

James 5:14-16 – “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. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed...”

#### PRAYER FOR HEALING

Is healing guaranteed for a believer? I do not believe it is. This is the go-to passage for healing in the church. James assumes a Christian will be a part of a church, and that the spiritual leaders are willing and spiritually capable of praying for healing... “Elders” should be the most spiritually minded people in the church. If they are to pray for the sick, they must believe in praying for the sick, and they must believe that God does heal. Those are the first requirements. Elders are to do two things: (1) They are to pray over the sick person. (2) They are to anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. This is a general term for anointing of any kind, not the more limited word which is confined to ceremonial anointings. It is possible this anointing was medicinal. God may heal through medicine, or in answer to prayer, or both combined. The oil is a symbol of the presence of God. It may also have been considered medicinal in James’ day. Ryrie points out that prayers of faith are answered not simply because they are prayed in faith but only if they are prayed in the will of God (I John 5:14). God does not always think it best to heal, as in the case of Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (II Corinthians 12:8-9). Paul left Trophimus in Miletum sick (II Timothy 4:20). Healing in this passage is dependent on two things: (1) Confession of sin by the sick person. (2) At least one of the elders praying must have faith to pray for healing. When faith is present, “the prayer of faith will ‘save’ the sick.” It doesn’t say the prayer of faith will “heal” the sick, but the prayer of faith will “save” (deliver) the sick, referring to deliverance from death. This refers to a situation where a person is being chastened by the Lord for unrepentant sin. (I Cor 5:1-5; 11:29-32). James then gives instruction for believers to confess their trespasses to one another, and to pray for one another that they may be “healed,” not saved (delivered from death). Verses 19-20 tell why James gave instructions on praying for the sick. “If anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will ‘save’ a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” When we sin, we are to confess it to God for forgiveness, and we should confess it to a spiritual confidant. This removes the debilitating anxiety caused by shame, leading to a multitude of physical illnesses. James encourages prayer for one another and accountability to one another. Prayer and accountability lead to emotional and spiritual freedom, as well as physical health. Pray for anyone you know who needs healing. Pray for the will of God. In faith remember that God does not always think it best to heal.