

James 5

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

Date: 06 May 2018

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Good evening.

And welcome to the service again. Again, it's good to see some who are visiting and still with us. You're especially welcome. I don't want to go through the information, so I went through them in the morning.

We've been on the screen before the service. I just want to say to the secondary school-age children, or young people even, that the YF meets at half past seven tonight.

So don't rush off, but stay behind if you're able to. We'll begin our time of worship by singing to God's praise from Psalm 116. Psalm 116.

And we sing the first two stanzas of the psalm. The first four verses, as they're marked in the English. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear.

[1 : 06] While I live with calling him, he bowed to me his ear. Of death the cords and sorrows did about me compass rhyme. The pains of hell took hold on me. I grief and trouble find.

Three stanzas, sorry. Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thy my soul, O Lord. I do thee humbly pray. The first three verses, or three stanzas of Psalm 116.

We sing in Gaelic to God's praise and we remain seated to sing. And after we've sung Angus Alec, will lead us in prayer in Gaelic, please. I still am here to stand with you, in those of you, in the morning, fall.

I still am here to stand with me, Troy. I n m okayed in a sadan k ram.

AR zoals Mar Paim Thank you.

[3 : 37] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[6 : 07] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[10 : 37] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. There humbly fall before his feet, for none can perish there.

[13 : 00] Approach my soul, the precious sea, where Jesus answers prayer.

There humbly fall before his feet, for none can perish there.

Thy promise is my only plea, with this I venture nigh.

The call is burdened so to thee, and such, O Lord, am I.

But down beneath a load of sin, thy Satan's sword in rest.

[14 : 18] By war with earth and fears within, I come to thee for rest.

Be thou my shield, a hiding place, but shelter near thy side.

I pray by fears, accuser fades, and tell him thou hast died.

O wondrous love to bleed and die, to bear the cross and shame.

That guilty sinner such as I might be thy gracious name.

[15 : 36] If I could invite you to turn to God's word, James chapter 5.

James chapter 5.

We'll read the last section of this chapter from verse 13 to verse 20.

It's good to have a number from Musselboro Baptist with us this morning and this evening. I know I haven't asked you to do this, Ian, but Ian and I and Heather had lunch today. So after I read God's word, would you be willing to come and read us in prayer?

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[17 : 05] Amen. Amen. Amen. truth and someone should bring him back. Remember this.

Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins. Amen and may God bless to us that reading of his word. Ian, give me this in prayer.

Amen. Father, we come before you tonight as a group of people unworthy to be here.

But we thank you that through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, through his amazing work, his amazing life, his amazing death on a cross, his resurrection, through this wonderful work, we're able to be here tonight in your presence.

And we praise you, Father, that you've looked upon us so kindly, so graciously, with a love and a depth of love that we can't understand.

[18 : 56] You're a God who we know little about in the big picture. We know the things that you want us to know through your word, but you're a great God, unfathomable to us and our minds.

that we thank you for what we do know, for our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who's come in to this world to reveal you to us.

And we praise you, Lord, that you've made us your own and that no one can pluck us out of your hand. You're a great God who has plans for all who belong to you.

And we thank you for this purpose, that we don't live lives that are aimless, that we live lives that are for your glory. And we just want to ask you afresh that you would help us to do that for you.

As we meet here, we want to worship you with clean hands and pure hearts. We want to bring glory to your name in our prayers, in our singing to you, as we listen to your word, as we apply it to our lives.

[20 : 15] We ask you that you'll help us to live lives that are worthy of the gospel of our Lord Jesus. So come close to us.

Draw close to us. And we know that you draw close to us when we do this. And we're asking you to help us in our worship, in our lives.

We pray, Lord, for those who are close to us that can be here tonight. We pray for those that are close to us who are on the mission field serving you in other parts of this world.

And we thank you for our part that we have in reaching out into the nations by praying and for supporting these people. Lord, I don't know everyone who is known to this congregation, who they're supporting, who they have sent out, that I just ask you that you would be with them tonight, wherever they are, and have a real sense of your presence and your touch.

So draw close to us. We pray for David as he brings your word to us. We pray that he'll stand here with real confidence, really sensing your power as you help him communicate what you've laid on his hand.

[21 : 32] So we ask your blessing with thankful hearts in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Lord, we pray as we have sung that you would create soul thirst for you, Lord, that you would give us that hunger for your word and that you would enable us to receive your word by faith as we bow before you.

We ask, Father, that you would help us. We pray that you would send the Holy Spirit, that you would show us our sin, our unworthiness, our need of Jesus, and Lord, that you would spotlight Jesus so that we would see him and be drawn in faith to him.

We thank you for the gospel, for the good news about Jesus Christ. We thank you that the work of salvation is done. And we thank you that as we look in faith to him and as we open our empty hands and ask that he would give to us the forgiveness and the salvation that we cannot earn or buy, we pray that we would have that assurance even this evening.

So hear us and help us, Lord, we pray. Help us, as we pray, to pray in accordance with your will and to have that desire in our lives to exalt your name, not our name, and to live for your glory and not for our own.

And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. The question that I want to begin with tonight and focus on tonight is a question of how do we pray?

[23 : 27] How do we pray? I think that's a question that we should often ask. It's a question that we should probably never stop asking. How do we pray?

Teach us, Lord, how to pray. I remember when I was probably in my early teens, maybe younger than that, in fact, maybe I was only eight or nine, but my Shendor and Stornway, that's my grandfather, my Shendor Archie, who some of you remember who worked at Scalby for years. After he retired, he was in his late 70s, maybe his early 80s, and his people were from Glenelg, told some of you this already, and he wanted to go to Glenelg one last time, but he, it's a very inaccessible place, it's not easy to get to, there's not much public transport, but he was determined he wanted to get there, and my granny wasn't so keen to go there.

So one morning he took off downtown, and he did the tour like he always did, I used to go with him, but this particular morning I wasn't allowed to go. He went out for 40 minutes on the dot, this particular morning, 40 minutes past, 50 minutes past, an hour past, an hour and a half past, and just a wee bit after that, we heard a roar from the front path.

It wasn't him, it was a motorbike. He'd gone off to the shop, I don't know where you buy that in store, no way, and he decided he would buy himself a motorbike.

[25 : 04] That was the way he was going to get to Glenelg, and he did get to Glenelg on that motorbike. He'd never had one before, he had no idea how to ride it, but he discovered that as long as he had the L plates on, he was entitled by law to ride the thing.

So he put the L plates on, and he never took them off. Never sat his test, but he drove, he rode on this motorbike for years afterwards, always with the L plates on, he never took them off.

And in the area of prayer, we should never take the L plates off. We're always learning. So this evening, James 5, in the next 25 minutes, some lessons in prayer.

How are we to pray? With the verses in front of us as our guide. The first thing, first point to note is we're to pray believing.

Point number one, we're to pray believing. The NIV here has the preface to verse 13 as the prayer of faith.

[26 : 20] And then James begins to speak about the prayer of faith. And we might ask, certainly I asked in studying and in approaching the book in my own study, what is this prayer of faith?

Is this a special kind of prayer? Is it a kind of prayer that uses a special kind of language, special kind of words? Is this a prayer that's prayed by a special kind of person?

And I don't think it's any of these things. The prayer of faith is simply believing prayer. It's to pray believing that God is hearing and he is able to answer.

The prayer of faith is not some turbocharged prayer. It's not the prayer of a super Christian. We'll see more about that shortly. It's simply prayer believing that God is hearing and he's able to answer. I got various prayer requests even in the course of the last week. Some asking for prayer in starting a new job. Others asking for prayer over a stressful exam period.

[27 : 39] others who are having difficult times in stressful relationships. Others who were going through medical procedures.

Others still waiting for the results coming back having had medical procedures. Some even were praying for good weather to allow a marquee to sit on a beach and not go into outer space.

Now why do we pray? Why do we get these prayer requests? Why do we pray when we're in trouble? Why do we pray when we anticipate trouble? Why do we pray when we are anxious?

Why do we pray when we're confused and we don't know which way to go? It's because we believe God hears and he's able to answer. Otherwise we're wasting our time.

James says in verse 13 is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. We sit tonight in this building for which we're thankful.

[28 : 48] How have we got this? We should ask that often. How have we got this building in this location in this condition? How did we get this?

I think we got this because we prayed believing that God can hear and God heard and graciously he answered in a way that was far in excess of our asking, certainly mine.

So we pray believing verse 15, our prayers should be offered in faith. And James cites Elijah as he gives this teaching in verse 17.

He prayed earnestly that it would not rain. Elijah that is, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed and the heavens gave rain and the earth produced its crop. Elijah prayed earnestly. He prayed believing. He prayed for what some may have regarded as being utterly impossible.

[30 : 04] But God heard and God answered and he answered his prayer every day. And God still hears and he still answers.

So we're taught here, we're encouraged here to keep on praying. Jonathan Lamb, the commentator, says this, James tells us that Elijah prayed that it wouldn't rain for three and a half years.

That was a prayer to be tested in daily life. The answer came morning by morning, not all at once. He had to keep on trusting and in the end he had 1200 reasons for trusting God.

And so do we. I don't know how often we maybe take the time to sit down and think about all the prayers that God has answered.

We can be quick to fire them off at times, and that's no bad thing. but it's good for us to pause and think about how God has answered and how day by day God continues to answer our prayers.

[31 : 28] Because as we do so, our faith is built up and our prayers just increase. peace. So how do we pray?

We pray believing. That's the first point. The second point is we pray as brothers and sisters. And that's something I think that comes through clearly in these verses.

And these verses, as James teaches, there's a concern, not just for self, but for all those who are bound up together with him in the family of God.

look at verse 14, for example. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him. If anyone's sick, they shouldn't remain isolated, but they should be prayed for and with.

Verse 16, therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. This is not a gathering of people who are all distant from each other and isolated.

[32 : 38] James is teaching that we should be in close relationship to each other, so much so that when we're struggling, we're able to lean on each other and confess our sins to each other and ask for prayer specifically.

Look at verse 19. My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this, whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

There's a real emphasis here, not on the single individual, but on all the Christians who gather together and who are connected together, the family of God.

See, the church is a community of believers. believers. It's not the bricks. We have to keep on remembering that. Week after week after week in the community centre, we were so conscious.

The church is not the bricks. The church is not the building. The church is the people. It's not the institution. It's not the denomination.

[33 : 52] It's a gathering of believers. It is a group of brothers and sisters who are united together in Christ. So when we come together, the biblical expectation is that we will care about each other.

Take a look around you. Do we care about each other? I hope we do. I believe we do. that's the biblical expectation, that we'll care about each other and we will care for each other.

Because there are times in our lives when we need that. Especially the biblical expectation is that we'll look out for each other.

that we'll support each other when we're struggling. That we'll lift each other up when we're discouraged.

That we'll weep with each other when we're grieving. And we'll rejoice from each other when we have cause to rejoice.

[35 : 14] and sometimes we'll hold each other accountable when we can see that we're straying off away from Christ and into the world.

But in every instance we're to pray for each other and we're to pray with each other. That's why the prayer meeting is such an important meeting.

I know some of you probably get sick of me saying be encouraged to come to the prayer meeting.

The prayer meeting is such an important meeting because this is where we come together as brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for each other and to pray with each other.

So we pray, believing, and we pray as brothers and sisters. God and I think if I was to go around everyone in the room here, everyone here would agree this in principle and nobody would dispute any of this.

But I'm conscious as we come to the end of James, James is a man of practice and not just principle. James is a man of application and I can imagine James sitting down and saying, well, I like to see you're nodding your head, but are you actually doing this in practice?

[36 : 45] Elders, are you being called to the homes of those who are seriously ill, when they're seriously ill, and are you praying with them? And do you know each other well enough and trust each other deeply enough to be honest and open about when and where you're falling into sin?

So you can pray for each other. you can imagine James saying, when did you, David, last ask someone why they don't come to the prayer meeting anymore?

Or why they're not coming out regularly to the evening service? When did you last have a coffee with someone because you were concerned about a drift that you could see in their lives away from Christ and onto a destructive course?

When did you last do that, MacLeod? And MacLeod, when did someone last do that for you? See, we really need to know each other and trust each other if we're going to meaningfully pray for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

And that's how we're taught to pray. If Jesus turned to his disciples and asked them to pray for him in Gethsemane, if Paul so often said to the churches that he was writing to, remember and pray for me, then we certainly need to be praying for each other.

[38 : 23] I have no brothers not in the blood sense but I have many brothers in the spiritual eternal sense and I'm taught here to remember you in prayer and you're taught here to remember me because I need it.

So we pray believing, we pray as brothers and sisters, we pray thirdly, bowing to God's will and to his glory.

Some people think about prayer like a slot machine, you know the vending machines, you put your money in, you make your selection of whatever tasty snack that you're looking for and outcomes to treat.

That's what some people have in their minds when they're thinking about prayer. That's not prayer. Prayer is not telling, prayer is not us telling God selfishly what we would fancy.

Prayer is when we are trying to discern what God would like for us, for our spirit, children, and for his glory.

[39 : 49] Robert Law says this, prayer is not getting man's will done in heaven, it's getting God's will done on earth. Remember John the Baptist, in his prayer, he must increase, Jesus must increase, I must decrease, and that's how we're to pray.

We need to bow down in prayer, not necessarily in our physical posture, but certainly in our hearts. I, we, self, needs to bow down, self is quashed, and God, his glory, and his will is to be exalted, that's to be our aim, that's to be our desire, and our lives, and that's to be reflected in our prayers. I was told this week that my nephews in Aberdeen, they had a bonus stay-off of school in this week past. One of the water meets into the school, or feeding the school burst.

so in the course of the day, they realised there was no water in the school, and so the school had to be evacuated, and all the children were sent home. And in the evening, the boys were gathered, and they were having their Bible time, they were saying their prayers, and one of them, I won't tell you which one it was, but one of them thanked the Lord with such gratitude and sincerity for bursting the water made, and he earnestly prayed that he would burst another water in the evening tomorrow, so they could get another day off school.

Not making this up. Now that's perhaps not the best example of a prayer where selfish motives are bowing down. James gives us a better example than Elijah.

[41 : 59] You see that in verse 17 again. We read it already, he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Now, what's the story in the background of this? I haven't got time to go into it, but you can read when you get home, 1 Kings 17, 18, and into 19 as well, and you'll get the full picture.

But in that context, at that time, Israel were being led away from the Lord by King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. They were worshipping false gods, they were into idolatry, they were forgetting about and

they were rebelling against the one true God, their God.

They weren't living as God's people. They had no concern for God's glory, they had no interest in keeping his laws, and Elijah saw this, and it rightly troubled Elijah.

So for three and a half years, Elijah prayed, no more rain, and God heard, and God answered.

[43 : 14] And as the crops failed, and as the nation struggled, the people began to think about their sin, and their rebellion.

they began to think about God's covenant that they had forgotten. And then we know in the well-known account of Elijah on Mount Carmel, Elijah then prays for rain, and God displayed his glory and his power in answering that prayer, and sending showers of blessing.

Elijah. Why did Elijah pray? Elijah prayed that prayer so that the nation would notice that they would be arrested in their hearts and their minds to think not about their own selfish desires, but that they would start to think about God's glory, and his call on their lives, and God heard that kind of prayer, and God answered.

And it's not hard for us to apply these principles to our land. Our land was once, not that long ago, considered to be the land of the book.

It was once a land where the glory of God was our desire. We see it in the emblems of universities all over Scotland. England, and now we're a land in rebellion against God, where the Bible has been pushed out of every public sector, even the church.

[44 : 59] And there's certainly a spiritual drive in these days. There's certainly increasingly a famine of the gospel. So should we not pray like Elijah? Should we not pray that God will arrest our nation, starting with us, so that his glory will be seen again?

Should we not pray for showers of blessing? Should we not pray for the awakening and the revival of God's people? That's what we sang. Revive thy work, O Lord.

Exalt thy precious name. And by the Holy Ghost our love, for thee and thine in flame, revive thy work, O Lord, and give refreshing showers.

The glory shall be all thine own. The blessing, Lord, be ours. That's Elijah's prayer. Self-bows down. God's glory is lifted up. God's prayer. And so in the detail of our lives, as we think about our prayers, as we audit our prayers and listen to ourselves as we pray, maybe we should be challenged to pray less about our own comforts and securities and more for God's glory to be revealed in us and through us, whatever circumstances that takes.

[46 : 34] I've mentioned a few times a book that I read in the past weeks, which I found really challenging. The Insanity of God, the title of the book, and as the author speaks about the intensity of persecution in certain parts of the world where God was working, the prayers of the Christians there were not for the suffering to end.

The prayers of the Christians in these countries were that God's glory would increase. And if their suffering was going to make God's glory more evident, then so be it.

And God is hearing and he's answering these kind of prayers because the church in these persecuted lands is exploding. I always remember Dominic Smart Wednesday evening in Aberdeen, 15 years ago probably, saying, by all means pray for revival, but remember revival usually comes in persecution.

so we pray as those who are believing, we pray as brothers and sisters in Christ, we pray as those who want self to bow down and God to be exalted, and we pray finally as those who are bad, but we are beloved.

Bad by nature and yet we are beloved in Christ. We've got a wee mat in our house and it loves to curl up at the front door and act as a trip hazard.

[48 : 33] So whenever you're walking into the mat, watch, that mat's anywhere about, it wants you down the deck. there's a verse here in this passage that could trip us up if we're not careful.

There's a verse that could stifle our prayers if we don't understand it and it's the version in verse 16 concerning the righteous man. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Now who is the righteous man? It's a question going through my mind when I've been reading this in past weeks. Who is the righteous man? Who is James speaking about?

Who is he addressing in these verses? Some might say, well, clearly it's Elijah because Elijah is the one who's been held up as an example in prayer here. Must be Elijah.

I mean, he was a spiritual giant. No wonder his prayers were heard and no wonder my prayers are not. Must be Elijah.

[49 : 34] But then if we go from 1 Kings 17 and 18 and fast forward just a wee bit into 1 Kings 19, we see Elijah on another day.

And on this day, he's on the run. He's terrified of Jezebel, the queen. His faith has failed.

He's in total despair and he's running for his life. He's far away from where he should be and the Lord comes to him in that chapter and says to Elijah, what are you doing here?

Why are you here? See, Elijah is in a bad place. He may have been in a good place in the previous chapters, but now as we look at Elijah in 1 Kings 19, he's in a bad place.

He no longer looks like the righteous man. He no longer looks like the exemplary believer. He looks like a wreck. So who's the righteous man?

[50 : 46] Is it Moses? Is it David? Is it Peter? Is it Paul? The answer to that is no, it's none of these guys.

All of them were used of God, they walked with God, but they all sinned. The stark reality hits us in Romans chapter 3 verse 10.

We're told there is no one righteous. No one righteous. Not even one. Romans 3 23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

sinned. So with our Bibles open, as we look at our own hearts, we see as God teaches us through his word, by his spirit, that we are all bad by nature.

We're all sinners. But God so loved this bad, sinful world that he sent his good son, Jesus.

[51 : 54] Jesus. And he was, and he is, and he ever will be, the only righteous man.

And he came to live the righteous life that we could not live. And he died the sinner's death that we deserved.

saved. And the amazing truth of the gospel is that if we trust him, we become righteous. As we believe, what Martin Luther called the great exchange is effected, our sin is transferred out of our account into Jesus' Calvary account.

And his righteousness is transferred from his life into ours. So we become righteous.

In and through him. No other way. In and through him. Romans 3 22. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

[53 : 12] There is no difference. for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

So we are bad by nature, sinners. But in Christ, by faith in him, we become righteous.

We become sons and daughters of daughters of God. We become those who are beloved of the Father. So to go back to the question about the righteous man, the righteous man or woman, quite simply, is the man or woman or boy or girl who has faith in Jesus.

And the prayers of a righteous man or woman or boy or girl are the prayers of those who are trusting in Jesus, those who are made righteous in and through the blood of Jesus.

And we know that these prayers that are made in Jesus' name with faith in Christ, these prayers are powerful. and these prayers are effective.

[54 : 42] Because through Jesus we come and pray as children who are beloved of the Father. these are some of the lessons that we can I pray import into our own prayer lives.

We pray believe in. We pray believe in. We pray as brothers and sisters concerned for each other, holding each other up, bringing each other to the throne of grace.

We pray as those who are bowing down in self, hungry for the glory of God, not the glory of me or you. And we pray as those who were bad by nature and fallen, but through Christ have been made good and are now in Christ, beloved of the Father.

And we'll pray. Lord, teach us to pray, we ask.

Help us to not only hear these things, but help us to take these things by faith into our lives, into our experience, into our prayer lives, into our fellowship with you and our fellowship with each other.

[56 : 12] Forgive us when we have prayed wrongly. Forgive us when we have failed to pray at all. Enable us, we ask, to be diligent, to be believing, and to be effective in prayer.

Because we pray all these things in and through the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. foster care and the love service.

Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.