



Godly Confidence-Part 2

Trusting God When You're Hurting

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Twenty-three minutes. Twenty-three minutes, that's the average time they say now it takes to taxi from the gate to the runway before you take off. Twenty-three minutes. And if you're at a big airport, I want you to think about like Atlanta or Dallas or Denver, I mean, you can take a lot longer than that. Now, I usually sit on the aisle when I'm flying and sometimes I'm sitting there and we're going for so long taxiing I start to look out the window thinking we're going to be on the Interstate. Like, are we going to drive through Orange County? It just goes on and on and on forever. Something's just not right when you're sitting on the airplane and it's going and going and you hear those wheels going and you look out at those big wings and you think this is not what this is designed for. I mean, there's that jetliner. It's designed to fly, you know, 550 miles an hour and we're going 30 miles an hour for, you know, 40 minutes. It just seems, it seems ridiculous.

There are a lot of things in life that don't work the way they're intended to work. I suppose at the top of the list, at least that's personal to us that we feel in a real poignant way would be our bodies. Our bodies do not work the way they're designed to work. I mean, they work. But if you think back to the initial creation of Adam and Eve, I mean, you've got to recognize how far we've come from that. There is that sense in which God has designed us, initially designed us, with the purpose, I mean, to live forever, to live in a garden that was without sin, to live in bodies without sin. And we recognize that things are just not the way they're supposed to be. Particularly when we think about all the ailments and the illnesses and the sicknesses that we encounter as human beings.

Solomon made a lot of interesting statements in the book of Ecclesiastes. And some are curious. One of them is that "He's made all things beautiful in its time." And that statement comes juxtaposed to this next phrase. It says, "And he set eternity in the hearts of men." It's an interesting thought to think about how we internally have a sense of immortality. I mean, all of us feel like we should live on forever. And yet in these bodies, they just keep on deteriorating. We live in perishable bodies and it just doesn't seem right in so many ways. The Christian life, of course, is about holding out a hope, not just about personal reconciliation with God, which, of course, is fundamental and profoundly important, central, but it's about the fact that he is going to one day exert his power, the power with which he's able "to subject all things to himself," and he's going to "transform our lowly bodies," to quote the book of Philippians, and make them like the body of Christ, "the glorious body of Jesus Christ." That we recognize is a hope. A hope so much that Paul said in Romans, it's like we're "groaning" and we can't wait for the "redemption of our bodies."

Before the Christmas holiday, we decided to take a little break from our exposition of Acts and to go back into the Old Testament knowing that those things were written for our instruction, for the endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures to give us hope. We need to learn from these stories, as First Corinthians 10 says, sometimes so we can learn to not do what they did, so we



can start to practice biblical principles, New Testament truths, live them out in a way that unfortunately our elder brothers in the Old Testament sometimes fail. We can learn from the mistakes of our spiritual forefathers.

We picked a story that I hope that we could all identify with, at least we want to identify with it, and we thought we'd take two weeks before we get into the holidays and think, let's look at that character, King Asa, the third king of the kingdom of Judah after the split. Here's a life that is stated to be a man whose heart "was wholly devoted to the Lord." He did what was "right and pleasing in the sight of God." I think we like to identify with that because we come to church, hopefully, as Christians, we're regenerate, we have a relationship with God, we're growing in our sanctification. We like to think, hey, we're doing okay, we're moving in the right direction. And yet this godly man who's designated as such in the Bible has two failures at the end of his life that really are magnified because the expectation was so high.

King Asa is the life we've been looking at and I want to wrap up this really short two-part series by having a look at the last four verses of Second Chronicles Chapter 16. We looked last time at what he did when he was scared. We would hope that he would have a godly confidence, that he would trust in God when he is afraid. We had the invasion of the northern tribes that were encroaching on his territory. Instead of trusting the Lord like he should have, he relied on King Ben-hadad of Syria and it displeased the Lord and we ended our study last time with that verse where the prophet comes, Hanani comes and says, listen, God would just be so ready to support you. It's as though his eyes, metaphorically speaking, they're moving "to and fro throughout the whole earth." He's "looking for someone to strongly support, someone whose heart is wholly his," completely his. He wants your trust. Now if there was ever a guy who should trust the Lord, it would be King Asa. He did so many good things. He was willing to sacrifice family relationships for devotion to God and doing what was right. And yet he got scared and his trust wasn't in the right place.

Well, these last four verses shift to something we can all identify with, and that is the failing bodies that we live in. We hope as Christians and can't wait for the day when the "perishable puts on the imperishable, when this mortal is putting on this immortality" because of the resurrection, the bodily resurrection of Christ. That is our hope. He's the first fruits of our life. But we know between now and that day before that transformation of our bodies, we are going to have the problem that King Asa had. That is we're going to have aches and pains and sicknesses and illnesses and diseases. It's a sad chapter, even if he did the right thing, because we know that we have bodies that are fallen, they're failing, they don't work as they ought to work. And yet what he does in this passage can be easily misunderstood. But what he does is reflective of what he failed to do last week, and that is he puts his trust in the wrong place.

So let's read these verses. I'll read them from the English Standard Version. Second Chronicles Chapter 16 verses 11 through 14. Let's see if we can't leave today with a renewed commitment and the empowerment of God's Spirit to respond rightly the next time we're sick. You might be here today in the midst of some chronic illness and who doesn't have some kind of problem in their body. I kind of feel like we're all bananas. There's that one like 20-minute period where everything's just the way it ought to be for bananas. Right? They're green and then they're

perfectly yellow and then they get spotted and they're mushy. My wife has a terrible time trying to keep bananas the way I like them. We dangle them from the hook and all this. You've got a baby those bananas because they're perishing quickly. And so, maybe you're in that little short window of really good health and you're feeling strong. Just keep this sermon in your back pocket because you'll need it. It's coming to all of us that we're going to have the problems of King Asa.

So it summarizes it. I'm just going to look at the whole thing to make my first observation here. In verse 11, it says, "The acts of Asa, from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign," that's a long time into this, "Asa was diseased in his feet." By the way, the parallel passage in First Kings, it adds this phrase when he was old, "in his old age." Okay, well, yeah, you're right. You're at the job now 39 years, he's old, he gets diseased in his feet. You'd expect that.

You get old, things don't work right. "And his disease was severe." People speculate, well, what was wrong with him? People suggest maybe it's gout, it's in his feet. Usually that doesn't affect both your feet at the same time. And so it says legs. It's probably not that. Some people think perhaps it was a degenerative osteoarthritis, which can be incredibly painful and get very severe. Some think it's peripheral vascular disease of some kind which is very common as people get older. I mean, they can speculate about it and a lot of doctors have in looking at a passage like this and thinking about the diseases of the kings of Israel, particularly this king. What was it? Well, we don't know what it was. All we know is we can identify with the fact that he's sick and that it was painful and it was severe.

"Yet," this is interesting, "yet," here's a godly man in pain. What would you expect? You'd expect him to trust in God, "Yet even in his disease," and we've just seen he didn't trust it in the geopolitics that he was dealing with, he didn't trust it in the fact that he in the past trusted God against the Egyptians that came. Now he was folding. He wasn't trusting God up there in verses 1 through 10. And now, even in his disease, even when the pain was that close to home, "he did not seek Yahweh," he did not seek the Lord, "but he sought help from the physicians."

You think, well, what's wrong with that? Well, we're going to look at that in a minute. Is there anything wrong with that? Well, it's not that he sought help from the physicians. We got good statements about physicians from Genesis all the way to Dr. Luke, the beloved physician, writing one of our four gospels. So it's not that. But there's something about the shifting of his trust. Just like he trusted in Ben-hadad of Syria instead of him trusting in the Lord. So he was here trusting in the physician instead, it displaced his trust in God when he was in pain.

Verse 13, "And Asa slept with his father," which, of course, is a euphemism for his body. Right? He's dying. It's a nice way to say he died. "Dying in the forty-first year of his reign. So you can see here, doing the math, his last couple of years of his reign, he was in a bad situation physically. He had this chronic illness. It ended up killing him, a terminal illness. "And they buried him in the tomb that he had cut for himself in the city of David," that's Jerusalem, of course, "and they laid him on a bier that had been filled with various kinds of spices and prepared by the perfumer's art." Of course, this is the king, this is a royal funeral. "And they made a very great fire in his honor," which is not cremation, by the way. Don't get that confused. He's being buried, as they



always did in the Old Testament, with one exception, and that was a unique situation. So we have this big reminder of Asa's life, his big memorial of his life, as has happened elsewhere in Chronicles and Kings, as they built a fire in honor of the king that was deceased.

Now this is a sad passage. You came to church hoping for something encouraging, probably. But, I mean, I'm going to tell you basically the essence of what's going on here. Asa gets old. He gets sick. He's in a lot of pain and he dies. Thanks, Pastor Mike, for that great uplifting devotional message today, because I want to say that's going to happen to you. You are going to get old. Things aren't going to work right. You're going to be in pain and you're going to die. And that's barring some catastrophic thing that happens to you before then. But if you have a pampered life and everything seems to go well and you can eat all your supplements and do all your exercise and put drops behind your ear and on your big toe, whatever you want to do to try and live long and prosper, you're going down (audience laughter). Right? That's just how it works. As the old witty George Bernard Shaw said, the statistics on death are quite impressive. Right? One out of one people die. It's the problem and it's the problem of Genesis 3.

And you remember God made Adam out of the dirt, out of the dust of the ground, all that material, all that raw material that we're made out of. You find everything in our human bodies out there in the soil, in the clay, it's all just stuff of this earth. And when he sinned, the moral rebellion of God, you remember what God did. There were a lot of consequences in Genesis 3. And one of the consequences is "cursed is the ground because of you." Well, that's what he's made of. He's made of the dirt. So everything in his body, the fabric of creation, is now under God's sentence of judgment. And that means your body isn't going to work the way it's supposed to work. Just like there are going to be thorns and thistles in the garden, there is going to be a lot of bad stuff that's happening in your body. And that's going to be the reality. Eventually that dirt that's been cursed, the dust that you're made of, it's going to return to dust. Right? You're made of dust, Adam, and to the dust you shall return to.

Those aren't encouraging parts of the Bible either. So how are you going to parlay this in anything positive for us today? Well, I didn't promise you a positive sermon, but I'm going to tell you now. I hope you will be encouraged today, in part because the forecast is clear in your mind. You can go to a lot of churches today that seem to want to defy the promise of God in Genesis 3. They want to tell you that if you're godly and you seek the Lord and you have enough faith, all your ailments will be gone. Everything will be good. You will be healthy. If that theology were right, by the way, we'd have a lot of really old Christians around, would we not? We should have some 2,000-year-old Christians around who are living by faith, trusting in God. But that's not happening. As I like to say, every faith healer gets sick and dies. Right? That should be something that puts them out of business, I would think, knowing that everyone who claims that this is the promise of God for you, that clearly it shouldn't be proffered and put out there as something we're appealing to people to come and come to our churches and give money and all this because, you know, you're going to get your healing. If you just trust God, you're going to be healed.

Now, I'm not denying the fact that God allows us to rally. As a matter of fact, Psalm 103 says if you're sitting here in your right mind and you're healthy enough to hear this sermon, we can all say with the psalmist, he's healed all your diseases. Right? "Remember all his benefits. Bless the



Lord, O my soul, he heals all your diseases." You've made it so far. Congratulations. That's good. But I'm not going to be here preaching to you 100 years from now. And none of you're going to be here listening to me preach 100 years from now. You're not going to be listening to anybody preach here on Earth 100 years from now, because we're all under this promise of God. And that is you're made of the dirt, the dirt is cursed and you're going to return to the dirt. And that means we're all going to get sick, we're all going to die.

Now that's a sad thing in and of itself. But I want to tell you something from the passage like this, just to step back and get our first observation. You should not be disheartened by that. Matter of fact, if you're taking notes, and I wish that you would, jot this down, number one, "Don't Be Disheartened by Genesis 3." Do not be disheartened by the fact that Asa got old, got diseased and died. Now, that's not the lesson of our passage, but it's a good observation about our passage just to get started. You and I should not be disheartened.

Now, how does that work? Let me turn you to Second Corinthians and give you a little bit of time in this passage that should remind us of what real Christianity is pointing us to look at. What real Christianity is wanting us to focus on. Second Corinthians Chapter 4. The Apostle Paul has been talking about his ministry. He's about to ramp up into a great exclaiming truth about that we have the words of reconciliation that we're holding out to our generation. He calls us ambassadors. He says that he and his fellow band of evangelists, they're ambassadors, as though God is making his appeal through them, that people would be reconciled to God. We're seeing people, as he says earlier in this letter, their eyes are being opened, that the truth of the gospel is being perceived as God can say, "light should come out of darkness." So people are being born again, they're being made new. They're being regenerate. God is using the message, the means of the message of the gospel to save people. And that just gets him amped up, gets him jazzed up.

And yet you look at him and if you know anything about the Apostle Paul, he had a lot of problems. He had a lot of problems because he had a lot of enemies, he had a lot of people persecuting him, chasing him, trying to kill him. People put a bounty on his head. And not only that, we start reading his letters and we find out, man, he's got some illnesses and sicknesses and chronic illnesses. I mean, something wrong with his eyes. Right? He says in Galatians, I mean, if you could have I know you love me as much, "you would have gouged your eyes out and given them to me."

He's going to get around to it, too, in this letter talking about something he calls a thorn in his flesh. He doesn't tell us what it is but it's painful, it's physical. He calls it a messenger of Satan that's there tormenting his physical body. This guy's in a lot of pain, and yet he's a very positive apostle. He can sit in a jail and talk about "rejoice in the Lord." You know, "I'll say it again, rejoice." And so what is all of this optimism and excitement and joy in the midst of this body and this life that's got so much pain in it?

Let's drop into verse 7 here and get a picture of this seeming contrast between an internal, positive, optimistic, joyful perspective and some of the frailties that he's exposed to, and even being a target of persecution and having all these physical problems. He says we have this treasure, the treasure not just of reconciliation myself with a God that I should be cast away from,



but I got a message that opens that up to other people. I mean, it's an amazing ministry. "We have this treasure in jars of clay," brittle, fragile containers, "to show in part that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." I mean, we certainly can't save anyone. We can't save ourselves. This is an amazing thing that God is doing in us and through us and God is doing all this.

"Hey, we're afflicted in every way." And certainly there are a lot of things exterior that are afflicting him. There are certain things that are nonphysical that are afflicting him. There's a lot that's physically afflicting him. "We are afflicted in every way." And when he says every way, I mean, all kinds of ways. "But we're not crushed," hey, we're, "perplexed." And I'm sure at first when he's praying about the messenger of Satan, this thorn in his flesh, and he gets no, no, no from God, I'm sure that was perplexing, along with a lot of other things in his ministry. And yet, underline it, "not driven to despair; persecuted." Sure, people want to kill me and they're trying really hard to do it. "But I'm not forsaken." I'm accepted by God. I'm in his family, I'm an adopted child of God. "Struck down," literally and metaphorically he'd been struck down, "but not destroyed."

We're always carrying in the body the death of Jesus... Remember Jesus, the incarnate Christ, was capable of death. He was killed. He was executed. He was beaten. They spit on him. They put a spear in his side. Talk about the vulnerability of life and how you can die. "We carry around in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies." All the benefits of his death on the cross are all mine. Even the vulnerability of our dying certainly mirrors the vulnerability of his incarnate death. Right? Here it is in verse 11, "We who live are always being given over to death," certainly in his ministry, "for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh." He's ill. He's sick. He can't see well. He's being persecuted. And yet the life of Christ, it's vibrant, it's glowing, it's exuding from his life.

"So death is at work in us," here are the messengers of the message of life, "but life in you." I mean, he's led these people to Christ. He says he's their father in the faith. He's brought the message of salvation to them. Verse 13, "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written," now he quotes this passage, "'I believe, and so also I spoke,' so we also believe and so we also speak." I mean, that's the thing. He's a messenger. We're all ambassadors. He's an ambassador of this message. "Knowing that," here's the real hope, "he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence." That's the real hope. I mean, that's what it's all about.

"For it is all, for your sake," verse 15, "so that as grace extends to more and more people," the concentric circles of the impact of the gospel, "it may increase in thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So," highlight this, "we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day." All the stuff on the outside, all of our bodily pain, all this affliction, what did he say in verse 8? "Affliction, perplexing thoughts, persecution," verse 9, "being struck down, carrying around the death of the body in the body." All of that he says, "it's all light and momentary affliction." It seems like a downplaying of the reality of it all, but it is like momentary, as Romans 8:18 says, there's really no comparing. Right?



"It's preparing for us an eternal weight of glory," something great, something with gravitas, something rewarding, something so good and pleasurable and awesome, "it's beyond all comparison." You shouldn't even compare it. The bad of this present life is nothing compared to how good the good of the next life is. It's so much better you can't even compare it. "As we look," now how do you keep this positive attitude? How do you have this sense of not despair, not crushed? How can you not lose heart? Well, because our focus, our priority, "We look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. For things that are seen," like our health, by how many scars we have on our body, like our eye problems, like any other issue of the externals of the physical reality of our present life, they "are transient, but the things that are unseen," like your salvation, like your adoption, like your justification, all of those things you can't see, those things "are eternal."

The God that you worship, the Spirit that empowers your prayer life, the fact that you are right with the living God who created you. Those are things that matter forever. He says think about that. That is what this is all about. He's so amped and excited that he takes that all the way to the end. He says at the end of his life, "I'm ready to go. I fought the good fight. I kept the faith," Second Timothy 4. He says, even in prison when he might die, he said, "Listen, I have courage. I'm confident. I'm completely resolved to the fact that I'm going to glorify Christ, whether by life or by death."

See, so much of Christianity today is trying to get us focused on the here and now. Actually, on the theological spectrum you've got a lot of these liberal-leaning theologians who keep looking to the present to find any kind of meaning in Christianity because they've gutted it of the power. They keep telling us, "Hey, it's not about the 'then and there,' it's about the 'here and now.' I mean let's practice our Christianity here." I get that, I'm all about practicing our Christianity here. But the real hope for the Christian life is "then and there." God says, I'm not ashamed to be called their God because they're looking for a homeland and it's not here. They're looking beyond the horizon of this life. They're looking beyond living longer or being healthy or having some kind of comfortable experience for the rest of their retirement. They're looking beyond it all. They're willing to spend and be expended because what they're living for is something eternal. They're looking for some kingdom that they pray for every day. When the Lord Jesus Christ takes his power, not only transforms our lowly bodies to make them glorified, but he takes his great power and begins to reign in all the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he starts to reign.

That's a picture that a lot of modern Christians don't have. That's something when you gut the core of Christianity and you start looking past the obvious emphasis of the New Testament, like the bodily resurrection of Christ, which is the foretaste and the forerunner and the first fruits of a bodily resurrection for us. That all you can do is really rearrange the, you know, the chairs on the sinking ship of this life. You got to get it back to what the Bible's all about.

That doesn't play well in the faith healer's church. You don't preach these kinds of sermons there and you can't preach in liberal churches anymore either. The only people who are going to preach this kind of message, which is you're going to get old, you're going to hurt, you're going to get diseased and you're going to die. But it's OK. Don't lose heart. As a matter of fact, as the outer



man wastes away, the inner man ought to be renewed every day. It has nothing to do with your family, it has nothing to do with your income, it has nothing to do with your health, it has nothing to do with how strong you are on the outside. The things that are seen, they're going to go away.

Don't be disheartened by Genesis 3. It's good to know the forecast, even if the forecast is bad, because, you know, when it comes to the kind of forecasts we're talking about, disease and sickness and illness and pain and death, really, it's short-lived, it's temporary, and God's got a place where there's going to be no mourning, no crying, no death, no tears. All of that's going to be replaced and the new order of things is going to be established. If that's not our hope then we ought to go play golf on Sunday mornings. It really doesn't matter. Right? Come up with some other philanthropic group to be a part of. I mean, why would we chase the fairy tale? If this is real, then we live for the next life and our illnesses are just a challenge. They're a test. They really are.

This was a test for Asa, I'm sure. I mean, every trial, as we had in our morning Scripture reading in the service here, it's testing the genuineness of our faith. And that's so important. Even in the wilderness wanderings, you want to talk about foot problems. Moses says in Deuteronomy 8, all of this stuff, including the feet there that you were, you know, out there in the desert and the swelling of your feet and all that was going on in the wilderness for 40 years, all that pain, having to eat the manna, all of that, he says, is all a test. A test to see what's in your heart.

Now, God knows what's in your heart, but it's good for you to know what's in your heart. It's good for you to know that your faith is solid. It's good for you to have that assurance. And Asa, he needed to prove that, he needed to see that. He needed to see exactly what that passage in Deuteronomy goes on to say and Jesus quoted it, and that is "that man does not live by bread alone," and you don't live by your doctor or your medicine or whatever it is you're taking for whatever ailment you have. Those aren't the things you should be seeking and trusting in. It's not that you shouldn't call a doctor. We'll get into that in a minute.

But let's look at verse 12 again. The problem is he should've been seeking the Lord. Let's just invert this. He didn't seek the Lord, but instead he sought help from the physician. Apparently we should be seeking help from God and we should be seeking God. We ought to do that in two ways. Let me just put it this way, or at least describe it in two ways. Calling a doctor is not the problem, we'll talk about that in a minute. But he should have certainly, with the pain of his body, he should have sought the Lord first in time, and he certainly should have sought the Lord first in priority. Let's call it foremost. And if we're going to learn from the lesson of Asa, let's not do what he did. Let's do just the opposite.

Number two, if you're taking notes, we ought to, based on verse 12 here, we ought to "Always Seek God First and Foremost." We're talking about the context of illness. And I know this is an applicable sermon to everyone in the room. If not now, it will be soon. And that is when you're sick, I need you to seek, and I use the word of the passage in our English text here, "Seek the Lord first," which is an interesting word there in Hebrew. It's a word that sometimes translated "to inquire," which is interesting, to inquire, to ask. To ask what? Well, there are a lot of things we can ask when we're sick. Let me suggest a few things.



We ought to inquire of the Lord. It's always good to ask what's up? I mean, I wouldn't speak to God like that in those pedantic words. I would want to say, though, what's happening? What's going on here? There are a lot of passages that remind us that God often uses physical illness to get our attention, as C.S. Lewis rightly said, I mean it's God's megaphone. He shouts to us in our pain. He does snap us to attention, at least he should and we should immediately be calling out to the Lord. Not just, "Hey, fixed my pain," but we ought to be saying things like Psalm 139, "Search me, try me, know my heart. See if there's any evil, wicked way in me."

Because even when it comes to what we're about to do, participate in the Lord's Supper, even how we go about that, according to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, it could be that we're sick or "ill or weak or have fatigue, some even among you have died," the text says. So you're starting to have an illness. I mean, I do want to ask the questions, God, what's up here? I want to inquire of the Lord. I want to seek the Lord. I'll talk about help in a minute here, I want to get the help of God. But I want to make sure that I'm asking God what's going on. I want to see, is this even just a test? Maybe it's like Paul who recognized that the thorn in his flesh, Sunday school grads, do you remember why? Why did he have that? It was to do something in his heart. What was it? To keep him humble. Right? So even that was like, why do I have this? Well, apparently it was revealed to him and he understood, this is doing something to keep the surpassing revelations, this amazing privilege I have, this mechanism and receptacle of all this revelation, it's keeping me humble.

Ask the question. God, I'm in the hospital. I've been diagnosed. I want to start asking why. Now, was there always a correlation to sin? We learned that in John 9, when the apostles asked, "Hey, who's sin is this? This kid was born blind. He's been blind from birth, was it his parents or was it...?" There's not always a direct correlation. Right? Sometimes it could be just God keeping his Genesis 3 promise, which is a problem for us. You're going to get old, you're going to get sick, you're going to die. God keeps his promise of Genesis 3 and it may be he's just keeping my promise here. There'll be no thousand-year-old people in the present dispensation of things. So I'm keeping my promise. You're getting sick, you're going to die, you'll return dust. You're going to live and have these diseases and you're going to die. So it could just be that. It could be that I have a lesson to learn. It could be a governor on my life in some way, it could be a redirection of my priorities. But I want to think about asking God, what is it?

I'm not just suggesting this logically. If you want biblical authority from the New Testament, jot this down, James Chapter 5 verse 13. James 5:13. It couldn't be any clearer than this. I mean, tell me if I can't say this with full biblical authority. Ready? "Is anyone among you is suffering? Let him pray." That's just a good starting place right there. I know one thing that ought to happen when you get sick and you're suffering because that's the context. He goes on next to talk about those who are ill. You ought to be praying. You ought to be praying.

Before I'm asking God just to help me, I want to start talking to God about the pain that I'm feeling. I want to recognize that there's a lot that I can learn in my pain. There may be a reason for my pain. It may be a temporary tool, Hebrews 12, of some kind of discipline in my life. But I want to pray. I want to pray and I want to talk to God about it. I'd like to examine my life. I'd like



to think through my life. I'd like to ask God to see if there's anything in me that needs to change, any priority needs to be put in place.

And then I want to make sure, based on the contrast, that I don't do with my physicians what I should be doing with God, and that is putting my trust in them. I mean, that's a critically important thing. I want to make sure that I understand that God is the giver of life and breath and everything else. To get back to Deuteronomy 8, that without God decreeing my life for another day, I'm not going to live. "I don't live by bread alone. I live by the words that proceed from the mouth of God." If God says Mike Fabarez is going to live, guess what? I'm going to live. Even if I don't get food to eat today, I'm going to live even if I don't get the shot, even if I don't get the blood transfusion, even if I don't have the chemotherapy. If God wants me to live, I'm going to live. If God wants me to die, I can have everything I could possibly have in terms of modern medicine, and I'm not going to make it. I understand that my trust needs to be in God. So I want to transfer my trust and I want to recognize this, that God is the God who gives me everything, including health.

Seek God first and foremost. In James 5 it says when we suffer we ought to pray. In that passage he goes on to talk about Job. He says, Job's the guy you ought to think about, "the steadfastness of Job." The patience of Job. I'd like you to look at this real quick with me. Take a moment to go to Job Chapter 2. If you know your Bible, you know Job Chapter 1 is round one in this thing where Satan comes to God and says..., well, actually God brings it up. And I'm thinking, God, do me a favor, don't bring me up in any meetings with Satan. But God says, "look at my servant Job, he's an amazing, blameless guy. Look at him." And Satan goes, "Well, he's only doing that because you put this big hedge around him. You gave him everything he wants. You've blessed him so much, of course he's going to love you. You take that stuff away, he's going to curse you." Well, round one, we end up writing worship songs on his response. Right? "The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of Lord." So round one, good job, Job.

Round two. Job Chapter 2. Are you there? Look at verse 3. The Lord says to Satan a second time, "Yahweh says, 'Have you considered my servant Job?'" I'm thinking enough already. I don't want to be the subject of your board meetings, you know. This is not good. He's saying it again. He's just like so proud of him. "None on earth like him. Blameless, upright, fears God, turns away from evil. He still holds fast to his integrity although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." Think of all he's been through. He's buried his ten kids. He's had all of his camels and goats and flocks and oxen all stolen. He's had stuff destroyed. Fire from heaven. I mean, this is bad. It's been bad. And still he's saying words that we still echo in our worship today, not knowing anything, really, of the extent of the pain of Job in having to bury all of his kids in one week. That's amazing pain.

And yet here's God going, "Look at him. He passed the test." And Satan answered Yahweh, "Satan answered the Lord and said, 'Skin for skin!'" verse 4, "'all that a man has he will give for his life.'" Don't forget, by the way, that Satan thinks that about your health. Don't forget that. He thinks, "You know what? Nothing will get him to turn like illness." I mean, just think of this backroom discussion. It'll help you, I think, recognize that everything in your life that's a trial is a testing of your faith. Do I trust God? Is my trust going to be squarely in God?

And the Lord said to Satan, verse 6, "Behold, he's in your hand." Oh, I'm sorry, verse 5. Let's just give the whole picture here of what he says, "Stretch out your hand," Satan says, "and touch his bone and his flesh; and he will curse you to your face." And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he's in your hand; only spare his life. So Satan went out from the presence of Yahweh, and struck Job with loathsome sores." And these could be a lot of things. You can have disease in your feet. I mean, I'm not minimizing pain in other parts of your body. But think about this, your epidermis, think about your skin breaking out in sores. Speaking of feet, "from the soul of his feet to the crown of his head. And he took a piece of broken pottery," this is gross now, "with which to scrape himself as he sat in the ashes." You can picture him getting the pus from broken sores on his body, scraping it with a pot sheared, a broken piece of pottery. This is a painful picture of a man in great physical distress.

Well he had a visitor at the hospital, verse 9. One who should've stayed in the waiting room, his wife shows up. I hate to say that, but she wasn't much of an encouragement here. She says, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die." I mean, it's almost like euthanasia. It's almost like, "Job, you've been through so much. God has not been good to you. You need to recognize it's over. Just give it up." Verse 10, "But he said to her," which you ought to say to anyone who is going to tell you that the illness should change your inner disposition toward God or your faith or your trust or your confidence in God, the giver of all good things, he said, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak." I mean, I expected more from you, wife. I can't believe you're talking like that. "Shall we receive good from God," here's an echo of the end of Chapter 1, "Shall we receive good from God, and shall not receive evil?" And here's the God-breathed commentary, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

Now Job starts to spiral if you know the book of Job. God's got to come on the scene, Chapter 38, and kind of reset this whole thing. But right here at this point, at this juncture, we can learn a lot about a guy who realizes this: God is the giver of all my health, and if God decides to take that away, it's certainly within the purview and prerogative of God to do so. That's a humble perspective in light of a God who really doesn't owe us anything. Job recognizes that and he accepts that and he realizes the goodness of God even when he's sick. That's a very challenging thing. But James says you ought to be considering Job. Think of his patience. Think of the outcome of his life. Think about him in the midst of that suffering.

Now he prays and his prayers start to degenerate in a way to where he's saying some things he shouldn't say in the rest of the book. But at this particular point, I'm thinking that's what I'd like to do, is be able to look at God and recognize that he is the provider of all good things, that my health is a gift. If God decides to take it, he can take back any of the gifts he gives me. It's an unfortunate thing that we go through the grief and pain and loss of our good health or our family or whatever it might be. But that's the picture of an exalted, transcendent God that he's living in light of.

And with all that said, you might expect, certainly with the parallel here in Second Chronicles 16 printed there on your worksheet, that really what he should be doing is asking God to help him. Which, of course. I'm not going to downplay that, because intuitively when we respond to our



sicknesses by saying, "God, would you please relieve my sickness?" I'm not saying we shouldn't do that. I'm just trying to say there is an order of things to this. There is a searching our heart. There's an asking about it before God. There's a trust that needs to be firmly seeded in the God who is the giver of all good things.

But then there is, I think, something very intuitive. We say, God, "Would you please help me? Would you fix the problem?" Not that God owes us the rallying of our health. Not that God owes us the eradication of our cancer cells or the fixing of our arthritis or our migraines or whatever we're struggling with. But when he does bring that, here's the good perspective. The New Testament would remind us that it is an act of mercy, and that's a good thing to remember. As Paul talks about his good friend Epaphroditus to the Philippians, he says, "Man, I was really on the edge of my seat with his illness. He was sick. Matter of fact, he was sick to the point of death. But God had mercy on him," and on me because I can't imagine, as he says, "God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

Now, if God kept his promise and Epaphroditus got sick and died, it should still be "blessed be the name of the Lord." But to be able to ask for his rally, for his restoration, to have his health fixed, I mean, that's a natural prayer, and you ought to pray it after you pray a few other things. You ought to ask for those things. But when God grants that, if he grants that, then we ought to recognize what an act of mercy and grace that is, that God does not owe that to us. But when he does bring it, hey, we rejoice. We give thanks for that. We're thankful. We're thankful for the way that he restores our loved ones to us, even though, really, we know to die is gain, but we're still grateful and Paul's grateful. He sees it as an act of mercy. So, yes, of course, I don't need to lecture you on this, but ask God for his sustaining and restorative intervention in your life when you're struggling with illness. Seek him first, seek him foremost, put your trust in him and then don't misunderstand the bottom of verse 12.

Second Chronicles Chapter 16, bottom of verse 12, "Even in his disease, he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from the physicians." And the contrast here is about his faith and his confidence and maybe even the sequential order. But it has nothing to do with the utilization of physicians. As I said, from Genesis to the New Testament pages, physicians are not bad guys. They're good guys. They're a proper means by which God accomplishes what he wants to accomplish for good.

Let me remind you of the beginning of the book of Genesis that says that we are here to exercise dominion. We're here over the creation to take the raw elements of this world, whether in a garden or the molecular structure of what we find in the universe, and we are to put it all together and assemble it all together and aim it for good. That's a good thing. Take raw materials and make a phone for communication and a computer for research and pages and ink to print Bibles with or print books with. All that's a good, good thing. Including pharmacology, including X-ray machines, MRIs, including inoculations from diseases, including glasses, including heart valves, including pacemakers. All of that is part of God's design and plan for us to marshal the things of this earth and to utilize them for good.

But we've got to be careful, particularly in Southern California, in Orange County, with some of the best hospitals in the world right here in Southern California, that we make sure that our trust



never shifts to them. So we utilize the means by which God has ordained the help and alleviation of our pain, after we seek God, and at a second-tier so that we're always foremost trusting in God. Number three, I put it this way, you need to "Wisely Utilize God's Tools." And the tools I'm talking about are the tools that might remedy your illness, that might alleviate your pain, that might correct a problem in your health. Utilize them wisely, carefully. Utilize them without ever disrupting your trust.

Turned to Psalm 33 if you can get there quickly, Psalm 33. This is an uncredited psalm, but if we were to assume it was written by David or certainly part of Davidic volume of psalms, even if we don't need to, but I certainly want to think about David, who knew what it was to stand there, his first official battle with the Israeli army when he was really there just to bring bread and cheese to his brothers. He goes out there, as you remember, in the zeal of God coming against the Philistine champion in the name of God with a slingshot in his hand. And of course, God gave over the Philistine giant to David and David wins and he's hailed as a victor. He cuts his head off. It's a big, big deal.

Well, David becomes king, as you know, many years later and he doesn't say, well, phooey on the chariots and the horses and the swords. We're just going to pass out slingshots to everyone and if we ever have problems with those Philistines or anyone else, we'll just throw rocks at them. David is all about putting an army together. But just like David or any other king, we've got to recognize the tool is being utilized as a means by God to accomplish an end where our trust is squarely in God.

So look at verse 16, Psalm 33:16. It's just a good reminder whether it's from the pen of David or not. "The king is not saved by his great army." Underlying these two letters "by" "B" "Y". He's not saved BY it. He might be saved WITH it. He may have a large great army, but he not saved by it. "A warrior is not delivered BY his great strength." Now, a warrior could have great strength. Should the Israeli army not be pumping iron, you know? Should they not be doing push-ups? No. I mean, that's fine. Get strong. Be good if you're a fighter to be strong, but you're not delivered by that great strength. "A warhorse..." I mean, you should have them if you are going to have a standing army, David. "A warhorse" is a good thing, but "it's a false hope." Don't put your hope in winning or being saved in salvation through the warhorse. No, "By its great might," and it's great to have a bunch of warhorses, "it cannot rescue." IT cannot rescue. It may be the means by which God is appointed your rescue.

Now it looks a lot like Second Chronicles 16:9, the verse that pivoted from being scared in the political sense to being sick as we're dealing with today. We've got a verse that sounds a lot like what Hanani said, "Behold, the eye of the Lord," the eye of Yahweh, "is on those who fear him, on those who hope," in his hesed, "in his steadfast love," in his faithful, covenant love, "that he," God, the Lord, "may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine." Think about that. It's the same thing. God, just looking to strongly support those whose hearts are his, are fully his, are loyal to him. Well, Asa said he had a heart that was loyal to God. Matter of fact, people saw it at points in his life, he seemed devoted wholly to the Lord. But when it came "skin-for-skin" time, and "touching his flesh and his bones" at the end of his life here, he didn't have this perspective. Matter of fact, he said, "Quick, who is on the speed dial for my doctor? Who's the royal doctor?"



We better call him because I'm really getting bad in my feet." It'd be like him going to war and saying, well, how many chariots do we have? How many warhorses do we have?

You may be rushing up to the trauma center, you may be loading up your loved one in an ambulance to take them to the best hospital in Southern California. You may be calling a doctor and boasting about his credentials and who else he's worked on and how great he is in surgery. But if you start talking in that way and you're not careful, you'll start to think that you're saved by, you're healed by, you're delivered by the surgeon, the doctor, the skill of the practitioner. That's just not the case. God utilizes those means because you don't live by bread alone, you don't live by medicine alone, you don't live by doctors alone, you don't live by surgery alone.

If God is not interested in you living another day, I don't care what you've got, you're not going to live another day. But if you seek the Lord as it says here, "The eye of the Lord is ready to set his support, to deliver." Now, does he deliver every time? No, we'd have 2,000-year-old people. We'd have, you know, 10,000-year-old people if this were an ongoing... No, God made a promise. We're going to get out of this temporal life, the transient life, we're going to get into the next life, he's going to give us a refurbished and glorified body. That's the real point of Christianity. But in the meantime, when you're sick, keep your trust in the right place, utilize the means.

Jesus told a story. We call it the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. At the end, he says in the punchline, you remember, "Go and do the same." Now, of course, it's about having compassion on people who may not seem to be your neighbor. Right? The whole question is who's my neighbor? But you do remember in that passage, the thing that he saying go do the same, I mean, the one example at least is if you find someone dead by the road or almost dead or left for dead by the road, you ought to do some things. You ought to show compassion in a certain way.

Let me read it for you. Here's a couple of things that happened. The Samaritan came and bound up his wounds. That's a good thing. Do you have some bandaids in your house? It would be a good thing if you're sick, you should have some bandages. You know, you should put oil on the cuts, they poured oil on it, medicine, salve, wine used as an antiseptic to keep from infection. Then he set him on his own animal, on his own animal. I also said ambulance, but that's what it was. Right? Let's get the sick person to the inn where they will take care of him. Inns are where they take care of people. They're called hospitals today.

And so he goes, he takes two denarii and he gives it to the guy at the place where they take care of people. There's even insurance involved in this. Right? There's money exchanged. I mean, you got everything in this passage that you could correlate to the modern experience of trauma, bandages, triage, oil, antiseptic, antibiotic cream, injections, IV's, ambulances, hospitals, ERs all the way down to paying for medical care. Nothing wrong with that. If God wasn't into utilizing the means, we wouldn't have means like that presented as a good example of someone caring for someone.

Even in the passage it might take on James 5 is this: that not only should we be praying, we ought to be expanding the circle of prayer. It talks about telling the leaders of your church and then it says anointing them with oil. I don't think it is a symbolic act like they did in the Old Testament



with a priest. I think that's just the major medical means of dealing with people's sicknesses. Probably, much like on the mission field today, it's the leaders of the church who are the most educated and the most capable of helping people, not just with their physical needs, but with their medical needs. I'm thinking with the audience of James, that's probably what we have in view there.

But the sequence is important. We pray. We seek the Lord. We expand the circle, have others pray for us, which I had to do even just last week with my family, texting my friends, pray for me, I'm taking my daughter to the ER. She's going into the hospital. She's in an ambulance. I've been through that just recently again with my daughter, some you know, born with a congenital defect. She's got her medical struggles. We had another episode last week. We had to deal with her brain shunt and that stuff happens. We pray, we go about utilizing the means that God has given to us, and then as the text says, we make sure we give credit, and James 5 is where it belongs, "and the Lord will raise him up." The Lord will fix the medical problem. Right? That's the picture in this passage. He will heal him. "The Lord will raise him up." If it has something to do with sin and discipline, "The Lord will forgive him."

My point is in Scripture that you ought to recognize those gifts that we have in the modern era, just like they had some corresponding gifts in the ancient world, are the means that God gives us for good in our lives. We ought to utilize them without ever putting our trust in them. Matter of fact, I take great, I don't know, pride, I feel good when Paul says to Timothy, you know, there are a lot of things out there that are good, they're created by God and we are to engage in them in the context is dealing with things like marriage and food, he says they're given by God, "they're to be received with thanksgiving." Right? And they're sanctified. They're set apart. They're useful in God's economy by Christians, by the word of God in prayer, when I think biblically and I'm praying to God.

What I love is a little phrase that's tucked in there. "These are for those who believe and know the truth." I just like that thought. When I drive by the best hospital off the I-5 freeway and I look, I think the modern marshaling of the arts in medicine really are given, really, as a direct gift from God to those who believe and know the truth. Do non-Christians get to participate in it? Yeah, they do. The common grace of God. But God allows those tools for us to utilize. So we do without ever putting our trust in them.

There are a lot of preachers out there this weekend who are going to be talking about God's will for you to be healthy and wealthy. Sometimes they're going to point theologically to the atonement. They're going to quote Isaiah 53, "by his wounds, you are healed." They're going to look in the gospels and see that that was even quoted that he carried our infirmities and our sicknesses when Jesus healed people there in his ministry. And you're going to say, "See, right there? God wants to heal us."

And again, I going to look at the objectivity of where are the non-dying faith healers? Right? Where are the people who have this theology working for more than a few years? Right? Well, of course, it doesn't logically make sense that the atonement has purchased for us our healing in every circumstance and certainly not in this life. And yet, I'm not going to disagree with the



exposition of Isaiah 53 from the faith healer who says, you know, in the atonement was purchased our physical healing. I can agree with that. I can agree with that. But like a lot of folks, even in Corinth with an over-realized eschatology, that all the things that God promised for eternity should be experienced right here and right now, I'm going to say, well wait, the whole point in what Christ did in absorbing the penalty of my sin was not only going to remove the problem of sin relationally with God, it's going to remove the penalty of sin physically in my body and I'm all about that.

I believe that in the redemption, in the death of Christ, in the pouring out of his blood and his body being killed on a cross, I believe that in that is the purchase of my physical health. And one day I'll have it. I'll have my lowly body transformed. In the meantime, I'm going to groan, waiting and longing for the redemption of the body. Will God give me a reprieve on some of my illnesses? Yeah. And he already has on a few and that's great and I praise him for that. But I look forward to the day when there's no crying, no mourning, no pain, no sickness, no disease, no arthritis, no heart disease, no vascular disease. Just that there are so many things that we struggle with in our church. No cancer. That's coming. It's been purchased in the cross.

I'm going to ask the ushers to have come down the aisles. We're going to pass the elements of the Lord's Supper. I don't want us to focus overly on our promise of physical glorification, but I don't want it to be lost in this practice of the Lord's Supper today. I want you to focus on the fact that what happened, if you are a Christian, you know what happened, the payment of our sin, the punishment that I should receive, was in some incredible mind-blowing transaction paid for by Christ on that dark Friday afternoon.

But in that is the cure for what ails us ultimately. And we look forward to that. We set our minds on things above. We set our minds on the things that we cannot now see. If you never participated in the Lord's Supper with us, I want to make clear that this is a reminder. It is what Jesus said to "do in remembrance of him." Even in the first modified Passover meal that became the Lord's Supper, he talked about the cup being a cup that represented this promise, this covenant in his blood.

But if you grew up in a church that taught you that this miraculously turns into his blood, I want to make that very clear, that's not the case and Jesus made that clear. He said, after he'd pronounced that this was the cup of the blood of his covenant, that this picture that was presented to us, he then said, "I'm not going to drink this fruit of the vine until I drink it again with you in the kingdom." So we know this is not some molecular change. It's a reminder. It's a tactile reminder, much like baptism. Baptism doesn't wash away your sins. It's a picture of something. And yet it's a tactile experience that even your taste buds get to experience today that gives you a reminder of your desperate need for alliance with Christ. You can't get any closer than eating this stuff. I mean, it becomes a part of me.

And so it is that I need to be so alive with Christ that I am said, as Paul liked to say, in him, "I'm in Christ." I want to associate with Christ by saying it's my only hope. It's my only hope to be right with my creator. It's my only hope to be ever in a body that doesn't ache and fail and die. As I said earlier, Paul called the Corinthians to examine themselves, make sure they're eating this meal in a



worthy way, which is to make sure that we're honest with God about our sins. So we always leave you some time and I'm going to leave you about three, four minutes here for you to talk to God silently about your life. If there's anything that's outstanding.

Maybe it's a simple and yet as grave as shifting your trust from God to a bottle of medicine or from the Lord's sustaining power in some upcoming surgery you have scheduled. Don't break the appointment. Just make sure your trust is in the right place. Because if you rally and God restores you, it's the work of God. "In him we live and move and have our being." He's actively involved. We're not Deists. God did not walk away from his creation. He's involved here in your body. If he gives you grace and gives you mercy and gives your family mercy and keeps them from the sorrow of losing you or having this get worse, praise God for that. But look beyond the horizon of this life to where Christianity ultimately takes us. That's the hope we ought to be praying for. That ought to be the hope we're focused on. And thank God for what it took to buy that for us, to purchase that for us. You talk to God. I'll be back up in three minutes and we'll take these elements at the same time.

Romans 8:18 says, "that the sufferings of this present time, they're not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us." And he personifies creation, verse 19. It just like creation is longing, eagerly longing, the fabric of this creation, "it just longs and it's waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. The creation was subjected to this futility." It's in bondage to this decay and we're made of that stuff. But the good news is, as that passage says, that one day, even though we groan within ourselves, we can't wait for the redemption of the body. That is the hope in which we were saved. Hope that we see, what hope is that? This is not it.

The Christian life is not about the "here and now." A lot of work to do in the here and now. But, it's all about the "then and there." It's about the day that the sons of God will be revealed, the day that we get our inheritance, it's the day that Christ sets up his throne and rules over this world, a remade world, ultimately a promise of a world in which righteousness dwells. That's our hope. It's not a hope that makes us bury our heads in the sand. Some people have said, Christians are so heavenly minded, they're no earthly good. As Lewis rightly responded, we're really no earthly good until we start to be heavenly minded. That's when you start to get bold in your evangelism. That's when you start to value the redemption of Christ on a cross. You cannot gut Christianity from that core. We have to be focused on where Christ is taking his people and that's why we want our neighbors, our friends, our family members, our co-workers to come to faith in Christ.

These elements are supposed to remind us of the high price of our salvation, and I hope with a very sober heart, at least in terms of the cognizant nature of us looking at our own unworthiness before a great and gracious God, that we declare our desire to align with Christ. We want to be with Christ, we want Christ and all of his righteousness to envelop us, as Paul said, "to be clothed in him." So with confidence in the finished work of Christ, with hope in what's coming, if you know Christ today, I invite you to eat this bread and drink this cup.

God, you said that we would proclaim your death, the death of your Son that is, until he comes as we participate in this very simple practice of the Lord's Supper. It's supposed to unify us in many ways. There are practical spillover benefits of us being together in church, assembled to celebrate



this reminder of the Lord's Supper. God, we know that even if we think about physical pain and illness and disease, we need each other to walk through and support and encourage each other.

So God, I do pray as we set our hope firmly on you for all things, knowing that you give us every good gift that comes from you, we want to pull together as a church, we want to make sure that we put our arm around our brother and sister in Christ and walk through this life with our hope firmly set on where you're taking us. You're not ashamed, God, to be called our God when we have that sense, we want that homeland, that city whose architect and builder is God. So God gets us excited about that this week, even as we enter into this week where people are talking about Thanksgiving and giving thanks, may we give thanks in a profound way for what you provided for us in Christ. And I ask that you would encourage us in that way this morning.

In Jesus name. Amen.