

BOOK OF JAMES
ARE YOU SICK? CALL FOR PRAYER!-PT 1
JAMES 5:14-15

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Introduction

This is **one of those difficult passages** that some preachers would rather not deal with and many don't deal with it! But **it's not difficult because of what it says or what it means. It's difficult because of the way it's been mishandled and taken out of context so much.**

But listen, that is all the more reason that we need to study verses such as this! Amen! I've said before and will say it again, one of the main reasons I preach through books the way I do is so **we are forced to deal with even the difficult passages!**

In dealing with difficult verses such as this in a verse by verse study, it can help us in our study and understanding of all of God's Word!

We need to have the tools so that when we see some huckster on TV selling "*Anointing Oil*", we can look at this text in its context and know he is a fraud!

We need to understand ***James 5:14-15* in the context of this whole passage in this book!** We need to understand this verse **in the context of this whole book of James!** We need to see it and understand **how it relates in the context of the whole of the New Testament and even Scripture as a whole!** That's why I use so much Scripture in my preaching! **We must compare Scripture with Scripture!**

So remember, this is how we must approach all of Bible study! **One verse cannot be understood in isolation from the rest of Scripture!** In Bible interpretation, **CONTEXT IS THE KEY!** And remember too that **Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture!**

2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

How much of it? All of it! Together! Each part understood as it fits into the whole, complete, revelation of God. So, that gives us a foundation with which to look at this verse! So let's begin...

Verse 14 starts the same way as *verse 13* did. A question followed by a command! (*Read and review verse 13 questions and commands*)

Read verses 14-15! Understand that ***verse 14 and 15* are tied together** by the conjunction "***And***" in *verse 15*. Our focus tonight is on *verse 14*.

I. WHO ARE THESE VERSES TALKING ABOUT WHEN IT SAYS "*SICK*"?

A. The Definition Of The Word "*Sick*."

The word that is translated "*sick*" here is used **32 times in the New Testament. 18 times it is used to describe physical sickness. 14 times it is used to describe emotional or spiritual weakness.**

So, at its core, **it means ANY DEEP, INTENSE, PERSONAL AFFLICTION—WHETHER PHYSICAL, SPIRITUAL, OR EMOTIONAL.**

B. The Context Of The Word "*Sick*."

Some folks think that James is giving us a blanket formula for healing the sick. **We know that this is NOT the case!**

Scripture shows that it is **NOT ALWAYS** God's will to heal the sick! (*e.g. The Apostle Paul*)

Experience shows that it is **NOT ALWAYS** God's will to heal the sick! (*Give examples*)

The surrounding context shows part of what the special characteristics are of what James is describing.

We saw in *verse 13* how ***AFFLICTION*** would include those who are "***sick***"!

Vs 15-16 – Shows the possibility that the person may be sick because of his sin.

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The phrase “*if he have committed sin*” the literally means “*if he has been constantly sinning,*”

As Paul addressed the situation in the Corinthian Church regarding their abuses as it relates to the LORD’s TABLE. He said:
1 Corinthians 11:30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

From this surrounding context, we see that **James is dealing with a Believer who may be sick because he is being disciplined by God!**

Well how can you know? That Believer knows! If you aren’t right with God and sickness hops on you, you know!

Now, with that being said, **it’s not up to us to judge what one’s sickness is from**, unless that person has been in open sin and placed outside the confines of the Church through proper Church discipline! (e.g. The young man disciplined in 1 Corinthians 5.)
1 Corinthians 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1 Corinthians 5:13 Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

II. WHAT ARE WE TO DO IF WE FIND OURSELVES IN SUCH A WAY—BEING SICK?

A. When We Experience That Kind Of Affliction In Our Life, First And Foremost WE MUST PRAY! (Verse 13)

If we are not willing to **pray for ourselves first in dependence upon the LORD**, how can we ever have confidence in the prayers of others?

B. Then, After We Have Prayed Or Even While We Are Praying We Are To Call Out To Others To Pray Over Us!
But not just any others!

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Yes, every one in the Church is to pray for fellow Brothers and Sisters in Christ who are experiencing affliction!

It is part of Brotherly love! We are all part of the same Body! When one member hurts, the other members hurt with them! It is **why we have a prayer list and why we come together and have a prayer time to pray for folks needs as a Church!**

We’ll talk about that in the second part of this sermon, next week, Lord willing. **But for this kind of deep, intense, personal affliction of sickness, we are also to call on “the elders.”** *There was a young Baptist preacher who was committed to preaching through Bible books like I do. He had just started preaching through the book of Titus when he came to the passage where Paul gives Titus a list of the qualifications for elders. He said, “Now Paul is dealing with elders. Since we’re Baptists, we don’t have elders. So we’ll just skip down to verse 10.”*

Well, we are Baptists, but **James clearly says that we are to call on the elders to pray over us in this situation. Literally, to come along side us and pray with us.**

So, since we are Baptists and our Baptist Church doesn’t have a separate office that has multiple elders, what do we do with this verse? Do we make someone go visit some other kind of Church that does have multiple elders to have their elders pray over them? No! Let’s consider the word “*elders*”.

In the Old Testament, the word “elder” was used in several connotations:

- 1. Sometimes “elder” referred to “older in age.”**
Genesis 27:42 “And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son...”

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We use that form of the word today...“*respect your elders!*”

2. Sometimes “*elder*” referred to “*mature older men; heads of families; men of repute who serve as leaders*”
Exodus 3:16 “Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt:”

Throughout the New Testament, “*elder*” can mean one of two things.

1. “*Elder*” can mean a person who holds a specific ruling office within the Church. And by the way, the Church at Jerusalem where James was the pastor had a multiplicity of those kinds of **elders**...it was a large Church!
Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

2. “*Elder*” can mean mature men within the Church who are specifically recognized and known for their godly character.
The word “*elder*” here is NOT speaking particularly of one who holds an office with that title (though they may). No, the word here means one who is “*elderly; older; a senior.*”

These men did not necessarily hold a specific office within the Church with the title of “*elder*”.

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So, back to the verse...The point of the verse is this—When we experience deep, intense, personal affliction, where are we supposed to go?

To a counselor? To a psychologist? To a telephone hotline? Who does James say we are to call on? The “*elders*” in the church. The good, godly, spiritually mature men in the Church!

It is our individual responsibility to call on them! What is the responsibility of the elders? They are to come along side us in prayer! That is what “*pray over him*” literally means.

It means that they will unite their heart with ours in prayer and spiritual support.

But that’s not the end of it. Because it says they are to also anoint you with oil in the name of the Lord.

In the ancient world, olive oil was an extremely important product. It was used for food. It was used for ceremonial purposes. And it was used for health purposes.

I’ve heard it said that this anointing is for health purposes. I tend to disagree with that as the anointing with oil is linked to prayer and to the name of the LORD.

So, I see this as being ceremonial or symbolic. Having said that, understand that there is no magic in the olive oil. It is just olive oil. It is symbolic of the Holy Spirit, but as far as oil it is just olive oil.

Nor is there any magic in the touch of the elders who anoint the person! They are just elders who have been called to pray for this person!

So, what is the significance? Listen closely.

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The sick person, in calling for the elders to do this is showing their faith and utter dependence on the LORD by doing what James says to do here! Right? Obedience!

And the elders, in humility, by doing what James says to do here, also realize that if anything is going to be done for this person the LORD is going to have to do it! Right?

So both the prayers and the anointing here show both sides of this situation placing their complete faith in God to do something for this person if it be His will!

Lord willing, next week we'll see in the next two verses... *verses 15-16* more about this prayer and what it does for this person and some other things that we are to be doing!

Conclusion

Do you have the kind of faith that can withstand afflictions when they come?

I'm talking about the kind of faith that can look to God with prayers of faith... knowing He has our best interests at heart and knows what we're going through!

The kind of faith that can not only look to God, but can also call on and lean on others too!

Listen whatever kind of affliction or sickness we're going through—we don't have to face it alone!

If Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, call on Him. He will bring you through!

Call on good, godly, spiritually mature believers to come along side you in your prayers during your affliction! You are not alone! You can persevere! You can make it!

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If you are going through afflictions and do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, sadly, you are on your own. You have no one to really turn to and no one who can really help.

But you don't have to stay that way! If you turn to Jesus, He will save you from your greatest affliction—your sin! And then He will give you the strength to endure the affliction and fellow Believers to stand with you and pray for you through those afflictions!