

July 2012 Newsletter

Health And Healing

Weakness leads to sickness and is just the opposite of strength and health. “*Is anyone of you (in the church) sick?*” It is describing an actual sickness without a presupposition of a weakened immune system. The present indicative indicates a present reality in their lives; they were sick at the present time. What's interesting, though, is the scriptural approach to sickness. The Apostle James is telling them to call for the elders of the church, which indicates that they were familiar with this area of dealing with sickness in their society.

2. “*He should call for the elders of the church*” - *proskalesastho tous presbuteros tes ekklesias*

To *call* is the orist imperative of *proskaleo*, which is a command to do something which they were not doing. They had not called for the elders of the church and are commanded to do so. It doesn't tell us if they had sought “medical” help or not. I imagine that they, like any of us, would have done what they had to do to get better and it didn't work, if that was the case.

What this apparently indicates is that whatever steps they had taken to get better, if any, were not working, so James tells them to call for the elders of the church. There are three possible concepts that come into view here. **One**, that one's sickness is due to personal sin in his life and by calling for the elders is a sign that the heart wants to get right with God, which could be the case because of the reference to sin later on in the passage. **Two**, the second reason could be due to a failure concept. In other words, they had tried this thing and that thing and nothing had worked, so call for the elders. And **three**, this could have been an established procedure in the local church, where the church was not only interested in the believer's spiritual health, but their physical health as well.

An **elder**, *presbuteros*, was a male believer who had spiritual maturity and held a leadership position in the church under the authority of the Pastor-Teacher. To **call**, *proskaleomai*, in the middle voice meant to call to oneself, or to bid someone to come to you. In this case James is commanding them to ask for the elders to come to them.

If they are sick, it's obvious that they haven't become well. And if that's the case, then there is something they don't know; something that they're not applying; something they're lacking the wisdom in, or a lack of faith. Elders are to be men who have wisdom, who have had to apply the Word of God in their lives; men who don't have all the answers, but have more answers than the other believers, and men who were to have more faith, or exercise faith more than the others. So we can see why the believer in the church was to call for them. But they have to call! It's not our place to stick our nose in other people's business, unless they request us.

3. “*To pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord*” - *kai proseuxasthosan ep'auton aleipsantes auton elaiou en to onomati tou kuriou*

The action of the orist participle, to anoint, precedes the action of the main verb, to pray. Which is to say that they were to anoint him with oil before they prayed over him. After having anointed him with oil, they were then to pray over him. But this is where it gets interesting, for the practice of churches today is not going by what was done then.

The two words used for **anointing** are *chrío*, from which we get Christ, and *aleipho*. *Chrío* was used in the symbolic ritual sense in a religious setting, such as **the anointing of prophets, priests, kings and Christ**, who was anointed by God. And he was anointed, not by water, but by the Holy Spirit. (All believers in Christ are anointed by the Holy Spirit at the moment of their salvation). While *aleipho* was used outside of the religious setting for a variety of purposes: **cosmetics, medicine, purification, bodily hygiene, the treatment of wounds and the healing of diseases**.

Anointing with oil could be done in the sense of *aleipho* by smearing, daubing, or salve, or in the case of *chrío* by pouring the oil on. **Oil was used because of its deep penetrating qualities into the body** and was thought to impart strength, health, joy and beauty. In addition to healing the sick anointing with oil was used for honoring a guest, honoring the dead and accompanied the casting out of demons.

The **ointments** that they used were olive oil, and the more expensive myrrh and balsam. **Myrrh** was believed to have tremendous healing qualities including healing cancer. The word used for oil is *elaio* and was the word for olive oil, which was used as the base for just about everything.

Now what they did, when they used **olive oil for perfume**, they would take certain **spices**, crush them and then put it into the oil giving it a pleasant aroma when applied. But if it was used for **“medicinal” purposes**, a variety of **herbs**, each having their own healing properties for certain, different ailments, would be **crushed up into the ointment then applied by daubing or smearing**.

So there was a certain medicinal, therapeutic, healing benefit to apply “herbally treated” oils to injuries, wounds, illnesses, diseases, etc.. Maybe not a perfect solution, but one that had been tested over time and found to be effective. **And in this passage, where we have the oil applied first, then prayer; we note that the therapeutic approach was used first to start the healing, then the believer was prayed over.**

The root or fruit of trees and plants were used for food and the body's nutritional needs, while the leaves were used for healing. In a pharmaceutical controlled nation talking about using herbs to treat people's health problems sounds to most people as hocus pocus, witchcraft, primitive superstitions, even illegal to some. But the Chinese, Japanese and other oriental cultures use herbs and are far healthier than we are! Part of it is due to their better diets and the rest due to their approaches on treating sickness and disease using nothing but herbs!

They use the plants, herbs and leaves of the field for the healing of their bodies, **just as God had provided for us in the Bible**. We have the scriptural endorsement by God in his Word where he said that the leaves of the plants are for healing. Then there is also the pharmaceutical industry which derives half of its drugs from plants. The plants could be used, but then there would be no profit in that, and they can't patent plants that are growing in the wild.

Now healing herbs could be applied in a poultice, in a tea, in a broth, or crushed up to release the oils in them, mixed with olive oil, then smeared or daubed on to various places on the body for absorption.

Essential oils today are a take off and improvement on that concept producing a more pure and concentrated oil from the herb itself, thus making it much more effective. They are being used more and more today for health and wellness.

So when the elders of the church came with oil to anoint the believer who was sick, it was **not a religious ritual, because the word *chrío* was not used.** By the use of the word *aleipho* we know that they came out to see the man, not to perform some religious ritual over him and pour oil on him, which was what *chrío* would indicate, **but they came out there to daub or smear an oil that had crushed up herbs or spices in it that could help in healing the sickness, or whatever the problem was.**

What this shows is that there was an accepted cultural practice that the elders of the church were adept at. **They were familiar with the use of herbs and essential oils in healing,** what kinds for what problems, and that they had a reasonable confidence that they were effective and could help the situation. But they did not rely on them totally, hence the employment of prayer. Ultimately, they knew, like us, **that only God can heal.** **By the use of prayer over the believer they were saying in effect that it was ultimately God who heals us and they were asking him to heal the man.** “*In the name of the Lord*” is used here because Christ told them, and us, that we are to go to the Father with our requests in the name of the Lord and he will grant them.

What this tells us is that **there is a place for both applications in the Christian life,** for the medical, herbal or natural approach in dealing with our sicknesses, and there is the approach of faith and prayer. **It tells us that both concepts are to be used when dealing with our problems; medical or herbs, (that choice is the individual's), and the utilizing of faith and prayer,** even calling in other believers to pray. It also tells us that, even though the prime function of elders was in spiritual matters, they also had a responsibility to also use effective, natural concepts found in the natural world. And we note here the order of things; first the natural means used in society were to be applied first, then the spiritual approach of prayer. Seek the remedy; apply the remedy, then pray over the matter. It's sort of like taking aspirin for the headache, then praying.

“*To pray over him*”, *ep'auton*, *epi* with the accusative, is used to denote the recipients of various spiritual blessings. Here they are praying for someone and he will receive the blessing of healing. *Epi* also has the idea, at least it's implicated here, of having power or taking control over a situation or condition. The implication is that by calling for the elders, who have more knowledge, faith and maturity, who then come out with healing essential oils, and beseeching God to intervene in the matter, they are taking control over the problem of the sickness, which up to that time, has had the control!

Ancient people, including Israel and the Church, and even today also believed that maladies, sickness were caused to a large part by demons, fallen angels, evil spirits, so by employing the spiritual solution alongside the practical, they would be dealing with that element and the physical problem would go away. But either way both the spiritual and physical approaches were used by the elders in dealing with physical problems including the power and authority of Christ.

P. The Prayer of Faith

“*And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.*” James 5:15

1. “*And the prayer offered in faith*” - *kai he tes pisteos*

When we look at faith in reference to the subjective genitive and the objective genitive; the objective genitive looks at **what we believe**, the Word, God, his promises, etc., while the subjective genitive looks at the **act of believing**. One is external to us, the other is an internal dynamic.

So what this does is tell us something about the nature and character of our prayers, **that there is to be faith in them when we pray!** Their character should be that when we pray to God with our requests, we should be believing that he will grant them. The use of a subjective genitive tells us we have a faith-prayer, or faith in the prayer, or believing while we're praying.

Christ told the disciples not to pray with “*vain-babblings*”, which was just mechanically repeating the prayer over and over, like Catholics do with the rosary. The rosary, (prayer beads), actually began in ancient Babylon and is still utilized today by not only Catholics, but Moslems and people in the eastern religions.

In the passage it really isn't “*the prayer offered in faith*”, but “*the prayer of the faith*”, which really draws our attention to the character of our prayers; they are to be faith-prayers, **prayers that actually believe that we will get what we have asked God for!**

Faith is so important, not because it has any power in it to do anything, **but because it opens up the channel by which the power of God is made available to us in its operation.** Faith is not a feeling; and looking for some kind of a feeling when looking for faith is misleading. **It is believing that you will have what you have asked for; it's like believing that you already have it!**

There's also an assumption being made here. The elders are being called because **it's assumed that they are stronger in their faith**, both individually and collectively. Which also implies that the men who hold leadership positions in the church are to be stronger in faith than the others. It isn't about legalism, judgmentalism, tabooism, self-righteousness and things that are so prevalent today - but faith! Are they actively living by faith in their lives? Do they believe when they pray? Does God answer their prayers? These are the kind of believers you want praying for you.

This tells us something about the men who hold leadership positions of elders and deacons in the church. It tells us what kind of men they are to be and something about the nature and character of their work. Yes, they are to be men who love the truth, men of grace, (grace-oriented and gracious), men of Bible Doctrine, but they are also **to be men of faith.** Faith, in that, **when they pray they believe that God will answer their prayers!**

Men of faith who live by faith, who run their businesses and live their lives by faith, men who trust the Lord like Abraham did and men, who when they pray, exercise faith, and God sees that faith and answers their prayers. They're also to be **men of prayer**; we see that when they go over to the sick man's house to pray over him.

We see also an adeptness, a familiarity with the healing arts by them bringing over the oil. It shows a practice that was in line with their customs, a practice that had benefits.

“*Whatsoever things ye shall ask for, by means of prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*” is a promise and instruction for the Church from Christ. James knew it, believed it, applied it, instructed it and commanded it to others as he did to the elders. The elders, themselves, knew it believed it and applied it in their lives and with others.

So where does that leave us today? Aren't we also responsible to believe when we pray? Shouldn't there be faith in our prayers to God; the kind of faith that actually believes that we will get what we're asking him for?

Faith can be developed and it can be exercised. If we're having problems in the matter of faith, a careful study of my on line book on faith can help us overcome it. See “**True Faith**” at www.pacificrimbible.com. There are many things that will contribute to the developing of our faith and we need to know them.

If there's something that we would like God to do for us, **first** we must pray to him, and **secondly** we must believe that he will do it. If we're not at the level of faith when we do, then we need to stay on the matter until we actually believe he will do it. **How long will that take? Until we get the faith!** We just stay with it until we do!

2. “Will make the sick person well” - *sosei ton kamnonta*

Literally, “*Heal the sick person*”, or, “*Cure the sick person*”, so we have, “*The prayer of faith will cure the sick person*”. The word for *cure or heal* is *sozo* and it meant to rescue from danger, to save from death. It also meant to free from disease, sickness or demonism. **It was to deliver or preserve someone from anything that threatened their life or health.**

So, if it was in the area of God's judgment and the Lake of Fire; we would call it **salvation**. If it was in the area of imminent danger or death; we would call it **rescue** or deliverance. If it was in the area of sickness or disease; we would call it **healing** or curing. If it was in the area of demonism; we would call it **casting out demons**, or delivering from demonic influence and oppression.

The word for sick person is the present active participle of *kamno*. *Kamno* meant to be sick, to have a disease, to waste away, to be hopelessly sick. But *kamno* also had the idea of fatigue, being worn out and weariness of the mind. It also lines up with what is so common in America today called “chronic fatigue syndrome”, job burn-out, stress factor concepts and being overworked on the job. These are some of the factors involved in *kamno* that lead to and cause physical sickness. They are also the things that prevent physical recovery. Weakened immune systems is a serious problem today.

So apparently we are dealing with someone who has weariness of mind, fatigue, stress, burn-out; being worn out by life, home problems, pressures, etc., that have brought him into a mentally weakened state where his immune system is weakened, which in turn has now opened the door for some sickness, disease, or illness to hit him. Sound familiar?

We also know that we're not dealing with a bleeding wound, or an injury, such as a broken bone, but common fatigue, weariness, weakened immune system, all leading to some physical sickness. **Application of essential oils, prayer and faith create the proper positive environment for the body's refreshment and healing.**

4. “The Lord will raise him up” - *kai egerei auton ho kurios*

When dealing with critical problems in our life: health, sickness, pressure, finances, etc., we need something that we can really hold on to with our faith and this verse does it. When it says that, “*The Lord will raise him up*”, it uses the future active indicative, which expresses the absolute certainty of the action, which tells us that it really will happen!

With the use of the active voice; it tells us that it is the Lord who will be doing this. It isn't us; it isn't our prayers; it isn't our faith, but the Lord who is doing this. We need to remember what's going on here. We pray; we petition, **but it is God who does it !**

The phrase, “*raise him up*”, means to raise him up off his bed of sickness, to restore him to health, to get him back on his feet again. What is also implied is there will be spiritual and emotional healing as well as physical.

We know that the emotions have an influence on our physical well-being, with negative feelings causing ill health and sickness; some say there's a direct connection between the two. We also know that the spiritual life affects the mental life, which affects the emotional life, which in turn has an affect on the physical life.

The first word in the passage for sick is *astheneo*, which emphasizes the ideas of weakness, infirmity and a weakened immune system. The second word for sick is *kamno*, which has the ideas of fatigue, being worn out and weariness of mind.

The man is physically sick, but it is his spiritual/mental/emotional dynamic that is behind it! **So for the healing process to take place, for there to be total healing, there has to be healing in the spirit, mind and emotions.** We see this concept being addressed here by calling for the elders of the church, prayer, the exercising of faith, as well as the “healing oils”, which all create a very positive atmosphere, all leading up to the Lord granting the healing.

5. “*If he has sinned, he will be forgiven*”- *kan hamartias he pepoiekos, aphetesetai auto*

Kan comes from combining two words, *kai* - and, *ean* - if. It means and if, or even if. It begins a conditional clause which tells us that **not all sickness and suffering is due to sin, but if it is, then the sin will be forgiven and the suffering will go away.**

We have an interesting grammar set up here with *hamartia* - *sin*, and *poieo* in the perfect active participle of *to do*. The perfect active participle looks at an event that took place in the past that brought about a state of being; combined with to commit a sin, it tells us that **some sin brought about a state of being or a condition.** The idea is that **if the believer has sinned, then it will bring about its own consequences.** It isn't saying that he did sin; it's left at, “*and if he did sin*”; it will bring about a condition as its consequences. You get drunk; you get a hangover and who knows what else!

One of the consequences is in the **physical area.** It can be **divine corrective discipline, self-induced misery, or both.** Under this would be such things as physical sickness, disease, weakness, etc. The action of the perfect participle tells us that there was a time when it all began when the sin was committed, then divine discipline, or self-induced misery came into the picture manifested in physical, and/or emotional suffering.

Self-induced misery can be just the natural consequence of bad decisions; get drunk, have a hangover; get mad, punch a wall, and then break your hand. Or, they can come **from a guilty conscience** where your conscience punishes you for your sin; both are self-induced. Get drunk, commit fornication, have a hangover, a guilty conscience and a disease. God didn't have to do anything; we did it all to ourselves - self-induced misery.

The good news is that he will be forgiven, if he has sinned. It indicates that sin could be the cause behind his physical problem and with the forgiveness of the sin is the removal of the problem. It also indicates that forgiveness of sin is also brought about in the event of the elders coming over: prayer, faith, positive attitudes, “healing oils”, forgiveness of sins, a spiritual, emotional and physical

event. For the suffering believer there would be the healing of the spirit, the mind, the emotions and the body; and if he had sinned, that would be forgiven too according to 1 John 1:9, “*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

Q. Praying For One Another

“*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*” James 5:16

1. “*Therefore confess your sins to each other*” - *exhomologeisthe allelois ta paraptomata*

Allelos tells us that this action is to be done among a certain group of people and to them alone. The word *heteros* is another of a different kind, while *allelos* is another of the same kind! **This tells us that our “confessions” are to be made only to fellow believers in Christ and not to unbelievers.**

To understand this concept more thoroughly we need to see that hearing confessions was one of the duties of the OT priests, even the priests of the Babylonian religion heard confessions, as they do today in the Roman system. But **in the Church Age the royal family of God are all priests!** And as priests we are qualified to hear “confessions”, (we'll get into that later), and we are the only ones qualified to hear “confessions”. This eliminates Christians going to a Babylonian priest to confess.

But don't confuse this with the proper role of the Christian taking his sins to God in confession for forgiveness and cleansing, 1 John 1:9. Our **sins** are only to be confessed to God, not to each other and not to someone else.!

Paraptoma, **sins**, meant an error, an oversight, an unintentional mistake, a blunder or failure. The verb *parapipto* meant to drift off course, to fall to the side, to accidentally bump into something, to fail, to turn up somewhere or other, to fail in one's duty, to miss one's way, to miss the truth. Originally it meant to deviate to one side or the other.

From these we get the general idea of what is going on here. It is not referring to some particular sin that we have done, **those are to be confessed to God**, but it looks more at the idea of **our faults and failings, our blunders, our failures in certain areas, the mistakes we make, areas of weakness**, etc.. We all know what this is about because who among us have not failed in our roles as parents, or husbands, or wives? Or in the area of our spiritual life, prayer, living by faith, claiming the promises, spending time in the Word, etc.? How many of us have had problems in controlling our tempers, our tongues, our thought life? How many of us have had problems with worrying and being afraid? How is our health discipline, our diets? We get the point.

Paraptoma covers most of our daily living, for who hasn't made mistakes, veered off course, made many blunders and have faults? And that's what *paraptoma* is talking about when we're confessing to one another. Not our sins, but in the area that we're having problems in, areas that hold us back from living and enjoying the life that God has for us.

A scenario would be something like this, “I just can't seem to get over the problem of worry! I worry all the time about everything. Would you pray for me?” Or, “I've been missing so much church lately. It seems like I'm bogged down with details. Would you pray for me?” These are what is being talked about in “*confessing your 'sins' to one another*”, and because all believers are priests of the Most High God we are entitled to hear these types of confessions.

Now the word for *confess* is the present middle imperative of *exhomologeō*. In the second person plural, “*you all*”, it means that this applies to every believer in Christ, all of us. The present imperative tells us that this is not only a command, but to be an ongoing thing. In the middle voice it tells us that we are **benefited by confessing**. It benefits the believer **first of all** by dealing with the area of his pride; pride denies, humility confesses. So by sharing something with another believer we're rid of a little more of our pride, which is extremely beneficial. **Secondly** it benefits us when we get something off our shoulders. And **third**, we have somebody praying for us.

The **legal aspect** of to confess was very dominant, where the offending party before he could receive clemency, pardon, forgiveness had to admit (confess) to the judge or his treaty partner, that he had committed such an act. This idea was then transferred from a court of law to confessing to a deity. In the early church new believers were required that past practices in magic were to be confessed. Perhaps the idea was that humility was in view for them, plus by confession the other believers would pray for them and they would be free of them. In this passage maybe their sickness is linked to something they were doing, or involved in that was wrong, and by confessing it healing would follow.

2. “*And pray for each other*” - *kai proseuchesthe huper allelou*

“*One another*”, *allelous*, is one another of the same kind and is a reference to **fellow believers in Christ**. This tells us that we're to be praying all the time for our fellow believers, especially those in our own circles.

The second thing about this is that it's a command for us to be praying for one another. And in the second person plural it's a command for all members of the Royal Family of God to be praying for other members of the Royal Family.

The third thing we see, and it is brought out in the passage, is to pray for the healing of the sickness of some believer. **No command is given to us to be praying for the healing of someone who has not believed on Christ as their Savior**. Our prayers for them are that they would be brought to the place where they see the need of trusting Christ and that they would have a clear presentation of the Gospel.

The fourth thing we see about this is because of the present tense we are to be praying for each other all the time. Prayer in our personal lives and in our group prayers at church are to be for other believers here and abroad, but especially those we go to church with.

And the fifth thing we see about this, due to the use of the middle voice, is that it will not only **benefit the believer we are praying for, but we will be benefited because we are praying for him!** We have a vested interest in praying for our fellow Christian.

The use of the preposition *huper* is also significant here. *Huper* meant to do something specifically **for the sake of another person**, to help or benefit them. **Originally it meant to act as a shield over someone to protect them**. It had the idea of placing yourself between the harmful threat and the one you loved so as to protect them. This is what we are doing when we intercede for another believer in Christ who is sick. When we're sick, injured, suffering, have some malady, we're not only down in our physical health, but we also get down, even incapacitated in our spiritual, mental and emotional life. We're not able to hold ourselves up in prayer like we normally do. **It is in times like these that we need other believers to hold us up in prayer to intercede to God on our behalf and for our sake.**

What we end up with are believers coming to the side of a believer, who is sick and suffering, acting as a shield for him, not only in the area of praying over his sickness, **but to protect him from the attacks of Satan! The interceding for the sick believer acts as a shield to protect him from the attacks of the devil.**

3. “So that you may be healed” - *hopos iathete*

Hopos in the subjunctive mood tells us that something is being done for a purpose. Coupled with the preceding verse it tells us that we're to be praying for each other for the purpose of healing. This tells us what we're to be doing, why we're to be doing it, and it **also tells us that God wants us to be healthy!**

I think many Christians have the wrong idea about their personal health and relationship to God. Some of them have a martyr complex about poor health, that this is their “cross to bear”, others think that it's just a part of living on a sin cursed earth.

While it is true that suffering, undeserved suffering, evidentiary suffering, corrective discipline, spiritual growth, etc., does play a part in the believer's life, but what the Scriptures show us is that God wants us to be healthy and that is to be the norm in the Christian life! Now if a believer isn't healthy, they need to evaluate their life and start making decisions to pursue after a life of health.

The passage has the aoist passive subjunctive of *iaomai* for healing and the culminative aoist looks at the results of the action - **our healing**. The passive voice tells us once again that it is God who does the healing; our prayers simply ask God to do it. And the word *iaomai*, used so often for divine healing, tells us once again God is our Healer, “*For I, Yahweh, am the one who heals you.*” Exodus 15:26b

What this passage also teaches is that we're not only to be concerned about each other's spiritual walk with God, but also for each other's **health!** It tells us that God wants us to have churches full of healthy Christians! And toward that goal is where prayer comes in. And our prayers should not just be praying for sick believers, but praying for the health of the church! And according to this passage we can expect the results of healing and health when praying with the prayer of faith. We pray for the purpose of, and looking forward to, the results of being healed.