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Genesis

Chapter 19 - God's Rescue Mission

Who's God Remembering? (vs. 27-29)

Genesis 19:27-29: Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD; and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace. Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.

The study of Abraham is such an endearing study to me because it shows an individual that cares about people. And as we read and see the life of Abraham unfold within the narrative, we realize that, wow, God knows what He's

doing when He chooses certain ones. That God, in many respects, chooses those that have a redeemer heart to be those that will lead so that they would be a heart after His, or as it says about David, this is a man after God's own heart. God is searching to and fro; as Chronicles will say, searching throughout all the earth for a heart that's wholly His. And we see this individual, Abraham, and I think one of the reasons why I love this individual as much as well, is that he makes huge mistakes. And it's not that he doesn't want to do the right thing. It kind of reminds you of Romans 7 as Paul begins to share, "The things that I want to do, I don't do; things I don't want to do, I do. Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from this?" And we realize that it takes an act of God to cause us to do the right thing because we just don't naturally think right. We don't naturally do the right thing. Our heart may desire to do the right thing, but even in the desire, we have those wrong, twisted desires. It's like Moses thinking that he's going to save people by killing somebody. And so, it is the distorted and twisted thinking of our flesh that hinders that relationship. But God sees the heart, and He raises up people for Himself that they might demonstrate

His nature. Ultimately, they are there to point to the Messiah who will fulfill the nature of Christ.

Hebrews 1 says that Christ is the exact representation of His nature. And so, we began to realize that all of these Old Testament saints are pointing to the Christ. And weak as they are, unable to ultimately fulfill and fill the shoes of what they're called to do; they are pointing us to Him.

And as Galatians so aptly puts it, the Law is a tutor. "Law," in the Old Testament in particular, is a tutor to lead us to Christ. It continues to point us in that direction.

This passage that we read is really informing us of and has been leading us to a process of this individual, Abraham, and in many respects is kind of a summary of the text that we're looking at today in the sense that He cares for Lot. And we've seen this all the way through from the very beginning of his calling.

You look at Genesis 12, where God calls him out. And actually, at the end of Genesis 11, you have Abraham, I'm not really sure why, I mean, it seems as if the death of his brother was something that he took to heart. So, his brother dies. And in the process of this, he feels

responsible for his nephew. So, he takes Lot under his wing. And you don't see within Genesis 12 the fact that God says, "And, you know, when you leave, when you go into the promised land, I want you to take Lot with you." There's nothing about that. But he takes Lot with him. He feels responsible, perhaps; perhaps guilt motivates him, a sense of obligation. None of these are bad things in and of themselves. However, when we begin to listen to these things more than God, that's where the problems ensue. So, as we follow this thing through, he not only feels responsible for Lot, but he feels highly protective of him. And like anybody that cares for somebody, you want the best for those people that you care for.

So, you come into Genesis 13, of course, where they can't seem to get along, they're groups together, he turns to Lot and he goes, "Look, you choose whatever land you want to go to. I'm going to give you first choice." And he really demonstrates his desire to give the best to this nephew. Once again, what's the motivating factor within this? Is it guilt or is it just compassion and loyalty? It doesn't say. But what we know is that Abraham begins to

do things that aren't necessarily things that God has called him to do, however, clearly understandable from somebody that cares for somebody. And in many respects, I think one of the things that this particular narrative does is it reveals to us that there is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is death or harmful to the individual. And so, in our own estimation, we can actually be thinking, "Well, we're really doing this person a favor," but we find out that we're not.

So, as you follow this path through, not only is he wanting the best for him, not only is he taking him under his wing, but then he rescues him when he's in trouble. And so, if you remember, these armies from the north come down, and they began to take over the area of Sodom and Gomorrah. They literally would have taken him back home to where he lived, which was Ur of the Chaldeans. Nevertheless, Abraham rescues him with his 300 and some odd men and defeats the enemy; God being with him in this rescues him, and we see his care once again for Lot.

We now come to a passage in which the place that Lot chose, which obviously, according to the text, was one of the grandest and most glorious places. It looked like the garden of Eden. This place that he chose is going to be destroyed because of the debauchery, because of the evil, because of the sin in this region. It was just horrific. So, Sodom and Gomorrah was going to be destroyed.

Abraham's concern naturally doesn't cease. He can't let this go. And once again, I think every parent can understand this, that you're emotionally invested. You're not only emotionally invested, but if you think about it, over 25 years, he's fundamentally been parenting Lot. So, he's got an investment in this and an oversight, and this is difficult and almost impossible to relinquish. You can't stop thinking about something or somebody that you love just right away like that. So, the angelic beings and what we believe to be Christ Himself in the Old Testament, because it actually defines Him as Lord or Yahweh in the Old Testament, comes to see him and He says, "I need to tell Abraham these things because he's a friend."

Fundamentally, "Should I hold these things back from

him?" So, He begins to share with him what's going to happen in Sodom and Gomorrah.

Well, naturally, if you have a vested interest in somebody that you care for, what do you start doing? You start interceding. That's exactly what Abraham does in Genesis 18 as he goes before the Lord and he says, "Look, if there are just 50, if there are just 45, if there are 40," he finally gets down to 10, "If there are just 10, would You destroy the city?" Abraham's ultimate conclusion is, "Will not the God of all the earth do right?" He knows that he can trust God. He's already come to the point of believing and trusting in the person of God. But still, you have a loved one at stake. Your heart is involved with this individual. You would like to see them okay. This is where this particular passage actually picks up, because what we know in the interim are things that actually Abraham did not know. These angelic beings go down, they actually pull Lot out of the house with his family, they're resistant, they're hesitating, they're doing all kinds of things, but then they just literally thrust them out of the place. And of course, Lot starts bargaining with God, going, "I don't

really want to go to the mountains. Let me go to this city. You know, I'm a city guy, so let me stay in this small city, this small place." And we know that was a bad decision, but they said, "Go, just go, just get out of here, because God's going to destroy it!" The destruction then becomes so massive that not only Sodom and Gomorrah, but all the cities in this particular region, it uses the term "valley," but it actually is the Hebrew word that means all of the circumference of the territory is actually destroyed and goes up. And the description within the passage that we're looking at today refers to it as a kiln, which is a description of a fire that's so intense that it's melting metal. So, the smoke is rising, the heat is intense, and we know that Abraham is at a distance to where he's up about 3,000 feet, and sees the smoke. But more than that, what's interesting as this text begins to open up is that he wakes up early in the morning to see if Lot's okay. There's no doubt why he wakes up. And we know that at the rising of the sun, God was going to bring His wrath upon Sodom and Gomorrah. The story is less about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and more about God's saving. And that's the emphasis.

So, if you'll pick up with me, in this passage, verse 27, as it starts with,

(Genesis 19:27) “Now Abraham arose early...”

Now, that shouldn't surprise us, right? I mean, he's concerned. And the way that it's worded within the Hebrew, he woke himself up. I don't know if he had an alarm clock or whatever, but I don't think those sand things make a lot of noise.

“Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD.”

This is a very interesting point. Now, where is that place? What is he talking about? Well, that's where he was interceding for Lot.

If you back up into Chapter 18, you'll see in verse 22.

It says,

(Genesis 18:22) “Then the men...”

And what we know is, according to Genesis 19:1, it's the two angels.

“Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD.”

And at this juncture, I'm sure the Lord goes, “Something else you want to talk about?” You know when somebody just stands in front of you and just stares at you? There's something else.

So, verse 23 reads,

(Genesis 18:23) “Abraham came near and said, “Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?””

Now, of course, his hope is that Lot is righteous and that God would see that. Nevertheless, I'm sure at this juncture, he's even questioning it. What would cause somebody to want to move to Sodom? Why would you feel comfortable living there? Well, we find out later in 2 Peter 2 that Lot didn't feel comfortable living there, that his righteous soul was tortured. Nevertheless, Abraham doesn't know all of this. And so, there's grave concern.

He wakes up early in the morning, and what does he see? Obviously, if you go back to Genesis 19:27, He went back

to the very place where he had talked with the Lord about; once again, probably within view of the region, obviously, as he's about 3,000 feet up and able to look.

And it says in verse 28,

(Genesis 19:28) “And he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley...”

Once again, the circumference of all these cities.

“... and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a (kiln, or an intense heat that would literally melt metal) furnace.”

When it says that he looked down, if you look in verse 28 at the very beginning, it is a picture of somebody lying down over a cliff and hanging over and looking down. I think it's very interesting that God and the angels said to Lot, “Don't look back.” And of course, we know that Lot's wife did. But the looking that Abraham does is not destructive. Because when God said to Lot and his family, “Don't look back,” it was for longing of that. Now, Abraham is looking to save. I mean, he's not looking for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He's not

rejoicing over the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.
He's looking for somebody that he cares about.

And so, we see the intensity, if you look at the passage of this happening, and it says in verse 29,

(Genesis 19:29) “Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley...”

Once again, of the circumference, all these cities.

“... that God remembered Abraham...”

Wait a minute, I thought we were talking about Lot here. I thought it's Lot that we're hoping to save.

Finish reading it with me.

“... and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow...”

The passage is clearly showing us a power of intercession. That God is actually rescuing Lot because He remembers Abraham. The word “remember” is once again that wonderful word, “*zākar*,” that's used in the Hebrew, and will be translated as that which pierces. So, by the time you come into Isaiah 49, where God will say, “Can a mother forget her nursing child?” He says, “Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. I placed you on the

palms of my hands.” So, I'm sure James, now that he broke his leg, will remember that. Because there's something about some piercing pain that causes you to remember. It's etched in your brain, and that's that wonderful picture of remembering. God remembers. And He literally puts us in the palm of His hand.

Why is Abraham so memorable? And I would say, there's a great verse in Isaiah 64:5, it reads this way,

(Isaiah 64:5) “You meet him who rejoices in doing righteousness...”

Isn't that a great phrase? “Thou dost meet him who rejoices in doing what is right,” we'll put it another way. And obviously, Abraham was not a perfect individual, but one who longed to do right and put His trust in God. And once again, without faith, it's impossible to please God. But by putting his trust in God, he's going to say, “I believe You to take care of this one that I care so much about.” Of all the things that Abraham has done up to this point, taking Lot with him, giving him the best land, which really didn't turn out well with him being in Sodom and Gomorrah, with him rescuing him in time of trial. Of all

the things that Abraham did in his own power, the greatest thing that he could ever do was to intercede before God on his behalf. And this is exactly what this passage is making reference to. And really, you see this throughout in which God raises up individuals for that very purpose.

Let me give you an example of this. In Deuteronomy 9, you have Moses that was called to intercede for the people. Do you remember the time when they go up to the mountain? Of course, Moses receives the commandments of God, this great thunder, this great lightning and fire and power, and the people actually turn to Moses and they go, "You go up." And so, it was an ominous point. But if you look at Deuteronomy 9, you realize that "Deuteronomy" actually means "say it again." So, what we're reading in Deuteronomy is they're getting ready to go to the Promised Land, and Moses is rehearsing over the things that had happened. And he's saying, "You don't want to forget these things because this is going to keep you on the straight and narrow." So,

he kind of rehearses, and so, Deuteronomy means “to say it again.”

So, if you look in Deuteronomy 9, he reminds them of the time in which they were rebellious; even though Moses was receiving the Law of God, they were rebelling at the same time in which he was receiving it. And when they go into the Promised Land, your initial thought might be, “Well, I know why God saved me. I'm a pretty good person.” And the one thing God doesn't want you thinking is that. “That's not the reason I saved you.”

And so, if you pick up in verse 4,

(Deuteronomy 9:4) “Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you.

(Deuteronomy 9:5) It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of

these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you..."

"Don't think for one moment that it's because you're righteous.

(Deuteronomy 9:6) "Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess..."

Now, it's in the context of this that he gives an example of them acting corruptly at Mount Horeb. And as he gives the example, he reminds them that the Lord said, "You're a really stubborn people."

We picked that up in verse 13,

(Deuteronomy 9:13) "The LORD spoke further to me, saying, 'I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people.'"

Then He states this in verse 14, you might want to mark it in your Bibles, God says,

(Deuteronomy 9:14) "Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation..."

“We'll just start all over again.”

And what's interesting about the passage is that Moses goes right into intercession mode and he falls on his face.

You pick up in verse 18,

(Deuteronomy 9:18) “I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and nights...”

It's an interesting passage.

But it says in verse 19,

(Deuteronomy 9:19) “For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was wrathful against you in order to destroy you, but the LORD listened to me that time also.”

Why? Because he had been the one... “I'll just start with you.” We'll go, “Well, but there was Aaron.” Keep reading with me. I think you're going to get a kick out of this.

(Deuteronomy 9:20) “The LORD was angry enough with Aaron...”

That's the High Priest.

“... to destroy him; so I also prayed for Aaron at the same time.

(Deuteronomy 9:21) I took your sinful thing, the calf which you had made...”

It goes on and says in verse 25,

(Deuteronomy 9:25) “So I fell down before the LORD the forty days and nights, which I did because the LORD had said He would destroy you.

(Deuteronomy 9:26) I prayed to the LORD and said, ‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

(Deuteronomy 9:27) ‘Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...”

It's a powerful passage that you begin to realize that God remembers those who are righteous, but more than that, God works on their behalf. I oftentimes tell people the greatest thing that you could ever do for your family is be right with God. Because when you're right with God, then

you can pray on their behalf, even when they're straying. And God will use you in an intercessory position. It's hard to imagine that God would work on our behalf. But as James chapter 5 would say, the fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much. Which is telling us that you being right with God is paramount to anything else you could do. I mean, you could give them the best. You could rescue them out of things, but they're just going to get right back into trouble. And that was clearly seen with Lot. But God is the One that rescues the life. And as you begin to trust and put your loved ones in His hands, there's great confidence.

Daniel 9 is one of the great passages in which Daniel is in his intercessory prayer. He was reading the Book of Jeremiah and he goes, "After 70 years, the people should be set free. We're not free yet." And so, he brings this prayer before the Lord, and he says, "Oh God, we have sinned. You're righteous. We're not." And it says, as soon as he began that prayer, God had sent an angel to him. God hears the prayer of the righteous, and He hears the prayer of intercession. And I've always kind of wrestled

with this. James actually says this in James 5, “You have a need, pray to God.” I mean, you can talk to Him anytime. So, why does God continue to raise up intercessors? Well, one is that people don't always pray before God, and many people aren't even thinking about Him. But also, that really the greatest prayer that you could ever offer is a prayer of intercession. And the reason why it's the greatest prayer you could ever offer is that it's selfless. And God hears the prayer that is His heart. It is literally the prayer of Christ on the cross, “Father, forgive them for they know not...” I mean, He was interceding for us on that cross. And so, we begin to realize this great power. Samuel says something interesting in 1 Samuel 12. If I could just quote this verse to you, as the people were saying, “Samuel, you've got to pray for us.” And Samuel was the priest and the prophet, as well as the judge at that time.

Samuel says to God's people,

(1 Samuel 12:23) “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you...”

That's quite an interesting statement, isn't it? "Far be it for me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you."

Now it goes on and says,

"... but I will instruct you in the good and right way."

(1 Samuel 12:25) "But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king will be swept away."

But you realize that there is a responsibility that the Lord has laid upon our hearts and has given us to pray; even when oftentimes when it's perceived that there's no one to intercede for us.

You can't help but think of Job and the difficulty he went through. And one of the things that Job came before the Lord and said is, "If You could just give me an umpire that would stand between me and You so that I could tell him things without getting struck by lightning or something, that I could talk to you." And you can hear his heart, "I need somebody." In fact, one of the statements that he makes is, "There's no one to plead my case before You." And we see his desire throughout that.

I've oftentimes thought about there in Revelation, the Great White Throne judgment. And Scripture says at that final judgment, it says that God removes earth and heaven away, and it's just you and God in the middle of nothingness? I don't know. Wouldn't you like to know you had somebody to intercede for you at that moment? I mean, to realize that you stand with nothing before God, and all your sins, Scripture says that at that point He opens up the books, plural, and all the deeds that you have done. I've had people say, "I hope God gives you what you deserve." I go, "No, no, no. I don't want what I deserve. I want God's grace and God's mercy upon me." And certainly, we see that. But what you have is that there are times in our life we go, "Well, is there anybody that would intercede for us?"

And I think one of the comforting passages, if you look with me in Isaiah 59, is found in this text in which we realize that God looked, and actually, there was no man that would be able to intercede for us. If you look in Isaiah 59, this whole chapter is that their feet run to do evil, they hasten to actually shed innocent blood. I mean,

they're not good people. They don't know the way of peace. They don't know what justice is.

It says in verse 9,

(Isaiah 59:9) “Therefore justice is far from us,
And righteousness does not overtake us;
We hope for light, but behold, darkness,
For brightness, but we walk in gloom.

(Isaiah 59:10) We grope along the wall like blind men,
We grope like those who have no eyes;
We stumble at midday as in the twilight,
Among those who are vigorous we are like dead men.

(Isaiah 59:11) All of us growl like bears,
And moan sadly like doves;
We hope for justice, but there is none,
For salvation, but it is far from us.

(Isaiah 59:12) For our transgressions are multiplied before
You,
And our sins testify against us;
For our transgressions are with us...”

I mean, this is not a good moment.

“... And we know our iniquities:

(Isaiah 59:13) Transgressing and denying the LORD...”

Interesting statement that is made in 1 Samuel 2:25,

“If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him? ...”

It's an interesting point, isn't it?

(Isaiah 59:12) “... And we know our iniquities:

(Isaiah 59:13) Transgressing and denying the LORD,

And turning away from our God,

Speaking oppression and revolt,

Conceiving in and uttering from the heart lying words.”

(Isaiah 59:14) “... For truth has stumbled in the street...”

It says at the end of verse 15,

(Isaiah 59:15) “... Now the LORD saw,

And it was displeasing in His sight that there was no

justice.

(Isaiah 59:16) And He saw that there was no man,

And was astonished that there was no one to intercede;

Then His own arm brought salvation to Him,
And His righteousness upheld Him.

(Isaiah 59:17) He put on righteousness like a breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head..."

And He goes with great, great resolve.

No wonder Isaiah 60 starts off,

(Isaiah 60:1) "Arise, shine; for your light has come,
And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

(Isaiah 60:2) For behold, darkness will cover the earth
And deep darkness the peoples;
But the LORD will rise upon you
And His glory will appear upon you.

(Isaiah 60:3) Nations will come to your light..."

What a wonderful promise that gives us. Once again, I am reminded of that wonderful passage there in Isaiah 49, as we're actually in Isaiah, is, "You may be forgotten by your mother, but I'm not going to forget you." And God remembers those who are righteous. God remembers those who seek Him. God remembers those who will put their trust in Him, and they will not be disappointed. Now,

all of this is to say that Scripture is full of examples, even though Christ ultimately, as Hebrews will say, has become our High Priest. And so, literally we need no high priest or priest at all, because Christ has become our intercessor, which He says in the Book of Hebrews that the priests, by the very nature of their death, revealed that they couldn't continue to intercede on your behalf. But now we have One who will intercede for us forever. And Hebrews says, because of this, we boldly come before the throne of grace, not by any merit that we have done, but because of Christ and because of His love for us.

A great picture that's found in Zechariah 3 is you have Joshua the High Priest, who stands before the Lord with filthy clothes, and priests sin too. Earthly priests sin too. And there he is with filth. And Satan begins to accuse him before God. And then you see the Christ in the Old Testament rise up and He declares, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan. I've plucked this one out of the fire. I'm going to save him." And He puts new garments on him. Isn't it great to know that when we stand before God, we have an Intercessor that has died for our sins, that paid the

price for all of our sins so that they're there no longer? But there's a different story in this as well, and that is that not only has Christ fulfilled that wonderful place of intercession and that He ever makes intercession for us, but God has given us the task, the joy, of being like Him. Scripture tells us that we take on the nature of Christ. The Spirit of God comes within us. And so, you'll have interesting passages that actually make reference to "pray for one another." In fact, Paul will state in Colossians 4, "Pray for us." It's an interesting statement. So, he's actually asking for different ones to pray. Now, here again, I would think, "Okay, Paul's an apostle. Paul, you would carry more weight." And God would say, "No, because if Paul prayed for himself, it would be more of a selfish prayer." The greater prayer is always selfless. And this is why the grace of God was upon His Son. Because though He were rich, He became poor that you might have. And He took on the form of a bond servant, even though He was equal with God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but He would empty Himself and take on that form to save you. Paul would not only mention that in Philippians 2, but he'll give the

example of Timothy, who didn't perceive his own interest to be an issue and would be able to minister to the people better, as well as Epaphroditus. He mentions both those individuals for that very same purpose, because he's revealing the power of one that is not solely thinking about himself.

Now, I know the tendency of some of us who are a little bit more selfish than others to think, “Well, if I'm praying for everybody else, who's praying for me?” And I got that one. So, if you turn with me to the Book of James, James 5. I guess I can only say those kind of things because I think like that. But if you turn with me to James 5, this particular chapter is a very interesting chapter because it's dealing with people that have had to work through injustice in their lives. They've not only been pushed out of their own homes; they've not only had losses of life within their family, but now they're living in strange lands.

I mean, the way that James 1 starts off is,

(James 1:1) “James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings.”

So, the book starts off with the realization that these are people that are in places where they never thought they would have to live, but they've been pushed out. These are James's parishioners. James was the pastor of the church in Jerusalem. This is family to him. He knows that they're getting upset. So, he writes in James 1, "I just want you to remember, the anger of man doesn't accomplish the righteousness of God." But I mean, who wouldn't get upset over those kinds of things? And he says, "I hate to tell you, but this is something you should rejoice over. Consider it all joy when you encounter all these various trials."

But as he goes on, you come to this Chapter 5, and he then begins to go into the depth of, not only are they having to deal with all these other issues, but they're working on jobs, and then the people that have hired them to work are not paying them. They're withholding their income. And the words that he says to them is, "Be patient. Wait on God. Trust in Him." And I know that they're not feeling that. Because of all of the things that are happening, they're getting extremely angry. And

they're starting to manipulate their situation. Some of them are actually catering to rich people. So, when rich people walk in the room, they go, "Oh, sit here, you know, we're going to give you a special seat here." And they're starting to argue with one another; they're starting to hate one another, because they're just upset and angry over their situation. People get that way, you know? So, what does he say to them? He said, "There is a source of healing. First is that you begin to walk in humility, and you receive this word that I'm telling you, in humility. It will save your soul. It will save your psyche. Do this." But then he comes to this Chapter 5, and I want you to look here with me as he begins to talk about a sickness. And in the context, the sickness is something that has been brought on because of the hostility and the sin.

So, it reads this way, if you pick up with me in verse 12, (James 5:12) "But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment."

In other words, the tendency is to say that you're going to make something happen, and he goes, “You know, trying to take control of the situation is not going to bring pleasure to God.”

(James 5:13) “Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

(James 5:14) Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him...”

Now, I already talked about, well, if you're feeling bad, you need to pray. But he's not talking, once again, about a sickness in the general sense. He's talking about a sickness that was brought about because of the sin. Now, this shouldn't be hard to imagine because of the fact that if you're worried long enough, you're going to get ulcers. So, there's a physical, psychosomatic thing that begins to happen as a result of your sin. As the psalmist says, “I kept silent about my sin; my body wasted away.” There's a reason why they call it a sympathetic system. Scripture just aligns with this, that your body reacts to your

emotions. So, I think it would actually take care of a lot of cancer, quite frankly.

But it goes on and says in verse 14,

“... and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

Now, it's going to describe the kind of sickness that there is, so just hang in there with me.

(James 5:15) “And the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick...”

It seems like a guarantee within the text.

“... and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.”

Now, that phrase literally puts it into context. In other words, you came because you were sick. It's because of the sin that you were sick. So, when you come before the elders, you confess before the elders; they anoint you with oil; your prayer has been heard. They're bearing witness to this. You've actually confessed your sin before the body of Christ because you've been a problem to the body of Christ. You've hurt the body of Christ by your sin.

So, you've confessed that before them, and now what's going to happen? You're not only going to be healed, but your sins are also forgiven. So, keep following.

Watch verse 16,

(James 5:16) “Therefore...”

This is a conclusion, right?

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another...”

Why? Because if you don't, you're going to be sick. Now, it's not talking about, you know, you did something to your dog that you shouldn't have done, or you did something at your house that you shouldn't have done, or you said a word that you shouldn't have said. But what it's talking about is you did something to hurt the body of Christ. Now, you need to confess, and say, “I'm sorry” before the body of Christ and before the Lord.

It goes on and says,

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another...”

It has a very interesting ending here,

“... so that you may be healed...”

Scripture is not only making reference to the power of you confessing your sins and the healing that brings, but you go from being very selfish and hurting people to being very selfless and praying for them. This God hears. And He not only forgives you of your sins, but He heals you of your hurts. There is a great power in praying for one another, because God sees the very heart of Christ in you. And as you do this, He begins healing things in your life. I realized this in so many aspects of my life. As I began to take my eyes off myself and all the things. You pray about this illness and that; you know, when I have an illness or I have a problem, I just turn heavenward and I go, "I trust You, God. I know You're doing something good. I trust You." But when my brother hurts, I start praying for him. And it's amazing how God takes care of me. It's amazing, the selflessness of God. God hears that heart. God rescued Lot because He remembered Abraham.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your love for us and for Your word that puts us on the right track. We are a selfish people. We're self-absorbed. It's hard for us to think of anybody else. But You give us these pictures in Your word of those in the Old Testament who would fall down and pray for a people that were rebellious, who would actually identify to say, "We have sinned." Lord, we see the heart of the One that You would send for us, Jesus Christ, the propitiation, the atoning victim for our sin. And that while we were yet sinners, You would die for us. You declare, "This is the heart that saves." You tell us in Your word that we're to be imitators of Christ and walk in love. And so, Lord, help us to be intercessors, as You have been.