

Victory Through Patience

by Billy Strachan

Billy Strachan's sermon emphasizes the importance of patience and endurance in the Christian faith, particularly in light of the imminent return of the Lord.

Duration: 1:08:49

Scripture: James 5:7

Topics: "Patience"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a man who is bedridden and finds hope in his faith. Despite his physical limitations, the man is filled with joy and gratitude. The speaker encourages the audience to be normal and not judge others based on their appearance. He emphasizes the importance of enduring hardships and finding strength in the Bible. The sermon concludes with a call to action, urging the audience to reach out to others and share the message of Jesus.

Transcript

Victory Through Patience, chapter 5, verses 7 to 9. Victory Through Patience, chapter 5, verses 7 to 9. Let's read those verses. Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain.

Be ye also patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned. Behold, the judge standeth before the door.

Now, these are the earliest references to the second advent proclaimed by any member of the church. The earliest references to the second advent, to the coming again of the Lord. And you'll notice that there is a progression of declaration here.

The first says that he's coming. He's coming. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

In other words, he's coming. Number two is he is drawing nigh. He is drawing nigh.

Now, verse 7 was the coming of the Lord. Be patient unto the coming of the Lord. Verse 8, he's drawing nigh.

And verse 9, number 3, he's before the door. Now, do you see the progression there? Just always, it says, encourage your hearts. Those of you who, in the trials of life, are being misused by other Christians, those of you who are being robbed by other Christians, those of you who are being persecuted, not only by the pagans but by Christians, and you feel that life is tough, you can't explain some of the things you're going through and some of the pressures you're having to face, it says to encourage yourself by a reminder that the Lord is coming.

Now, of course, in those days, just as is typical of people in Scripture, they thought that he would come prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. And this is typical of people misinterpreting the promises of God, not listening to them properly, and that's something you must learn to do. Listen to what God really says, read what God really says, and don't read into it and don't read out of it.

You see, when God said to the serpent, on thy belly shalt thou be, and he cursed the serpent because of the fall of man, he immediately announced the first great promise of the coming of the Messiah, and he said that you shall bruise his heel, but he shall bruise thy head. The seed of the woman, the promise of the coming Christ, and he'll be a boy and he'll be the seed of the woman. Well, the funny thing is, as soon as Eve gave birth to Cain, she thought that was Christ, and she was holding in her hands a murderer.

In the sort of language there, I have gotten a man from the Lord, in Hebrew it's indicative, I've got thee one. I've actually got the fulfillment of the promise already, and little did she realize that was all the ages in between Cain, the murderer, and the coming of Christ, the second man on earth. It was the same with David.

God reiterated the promise that of the line of David, of the seed of David, would come forth he that would be God's king and ruler over God's people forever, and David jumped the gun and assumed it was Solomon, but it wasn't Solomon. It wasn't Solomon at all, and when the Lord said, and that son of mine is going to build an everlasting temple, David prepared silver and gold and great wealth, and they built an earthly temple. And the minute Solomon finished it, he just took one look at this thing, saw the glory of the Lord fill it, and he said, how can you put God in that? How can you contain God in a temple, even if you've made it the biggest, most expensive, and beautiful thing in the world? It's impossible.

Earth is his footstool, heaven is his throne. And even he saw that this isn't what father was talking about, and little did he realize the reference was to Christ. Now, of course, when the church was formed, they assumed that when the Lord said he would come back again, that it would be just a matter of years, and then there would be the great coming again of the Lord.

But you'll notice that the Apostle here encourages them in that attitude of always behaving as though the Lord's return was imminent. Now, of course, that's the very attitude we have to teach people to live in today. I preached on it Sunday night in Stafford, and it's amazing the reaction Christians have to this idea when you're reminded of it.

You see, in that church they told me that was the first time somebody had spoken about the second coming as far back as any of them could remember in years, in that place. And it was almost frightening to hear somebody talk about the imminent return of the Lord. It could be this year.

And they said, it really does make you sit back and re-evaluate your life. I said, yes, I know. I remember once being in a conference in San Diego, and I started the convention by saying, wouldn't it be interesting if instead of preaching tonight, I was able to say to you, I've just received a postcard from heaven, and it

says, dear Billy, please don't preach tonight, but just stand perfectly still, because within 30 seconds it'll all be over and you'll all be in heaven.

Your Lord is coming in the next half minute. I said, wouldn't it be great? You should have seen their faces. They look like some of you look just right now.

You know, unprepared for it. And people, you know, this is why we have this attack on worldliness. Everybody's so caught up in a world, you see, that if you suddenly say, yes, he is coming back tonight, they say, oh he can't, I haven't finished the summer house.

Oh God, and I was planning a boat. Oh, what a swiss to come back right now. Couldn't you come after my holidays? You know, there's so much I've planned, so much I've insisted that has to happen, so much I want to see done.

Oh God, couldn't you come after the holidays? It's cheating. It's cheating to rob me like that. I want to enjoy life.

What you are saying is, I want to enjoy the world. You see? And so that's why all through this epistle, he's been talking about this business and not holding on to things too tightly. Hold on to your materialism.

Hold on to your wealth. Hold on to your empire building, your idea of what you're going to do in the future. And you're in for trouble.

Because the Lord should have the right to come back at any minute. And we should be living always as though his return were imminent at any time. And of course this would clear up a lot of problems, if we live like that.

Instead of holding on to the earth. And it would be better for you. And here he's encouraging them to use this idea of the Lord's approach.

He's coming. He's near. He's at the very door.

To make you hold on and hope. To make you say, well so far I'm being misused by Christians today. I get better treatment from the pagans, but the Christians are misusing me.

Okay, I'll hold on because the Lord can come back. And using this imminent return of the Lord can be a means of building up in yourself a hope and patience and endurance. And remember that the Scriptures do exhort Christians to endure.

You know, we don't believe in that. You look, just flip over to Paul's epistle to Timothy. 2 Timothy chapter 2. Look at verse 3. Thou therefore endure hardness.

It doesn't say hard heartedness. It doesn't say be hard in yourself. But it says endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Endure hardness. Learn to stand up to the elements. Learn to take the bumps.

Learn to take the bruises. And if you can't take it, you're no use anywhere. And if you can't take the bumps, I know exactly what you'll do.

You'll go and you'll get yourself a job, and it'll be nice as long as the job's nice. But the minute you hit a personality clash, the minute there's somebody in there you don't like, they don't do things the way you want to do them because you want them done the way you want them done. If it gets tough, you'll just run out and go for a new job.

You'll just keep running and keep looking for places where it's going to be easy and there's going to be no problems. Well, you'll never find it because everywhere you're going to get a job, your biggest problem's there when you walk through the door. You.

And honestly, half of your trouble in any corner that you're going to work in is not them rubbing you up, it's you rubbing them up. And so you've got to learn to endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ. Temper yourself for a battle.

Learn to take a knock. It's amazing what people can endure in a time of real testing. You never think about it.

You'd never think about it in an emergency. You don't question it. If you see a person drowning in a river, you never stop and think about the coldness of the water.

You're in. You're pulling them out with the scuff of the neck and then you think about it. But if you hesitate and think about, oh, is it winter? You know, can I put me toe in? Oh, it's chilly.

Cool. Can you hold on to the spring? You know, when it reaches a Florida temperature, I'll think about it. I know you've been down twice, but just hold on, there's better weather coming.

You'll find in an emergency, you never think about it, you just jump in. I remember as a lad, my sister, we used to play around the farmyard. And they had a sunken pit where they put all the horse manure.

And they had no drain. And they used to flood with water. And so there was this sort of, it looked like oxtail soup.

Especially in rotten weather. And I just remember turning around, I must have been ten at the time, and I turned around and my sister couldn't swim, nor could I. But I was at least a little bit bigger than she was. But she just stepped right back and was right in and under.

And I didn't stand there and say, oh, ick. You know, I was in there like a shot and had her out, and then we both combed it out of her hair, you know. You never think about it.

You never think about it, you just learn to be hard about these things. And then you think about it later. Or you never get it done.

And Christians, you know, I want to do this a little bit, about the knocks that you have to put up with in life. I'll never be as bad as that. And yet the minute somebody, I mean look at today, I bet you in here somebody today's been in tears because he didn't smile at me.

You know, all it takes is an expansion of your gums and the showing of your dentures to make some people feel happy today. And if you don't do it, they're ready to go home. They didn't love me, passed me and didn't notice me.

That's all it takes to make some Christians pack up and stop being Christian. No hardness about them. I don't mean hard-heartedness, but the ability to take a few knocks.

I mean, what would your reaction be to train in an army? You get the fella all equipped with his tin hat, his rifle, give him his hand grenades all around his belt, a bazooka over his shoulders, all the paraphernalia he needs for self-defense, and you say to him, you are a soldier. And he says, yes commander. Now, to the battle.

He opens the door, runs out two minutes later, and comes in and says, Oh, it's not very nice out there, fella. Look, I've got a hold of my tin hat. They're not being very nice out there.

Yes, but it's a battle. Well, you know, it's nice to sing in the hut, you know, onward Christian soldiers. I thought you meant to the kitchen to make coffee and have a prayer meeting, not out of the battle, you know, and don't you think you need a prayer warrior? I'll stay behind and pray for the fellas as they go.

That's typical. I remember one coffee bar when this gang leader came in. He had 24 fellas behind him in leather jackets and jeans.

It was over at Liverpool. He had a top hat and tails on. Marched right down to the front, and they pushed everybody out to make a space for him, brought him a chair, and as he sat on it, he just looked like that, and they lifted the tails of his coat up till he sat down.

So he didn't crush them, put his feet on a barrel, brought him a coffee, and the church worker ran on the stage to meet him, kicked me, and said, Hey! And I said, Oh, stop that. And so he nudged me again. I said, Will you stop kicking me? He says, Have you seen him? I said, What's the matter with your mouth? I said, What do you mean? He said, What's your problem? I said, Have you seen him? I said, I've seen him in the places full of people.

I knew who he meant. Him down there. I said, What's the matter with him? He said, Well, look at him.

I said, Well, look at him. He said, Well, look. I said, I have looked.

He said, Well, look at the way he's dressed. I said, Come on, I've seen Christians dressed worse than that. He said, He's pretty decent.

Looks like he's got eleven. He's seen the gang he brought. I said, Well, that's what the coffee bar's for.

He's reached the last. He's brought the whole lot to hear it. I said, Well, what are we going to do? I said, Well, you see the steps at the side? You walk down there, walk across, hold out your hand, introduce yourself to him, sit down and talk to him about Jesus.

Me? You. I can't. Why? I wouldn't know where to begin.

I see, you can only preach in the pulpit with your surplus and cassock on. With a wee candle behind you and a stained glass window. You want to chuck your job up.

If you can't come down amongst the people and speak to the people and reach the people and get alongside people, you might as well throw the job up. I said, Go and talk to him. And if you don't want to talk to him, send one of the Christians.

Send one of the Christians. He wasn't a teen girl. You know, we couldn't find any Christians that barricaded themselves in the kitchen.

In a moment like this, we really need prayer. You can hear their prayers for their knees going like a set of maracas. No hardness.

No hardness. Always running away. Always running away.

But if you were pretty sure that Jesus Christ was coming back tonight, you'd learn to put up with any emergency to reach people. And I think that's one of the blessings of this business of learning to have victory through patience. Just knowing that this can't go on.

It can't last long. You know, one of the phrases I like in the Bible is, and it came to pass, didn't come to stay. You find, you know, again and again in the Old Testament, some big crisis comes into somebody's life.

Abraham, you know, and it came to pass. It never came to stay. And you know, it's amazing what just a few minutes does to some problems.

I like Joseph, you know. I like that fella. In comes this lass, and he's got his heart made up to marry her.

She's much younger than he is. And it's been a marriage that's been arranged, and at last he's thankful he's getting a partner. And they're betrothed to be wed.

They're rushing towards the marriage day. And she comes in one day and says, Joseph, something to tell you. Sit down, dear, till I break it to you.

You know how we pray and all that. Yes, well, I just want you to know that spiritually I'm alright, but I'm pregnant. And I'm going to have a baby.

And I know we've never been together, but don't worry, it's of the Holy Spirit. Would you have believed him? Joseph didn't. He was faced with a crisis.

Now what do you do in a crisis? Panic. Do you know what he did? He went to bed and slept. It's amazing what a good night's sleep does for some problems.

He just went to bed and said, well, we'll take the action tomorrow. And in the middle of the night, the Lord came to him and said, don't be afraid. Take her to be your wife.

It is the Holy Spirit. And he said, thanks, I believe you. And his problem was solved with a decent sleep.

And you know, the trouble with us is we've got that many problems, we can't sleep. If you just learn to get to bed and have a good night's sleep, you'd find that you'd write a different letter tomorrow about today's problem than you would write today when the problem occurs. I think one of the greatest things I learned about Dr. Billy Graham is that when people send him nasty letters, he gets a dictating machine and he dictates a letter right back.

Then he puts at the end of his dictation, type, file, and do not send. That's smart. He gets it right out of his system and he says type, file, and do not send.

And he never bothers. And the thing's filed and forgotten and he gets on with his ministry. Enduring hardness.

The job's too big for any of us to get in the way and start getting in a hassle. We start fighting about our reputations and fighting about this, that, and the other thing and justifying ourselves. What does it say here? When you're misused by other Christians, when you're being mistreated by other Christians, when you're being mucked around, what's the best action? Patience.

Just say, okay, it's coming to pass. Let's go to bed on it. The Lord could be here by tomorrow.

No need for panic. And learn to develop a patience in the face of adversity, knowing that the Lord is coming. You shan't be left behind, no matter what people do to you, not even if it's Christians that are doing to you.

And you'll come out on top. See in your outline, the examples of patience, the examples of patience. Verses 10 and 11.

Take my brethren, the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord for an example of suffering, affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. You have heard of the patience of Job and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of a tender mercy.

Consider, consider the prophets, consider Joseph, consider Job. They're there. If you want to know what it means to endure hardness, if you want to know what it means to learn to take a few knocks, if you want to know what it means to go through the mill and come out on top, just go back and read Job.

Just go back and read about Joseph. Just go back and read about what a lot of the prophets went through. Every one of them counted for nothing.

Isaiah, a washout. Guy was off his head, streaking through the nation, nothing on for three years. Everybody was utterly disgusted with the fellow.

They just couldn't get him addressed. He's supposed to be a priest. From one of the aristocracy, we remember when he was invited to the diplomatic parties.

We remember whenever there was a big do on and the ambassadors and diplomats were invited, Isaiah was sure to be there. Nobody wants him anymore. He counts as the scum of the earth because he's gone a bit off.

He was doing what God told him to do. Ezekiel, he's for the birds. You've seen him sitting in the square, shaving his head, chopping some of the hair up and throwing other bits away at the wind.

Jeremiah, he's forever digging holes in riverbanks and stacking his clothes in there. He must be kinky. He went down there and dug a hole in the riverbank and took off his loincloth.

How can a man who calls himself the prophet of God do such a stupid thing? He must be orphaned. And they get fed up listening to Jeremiah. Every time he preached, he was in tears.

They couldn't stick his preaching. Prophet of doom. And he was a write-off.

You look at some of these minor prophets, they moved onto the scene, preached one message and were never heard of again. Write-offs. Look at the fellow we looked at the other day there, got smashed in the mouth for being honest.

A write-off. And the best thing to do, if you ever feel you're having a rough time, is to sit down one day and I tell you, do this sometime. I've done it.

I sit down and I write down what I consider are all my present pressures. I write down all my biggest problems. I try to skip the wee ones.

I try to miss out the little ones. And I write down all the great big problems. He didn't speak to me today.

You know. And I put them down. And then I go back and read the first chapter of Job.

And you know it just makes you want to crumple the thing up and put it in a basket. Go back and read about Joseph. And you just want to take your little petty list and burn it.

You've never in your life gone through what these men have gone through. And the majority of you will never go through what these men have gone through. And so it's time you stop having such tender hearts and doing such easy crying.

And learn to endure hardness and come out on top. And if you want to find out how to endure hardness, read the Bible. It will show you how to endure hardness.

What to go through. And it will teach you how to have patience and come out on top. D in your outline.

Victory through prayer and song. Victory through prayer and song. Verses 12 to 16.

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath, but let your yea be yea and your nay nay, lest ye fall into condemnation. Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up. And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Confess your faults one to one other. And pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Verse 12. Another way to have victory over the trials of life is to remember this. God takes our promises seriously.

God takes our promises seriously. And so you better not make any. The best advice.

I've stopped it. I've promised too many times to God that I'd never do this again and that again. And I'm just too weak.

I keep doing it. And he doesn't have to beat me. He doesn't have to chastise me on the issue.

But it says in the Old Testament, it's true enough. Your own sins shall punish thee. Your own transgressions shall chastise thee.

It's true. You hurt yourself more than God needs to hurt you. And here there's an exhortation in the face of all this.

Pressure, misuse from other people. Don't make promises. Just yes and no.

Don't make promises. Watch your speech in the face of adversity. In verse 13, the afflicted should pray.

The merry should sing. Now please note that there is a time for tears. There is a time for tears for Christians as well as a time to sing.

And too often we seem to think that synonymous with Christian maturity is a lack of crying. And that if you're really in the Lord and resting in the Lord, you should never shed a tear. That's rubbish.

There is a time for Christians to cry. And one of the reasons so many people as Christians get screwed up in their nervous systems is they've never let it go. They've never let it go.

They've figured it's brave to keep it in. You have to suppress tears. You have to be big men, big women.

So there's no times for tears in the Christian experience. And there's many a time you just want to bawl your eyes out. There's a lovely wood up there.

Have you ever cried up there? I have many a time. And boy it'll save your nerves. Save your nerves.

There's a time for tears. And to let it out just as there are times for being angry. The Bible says be angry and sin not.

It doesn't say never be angry. It says be angry. Let it come out.

But don't let it develop. Don't build on it. But there's a time for anger.

There's a time for a justified buster to clear the air. And boy you learn something through it. You always learn from it.

But look at the people that must never be angry. Not Christian. Whereas if you were prepared to come out and admit that you have a temper and that you can get angry, you don't have to live at it's mercy anymore.

You don't have to live at it's mercy. And it's the same if you feel really hurt deep in. You can cry your heart out inside and never show it outside.

And it tells on your health. It's rather interesting that these verses progress into a discussion on sickness. Did you notice that? There's a progression on into sickness.

Because if there is a disharmony in spirit and an upset of the emotions in the Christian that's being misused by other Christians, and that's what's being talked about here in this particular portion of the epistle, you will find that it ends up in having a telling effect on your life. Physically, emotionally, mentally. And for lots of people, one of the basic problems is they never cried.

I know a Christian that's going to be with the Lord now. And his whole problem stemmed from the fact that he never cried. There was a disaster and he lost his parents.

But because one of his relatives was a preacher, a man of renown as it were in his own estimation, and that he was living in and amongst loads of Christians who not only knew him and knew his own father but his father-in-law, it was obligatory to show that you were enjoying the victorious Christian life in the face of adversity, persecution and above all tragedy. And here was the biggest traumatic smack his whole system had ever had in his life. A fellow who just worshipped and hung on to and needed his mum and dad day in and day out, and both taken away in one instant in the crash.

And so he puts on the big show of victorious Christian living. I don't care how victorious you are if you lose a loved one and you don't cry, you're heading for a breakdown. And this idea of, well, they've gone home to be with the Lord, hallelujah, rubbish.

There is a human attachment with human reactions that are humanly necessary or you're going to be sick. And anybody that loses a loved one and does what this fellow did, suppress it. And he never cried.

As a matter of fact, he danced down the street in front of the coffin on the way to the cemetery singing choruses. And everybody was impressed. And, you know, I had them give a testimony a week later and I looked at that fellow as he gave a testimony and I said to myself in my heart, I'll give you two years, three years, but you're heading straight into the tube.

You're going straight into the black hole because this is just an absolute facade. And you ought to have cried and he didn't. Now he ended up taking his own life within a few years.

And I tell you, and I've discussed it with some of the folks that know him, and they suddenly looked at me when I said it and said, you know, we never thought of that, but you're right. He never did cry over the loss of his loved one. Suppression.

To give the impression of victory. There's a time to cry your eyes out. Okay, if you're embarrassed crying in front of people, go to the wood, but let it out.

Good place to go if you want to lose your temper too. I sometimes go and I let it out with the Lord, you know, I really lose my temper. You know, he's the only one that lets me.

He just says, there, there, I understand. I can take it. I'm God.

Still love you. Have you ever got angry with God? Boy, I tell you, I've told him a thing or two. And afterwards, when you see the compassion and the understanding and the way he picks you up and then starts using you more than he's ever used you before, you just wish he'd punish you.

There are times you go around saying, I want to be sick. There's times you go around and you say, I want to feel guilty. I want to feel remorseful.

Take my peace away. Make me feel really chastised. And he says, no, I love you.

Good for you to get that out. So if there's a time for tears, exercise it. And don't be ashamed.

Sometimes it's a great step forward for fellas to have their first tear. And for girls. And I mean real ones, not the crocodile ones that you turn on.

Ladies. But if there's a time when all is well, rejoice. You'll find that it really puts harmony to the whole body.

I liked it when the Psalmist said, you know, and he has put a new song in my heart. Many shall see it in fear and trust in the Lord. And I used to think, see a song.

You can't see a song. You hear a song. And no, you see it.

Because if spiritually you're in tune with God and everything's well, it tells through your very behaviour. Your whole life's in harmony. It permeates your mind, will, emotions and physical health.

And lots of the breakdown physically in Christians, you can trace it back to some of these things because there's misuse because there's pressure to be what other people expect you to be. And everybody's got wonderful plans of what you ought to be. They've never got one for themselves, but they've got wonderful ones for you.

You'll be so pressurized into do it, living up to standards, doing what people demand of you. They'll misuse you to get their own ends as we read there this morning. And you know, you'll bottle it all up.

You learn a time for tears. Pray in the midst of that affliction. Let there be that sorrow of heart.

And read in the Old Testament that many times men had sorrow of heart. And it was godly sorrow. It was permitted sorrow.

And if you're merry, sing. Be happy. But don't expect everybody to be happy the day you're happy.

And so if you see somebody alongside you in your room that happens to be in the condition where in their particular moment they're going through the mill and it's their time for tears, try to have a little bit of compassion and understanding on them. You don't sort of go up and nudge them and say, are you prepared to meet thy God? You know, Christians are the most unloving people in the world. Try to learn to sit and sympathize for a change.

Try crying with somebody as well as singing with them and being happy with them. Then he goes on to this business of sick. Now, you need to know a few things about this business of sickness in the Christian.

First of all, a categorical statement of fact from Billy Strachan. I believe in divine healing. Got that? I do.

I believe in divine healing. I believe in divine healing according to the word of God. And remember that too.

But I also know that in my Bible there is nowhere where we have a mandate to use healing as an inducement to bringing people to believe in the existence of God. Let me repeat that. Nowhere in the word of God do we have a mandate for using miracles of healing as a means of inducing the pagans to believe in God.

In other words, now you've seen a miracle of healing, that's proof that God exists, so please get converted, receive Christ and become a Christian. Be very wary of that. In nine chapters of Mark's gospel covering a year and a half to two years of the Lord's three year ministry, you will find that everybody wanted his miracles and nobody believed his message.

They wanted his miracles, not his message. And remember, miracles are temporal. Jairus' daughter raised to life, Lazarus raised to life, but they had to die all over again.

Once will be enough for me, thank you. Not twice. I wonder how those people felt coming back through it to face all that again.

And you see, there is a tendency today that because the preaching of the word doesn't see the results you want, you have to learn to use gimmicks to get people converted. And so like a salesman using the sugar on the pill, if we have a big campaign of healings and people see people getting healed, then they'll flock in to believe in God. Rubbish.

They'll flock in to get temporal benefits, but not to have the eternal issue settled. And if you put on the Ashton Hall, Lancaster, and the outside a big notice that says next week, Friday night, Billy Strachan healing campaign, it'll be loaded. And then say Sunday, he'll talk about your personal sin.

It'll be empty. So if you want to be a successful evangelist, don't preach the gospel about Jesus Christ, have a healing campaign. And there's nowhere in the world where we have a mandate for a healing campaign.

Nowhere. Anywhere. At all.

There is a specific order as far as healing is concerned in scripture. And it's here. But notice before we look at it, this divine healing is for Christians.

For Christians. And if any Christian is sick, then very often there are reasons for that sickness. And if that sickness is going to destroy your fulfillment of God's program and will for you, you can expect God to intervene to raise you up until your program's finished.

Because you will not die one day too early or one day too late. Christians die on time. Always.

Christians never die early or late if they're in the will of the Lord. They always die on time. And so if your program's not fulfilled and the adversary's been getting at your body, attacking it to try and reduce you to impotence so that he cannot get using you, God cannot get using you for his program, and the devil feels happy.

You have every right to find healing from the Lord to get on with the program. And it says here, is any sick among you? Let him that is sick call for the elders of the church. And if him that is sick does not call, they've no right to come.

And this business of pastors walking around and preachers and evangelists walking around with a little pot of oil in their pocket, carrying out a ministry of healing and looking for people to anoint with oil and pray over, it's not in the Word. It's not in the Word. I go by the book, not by people.

And it's sad to find people running around looking for people to heal. There is a strict order here. If you're sick, and it looks like it's fatigue and service, the adversary's stopping God's program and you know that there's nothing wrong spiritually with you, there's no reason why this should afflict you at the present time, you can expect God to intervene.

And you have a right to have the church share with you in your suffering. It's one way of getting to know each other, to sit down and cry with each other and laugh with each other and share each other's problems. Then call the elders of the church if you want to.

The Lord puts it in your heart and says it's for you. I know occasions when this has been done. One fellow called for a couple of leaders to come and anoint them with oil and they didn't even believe it would work.

But if you've asked for it, we'll do it. And they did it and it worked. But they went out of the room with hearts like stone.

They knew they had nothing to do with it. It had to be God. Because they didn't even believe.

So different from this attitude of I am a healer. And they should anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. Not in the name of the evangelist.

Not with a hanky from his pocket or touching the TV set for contact, for healing. And notice here it says in the prayer of faith shall save the sick. Now please note that that prayer of faith doesn't necessarily mean that it's the prayer of the faith of the elders that did the anointing.

That prayer of faith could be in the man on the sickbed and not the person that's doing the anointing. He's the one having faith. The other fellows, he's there sharing the sorrow but he's nothing to do with it.

He's not the one that's manifesting power. And the people that I have met that God has used mightily in divine healing in a positive way, they'll tell me. I'm unaware of losing any virtue, power.

I am unaware of anything really happening. All I'm doing is put my hand on them and pray that they are getting the experience. That's God at work.

And you'll notice here that it says, and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him. Would you please note the word if. It's very necessary to note that all sickness is not a direct result of you personally committing sins as a Christian.

Of course sickness, illness in the world is a direct result of the fall of the creation and of what Satan has done to God's creation. Yes, you can trace all sickness back to that sin, the principle of sin, the fact that the whole of creation has fallen. But today there is this funny idea being propagated amongst believers that if you're a Christian and you've got Jesus Christ as your personal saviour, you should never be sick.

And that it's a sin to be sick as a Christian. And that Christians should always be healthy. That's nonsense.

When the flu bug enters this room, I doubt very much if it goes around looking onto your forehead to see if there's some identity tag that says he sinned today, let him have it. Not her, she had a quiet time. The bacteria in this world don't care whether you're a saint or a sinner.

They attack everybody. They attack everybody. And it's just an utter lie for people to propagate that if you're a Christian and you're sick, you've had some secret sin that you've committed that has not been confessed and you've not been forgiven and that's why you've gone sick.

And so what they do is they get you to dig up the coffin, open the lid, get your little old dead body out and start scourging around 20 years into your past to see if you can find a secret sin that God has not revealed to you and that's why you're sick. Look, would you get this? If you're ever sick because you've sinned, and as a person that's sick, you ever stop in your sickness to say, is this a natural cause, this illness, or God, are you trying to tell me something? Is this some sin of commission or omission that I have made? Is this some rebellion? Is this something I've done and you're trying to get me to stop and face up to the fact and put wrong right? Show me. I'll tell you this, if you ever talk like that to God in sickness, He shows you.

If there is sin, He shows you. Right there and then you will know what it was you did. This funny idea people get that I asked God but He's not showing me and they give you the impression that God is saying, oh so you don't like being sick do you? Well I know what it is that's making you sick but I'm not telling you.

So there, suffer. That's not God. He loves you.

A perfect love that has no tarnment. He knows the worst about you. But He is concerned that you do not continue in rebellion, in disobedience, in not doing what you're told.

And it is plain from the Bible that there are those in the Bible who became sick as a direct result of sin. But there are also as many illustrations in the scripture of people who were sick and they'd never sinned. And so don't think that it automatically means if you're ill that you must have some sin.

All sickness doesn't come from sin but sin can cause sickness. And remember another thing, the healing does not have to be permanent. The healing does not have to be permanent.

And bear one thing in mind too before we look at a couple of illustrations in the word. And that's this, remember what we discovered about Hezekiah. God said set your house in order for thou shalt die.

My program's finished with you, it's time to come home to heaven. And Hezekiah asked for divine healing. Hezekiah wept and asked for his divine healing.

Hezekiah plead and wept and asked for his divine healing. Hezekiah got what he asked for, the permissive will of God, not the specific will of God. And he got the worst thing he ever got.

So just take warning. Just take warning. Always pray for this healing in the will of the Lord.

And it's one of the things that should always be asked of a person that asks you to come and pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And that is, is their prayer encouraged by the spirit of God? Are they praying in the spirit and in the will of God for this healing? Because if it's just a selfish demand, I don't want to back them up on it. I would prefer to find out if they're praying in the will of the Lord because if they're not, they can get the worst thing they've ever gotten.

There was a gentleman in Sweden, a great saint of God. And he was very, very old. In fact, I think he was nearly enough 90 and maybe even over it.

But he was regarded as a great prophet in the country. In other words, anytime this old man ever uttered anything, the nation heard it and listened to him. And he got to his deathbed and he was in a coma for days.

And the church gathered around his bed and prayed and prayed for his restoration. And when he woke up, he cried. When he found out what they'd done, he says, why? What did you do that for? I wanted to go.

And, you know, we've got to learn to let people go. If it's the right time to go. But we will insist in demanding these things out of the will of God.

But you can be sick through committing sin, but you can be sick without committing sin. Take a look at 2 Chronicles chapter 16. Verse 7. And at that time, Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said unto him, because thou hast relied on the king of Syria and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.

Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubums a huge host with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly, therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

Then Asa was angry with the prophet and put him in a prison house. For he was in a rage with him because of this thing. Because of what thing? The word of God.

The message that God gave him to give. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time. And behold the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet until his disease was exceeding great. Yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord but to the physician. He brought all this sickness upon himself because of a disobedience to listen to the word of God, to seek God, to obey God.

And it resulted in a disease in his feet that crept up the whole of his body and finally brought him to his death bed. His sickness was due to sin. Look in chapter twenty-six, verse sixteen, talking of Uzziah.

But when Uzziah was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. His mind, will, and emotion was lifted up to his destruction. For he transgressed against the Lord his God and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

I say, would you get that? Uzziah actually was forcing himself to be very spiritual. Two Chronicles twenty-six, sixteen, forcing himself to be spiritual, offering incense right in there in the temple of the Lord. Surely that's a great thing for God to acknowledge.

Sincerity of my man wanting to draw an eye to God. And Azariah the priest went in after him and with him four scored priests of the Lord that were valiant men. And they withstood the king to his face.

There is a time to stand up to authority, you know. And they withstood the king and said unto him, it appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests, the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed.

Neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God. Then Uzziah was wroth and had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord from before the incense altar.

And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in his forehead. And they thrust him out from thence. Yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him.

And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death. Leprosy, coming out in his forehead through rage. You can have such a disaster in your spirit and temperament, mind, will and emotion that it can have such a tremendous effect on your physical life immediately.

And God allowed it. It was a lesson to him, he was sinning, therefore he was sick. Oh yes, Nabal was the same, the wife of Abigail, the husband of Abigail.

And he was hard and mean and a son of Belial and bestial and rotten and cruel. And he went to bed, had a heart like stone and died. God struck him for his wickedness.

But then you will find that there are the occasions when you read, and Elisha the prophet took sick of the sickness wherewith he should die. You see, you've got to get out of this body somehow. You are a spiritual being living in a temporary dwelling place and you've got to get out somehow.

And when God's finished his program for you, you've got to be released from it to enter into eternity. You don't take this body with you. So if it's a bust that hits you, a plane crash, a disease, whatever it is, it's only the means of release.

It's the means of release. It's getting you out of the body. And it said that Elisha was sick of the sickness wherewith he should die.

His program was finished, he had to get out of the body. So God permitted a sickness so that he could be released. But the funny thing is that later in the book it tells you that when the men were cleaning the land of dead bodies after a battle, there were two soldiers carrying a dead body and they looked up and saw the enemy coming.

And so they quickly heaved the body into an open grave. It happened to be the open grave of Elisha. And as the dead man's body touched the bones of dead Elisha, the dead body stood up.

He revived and ran after the men that were running away. I wonder who got back to camp first. Can you imagine those guys throwing them in and seeing the corpse sit up? Boy, they ran, I tell you.

And he ran after them. Wait for me! No, we're not waiting for you. But what do you learn from that? That even the dead bones of dead Elisha were powerful.

In other words, there was no sin in Elisha's life that caused God to put him to death. It was the natural phenomenon of releasing the man from his physical framework to enter eternity and he was still a man of power with God and there was still enough power left in his bones to revive a dead corpse. So there are times when you will die and be sick and be ill and it has nothing whatsoever to do with sin.

I could take you to people that have been thankful for their illness. Every year when I do this, I talk about a man called Dick Newton. And yet I haven't heard from Dick Newton for years until just last year, late last year.

But it was in 1958 that I was first introduced to him. And he lives over in the county of Cleveland on the east coast. And they took me into his bedroom and they said, you know, he's paralyzed.

He was a deacon in the Baptist church that Neville Atkins used to be the pastor of. No, he still is at the tabernacle. And as a deacon, he was busy doing everything in the church.

And he was out one day cutting holly off a tree to decorate the church for Christmas with his son. And he fell off the ladder and he lay there on the ground and he said to his son, you better get the ambulance. I broke my neck.

And he had done. And they picked him up and they took him into the room he's been in since that accident. And that was long before I'd ever met him.

And I'm a Christian 19 years now. And he's been there 19 more years in that bed. And you know all that he moves, his eyes and his lips.

Nothing else. And I thought, how on earth do you cheer a man like that up? How do you bring him hope? I was only in the room 20 minutes and when I left, he cheered me up. You know, it was like walking into sunshine.

Go on, Bill. Pull up your chair and sit down beside me. And he lies there, sheet right up to the neck, looking in the mirror.

Through the mirror he can see outside to the petrol pump that his wife looks after that brings in the living. He's rubbed down with spirit two, three times a day, hand fed. They have to come in and turn the pages of the book over for him that he's reading.

And he said to me, you know, it's the greatest thing that ever happened to me. And I said, what? Oh, he says it is. You know, as a deacon, I used to be that busy.

The one thing I never did was pray. He says, now I've got all the time in the world now. So after they've rubbed me down in the morning and I've read my Bible a little bit, he says, I then divide the rest of the day apart from meal times and when I have to be rubbed down into prayer.

And I just shut my eyes and I remember every preacher that we've ever had come to the tabernacle and I just pretend I'm standing at the door of the church saying good morning to him as he leaves and shaking his hand and I pray for him. I remember every face of any kid that's been in Sunday school while I've been there, pretending they're coming out to go home and I pray for them. I remember every missionary that visited all Sunday school teachers and he would write down the list.

And then he says to me and he said, you know, I have five minutes between nine o'clock every evening and five past and I'd like to put you in there if you'd let me. And he's ministering, flattening his back, using his eyes and his lips as prayer. You ready for that? No complaint.

Not sitting there for 19 years saying why? But thankful. Getting the best out of it, knowing it's where God put them because I'm ready for anything. Ready for anything.

Oh yes, you can be sick and it's not necessarily because of sin. But both things are there. Remember that word if, and notice in verse 16, confess your faults one to another.

Harboring a fault can make you ill. Harboring a fault can make you ill. Confess your faults one to another.

Now please remember this, it doesn't say one to everybody. It doesn't say one to everybody. And be very wary of these fellowship meetings where you're being encouraged to be open.

Let's be open. In other words, tip out on the middle of the floor all your dirty laundry. Let's have a look at how rotten you are.

And you'll find that people love to sit in meetings listening to you confess all the rotten things you've done all week and it's none of their business because they sit there and they wouldn't tip theirs out. And it's a rotten thing. There is a time for face to face, person to person of honestly sharing what you're going through.

But there are still some things that are between you and the Lord and what God has forgiven and forgotten you've no right to remember it and display it. But if you have harbored a fault against somebody go to that person or anybody else you go to that person and you tell them because you'll find that you can be ill

because of it. A student here two years ago from Canada came to see me because I met him in Canada in 1957 and he hated me.

I didn't know he hated me. Never knew until he came here in the Bible school and said before this course gets on I need to talk to you. Why? Because I've got something that's just been nagging at me all those years and that was that I hated you and I wanted to tell you.

And he got it out of his system and he didn't do anything for me. I wasn't sick. But he had this head really cankered and eaten at him.

And he knew it the minute he came in and saw I was here. It just that was his problem and he came to see me about it. I didn't even know but it can if you harbor a fault you can make yourself ill and if you have a fault go and tell that person alone one to one other to another not one to everybody.

And then it says and pray one for another. In other words you've got to finish that conversation with that person to the extent that you and the one you've wronged are both going to pray together. Pray one for another that you may be healed and the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

It will work because God's in on it. So there's what you need to know about sickness.

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