



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

SOME FINAL WORDS ON PRAYER! – JAMES 5:14-15

COLORADO

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*Our relationship with Jesus Christ encompasses every experience in life and as we turn to Him in prayer we find we have a God big enough for it all. In times of trouble and suffering, joy or sorrow, prayer and praise alike, acknowledge that God is sufficient. To pray is to acknowledge His sovereign power to meet our needs. To praise is to acknowledge God's sovereign power in appointing our circumstances. God is our sufficiency!*¹

SOME FINAL WORDS ON PRAYER!-JAMES 5:14-15

James 5:14-15-"Is anyone among you sick? 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; (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."

James has addressed what our basic attitude to trials and the joys of this life should be in the proceeding verses. In all of life's experiences we must defer to the God from Whom they come; for praise in well-being and prayer in difficulty.² Now, as we come to these next verses, James instructs believers regarding suffering and affliction and the importance of prayer. This remains the context as we proceed. Though there are many different opinions, the context will direct and define our focus. Prayer is not only critical in our personal relationship with God, but also with one another as believers, for that prayer support will serve our needy brother or sister in the body of Christ.³

I. CALL FOR PRAYER -JAMES 5:14

James 5:14-"Is anyone among you sick? 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;"

A. "IS ANYONE AMONG YOU SICK" – JAMES 5:14A

Following James' lengthy and encouraging exhortation on enduring suffering patiently with steadfastness, he now asks the question, are any among you sick?

"sick" Greek *%astheneo* "to be without strength, mental, moral or spiritual, weary, worn out, a sick spirit in a sick body with the latter the result of the former, to be without strength, trouble from within and reflects the effect of that in the body.

While "*astheneo*" is translated 18 times in the New Testament as "*sick*", 14 of those times refer to an emotional or spiritual weakness. In all but three uses of this word, it doesn't refer to a physical sickness. Commonly in the epistles of Paul, it does not mean a physical sickness. For example, 2 Corinthians 12:10 says "*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 the word is translated as "*weak*", is produced by the sufferings of this

life. The primary thought here in James if we keep with the context, is addressing Christians who have become weak by the sufferings of life no matter what they are; maybe defeated in the spiritual battle and lost the ability to endure, exhausted, weary, sick, depressed, lost the desire to persevere, lost motivation, sinking in despair, not able even to pray effectively on their own. In that condition, these weak believers need the help of the spiritually strong.⁴ These verses cannot be confined to those physically sick with disease. In context, James focuses on those who are so weak and weary from the suffering, affliction, persecution, trials and testing of this life. When we are so weak and without strength, when we have hit the bottom and the bottom falls out, when we think we can't go on, what does James tell us to do?

B. "CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH" – JAMES 5:14B

James reminds us that help will be found in the elders of the church for they are the older, spiritually strong and mature believers. He calls on us to go to the leadership of the body of Christ, the church. The church refers to a called out assembly of believers.

"call" Greek *%proskaleo* "to call alongside, a definite act to summon.

This word is an imperative, where the step taken is by the one who is weak and sick. The wounded and exhausted, broken sheep are to go to their earthly shepherds who will intercede for them and ask God for help and strength. And this must be the priority of the church of Jesus Christ. It is not the responsibility of "professionals", but rather those who are defeated in the battle of life do not need to hear opinions of human wisdom, but rather strengthened by the power of God through the prayer of their elders. This must be a priority of the church.⁵

C. "AND LET THEM PRAY OVER HIM;" – JAMES 5:14C

This is the specific responsibility and ministry of the leadership of the church on behalf of this one who is weak, weary, sick, without strength. The tense of the verb stresses the urgency of the prayer for this one because of the great need. And clearly, the prayers which are on behalf of this believer would be for the Lord's healing touch on his life and restoration.

D. "ANOINTING HIM WITH OIL"- JAMES 5:14D

James does not refer to a special ceremonial anointing here. Olive oil was commonly used as a medical agent. This physical action of anointing or "*rubbing*" oil carried symbolic significance that the person being prayed for was set apart for God's special attention and care. Anointing of the weak, defeated, suffering believer by the elders expresses the duty for elders to encourage and assist this believer in need. In Psalm 23:5, David the king expresses God's gracious compassion in restoring him, "*You have anointed my head with oil.*"

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

Colorado

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E. “IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;”- JAMES 5:14E

“In the name of the Lord” of course refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. And to do something in the name of Jesus Christ would be to do what He would do and that would be pray, to ask what our Lord would ask and to serve others as He would. Encouragement that is worth anything will be consistent with Who God is and what His name represents. This reinforces that the elders were acting in obedient, trustful, dependence on our Lord Jesus Christ. It would be His work and will be accomplished here.

II. THE PRAYER OFFERED IN FAITH! -JAMES 5:15

James 5:15-“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.”

The future tense used in this verse leaves open the matter of time between the prayer and the result.

A. “AND THE PRAYER – JAMES 5:15A

There is a definite article used by James, “*the prayer*” pointing to a specific prayer. This is not a normal term for prayer and refers specifically to the elders’ prayer for the weak and suffering believer. This is a strong and fervent petition.

B. “THE PRAYER OF FAITH” – JAMES 5:15B

This term is used only here in the New Testament and it refers to the faith exercised by the elders in their prayer for this believer. It reflects absolute trust in the Lord and flows from a mature relationship with Him and a deliberate acceptance of His sovereign will. All prayer is a commitment to the will of God. The welfare of the child of God cannot be left with greater confidence anywhere else than in the Father’s hands, nor can any solution of the plight be more fitting, beneficial and glorious than that which He has in mind.⁶

C. “WILL RESTORE THE ONE WHO IS SICK” – JAMES 5:15C

James says that the result of the elder’s ministry of prayer and compassion “*will restore*” the believer who is sick and weak.

“**restore**” Greek %**sozo**” to save and often referring to spiritual salvation.

The idea here is that the prayer of faith of the elders will result in delivering the weak and suffering believer from weakness to wholeness. Then James uses a different word for “*sick*” in this verse than he did in James 5:14.

“**sick**” Greek %**kamno**” means to be weary and fatigued

The only other use of this word in the New Testament is found in Hebrews 12:3 which says, “*For consider Him Who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.*” This word clearly does not refer to a physical suffering from illness.

D. “AND THE LORD WILL RAISE HIM UP”- JAMES 5:15D

The closing part of this verse makes clear the real source of restoration. It’s not the oil, the prayer, the elders. Yes the obedience to what God calls us to is important, but the restoration isn’t accomplished by those things. They are merely the avenue by which the Lord restores. The faith exercised in prayer is a faith in God Who is sovereignly in control, accomplishes His providential purposes by His kind will and gracious intention towards the suffering believer. The Lord Jesus Christ is the One in Whose name the prayer was given and in Whom the restoration is accomplished.

“**raise up**” Greek %**egeiro**” to awaken, arouse, will save.

Through the righteous prayer of godly men, God will restore, will rescue, and save His battered, weak and weary sheep. The situation is never helpless or hopeless. No matter what comes our way, we can take comfort in that truth.

E. “AND IF HE HAS COMMITTED SINS”- JAMES 5:15E

The “*if*” used by James doesn’t assume that sin has been committed or that the condition of the believer is a result of sin. But we are always called to examine ourselves. Because James uses the plural “*sins*”, it is clear that he refers to repeated, habitual disobedience to God in the past. Those who are weak and weary from the sufferings of life no matter what they are; exhausted, weary, sick or depressed, with little or no desire to persevere, sinking in despair...now that is a battered and broken sheep. In that state, sin can easily result from being defeated, broken and discouraged. James will carry on this thought in the next verse.

F. “THEY WILL BE FORGIVEN.”- JAMES 5:15F

Just as David confessed and God forgave, so it will be with our sins as well. In Psalm 32:1-5, David cries out to God in confession, “*How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and whose spirit there is no deceit! When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to Thee and my iniquity I did not hide: I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”; and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin.*” In the verses that follow, James will address sin and then confession as an important practice for all of us in life. But clearly this is an important responsibility of the elder’s ministry to those who are weak, weary and sick. If there is sin, calling for repentance and reassuring of forgiveness.

¹Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.188.

²Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.193

³MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.275.

⁴MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.277.

⁵MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.277.

⁶Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.200.