

Faith Without Works is Useless

An Expository “Journey” Through the **Epistle of James**

20- The Prayer Offered in Faith- Part 2

Church; August 8, 2021

James 5:13-18

13 Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

14 Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

To the Glory of God

Now last time I told you, “*God is a healing God by Nature.*” Brothers and sisters, God is Good; and He is Kind; and Merciful; and Benevolent. And God *loves* to bless and heal and deliver His people. In fact, God is much more willing to *give* to us- than we are willing to *receive*. So, there is no debate or argument from me about whether God is *able* to heal or bless or deliver. He is able; and He will *always* be able. So, what I am trying to say in this Sermon series on **James 5:13-18** is four-fold:

1. There are times when it is God’s Will to heal and bless and deliver His people through Miracles and Acts of Providence. And the Bible teaches that

when God does this- He does it- “by” or “through” the strong and vibrant Faith of those individuals.

2. There are times when it is NOT God’s Will to heal or bless or deliver His people- but there are times, when it is God’s Will for that person; at that time- to endure whatever Suffering God has sovereignly allowed to come into his life- faithfully and fruitfully. And when that is the case- the Bible teaches that those saints were able to faithfully and fruitfully endure their Suffering “by” or “through” the very SAME Faith that brought about the other people’s Deliverance.
3. Whereas God has NOT changed and is able (and, many times, willing) to heal and bless and deliver- through the Prayers of His people- the GIFTS of Healing and Miracles that were active in the early Church are no longer active.
4. The Passage before us (**James 5:13-18**) is about Prayer and is NOT about physical Healing.

Now last time, we looked closely at verse 13. So, today, I want to get into verses 14&15 that say,

14 Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Now based on what they think this Passage says- those deceived by the Roman “religious system” embrace and partake of the Man-made “*Sacrament of Extreme Unction*”; while Pentecostal, Charismatic, Full- Gospel, and Non-denominational groups dab olive oil on the forehead of sick saints and pray over them- asking God for a Miracle of “*Divine Healing*”.

Now I’m not saying that these people are not sincere- they are. I mean who wants to be sick? And since God is Good- who doesn’t want God to heal them? I don’t want *anyone* to suffer from *any* illness. And so, I pray for *everyone* who is sick- even if they’re not saved. I don’t want my worst enemy to be sick- so I beg God to have Mercy and heal and bless and deliver EVERYONE.

Yet the Truth is that the overwhelming majority of EVERYONE who follows what James says here- ARE NOT HEALED. And that is NOT my opinion- that is a fact. Yet this Passage appears to *guarantee* Healing. James infallibly wrote,

... the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

WILL, WILL, WILL. James gives us three “WILLS” here:

1. The Prayer, offered in Faith WILL restore the one who is sick
2. The Lord WILL raise him up
3. Sins WILL be forgiven

Now I see NO debate here; NO ambiguity; NO preconditions; and NO allowance for ANY Failure. At all. And yet the *overwhelming* majority of EVERYONE is NOT healed. So, why is that? We can't just ignore that Reality. And the lame excuses that are commonly given as to why the overwhelming majority of everyone, who follows James prescription here- are NOT healed- DO NOT ANSWER THE QUESTION.

So, this Sermon is my effort to suggest a very simple reason why this Formula doesn't work. And that is that James was NOT talking about physical Healing in this Passage. This Passage is about Prayer- in the context of the physical Suffering and Persecution that these saints are going through. And this Passage describes three Actions of Mercy and Kindness that James commands the people of the Church to engage in- pertaining to those suffering saints:

1. We are to beg God (pray) to keep those suffering saints faithful and fruitful IN their Sufferings
2. We are to offer Medicine; Comfort; Prayer; Encouragement; and Hope for those who have suffered *faithfully*
3. We are to offer Rebuke; and Restoration to those saints, who have *failed* God in their Suffering

... so, let's look at the first part of verse 14 that says,

Is anyone among you sick?

Now the entire concept of this Passage revolves around the word “Sick” that James used here. And that is why most people believe that this Passage IS about physical Healing.

Now the word that was translated here as, “**sick**” comes from a Greek word (*astheneoe*; Strong's # 770) that was rendered as, “**sick**” *eighteen* different times in the New Testament. Here are some notable examples:

Matthew 10:8

"Heal *the sick*, raise *the dead*, cleanse *the lepers*, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

Matthew 25:35-40

**35 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in;
36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'
37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink?
38 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?
39 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'
40 "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.'**

Mark 6:56

Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

Luke 4:40

While the sun was setting, all those who had any *who were sick* with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them.

John 4:46

Therefore He came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a royal official whose son was sick at Capernaum.

... and in every single one of these verses- the word that was translated into English as “**sick**” comes from that same Greek word. And based on that- many people conclude that **James 5** pertains to *physical* Healing. And I completely understand why.

But what they conveniently ignore is the fact that this very *SAME* Greek word was also used *fourteen* other times to refer to *emotional, spiritual, or physical* “**Weakness**”- even to describe something (like the Old Covenant) as being

“*Ineffectual*”- but NOT a sickness or an illness. And here are some notable Passages:

The Acts 20:35

"In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.**'"**

Romans 4:19

Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb;

Romans 8:3

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

Romans 14:1&2

14 Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of* passing judgment on his opinions.

2 One person has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables *only*.

1Corinthians 8:11-13

11 For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died.

12 And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

2Corinthians 11:21-29

21 To *my* shame I *must* say that we have been weak *by comparison*. But in whatever respect anyone *else* is bold — I speak in foolishness — I am just as bold myself.

22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

23 Are they servants of Christ? — I speak as if insane — I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*.

25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.

26 *I have been* on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from *my* countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

27 *I have been* in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

28 Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me *of* concern for all the churches.

29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

2Corinthians 12:10

Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2Corinthians 13:4-9

4 For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God *directed* toward you.

5 Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you — unless indeed you fail the test?

6 But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.

7 Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but *only* for the truth.

9 For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete.

... and in every single one of these examples- the word translated as “**weak**” comes from the very SAME Greek word that was translated as “**sick**” in those other places.

Now since the Greek word that James actually wrote down around AD47- could mean either “**sick**” or “**weak**”- we can’t arrive at a conclusion using only the word itself. So, what do we have left? The CONTEXT of the verse; the Passage; the Chapter; and the entire Epistle of James. And the context is crystal clear: James is NOT discussing *physical* Sickness in any other place in this Epistle. He is talking about Suffering in general and in believers remaining faithful IN their Sufferings- in specific. And that means that for James to suddenly begin to discuss physical Healing here at the end of Chapter 5- would be completely out of context. And that is why we MUST see **James 5:13** as discussing physical WEAKNESS- stemming from intense Persecution- and NOT physical Sickness.

So, when we read,

Is anyone among you sick?

... and ...

... the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick ...

... we need to see:

Is anyone among you “weak”?

... and ...

... the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is “weak” ...

... which is referring to *emotional, physical, and even spiritual* Weakness- but NOT a disease, illness, or sickness in the normal sense of those words.

Now some people might say, “*But Brother Blair- you’re changing the Bible to make it mean what you want it to mean!*” And my response is, “*I’m NOT doing that at all. The Reality is that I am allowing us to read this inspired and inerrant and infallible Passage in the correct context in which James originally wrote it. And that is the correct and proper thing for me to do.*”

Brothers and sisters, we need to remember that before God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Apostles (and their designees) to pen down their “Letters” or “Epistles”- the “*Teaching Books*” of the Scriptures were the first five Books of the Old Testament (*Torah*). Those were the Books that taught the people how to live their daily lives.

But after the completion of the Canon- the “*Teaching Books*” (later called, the “*Didactic Books*”) became the 21 New Testament *Epistles*- which taught an infinitely *superior* Covenant that was based on infinitely *superior* Promises; brought about through an infinitely *superior* Sacrifice; offered by an infinitely *superior* High Priest. And when that shift took place away from the Torah and on to the *Epistles*- the Torah was NEVER used again in the Christian Church to teach God’s people how to live their daily lives.

In fact, it isn’t hard- it is IMPOSSIBLE for anyone to use the inspired Words of the Torah as a Guide for their daily life and also use the *Epistles* at the same time. Why? Because the Torah teaches people how to live according to the Old Covenant (which has been done away) in sacrificing animals; and by utilizing the Levitical Priesthood; and by worshipping in the Temple in Jerusalem; and keeping the dietary Laws- things that the New Covenant has rendered to be obsolete.

Even the Ten Commandments as recorded in **Exodus 20**, which is the Basis of ALL Morality had to be fully “explained” and “made more perfect” by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount in **Matthew 5-7**.

And so, it is very significant that in all but three cases- (**Philippians 2:26&27; 2Timothy 4:20**)- every single appearance of this Greek word (*astheneæ*) found in the 21 New Testament *Epistles*- does NOT refer to *physical* Sickness. The Apostle Paul's use of *astheneæ* in **2Corinthians 12:10** is *especially* helpful,

Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

... here *astheneæ* describes a *spiritual, emotional*, and maybe even a *physical* Weakness brought about through the Sufferings and the Persecutions that Paul experienced. But it is clear that Paul is NOT referring to a *disease*, or an *illness*, or a *sickness*- in the normal way of understanding those words.¹ And that is the *correct* context that James uses in **James 5**- even though most translators commonly use the English word, “**sick**”.

So, by understanding *astheneæ* as “*Weak*” rather than “*Sick*” in **James 5:14**- we are keeping with its *predominant* usage throughout the New Testament *Epistles*. And that allows us to view this verse in a completely different light.

So, in verse 14- James moves beyond the “suffering believers” of the *previous* point to address specifically those who have become “weak”- either *emotionally* or *spiritually*- by and through the horrific Suffering that God had allowed to come their way. So, they are *emotionally* “sick”; and *spiritually* “sick”.

¹ Some people would prefer to use the word, “*infirmity*” or “*infirm*” when describing a disease, illness, or sickness

But they are NOT *physically* “sick”. That would be completely out of context with the entire 5th Chapter of James and the bulk of this entire Epistle. So, the “weak/sick” of **James 5:14** are:

1. Those who have been defeated in their Sufferings and are *spiritually* wounded and weak (sick)
2. Those who have lost the ability to faithfully endure their Suffering to God’s Glory and have given up Hope

So, these are fallen, spiritual Warriors- who have become emotionally and spiritually *exhausted, weary, depressed, and defeated*. Now there is no doubt that they *tried* to draw on God's Power through Prayer. But somewhere along the way- they lost their motivation. And some of them have now even fallen into sinful Attitudes (doubt/giving up/returning to previous sinful behaviors/denying Jesus). And having hit “rock bottom”- these saints are no longer able to pray effectively on their own. And in that terrible spiritual Condition (brought about by the horrendous Suffering)- these spiritually weak saints need the Help of the *spiritually* Strong. And God is faithful to provide just what they need!

The Apostle Paul was familiar with this as he wrote to the weary believers of Thessalonica in **1Thessalonians 5:14** and said,

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

... and James says here in Chapter 5 that this spiritual Help is to be found in “**the Elders of the Church**”.

Now “Elders” are chosen men, who are *spiritually* Strong; *spiritually* Mature; and *spiritually* Victorious. They are morally qualified men- who have gone through rigorous and ongoing biblical Training- so they are qualified to Teach, Lead, and Shepherd the people of the Church during their pilgrimage on this earth. And the biblical Qualifications for Elders are found in **1Timothy 3:1-7** and in **Titus 1:5-16**.

Now having Oversight over the Church of Jesus Christ is no small task. It is a very weighty Responsibility. It doesn’t puff up the Pride and Arrogance of the men that God has called to lead- it causes them to tremble. So, one of the hallmarks of a genuine biblical Elder is great Humility. And this Humility combined with his God-given Authority makes it possible for the members of the Church to submit themselves to the Authority of these Elders. Look what the writer of Hebrews said about this in **Hebrews 13:17**:

Obey your leaders and submit *to them*, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

... and in **James 3:1**- the half- brother of Jesus adds that because these men lead by teaching Scripture- they face a much stricter Accountability than those who do not:

Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

Now the English word, “**overseer**” in **1Timothy 3:1** comes from the Greek word, *episkopos* (e)pi/skopo\$)) meaning: *overseer; watcher; protector; or patron*. The Authorized Version (King James) translated this Greek word as “**Bishop**” which, over the centuries, has been weighed down with Man-made ecclesiastical trappings- mostly by the Roman “system”- warping the intent of this word. In the inspired New Testament however- the Greek word, *episkopos* was used to refer to the SAME role as Pastor or Elder. Dr. Luke wrote this in **The Acts 20:28**:

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers (*episkopos*), to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Titus 1:5-9

5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders (*episkopos*) in every city as I directed you,

6 *namely*, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.

7 For the overseer (*episkopos*) must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,

8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled,

9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

1Peter 5:1&2

1 Therefore, I exhort the elders (*episkopos*) among you, as *your* fellow elder (*episkopos*) and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,

2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;

Now some have suggested that *episkopos* derives its sense from a City Administrator, Inspector, or Financial Manager in the Greek culture. Its New Testament usage, however, more closely parallels that of the Essene Jews of the Qumran community. The Overseers among the Essenes preached, taught, presided, exercised care and authority, and enforced discipline. Those functions more closely mirror that of the New Testament Overseer/Elder/Pastor than the more- narrow use of the term in Greek culture.

So, what are the Responsibilities of the Overseers/Elders/Pastors?

- ✓ They are to rule well (**1Timothy 5:17**)
- ✓ Preach and Teach (**1Timothy 5:17**)
- ✓ Pray for the sick (**James 5:14**)
- ✓ Care for the Church (**1Peter 5:1&2**)
- ✓ Be examples for others to follow (**1Peter 5:1-2**)
- ✓ Set Church Policy (**The Acts 15:22ff.**)
- ✓ Ordain other Leaders (**1Timothy 4:14**).

Weak, sinful, and defeated believers are told here to go to the Elders and draw on their Strength. James says that the weak believers are to “**call**” for the Elders. The English word, “**call**” comes from the Greek word, *proskaleæ*, which means: *to desire someone to come alongside*.

Now it is very possible that the reason that these weak people had to “call” for the Elders rather than simply go to them at the next Church Service- is because these “suffering saints” were still in prison being abused.

So, the Elders are called to come to where these suffering saints are and lift them up. It is the same concept that the Apostle Paul expressed in **Galatians 6:1:**

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

The wounded, exhausted, and broken sheep are told here to reach out for their “under- Shepherds”- who will *intercede* for them; physically nourish their wounds; and ask God for renewed spiritual Strength on their behalf.

Now this is a very important- but largely neglected- Ministry of the Church's Pastors and Elders. However, the Apostles acknowledged its priority when, in **The Acts 6:4**, they said,

But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

Sadly, all too often in the modern Church- weak and struggling believers are often handed over to so-called “expert professional Counselors”- who often have little or no Biblical knowledge; and who may not even be saved themselves. Godless Psychology and Psychiatry have almost *eliminated* genuine Biblical Counselling in many “main line” Denominations due to the decline of Trust that most people in the Ministry have toward the Scriptures; along with the ever-present threat of lawsuits from disgruntled congregants. And among the few remaining Church Leaders who actually DO continue to counsel- there is very little Power in their prayers due, primarily, to ungodly and unbiblical lifestyles.

But what we need to grasp is that those dear sheep who have been defeated in the spiritual battle do not need to hear opinions of human Wisdom. These “suffering saints” need to be strengthened by the Power of God through the Prayers of holy and Bible- saturated men.

Now, again in context, the **anointing with oil in the name of the Lord** done by the Elders here in **James 5:14** is NOT a reference to some symbolic ceremony or ritual supposedly representing the supernatural Power of the Holy Spirit flowing down upon an individual- as is commonly taught. But even if it were- it is not honest to suggest that the modern custom of “dabbing” oil on the forehead would constitute a Biblical “anointing” in the first place- *especially* like that carried out by Prophets and Priests in the Old Testament.

Psalm 133:2

It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, *Even* Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes.

The “Anointing with oil” that was carried out under the Old Covenant- has nothing to do with what is commonly carried out in the modern Church. It is clear from a study of the practices under the first “Model of Worship” (The Old Covenant)- that the man who was anointed was literally *drenched* with oil.

... the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, *Even* Aaron's beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes.

So, to suggest that a person today can place a few drops of oil on his finger and then “dab” it on the forehead of someone else- and that this constitutes “Anointing with oil” is patently ridiculous. If we want to truly “anoint with oil” then we need to be faithful to the Old Testament Scriptures and literally pour oil on the person’s head and let it run down over their face and down to the very bottom of their garment. That would be what the Old Testament mean when it told people to “anoint with oil”.

But this confuses the Issue. Because the only reason people were physically anointed with oil under the *inferior* Old Covenant was to signify that the Reality of the infinitely *superior* New Covenant had not yet come. You see, under the *original* Model (the Old Covenant)- God the Holy Spirit “came” to people- but then He left. He did NOT remain. God the Holy Spirit “**came upon**” certain people (**Judges 3:10; 6:34;11;29; 15:14; & 2Chronicles 20:14**). But He also “**departed**” from them (**1Samuel 16:14**). He “**visited**” His people (**1Samuel 2:21**); He “**descended**” (**Exodus 34:5**); and He “**fell**” (**Ezekiel 11:5**) upon God’s people- but He NEVER “stayed” or “remained”. In fact, the ONLY reference in the entire Old Testament of the Holy Spirit “**resting**” on anyone- is a prophecy concerning the Messiah in **Isaiah 11:1-5**.²

The Holy Spirit *remaining* on/in God’s people and “living” and “walking” and abiding *inside* them- is *solely* a Characteristic of the superior New Covenant through Salvation in Jesus Christ!

John 1:29-34

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

31 "I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

² It is obvious that God the Holy Spirit HAD to do a sovereign Work inside each individual that was saved under the Old Covenant- or they would have never been saved. But nevertheless, His Ministry IN people under the Old Covenant was not anywhere as intimate then as it is now.

33 "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

34 "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

When God the Father sovereignly sent John the Baptist to baptize those who turned AWAY from Sin and who turned TOWARD God (Repentance)- He told John that when John physically saw the Holy Spirit (with his natural eyes) descend on a particular Man- AND REMAIN- John would know that that Man was the promised Messiah.

... He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

So, it was the unmistakable Sign of God the Holy Spirit REMAINING on Jesus that allowed John to KNOW that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. It was NOT Jesus' Teaching (John never heard Jesus teach); It was NOT Jesus performing Miracles; It was NOT the Crucifixion nor the Resurrection (John was martyred BEFORE those things happened) that allowed John to KNOW that Jesus was the Messiah. It was one thing: the Holy Spirit *remaining* on Jesus. And that was such great a Sign to John that he could then declare this about Jesus:

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

And now that Jesus has come and died and risen again- we have the Prophecy of **Ezekiel 37:27** fulfilled in Him. Now WE are the Temple of God; and God the Spirit of God dwells CONTINUALLY in us! And this is why the Apostle Paul said this in **2Corinthians 6:16**:

what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

... in fact, that is what it means to be "saved"- to have God the Holy Spirit *dwell continually* inside us!

Now why am I *emphasizing* this? Because from the moment that John saw the Spirit of God remain on Jesus- until this very moment this morning- the Reality of

the third Person of the Trinity living and walking inside believers- empowering and enabling them to love and serve God faithfully- would make physical “anointing with oil” completely obsolete. So, the logic goes like this:

- ✓ Why would we want a Prophet (who himself is sinful)- when we can have the *sinless* Incarnate God?
- ✓ Why would we desire a “word” from that Prophet- when we can have the *infallible* Scriptures?
- ✓ Why would we desire to repeatedly sacrifice an animal- when we have the one- time Sacrifice of the sinless Lamb of God?
- ✓ Why would we need an earthly Priesthood- when God the Son- Jesus Himself- is our “High Priest”?
- ✓ Why should we go to Jerusalem once a year to worship- when WE are now the Temple of God and can worship God *anywhere*?
- ✓ Why utilize Old Testament *Symbols*- when we have the *Reality* of the New Covenant?

... and why “anoint with oil”- when we can have God the Holy Spirit living within us- *continually*?

Now let me take this one step further. Because everything I just told you is true- then what I am about to say is also true:

It isn't simply incorrect. It is much *worse* than that. It is a horrific Sin for anyone, who lives underneath the glorious New Covenant, to try to anoint anyone with oil today- after the Pattern given in the Old Testament. In fact, it is blasphemy. Why? Because to anoint with oil today- **for any reason**- is to utilize an Old Testament Sign or Symbol. But today, we have the New Testament Reality that the Old Testament symbolized. So, why use the obsolete Symbol when you have the Reality? To continue to use an Old Testament Symbol is to *belittle* and *ignore* the Reality of the indwelling Power of the third Person of the Trinity- God the Holy Spirit. This is just as insulting as if someone sacrificed an animal today- after the sinless Lamb of God was sacrificed. All of those Old Covenant Symbols and Signs were but earthly and weak Shadows of the infinitely more glorious Reality that we have today in Jesus- as we live underneath the auspices of the New Covenant.

And this is why the Greek word, *aleiphæ* (the root form of the verb translated as **anointing**) is NOT used a single time in the New Testament to refer to a ceremonial anointing. Not once. And James wasn't doing that either. The Greek scholar A. T. Robertson comments,

"It is by no means certain that *aleiphæ* here . . . means 'anoint' in a ceremonial fashion rather than 'rub' as it commonly does in medical treatises"³

.. and the Anglican archbishop, Richard C. Trench (1807-1886) agreed:

"[*aleiphæ*] is the mundane and profane, [*chriæ*] is the sacred and religious, word"⁴

The Greek word, *aleiphæ* was used in the New Testament in various ways to describe:

- Anointing one's head with oil (**Matthew 6:17; cf. Luke 7:46**),
- The women's anointing of Jesus' Body after His Death (**Mark 16:1**)
- Mary's anointing of the Lord's Feet (**John 11:2; 12:3**)
- Anointing the sick with oil (**Mark 6:13**).

... which all references events done BEFORE the Resurrection of Jesus; and the establishment of the New Covenant. So, the most *accurate* way to understand the Command here in **James 5:14** would be:

"rubbing him with oil in the name of the Lord"

... because this phrase literally reads in the original Greek:

"after having oiled him."

So, what makes much more sense- *contextually*- is that James is instructing the Elders to literally "*rub oil*" on the body of believers who had suffered debilitating physical injuries due to their Imprisonment and Persecution- which was a common practice by the Jews of that era. For example- in the Parable of "*The Good Samaritan*" Jesus Himself describes this process:

Luke 10:33&34

33 "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion,

34 and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on

³ *Word Pictures in the New Testament* [reprint, 1933; Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.], 6:65.

⁴ *Synonyms of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 136-37.

them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

We must remember that medical Science was in a very primitive state back then and there were few trustworthy doctors. And this Act of Mercy of rubbing oil into the wound and on the sore muscles of these beaten and injured saints would have been a gracious and kind demonstration on the part of the Elders- *especially* as a precursor to praying for them.

But perhaps even more importantly- the Elders' **anointing** (rubbing) of weak, defeated believers “**with oil**” conveyed the responsibility for Elders to stimulate, encourage, strengthen, and refresh these people.

Luke 7:44-48

44 Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

45 "You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.

46 "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.

47 "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."

48 Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."

... and speaking of Israel, Isaiah wrote,

Isaiah 1:6

From the sole of the foot even to the head There is nothing sound in it, *Only* bruises, welts and raw wounds, Not pressed out or bandaged, Nor softened with oil.

... in other words, because they lacked godly leaders- the people of Israel did *not* have their “spiritual wounds” treated.

King David also expressed God's gracious, compassionate, spiritual Restoration of him in these familiar words of **Psalm 23:5**:

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.

So, whether you are going strictly by the actually Greek words that James used here; or the theological *context* of this entire Chapter- we see that James was instructing the Elders to *physically* “rub oil” on the sore and weak and beaten bodies of these persecuted saints to help them recover. So, three things emerge from this:

- Physical healing does NOT come by way of the Prayer of Elders after they have anointed the sick with oil.
- Physical Healing comes by Way of God’s Mercy (that He distributes according to His Own Prerogative) through the Prayers and Faith of ALL of God’s people
- The overwhelming majority of those sick people who are prayed for by the Elders and “anointed with oil” are NOT healed (even though it is supposedly guaranteed)

Now look again at **James 5:14b**:

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

James says here that the Elders' Ministry of Intercession and Restoration is to be done “**in the name of the Lord**”. And that is because any true biblical Encouragement must always be consistent with Who God is (which is what the word, “Name” represents). To do something in the “*Name of*” Jesus Christ is to do what Jesus would have done in that same situation- and for His Glory. So, to minister in the “**Name of the Lord**” is to serve others on His Behalf- so that Jesus alone will be magnified. And for the Elders to pray in the “**Name of the Lord**” is to ask what Jesus would want- to His Honor.

Colossians 3:17

Whatever you do in word or deed, *do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

John 14:13&14

13 "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*.

Now, so far, we have covered only two verses in this Passage. (13&14). And, Lord willing, next time, we will begin to look at the *rest* of this amazing Passage (15-18) that James wrote for God's Glory and the Good of God's people.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.