity, like always be aware that it could be a counterfeit.

And each one of these men that I named and woman in that group have definitely denied the gospel. They say a lot of truthful things.

But inside that, their main goal is the glory of man and not the glory of God. And so, don't be fooled by just something that just may sound good. And so, that's one extreme is the charismatic chaos that we see on TV and in some other places.

[21 : 19] But hear me say that. It's not every charismatic circle that I think is there. It's some. So, the other extreme, which is one that we're probably closer to probably erring in than this other one, is just some evangelical conservatives are on the other extreme, and they basically believe that like the spiritual gifts seen in the New Testament have completely ceased in practice within the church, including healing and things like that.

But the problem, firstly, is they equate the gifts of healing. So, just write this down, like just for sake of time. Like just, if you want to go look, 1 Corinthians 12, 9 through 12.

1 Corinthians 12, 9 through 12.

Inside the church, not the apostles, not Jesus. He's referring to ordinary common people in the church that God is gifting for those reasons. So, very just clearly, it's saying that it wasn't just meant for Jesus and the apostles.

It was meant for ordinary people inside the church to exercise that gift to heal for the glory of God. And so, when you read the very simple thing in 1 Corinthians, they're given according to God's will for the common good and edification of the church to various and ordinary people.

[23 : 08] It's the gift, you can see it in verse 28, the gift of healing and miracles. They seem clearly distinct from the other gifts that are mentioned. Apostle, teacher, they're in that little list, like as if this is another gift that God can give to people.

So, many conservatives rightly, okay, rightly, you know, reject the hysteria that they see in the charismatic movement.

But yet, I think that a lot of them have overreacted and allow the pendulum to kind of swing to the other side. And they wrongly just sort of throw the baby out with the bathwater, so to speak.

And they, by just saying, well, we're just going to say that stuff doesn't exist anymore because of all the hysteria we see out there. It's better just to kind of can it. And the problem is, again, I think it's an overreaction.

And they're in danger of wrongfully accusing genuine works of God to being, they're shocking them up to works of the devil. So, you've got to be careful when you do that.

[24 : 14] Like you need to kind of trace the source of what you're talking about. So, that's just the two extremes. You could go into more stuff. So, number two, the second question.

Does God heal? And the simple answer I'm going to give you is like, yes, I fully believe he does. But, before I kind of get into that, it's not enough just to decide based on personal experience. Like, I've seen somebody healed. Or, I've been healed, so I know it's true. Supremely and ultimately, like our conviction on healing has to come from Scripture. It has to. Or, no different than some of these other wackos that are out there.

And just remember this. The Bible is not true because it works for you. Rather, the Bible works for you because it is true.

Okay? Like, it's not experience that determines our reality. It's the fact that the Bible is the Word of God. It's outside of us. And because it is the Word of God, it works. Not the other way around.

[25 : 25] So, hopefully, like, yes, my conviction is God can and still does heal people physically when he sees fit to do so. So, not just experience, but I believe the Scripture teaches this.

I can't, I don't believe, like, I've read it all. I've heard it. I just can't believe that there's a very watertight case proving that God still doesn't do this stuff. It's, they may make arguments, but I just don't think that it's tight enough to kind of just rule out this completely.

So, what Daniel read this morning, remember that, like, suffering and sickness is the cause of sin, the curse. But we read a prophecy from Isaiah 53 where it says, But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities, and upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And by his wounds we are healed. So, in what way is this talking about?

In what ways did Christ's wounds heal us? Well, let's go to the Scripture to find out. But there are two times in the New Testament that this particular text is quoted and cited.

[26 : 37] First of all, Peter, you don't got to turn there, but 1 Peter 2, verse 24, Peter uses this, quotes this, connecting it to the reality of our salvation in Christ, our redemption.

So, like, he has healed us spiritually is what he's trying to say. He says, So, Peter used it to refer to, like, a salvific idea, like a salvation, spiritual healing that Christ brought us.

So, yes and amen. That's, like, the most important one that you need, really, is that spiritual healing from Christ. But yet, Matthew uses the same passage to describe physical healing.

And chapter 8, verse 16, it says, Jesus cast out spirits with the word, and he healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

He took our illnesses and bore our diseases. So, it's used in both senses. So, what are we, kind of, to make out of that? The answer is, both are relevant. Yes, Christ died, ultimately, to heal us fully, spiritually, in salvation.

[27 : 54] That's the bigger picture of it. Yet, another picture is, he may still heal someone physically. That's a foretaste of eternity.

All right? Without really knowing this, but as I've been studying this, some men who, kind of, fall into this group of, sort of, where I would believe, C.J. Mahaney, Matt Chandler, David Platt, John Piper, Wayne Grudem, they believe, at least, kind of, what I'm going to try to be preaching to you today. Okay? So, both senses, both spiritual and physical, this verse is used, that Christ can have an effect on. So, what are some reasons that God may choose to heal?

Okay? What are some reasons that God may decide to heal someone physically? All right? Well, one that we see in Scripture is to authenticate his messenger.

Often, in the New Testament, well, in the Old as well, like some of the prophets, like Elijah, in the New Testament, the apostles and Jesus himself would do miracles to authenticate who they were as the messenger.

[29 : 07] Like, this is from God. Listen to me. And the main focus wasn't the miracles themselves. It was the message that these men bore. It wasn't like, come and just see this.

It was to get attention, to get, to shock people, almost, to, like, coming and hearing what this man had to say. And we can remember in Acts chapter 2, verse 22, it says, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you, attested to you by God, with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

So that word attested, if you remember a long time ago, it means, like, put something on exhibition, to put something on display for people to come and look at. And he did that with mighty works, which means miraculous, supernatural, wonders, this idea of something startling that grabs your attention.

And you put all those things together. And the attention of these wonders was signs that are pointing to a spiritual reality that the messenger bore himself. So God did this stuff through Jesus and through the apostles.

Likewise, when we see what we read in our text today, the two healings that we witnessed, this was, the healing was not the main focus. It was to gather people to authenticate the message that Peter bore, the gospel.

[30 : 29] So another example. So that was one, to authenticate a messenger. Secondly, to demonstrate his character.

God chooses to heal so he can demonstrate his character. He wants to heal because it's in his person. It's in his nature. It's a wonderful name used of God in the Old Testament.

A lot of you are aware of it. But it's Yahweh Rapha, the Lord that heals. God told the Israelites in Exodus 15, I, the Lord, am your healer.

He's referring to this idea of physical healing in that context. So God delights to give good gifts to his people. And even in this temporal realm, it's in his character.

He desires to do that. Jesus manifested that reality when he walked around. He healed many people. He was doing it out of compassion, out of love, out of pity for the people who are around him.

[31 : 30] So God may choose to heal as an expression of his kindness, his love, his mercy, and to his glory. It's within his character to do so.

Another thing, another reason why God may choose to heal is to be a witness of his kingdom. The New Testament makes it clear that healing is a sign to the world the kingdom of God is coming. And that the kingdom of this present world under Satan is leaving. It's like this idea of a foretaste of the redemptive kingdom that Christ will bring, where the reign of death and the age of futility will come to a final end.

So all this physical healing can be a sign that the kingdom of God is coming. And we receive, ultimately, right, this, none of us will fully live forever in this life.

We're going to die, probably, unless Christ comes back. But sometimes he grants a foretaste, a partial foretaste of physical healing that we will fully possess in the age to come.

[32 : 40] He may grant that. It's a foreshadow. It's a glimmer of the perfect health that we one day will fully enjoy in the kingdom of God. So, all right, another thing.

God may choose to heal to inspire faith, love, and obedience in his people. God may choose to heal to inspire faith, love, and obedience in his people.

So when God sovereignly desires to heal someone, like we read in Acts today, what's the result? It results in, like, great joy and celebration, and people coming, actually, to hear the gospel message, and they were saved.

It's a cause for celebration. Have you ever had a friend or a family member that was, like, in serious trouble, like illness, sickness, and then they pulled out of it, and, like, the joy that caused you to feel?

It's a way that God inspires faith in his people and is an expression of his love. Psalm 103, verses 1 through 5, says, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me.

[33 : 59] Bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity. There's a spiritual healing aspect. Who forgives all your iniquity.

Who heals all your diseases. Who redeems your life from the pit. Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. Who satisfies you with good, so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

So, this is something that God will do. You see, this psalm is a praise to God, an honoring of God, an expression of gratitude and love towards God because of these benefits that he has offered by his grace.

Psalm 103, verses 1 through 5 there. So, if God does still heal, how should we pray for it? How do you pray for physical healing?

All right, now, it's important just to take a little side note here and talk about the role of faith in involving healing. So, the Bible does emphasize the role of faith when it comes to physical healing.

[35 : 11] Yet, as always, there's a couple circles, a couple extremes probably to avoid in regard to faith and healing. But one of them is the, you might say the name it and claim it group.

They would say that you don't have enough faith if you're not healed. It's a group I have a major problem with because they come across very hateful, very self-righteous, not compassionate. They tend to come from prosperity circles for the most part. But yeah, name it, name that promise and then claim it. People who state they can obtain their desires in this world if they just have enough faith.

So, the word, key word is enough faith. It's this mindset of, you know, if there are any suffering, trial, or pain in your life, it's because you don't have enough faith in God or otherwise you would be healed.

There are those people out there. In my case, I have been told things like this. It's not God's will that I have cystic fibrosis. And if I would just have enough faith, God would heal me from my CF.

[36 : 29] It's absolute nonsense. When I really got ticked was in Birmingham one time when this nurse who had been a kind woman up to this point was a respiratory, yeah, she was a respiratory therapist, our nurse.

And she was praying with me, praying for healing, you know, just in my room with me. And my mom was there. And if you know my mom, some of you do, she is a woman who is, her prayer life and her trust in God really dwarfs mine most of the time.

Even though I may have a lot more knowledge, like her faith and her prayer life puts mine to shame. And she is a very Christ-centered, God-exalting, humble woman.

And so obviously she's been praying for healing for years for me. And this woman took my mom outside my hospital room and told her, the reason Clay is not healed is not because of you, or not because of Clay, it's because of you.

She told my mom that, like, I was not healed because of her lack of faith and trust in God. So a month later, and I kind of had more sense about me.

[37 : 43] Like, I told this woman off pretty hardcore in the hospital room, in Jesus' name, of course. But I don't want you to miss this. Do you see how cruel that is?

How cruel that is? You think God is up in heaven taunting you, saying, like, I know you're in despair, I know you're crushed, and you're barely hanging on by faith, but it's not enough. You've got to fill this bucket up of faith.

You just have a little bit. I need you to get it to the top, right? I can't, I'm not going to heal you unless you do. That's absolute nonsense. It's a cruel, taunting God that behaves that way.

Not enough. A little more. So in such cases, won't you hear me, okay? In such cases, one's faith is focused on the amount of faith and not in the object of faith, which is Jesus Christ.

So their faith is in their faith, not in the object of their faith, which is Jesus Christ. What did Jesus say? Faith, the size of a mustard seed, is enough to move a mountain, right?

[38 : 54] And here's the tricky part of that. Faith doesn't move mountains. God moves mountains, right? The object of the faith is what moves the mountain. And so your faith is only as strong as the object you're putting it in.

So faith doesn't move mountains. God does. And so we wrongly focus on the power of faith itself and not in the power and person of Christ to heal.

So that's a very dangerous camp, like beware. A lot of them may mean well, but they are wrong. The chapter, the big faith chapter, Hebrews 11, right?

These people did this by their faith, according to their faith. And all these great stories of people from the Scripture like Moses and Noah and Abraham receiving all these great things by their faith. But yet, if you look at the end of the chapter, it says, yet or but, others were put to death. Others were scourged. Others became destitute.

[39 : 54] And then it said all those did those things through faith, not lack of faith. In the same chapter in Hebrews, some people suffered because of their faith, not lack of.

So God is not up in heaven taunting us, saying just a little more, just a little more. Very wrong. The second group you probably need to avoid is really just the faith doesn't matter group.

It's the other extreme of like, God is sovereign. And if he wishes to heal you, he will. Like that kind of cop-out prayer that people use.

Is God sovereign? Yes. Okay, I'm not downing on that, but they downplay faith and responsibility against sovereignty. And that's not the right camp to be in either.

So that kind of group doesn't pray. That kind of group doesn't really have faith, active faith most of the time. So you need to know that faith matters. Like it really does.

[40 : 57] Hebrews 11, verse 6. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. For whoever would draw near to God must first believe that he exists.

You know, that he actually is the living, present God. And that he rewards those who seek him.

That's how they come to God, through faith. So faith can be assaulted.

It can be, you can have doubt. You can back down and be like, I just don't know. So fears, accusations, self-doubts, discouragements, those try to bury your faith.

But again, it isn't like you have to have this huge conquering kind of faith. Like you will notice that Christ will meet you even when you're the most weakest. Your faith is still there, but he will meet you.

So, this idea of like how we pray for these things. I want you to turn to James, chapter 5. And we'll come back to James 5 in just a second.

[42 : 00] I'm going to kind of just go ahead and turn there. But as most of you know, like I have not been miraculously healed in that sense that we just read about.

I sought medical help. And I, again, firmly believe, not just because of experience, but that God can and miraculously heals.

But he also has created substances in the earth to be used for medicine. He's gifted men and women to be physicians, to actually help people. Luke himself, who wrote Acts, was a doctor.

And then in 1 Timothy 5, we read Paul instructing Timothy this way. He says, No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and for frequent ailments.

Why didn't he just say pray and have more faith? You know, he like gave him an example. And you can read other examples in the Old Testament of kings and others who physicians came to them by God.

[43 : 02] And they used things to help restore them to health. So when I was in Birmingham, I had people tell me, like, don't, you know, don't get a transplant. You know, just trust God.

Like, why are you doubting God's ability because you're getting this transplant? And, man, that just really infuriated me again. But I do feel sorry for people who feel that way.

And I remember reading in one of the waiting rooms in Birmingham, John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion.

And I was reading a part, a section about God's sovereignty, God's providence, and this idea of, like, trusting in God's goodness and sovereignty. And aside that, I remember just reading something along the lines of, just because God is sovereign doesn't mean that we neglect or throw aside things that can kind of better our present condition because he has put them there.

You know, and I thought, very true. So God can restore you, can heal you, in a sense, through modern medicine. But here's where it can go wrong.

[44 : 12] Like, you don't need to put, you don't need to put your ultimate trust in man. Your ultimate trust has to be in the Lord himself, not just in doctors and in medicine.

There's a danger of that. At the same time, beware of people who will wrongfully say, throw away all your medicines. I have a buddy named Joseph, and he, cystic fibrosis like me, I was in the hospital a lot with him.

And he was a youth pastor, a great guy. But he kind of followed some wrong teaching for a while, and his friends were saying, throw away your medicine. Like, don't take any more medicine, just trust God, and God will heal you.

And he got very deathly sick multiple times because of following their advice. Now he actually has a lung transplant like me.

But don't do that because what you're doing is you're putting the Lord your God to the test. You're saying, like, if you don't act like, God, I'm going to, you know, just quit everything.

[45 : 15] I'm just going to throw that out there, and you better act. You know, you're putting God to the test. It's very silly and dangerous. So, what does the Bible say about this?

And that's why I had you turn to James 5. You need to know this. There is no formula, okay?

There's not like no little incantation prayers that you can say to be healed.

There are some models, but there's no formula. So basically, we come to God humbled and in faith, and we ask Him to heal us. Let's read this in James 5, verse 13.

He says, Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick?

Let him call the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

[46 : 24] And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. So therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Elijah was a man of nature just like ours. Okay, so you think of the prophet Elijah, how magnificent he was. He's saying he was an ordinary guy, just like us.

And it says, He prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then again, he prayed, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

But so inside this we see a lot of things. Like if you're sick, come in faith and ask people to pray with you. Specifically the elders, but I don't want you to mistake that.

It's like there's these priests in this church, and you only can be healed if one of them prays for you. But it is the responsibility of elders in congregations to pray for sick people.

[47 : 28] It's a responsibility that they're given. And it says, I don't want you to miss this because we usually detach these two things, but it says, So if you're really serious about God healing and working you, like you need to be honest and open, and not hide like sin this in your life.

I think it's connected. I don't think it's divorced from this. I think it's honestly coming before God and saying, God, I know I've sinned against you. I know that I have rebelled against you, and I know I don't deserve any good thing.

And I'm going to confess my sins as an act of humble, you know, brokenness, and asking you to have mercy on me. And so we pray in faith to an all-powerful God who has the power to heal and to restore.

So that is their very clear description of that. So just, I did want to share this with you, and this is the last place I'm going to have you turn, but very familiar.

Look at Philippians 4 real quick. But this is something that has helped me over the years in regard to praying. Philippians 4, verse 4.

[48 : 49] Rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice. Okay? So, not like, hey, if you get healed or if you get better, then rejoice.

It's like this idea of embrace where you are right now and rejoice because God is good. Let your reasonableness be made known to everyone. So don't, you know, lose your head.

Don't panic. Don't look like as if you don't have a God in your life at all. Calm down. Be reasonable. Let it be known to everyone that the Lord is at hand.

The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but on everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Let your request be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Jesus. So, very simple here.

[49 : 51] We come to God, we pour out our desires and our request to Him. Example, like God, I desire to be healed. I desire for you to heal me of this infirmity that I'm having right now.

Here's why. And make your case. Plead with God. Ask Him. Say, I really wish to live longer, and I want to serve more people.

I think that if I was healed, I might be able to serve you better in this context. And kind of lay out your case. God, I think that a lot of people would be turned to you if they saw you work in this way in my life.

Make an argument. Make a request to God. Tell Him why. And affirm your faith in Him to heal you. Like God, I fully believe that you can. You are the Lord God Almighty.

You can heal. All right? So where's the other part come in? Well, right here. At the same time, while you may pray this and ask, you need to kind of humbly submit to God's sovereign will.

[50 : 58] That's when you say, Lord, ultimately, I don't know what's best. I don't know if it's better for me to be healed right now or to remain sick. Because I can't see, like, the big picture like you can.

So I'm going to just trust in your sovereignty and your goodness to do what's right on my behalf. But I've told you why I desire to be healed. And I believe you can. And just leave it with Him.

Knowing that He will do what's best for you and for His glory. Those are two things that He promises to do. He promises to do what's best for you as His child and to pursue His own glory. Okay? That's like how I prayed for years. So, what if God doesn't heal? It's the last thing. I know there's a lot today, but hang in there.

What if God doesn't heal? What if He says, no? Alright? So, I know all of you have prayed, have fasted, have cried out to God for physical healing for yourself or a loved one, and yet your sickness may remain.

[52 : 05] So the truth is, though God can heal and does, He wouldn't choose to in every situation. leave it up to Him. Again, trust in His goodness and His wisdom. But please don't make this mistake.

Please don't say, God must not love me or care about me because He's not answering my prayer to be healed. That is a load of, you know what? Because, the greatest sign of God's love for you is the cross.

Okay? He is not going to give you a greater sign than like crucifying His own Son for unworthy sinners like you and me. That is the echo of God's love and goodness right there.

And that's all you need. If He decides to do the healing, okay, but if not, like you have enough in the cross. So, at the end of the day, God is concerned more with a deeper healing in your life.

He's more concerned at the end of the day, not just that He healed you physically, but more concerned with a deeper spiritual healing of your soul. He's more focused on working your life in such a way that you may know Him, trust Him, and display Him more.

[53 : 14] Like, that's what He's after. And if that means He allows you to walk through sickness, that's what He's going to do. If it means that He heals you, He will. He's most concerned with your sanctification.

And so, I wanted to close just by reading this to you. One of my heroes, someone that I have looked to a lot to get me through all the stuff that I have been through, is a woman who, her name is Joni Erikson Tada.

She's been a quadriplegic for many years. She is a young teenager dove into a pool and broke her spine. And she's been in a wheelchair her whole life. And she has prayed and she has prayed, like me, like she said, I'm a little dumped on her than McDonald's french fries.

Like, people have prayed for her to be restored. And she remains, you know, physically disabled. And she talks about this deeper healing that I want to throw out there to you today.

She says, to me, physical healing had always been a big deal. But to God, my soul was much more important. And that's when he began searching for a deeper healing.

[54 : 26] I began searching for a deeper healing. Not just physical. She said, some time ago, Ken, who was her husband, and I had a chance to go to Jerusalem.

We went into the old city. And there we were. I was being pushed around in my wheelchair. Not just, you know, bumping around.

She says, bumpity bump, bump, down the Via Della Rosa. She's like, when you go up to the Via Della Rosa in a wheelchair, you go down it and not up it. And she said, something caught her attention.

She said, Ken, come here. Look at this. It's the Pool of Bethesda. Now, do you remember what the Pool of Bethesda was? This is where Jesus healed the man. Who was lame.

And imagine her being a quadriplegic, seeing that, you know, seeing that location. And she says, oh, Ken, you would not believe how many times I have pictured myself here as one of those with disabilities.

[55 : 29] The place was dead quiet. All the tour buses were gone. And it was beautiful. And it was quiet. And I leaned, I leaned in there on the guardrail of the old ruins and tears ran down my face and I looked down into the cisterns to see if there was any water left in the Pool of Bethesda.

But while I was there alone, I sat there with my Savior and tears began streaming down my face. She said, oh, Jesus, thank you.

Thank you for a no answer to my request for physical healing. you really knew what you were doing so many years ago because a no answer to my request for physical healing has purged so much sin out of my life, so much selfishness and bitterness.

And I know I've got a long way to go, but every day I want to wake up and I want to be a different Joni than I was yesterday. I want to be a Joni that you created and that you designed.

Oh, God, help me to step into that no answer, Lord Jesus, to the request for physical healing. It has meant that I have depended more on your grace and it's increasing my compassion for others who are hurt and disabled.

[56 : 47] It's helped me quit complaining behind me and stretched my fate. It has pushed me to give thanks in times of sorrow. It has increased my faith.

It has strengthened my hope of heaven and has made me love you so much more than if you would just heal me physically. It is such a safe and wonderful thing in the back of the inner sanctum of the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings and I would not trade it for any amount of walking, she said.

And so she says, my question to you today is that you see yourself at the pool of Bethesda. Are you wondering why God hasn't removed the disappointment, why he is giving you no physical healing that you've desperately asked for?

Well, you know what? God may remove your suffering and that would be cause for great joy and praise, but if not, he will use it. He will use everything that stands in the way of his fellowship with you.

So let God mold you and make you, transform you from glory to glory and that's the deeper healing and you don't have to break your neck to receive it.

[57 : 55] There's the truth. God is most concerned with the deeper inner spiritual healing in your life. If it means just to carry you through suffering, to draw you closer to him, he'll do it.

And trust him. He is good. He is wise. He has shed his blood for us. But by all means, cry out to God.

Ask, because he invites you to ask. He invites you to come and experience this. Pray with me.