

Let Us Pray

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[0:00] Hi everyone, my name is Matt, hopefully you can hear me. And I'm going to be speaking tonight, and just before I get started, why don't I just commit our time together to God.

So just let me pray. God our Father, we thank you that you love us, we thank you that you speak to us through your word. Please now speak to us through your servant James, and God our Father, please help us to apply these words in our lives by the power of your spirit, and we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. It would be helpful if you keep your Bibles open to that passage that was just read out, so turn to page 983 if you have one of the church Bibles, and it's James chapter 5 we're looking at. We are looking at the last eight verses in James tonight. Over the past few weeks, we've been going verse by verse through the letter of James in the New Testament of the Bible.

That's if you haven't been here the last few weeks, or if you've missed a few weeks. So let me just kind of bring you up to speed where we are at, where we've come from, and where we're going. So James was a prominent figure in the early church.

[1:18] He was leader of the church in Jerusalem, and he writes this letter to persecuted Christians, Jewish Christians in the first century. In his own words, he says in chapter 1, verse 1, that he is a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you haven't been here the last few weeks, what we have seen James teach us from chapters 1 through to 5 is he calls Christians to persevere in trusting God during trials.

He says that genuine faith is shown by love and good deeds. And he warns Christians about how they speak in view of the return of Jesus, who is both lawgiver and judge.

The letter itself is fairly short compared to, say, other letters in the New Testament, like Romans or Corinthians. They're quite long letters. James is actually pretty short.

And sometimes when you read it or hear it, it seems a little bit disconnected in thought or argument. We might see a little bit of that tonight. He reads a little bit like Old Testament wisdom literature, something like Proverbs.

[2:21] But James is always in your face. He doesn't waste his words. He doesn't feel the need to present lengthy kind of systematic theology of Christian doctrine. He's just a down-to-earth, practical, living kind of guy.

He's primarily concerned with Christians taking the gospel seriously and living gospel-obedient lives. So his message tonight, we're going to look at in 5 verses 12 through 20, is divided up into three sections.

Firstly, speak the truth. That's verse 12. Secondly, to pray. That's in verses 13 through 18. And thirdly, to keep one another in the truth.

It's verses 19 through 20. So tonight we're just going to look at this passage verse by verse in these three sections. Speak the truth. Pray. And keep one another in the truth.

So firstly, speak the truth. In verse 12, he says, Above all, my beloved, do not swear either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath.

[3:27] But let your yes be yes and your no be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. Now, above all, the beginning of verse 12 indicates he's about to sum up.

It's his way of sort of saying, in conclusion, finally, lastly. We know we're in the end now by the fact that he says above all. And verse 12 has the most clear and obvious allusion to Jesus' teaching in the whole letter.

I don't know if you're familiar of where Jesus said something like this. If you think about it for a while, it's almost a word-for-word quote from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Not that James needs to footnote the source he's quoting, because the Christians alive at the time of James were close enough to the original source to recognize where James got his teaching from. But let's go back for a minute to Matthew, to the Sermon on the Mount. It's on page 786. If you have a church Bible, turn to page 786. It's Matthew chapter 5, verses 33 through 37.

[4 : 39] And as we read this, let's compare what Jesus says to what James says. So Matthew 5, 33 through 37. This is Jesus speaking. Again, you've heard that it was said to those of ancient times, You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you've made to the Lord.

But I say to you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.

And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be yes, yes, or no, no. Anything more than this comes from the evil one.

And then let's compare it to what James says. Above all, my beloved, do not swear either by heaven or by earth, or by any other oath, but let your yes be yes, and your no be no, so you may not fall under condemnation.

James and Jesus are saying the same thing. Speak the truth. In the ancient world, an oath was a form of confirming the truth of a person's words, whether that was someone affirming something about the past, or promising to do something in the future.

[5 : 51] And maybe the temptation for these Christians to swear an oath has come from the surrounding circumstances, that these believers are suffering at the hands of persecutors and rich oppressors.

We see that in chapter 5, verse 4, and in 7 through to 11 as well. They may be invoking God's name or a substitute for it, in effect, to bargain with God, to get out of their situation, or to persuade God to do something.

That could be the case. Or it could be that just in everyday speech, there may have been the temptation to separate truth into two categories, one being more true than the other.

So, if someone were to say, Oh, as surely as the Lord is king over Israel, such and such happened. Or as surely as the temple stands, I swear this happened.

Or I swear I'm going to do this tomorrow. It would be using God's name or a substitute for it to make the truth of something said more believable, more dramatic, more binding, than not using it.

[6 : 55] So, people in 21st century Australia, they don't swear by the temple of Jerusalem much these days. But have you ever heard someone say, I swear on my life?

I swear on my mother's grave, perhaps? Or what about, I swear to God that such and such happened? It's as though the more serious the thing you swear by, the more reason it is to believe what the person says.

Whatever the motive behind it, James repeats his master's teaching, telling believers not to do it. The point is, Christians should be in the habitual practice of speaking the truth, nothing more and nothing less.

And a believer's character, because James is a practical guy, a believer's character should be consistent with their speech, so that nothing more than the truth needs to be said.

Just a simple yes or no in any situation should suffice. Now, the implications of speaking the truth are huge. Anyone ever said to you, it doesn't matter what you say, just how you say it?

[8 : 00] Have you ever heard that before? There's a problem with that statement. According to the Bible, what you say does matter. James' language of judgment at the end of verse 12 is not a light or an empty threat.

He says, do not swear by heaven or by earth or by anything else, he says, so that you may not fall under condemnation. Literally, you may not fall under judgment. Now, you don't have to do this with me.

I'm going to turn to the last book of the Bible. I can read this out for you if you like. But if you want to turn, you can turn to Revelation chapter 21, and we're going to read verse 8. But you don't have to turn there. I'll read it to you if you like.

So this is Revelation 21 verse 8. And this is describing Jesus' return, his glorious return, and the day of judgment. And listen to this, Revelation 21 verse 8.

You notice that liars are placed in there with murderers and idolaters and fornicators.

[9 : 15] The problem of swearing an oath basically is that it's easy to swear an oath, but it's even easier not to fulfill it. And that makes you a liar.

The warning of judgment is not about Christians maybe telling a white lie, or that's not a godly use of the tongue. The warning of judgment is for people who adopt habitual lying and deceit, half-truths, false statements, misleading statements, and false promises.

He's warning people against adopting the lifestyle of the devil, who is by nature a liar and whom the Bible says is the father of lies. Adopting that way of life in the end will bring you to ruin.

That's the warning. And it's a sober warning. Hell is real. Judgment is real. Christ, your judge, takes your words very seriously.

So don't use God's name in a flippant, light, carefree manner using an oath to escape out of a situation or to somehow bargain or get your own way with God.

[10:27] Don't, God won't tolerate it. Adopt instead speaking the truth as your practice and with that have a lifestyle that is consistent with your speech.

That includes things like keeping your commitments, showing up to things when you say you will, praying for people when you say you will. Adopt speaking the truth as your lifestyle.

James says, speak the truth. So we're back in James and we're going to move on to the next section, verses 13 through 18, where James tells us to pray. Firstly, he tells us to pray in all circumstances.

It's verse 13. Then he tells us to pray for the sick, verses 14 through 15. And then to pray for one another, verses 16 through 18. But let's look firstly at verse 13, where it tells us to pray in all circumstances.

He says, are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Now you'll notice that James doesn't give us the theology of prayer, or he doesn't give us a systematic kind of theology, break down a doctrine of prayer.

[11:39] He just urges believers to get on with doing it. He's already spoken about prayer during trials back in chapter 1, verses 2 through 5.

He tells Christians to pray for wisdom during trials and to consider suffering pure joy. Here in 5:13, well, he doesn't go into detail exactly about what to pray for during suffering.

He just says that those who are suffering should pray. However, drawing near to God during suffering is only one side of the coin. The flip side is drawing near to God in rejoicing.

And he says, are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. And that phrase, sing songs of praise, translates from a single Greek verb which comes from the word psalm, as in the book of Psalms.

And it means to declare one's thankfulness to God, usually by way of a song appropriate to the occasion. So rejoice, tell God how wonderful he is. Sing, if you want. The Apostle Paul makes a similar instruction to the Colossians.

[12:44] Let me read Colossians 3, 16 and 17. He says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and with gratitude in your hearts, sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. So friends, the God of the Bible is the source of our comfort and the source of our joy.

So pray in all circumstances. Whether in response to hardship, maybe being persecuted for being a Christian, you know, your friends drop you at school because you're not cool anymore because you're a Christian, maybe losing your job, maybe having something really serious, like maybe having a child sick or die, maybe having a friend betray you or feeling lonely from being single for many years, finding out maybe you have a serious illness.

God is the source of all comfort, so pray. And when life is blessed, when things are great, like in response to maybe passing an exam, getting an award for something, having a baby, getting a promotion, getting married, getting a job, seeing fruit in Christian ministry after years of laboring and laboring and not seeing any fruit, whatever the circumstances, praising God shows that He is the giver of every good gift and the source of our joy.

In fact, James said earlier in chapter 1, verse 17, that every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

[14:19] Friends, how you pray shows the world that it's not luck, it's not fortune, it is not good karma that rules the world, it is your good and perfect Father in heaven.

So the next instruction in this section is to pray for the sick. Verses 14 and 15, Are any among you sick? They shall call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.

The prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up and anyone who's committed sins will be forgiven. Here James quite simply says if you're sick get the elders of the church to pray for you and anoint you with oil.

And James expects the prayer of the elders for healing to be answered. It's just a simple straightforward instruction. However, there are two views if you like on the theological spectrum that distort James' view of healing and healing ministry and so it makes this passage controversial when it doesn't need to be.

And so we're going to look at those two views very quickly now. So on the theological spectrum we're going to look at the Roman Catholic view of a sacrament called extreme unction or last rites that's spelled R-I-T-E-S not R-I-G-H-T so last rites or extreme unction the Roman Catholic view and on the other end of the spectrum we're going to look at the sort of far out independent charismatic view of healing.

[15:51] And by the way I think extreme unction or last rites would be a great name for Roman Catholic metal band but that's another point altogether. So we're going to look at that first example so the Roman Catholic sacrament called extreme unction or last rites.

Is that what James is talking about here? Well historically speaking the sacrament of extreme unction has its roots in the 3rd century where oil was consecrated by the bishop of the area in which it was to be used for anointing.

By the 10th century it was insisted that anointing with oil was only done by a priest. In the 12th century the term extreme unction and the anointing was restricted to those who were about to die. In the 13th century it was declared to be one of the seven sacraments instituted by Christ himself and the Council of Trent from 1545 onwards declared anathema that is a curse on anyone who denies that extreme unction is a proper sacrament instituted by Christ and in the 20th century the 2nd Vatican Council recognises extreme unction as one of the seven sacraments of the church. Now they've kind of liberalised it and it's not just for people who are dying but it's also for the elderly as well. Friends, with all the love in the world let me say that this is not what the Bible teaches in regards to salvation or what James is instructing with the sick here.

[17:17] There is no suggestion in this text that the oil used here by the elders in the anointing has been previously specialised or consecrated or made holy quote unquote by a pope or a bishop the elders or by anyone else.

The idea that consecrated oil or holy oil somehow carries God's grace or divine favour goes wildly astray from biblical teaching on grace sin and forgiveness.

The Bible teaches that Christ and Christ alone in his death and resurrection provides and secures forgiveness of sins. It is not obtained through oils candles smoke bells religious icons burning incense or any other object.

The oil mentioned here is being used symbolically to set apart the believer for God's special care and attention. It is not a channel of God's forgiveness or power it is just oil.

James is not instructing the elders on how to minister at the deathbed either. Extreme unction the sacrament is primarily for those about to die to put it crudely for those for whom there is no turning back.

[18:31] James however has in mind a healing ministry where the prayers of the elders actually bring the sick believer to health and vitality and life. The word save the sick is better translated as heal the sick in this verse.

Friends the Roman Catholic sacrament of extreme unction or last rites is a distortion of the scriptures and is not what James is teaching here. On the other end of the spectrum is the prayer of faith teaching primarily seen in independent charismatic movements and churches who teach that faith or prayers of faith is this kind of quantitative term not a qualitative term and that's the important distinction to make.

They say things like if you just have more faith more amounts of it so to speak then you really get things done that's really praying if you don't see answers to prayer then you just don't have enough faith that's their kind of language James isn't teaching here in quantitative terms that if you have more faith or conversely a lack of faith that you can control or get outcome X Y or Z the prayer of faith here is giving a clear contrast to the people praying earlier in his letter in chapter 1 verse 6 and

in chapter 4 verse 3 he describes double minded literally double soul we heard about that adulterers who pray only hoping to satisfy themselves and their sinful desires the people who want to please both God and the world true faith does not seek to manipulate God as if that were possible by putting faith in the outcome or result of a prayer true faith commits the person and the situation to the

God who has made himself and his purposes known in Jesus Christ both the Roman Catholic view and the independent charismatic out there view on faith and healing stray and distort James' teaching here on what a healing ministry looks like and just as a side note a bad application of this passage for those who are here and those who are listening to it a bad application of this passage would be if Paul Barker and Wayne Shuler next week get 100 emails from people who had this sermon and they want healing because they've got a cough or a headache because they have the sniffles let me just say that we're in Melbourne we've come out of winter we're going into spring people this time of year do get the sniffles and they cough and people catch bugs and pass flu and head colds on to each other and stuff I'd hate to hear of Paul or Wayne getting emails next week from people who can simply be healed by taking a Vicks vapor drop okay you know if people might think oh

I've got a headache today what was that James 5 14 all right I'll give Paul no don't give Paul Barker a call just take some codrill and soldier on okay this prayer of faith the healing of the sick applies to believers who are seriously ill not the sniffles so what does the text mean well let's think about how that it is not unbiblical to be a sick Christian movements and teachers who say that Christians don't or shouldn't get sick are wrong the apostle Paul for example told Timothy to drink a little wine with his stomach ailment that's a sickness Epaphroditus you read Philippians Epaphroditus was once so sick he nearly died but God raised him up and he's one of Paul's missionary buddies Christians get sick and in fact the fact that James gives these instructions as to how to heal the sick well it actually implies that it's not a pointless ministry

[22 : 25] God actually allows for ministry to sick believers it actually honors God to pray for the sick reality is sickness is just part of living in a post Eden world a world under the curse of sin and death and we are just waiting to be renewed and have creation renewed when it will be the new heavens and new earth when Christ returns and there's no more sickness death or dying having said that sometimes and here's the important thing to remember sometimes but not always sickness can be linked to unrepentant unconfessed sin in the life of a believer or the church there are biblical examples where sickness was a disciplinary warning or was a temporary punishment to bring people to repentance and to examine themselves that's why he says at the end of verse 15 the prayer of faith will save the sick the Lord will raise them up and anyone who's committed sins will be forgiven it's implicit in what

James says so there are biblical examples of where it was a temporary punishment or disciplinary warning where God wanted people to examine themselves and to repent so with that in mind elders who do minister to the sick need to be aware of not only praying for the believer to be made well but also ready to confront sin in a believer's life and speak the gospel to them the prayer of faith that James talks about is an expression of dependent trust in the God who's revealed himself and his purposes in the person and work of Jesus Christ that means trusting God to heal according to his will now he may not choose to heal immediately or even at all and I've never been in a situation where that's happened to me personally I've never been in that situation so I don't know what that's like first hand

I'm sure it must be a very hard thing to pray for a wife or a son or a friend and see them not healed but the prayer of faith expresses dependent trust in the God who's revealed himself and his purposes in the personal work of Jesus Christ so as creator and ruler he has his will is to display his glory and that may not be an immediate return to health if that sounds like something hard to swallow then I recommend you go back and read Job in the Old Testament or read the story of the blind man and his encounter with Jesus in John chapter 9 prayer trusts the God who raised his son from the dead who can do all things who wants people repent and believe the good news and whose primary purpose is to display his glory when you pray do you trust

God for this thirdly in this section is the instruction to pray for one another verses 16 through 18 so let me read therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective Elijah was a human being like us and he prayed fervently that it might not rain and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth

then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest in response to the God who hears prayer and forgives sin is encouragement to confess sins to one another and pray for one another verse 14 and the ministry to the sick was primarily focused on the elders here now is ministry for the whole church and there seems to be a link between the righteous and prayer because he says the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective so the righteous in legal terms are those who've been declared righteous by

God the judge through faith in Christ Christ bore their punishment on the cross when he died and he gave them his righteousness through faith so that they are legally right with God that's what the word righteous means but the word also carries an ethical dimension to it that those who are made righteous by Christ live in obedience to Christ so the ministry of confessing sins to one another as a church is that sins are repented of sick people are restored to health and service and that people go on with righteous living the ethical dimension of the command to pray for one another is also the command to be righteous since it is the righteous who have powerful and effective prayers and the example of Elijah makes that clear as well you may be familiar with Elijah if you've ever gone to Sunday school Elijah is a great story to teach kids his story comes from one kings in the

[27 : 50] Old Testament now Elijah he raised the widow's son from death by praying and there is his famous high noon if you like showdown with the prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel it's really exciting boys love this story little boys love this story it's great it's a famous story and you may remember it of when he's up on Mount Carmel and there's false prophets chanting away to their gods Elijah just offers a simple prayer to his god Yahweh and God rains down fire from heaven and he burns up the altar that they built up and all the water surrounding the altar gets burnt up by the true and living God what a story of the power of prayer isn't it but James doesn't make this incident or the incident with the widow raising her son from the dead as the focus of his illustration before the incidents with the widow and the prophets Elijah declares to

King Ahab that there will be a drought and there is and then after the contest at Mount Carmel and people fear the Lord he tells Ahab that it will rain and guess what it does so James gives us a clue as to why he uses Elijah as his example I mean well he says Elijah is a man is a human being like us you know why didn't James use Jesus as his example I mean he was his brother he knew about Jesus life and ministry he could have used any example of the Lord but he says that Elijah was a human being like us Jesus was truly human but he was truly God as well he was God in the flesh and you and I are not God in the flesh Elijah however just an ordinary bloke fully human all human James says that he prayed fervently that it might not rain and then in verse 18 he prayed again and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest

James wants believers to be righteous effective and consistent people of prayer to pray like Elijah and pray consistently and fervently the single greatest barrier I think to gospel ministry apart from the devil and sin is programs I think we tend to think that if we do more we'll see more results we should be doing more ministry but that's really the case I think we have this western capitalistic mindset that increase productivity increase results something like that we think that we need to do more but actually to bear fruit we actually need to have a foundation of prayer not just in ministry but in everything especially if we want to see new churches planted if we want to see laborers in the mission fields if we want to see people coming to

Christ in our church we need to pray fervently faithfully consistently James doesn't treat prayer as some kind of weak passive resignation what should we do I don't know let's look busy let's pray like it's some sort of boring thing James actually teaches us prayer is powerful it's effective so we should be doing it how do you view prayer as weak as passive negotiable or do you see prayer the way James does and see it as powerful and effective if you're still with me thanks so far in this final section James has told us to speak the truth pray and now finally in verses 19 and 20 he says to keep one another in the truth wandering here does not only apply to rejecting simply

Christian doctrine but also has the implication of Christian living remember James is a practical guy and truth and wisdom in James and in also Old Testament wisdom literature like Proverbs truth and wisdom are always connected to godly living they go hand in hand godly living or righteous living deny gospel truth and sure enough you have opened the door for ungodliness and immorality and sin to take hold of Christians and the church itself and the implication from the end of verse 20 is that wandering away from the truth giving up Christian living in the end leads to death and destruction now James uses the word sinner here but he's talking about believers he's not talking about people who don't know Jesus and they need to be evangelized he's talking about Christians

here who wander away from the truth and he uses the word sinner here the way the Bible describes people who don't know

[33 : 08] Christ and he's using it to describe Christians that is if you're a sinner you're a rebel and then the word to bring back that he used in verse 19 brought back by another and verse 20 bring back a sinner from wandering is the same word used in the New Testament to convert someone for the first time to the gospel to bring someone of faith in Christ that is the word itself means to turn to change direction from one way of living to a new way of living and the warning here is for Christians not to wander don't turn away don't do it as we heard earlier from the revelation passage that hell is not an empty threat so don't play games I read in this week in the newspaper in the age of a man called Francis McNabb Dr.

Francis McNabb a Christian minister in Melbourne who has decided to reinvent let me read to you what he says so I think we know about John Spong and people like Barbara Thiering who have shipwrecked the Christian faith but friends reality is they are old wounds and so the damage they've done has been done but again people fight those battles as if John Spong and Barbara Thiering are fresh wounds they're actually not they're old wounds here in this week's newspaper in the age Tuesday's age is a fresh wound and I'm not going to attack the man I don't know him and it's not right to do so but let me just point out these are some quotes from this Christian minister called Dr. Francis McNabb he says that Abraham is probably a concoction Moses was a mass murderer and Jesus Christ just a Jewish peasant who certainly was not God in fact there is no God in the usual sense of an interventionist deity what we strive for is a presence both within and beyond us according to Dr.

McNabb the new faith transcends denominations and religions it's about searching not dogma it seeks the good the tender the beautiful and finds it in Islam Buddhism Hinduism Christianity and Judaism he says at the Jesus seminar ask me about that later we are inclined to think there was a real Jesus but we don't know much about him the record has been embellished a great deal along the way he gives glimpses of something beyond him and that's the most powerful aspect of what he was doing until 1900 people believed in heaven above earth and hell below we've given up on that idea he's no longer the God up there an interventionist God we can all feel a presence beyond ourselves and are trying to get in touch with the presence better than ourselves it's trying to bring a more humanitarian understanding so I'm not attacking the man but I definitely disagree with his ideas

I think here is a clear case of someone wandering away from the truth it's not just that his scholarship is wrong and he's offending Jesus by saying Jesus isn't God although that is bad the thing is I don't think he realises the moral and ethical the practical implications of what this means for the lives of the people he ministers to see deny God his judge and you create a world of moral free for all Christian leaders can come into positions who are not morally qualified and what impact does that have on the life of God's people and then what about evangelism how can you call people to trust Christ for the forgiveness of sins if there's no sin no hell no gospel this man is wandering away from the truth so I actually sent him an email this week and told him that and he hasn't replied a guy I went to school with a guy who well I think he was a Christian when I was at school because when I became a Christian

[37 : 27] I used to talk to him about it a few years ago a bunch of guys from school we were catching up together we hadn't seen each other in years and I knew he was going to be there and I thought great what an opportunity to catch up with this guy and talk about how we're going with God and when I got there of all the guys from school who were drunk and passed out and fighting with one another and stuff he was the worst one I walked in and the guy was covered in his own vomit and was just passed out and so I remember going down to pick him up and said hey it's me what are you doing and he just sort of ignored me and went back to being asleep in the gutter and then I got his number off someone and then a few months ago I called him up and said hey can we talk about the whole God thing and talk about how we're going and we caught up and he told me that he's walked away from the Christian faith that he got burned by some people in a church he was once attending and that kind of did it that kind of broke the camel's back and he doesn't believe it doesn't want a bar of it and he doesn't return my calls anymore he's a guy who's wandering away from the truth I tried calling him back but he won't return my calls I tried are you wandering don't don't wander do you know someone who's wandering then what will you do with what

James says here just let me read a paraphrase the message technically isn't a translation of the Bible it's a paraphrase I'm just going to read it my dear friends if you know people who have wandered off from God's truth don't write them off go after them get them back and you will have rescued precious lives from destruction and prevented an epidemic of wandering away from God it puts it really great I think now the gospel is that Christ died for sins once and for all the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God if you are wandering away like Dr. Francis McNabb is then you need to repent come back to God put your trust in Jesus and God's promises he will forgive your sins James says here even a multitude of sins if that's the case if that's what's keeping you from coming back oh gee I've sinned too much God's promises he'll forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness if you repent and believe the good news if you need to do that tonight talk to Wayne or myself talk to someone here tonight if that is the case but if you're not one of those who are wondering you are a Christian you think what's it all about we've actually got a different type of ministry than sort of calling than people who have to repent do you notice when people don't come to church anymore do you notice when people stop coming to your Bible study group do you notice when people say they've stopped reading their Bible when they give up meeting with Christians they've stopped praying when they kind of just get turned off by God's stuff well then you have a role to play and bring people back to the truth pray for them send them an email call them invite them over for a meal do whatever you can friends let's keep one another in the truth now it was said in the first sermon in chapter one when we started this series that James is a tough teacher he seems to have no time for passive apathetic consumerist Christians who just puce it and spectate and say all the right things and sit under good theology but do nothing to live out what they believe he just hates it and he's not afraid to call the spade a spade I think James has this vision of a vibrant faithful gospel obedient church where every member encourages one another in gospel faith and living whether they're young old rich poor uni student whatever I think James hates everything that gets in the way of that picture so his final instructions to us tonight are to speak the truth to pray and to keep one another in the truth where we go from here as a church under God is what we do with James so let me pray our Lord Jesus thank you that you caused these words to be written that you've preserved them for us throughout the centuries thank you that you've spoken through your servant James to us about what you want us to believe and how you want us to live in light of all that you've taught us over these past weeks we pray that you would make your word powerful and effective in our lives that we will not simply be hearers of the word but doers of the word and that we will be faithful ambassadors for your kingdom we pray in Jesus name Amen