

# Faith Without Works is Useless

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

### 19- The Prayer Offered in Faith- Part 1

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Church; August 1, 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 in the Passage before us- the words, “Prayer” or “Prayed” is mentioned seven different times. So, we are correct to say that this Passage is *primarily* about Prayer; and the prayers of God’s people. But this Passage is separated into two main Divisions:

1. The Prayer offered in Faith (verses 13-15)
2. The “effectiveness” of Prayer (verses 16-18)

... and I would like to tackle the *first* Division today and next week; and then deal with the “effectiveness” of Prayer after that.

Now for many Centuries, verses 13-15 have been a “*theological*”

*Battleground*” as various groups have “taken ownership of them” and used them as a supposed “proof text” for their particular Beliefs. For example, those deceived by the Roman “religious system” *supposedly* find support in verses 13-15 for their Man-made “*Sacrament of Extreme Unction*”<sup>1</sup>. While many Pentecostal; Word of Faith; Charismatic; Non-denominational; and Full Gospel groups have used these three verses to teach “*Divine Healing*”- the false Doctrine that says that sick Christians will be *physically* healed by Elders dabbing olive oil on their foreheads and praying for them. And it is based on these three verses that many Churches have a small bottle near the Pulpit- filled with oil- to use for “healing lines” during or after the regular Worship Service.

But even though these various groups don’t agree with each other- verses 13-15 DO raise a number of very important Questions that we need to answer- such as:

- ✓ What *kind* of “Suffering” does James have in mind in verse 13?
- ✓ What *kind* of “Sickness” is referenced in verse 14?
- ✓ Why are the prayers of the Elders *unique* from those of other believers (vv. 14-15)?
- ✓ What does the “*anointing with oil*” described in verse 14 look like?
- ✓ Does it matter what *kind* of oil is used?
- ✓ Why specify a “**prayer offered in faith**” in verse 15? Aren’t ALL prayers supposed to be “*offered in faith*”?
- ✓ Does the “**prayer offered in faith**” *always* restore the sick?

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<sup>1</sup> The Council of Trent (Sess. XIV, cap. i, De Extr. Unct.) teaches that "this sacred Unction of the sick was instituted by Christ Our Lord as a Sacrament of the New Testament, truly and properly so called, being insinuated indeed in Mark 6:13 but commended to the faithful and promulgated" by James [Ep., v, 14, 15]; and the corresponding Canon (can. 1e Extr. Unct.) anathematizes (eternally condemns) anyone who would say "that Extreme Unction is not truly and properly a Sacrament instituted by Christ Our Lord, and promulgated by the blessed Apostle James, but merely a Rite received from the Fathers, or a human invention". Already at the Council of Florence, in the Instruction of Eugene IV for the Armenians (Bull "Exultate Deo", 22 Nov., 1439), Extreme Unction is named as the fifth of the "Seven Sacraments", and its matter and form, subject, minister, and effects described (Denzinger, "Enchiridion", 10th ed., Freiburg, 1908, no. 700--old no. 595). Again, it was one of the three Sacraments (the others being Confirmation and Matrimony) which Wycliffites (followers of John Wycliffe) and Hussites (followers of Jan Hus) were under suspicion of contemning, and about which they were to be specially interrogated at the Council of Constance by order of Pope Martin V (Bull "Inter cunctas", 22 Feb., 1418.--Denzinger, op. cit., no. 669--old no. 563). Going back farther we find Extreme Unction enumerated among the Sacraments in the Profession of Faith subscribed for the Greeks by Michael Palæologus at the Council of Lyons in 1274 (Denzinger, no. 465--old no. 388), and in the still earlier profession prescribed for converted Waldenses by Pope Innocent III in 1208 (Denzinger, no. 424--old no. 370). Thus, long before Trent--in fact from the time when the definition of a Sacrament in the strict sense had been elaborated by the early Scholastics-- Extreme Unction had been recognized and authoritatively proclaimed as a Sacrament; but in Trent for the first time its institution by Christ Himself was defined. Among the older Schoolmen there had been a difference of opinion on this point, some—as Hugh of St. Victor (De Sacram., Bk. II, pt. XV, c. ii), Peter Lombard (Sent., IV, dist. xxiii), St. Bonaventure (Comm. in Sent., loc. cit., art. i, Q. ii), and others--holding against the more common view that this Sacrament had been instituted by the Apostles after the Descent of the Holy Ghost and under His inspiration. But since Trent it must be held as a Doctrine of Catholic Faith that Christ is at least the mediate Author of Extreme Unction, i.e., that it is by His proper Authority as God-Man that the prayer-Unction has become an efficacious Sign of Grace; and theologians almost unanimously maintain that we must hold it to be at least certain that Christ was in some sense the immediate Author of this Sacrament, i.e., that He Himself while on earth commissioned the Apostles to employ some such Sign for conferring special Graces, without, however necessarily specifying the Matter and Form to be used. In other words, immediate institution by Christ is compatible with a mere generic Determination by Him of the physical elements of the Sacrament.

- ✓ And if not- why not?
- ✓ How does Sickness relate to Sin (v. 15)?

... along with the Issues of why God’s people suffer; and of what is termed, “Divine Healing”.

Now the key to answering these Questions and correctly interpreting verses 13-15 lies in understanding them- IN THEIR PROPER CONTEXT. We must remember that the Bible is *not* a random collection of Good and True Statements that can be interpreted in isolation. Nor are we given the Authority to place our own “*personal interpretation*” on any part of the Bible. And that is why the Apostle Peter said this in **2Peter 1:20&21**:

**20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,**  
**21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.**

Now to place a “*private and/or personal Interpretation*” on any verse or Passage is what it means to: “*take that verse or Passage completely out of context.*” And every time a verse or Passage of Scripture is taken out of context- a wrong or incomplete Understanding comes forth.

So, to properly understand *any* Passage- we must use a very rigid formula that is designed to hinder our carnal mind; and arrive at the one single true meaning of what the writer meant when God the Holy Spirit moved upon him to write it:

- We must interpret that particular Passage in light of the paragraphs immediately *preceding* and *following* it
- We must place the Passage *in context* with the entire Chapter or Section it is in
- We must take into account what the entire Epistle is teaching

Another very important thing is to keep in mind is that no Divine Truth will in any way contradict or annul any other Divine Truth. And when it seems to do so- we are NOT understanding it correctly. The proper context provides the flow of thought in which any given Passage of Scripture exists. So, to ignore the context is to sacrifice a proper interpretation. As Don Carson has said,

“A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Carson says his father said this.

... in other words, anyone can prove whatever they want to- if they are allowed to take verses of the Bible out of context. Therefore, before attempting to interpret this challenging Passage- a review of the context in which it was written is essential and helpful.

And the first thing we need to establish is that James wrote this Epistle to Jewish believers, who had been forced to flee from Jerusalem by the Persecution recorded in **The Acts 8:1-4**.

**1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.**

**2 *Some* devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.**

**3 But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.**

**4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.**

... and in **James 1:1** he referred to them as

**... the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad.**

... and consisting of both ethnic Jews and Gentiles- this group of “dispersed believers” faced great hostility from the pagan culture in which they now lived. And, knowing that, James opened his Epistle with an exhortation for them to patiently endure Trials:

**James 1:2-4**

**2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,**

**3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.**

**4 And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.**

And in Chapter 5- James returned to that same theme. The first six verses described the horrific Persecution that his poor church members were suffering at the hands of the wicked rich- even to the point of death:

**James 5:1-6**

**1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.**

- 2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.**
- 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!**
- 4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.**
- 5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.**
- 6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you.**

... and then, verses 7-11 call for a “patient Endurance” of their Trials and Persecution:

**James 5:7-11**

- 7 Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.**
- 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.**
- 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.**
- 10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.**
- 11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and *is* merciful.**

James exhorted those, who were about to collapse under the weight of their Afflictions, to prop up their hearts and to *resolutely* and *determinedly* persevere. And so, in view of the overall context of this Epistle- particularly Chapter 5- it is not surprising at all that James mentions Suffering in **James 5:13**.

So, I hope you can see that **James 5:13-15** is NOT a “stand-alone” Passage that people can use in their Church Services. That is taking this Passage

*completely* out of context; and it is *inventing* a Doctrine; or a Ritual; or a Sacrament; or a Way to conduct a Church Service that is entirely “Man-made”.

Verse 13 is where James calls on those who are suffering the Persecution discussed in **James 5:1-11** to pray- since Prayer taps the Source of spiritual Endurance- which is the Grace of God. It would have been very odd- in a letter like this to struggling and persecuted believers- if James had NOT mentioned Prayer. Because a strong commitment to Prayer is a *Requirement* if *anyone* wants to endure Sufferings and Afflictions.

So, the main theme of verses 13-15 (even all the way to verse 18) is Prayer- NOT physical Healing. And that is why Prayer is mentioned in every one of those verses. James's Exhortation for persecuted and afflicted believers to pray- embraces the “prayer life” of the *entire* Church. For example,

- ❖ Individual believers are called to pray in verse 13
- ❖ The Elders are told to pray in verses 14-15
- ❖ The congregation is to pray in verse 16

This section reflects James's compassionate pastoral Care for his suffering Flock. And his *main* Focus is on the *Casualties* of the many spiritual Battles that have been going on- which are the persecuted, weak, and defeated believers.

So, as the context and the content of this section reveal- the subject of this Passage is *NOT* physical Illness nor physical Healing. And it also is NOT Oil or even Anointing. The Subject is Prayer. So, there are three things that James is concerned about in this Passage:

1. “Healing” the *spiritual* Weakness; the *spiritual* Weariness; the *spiritual* Exhaustion; and the *spiritual* Discouragement- of the hurt and discouraged believers- through the Power of Prayer
2. Ministering to the physical Pain and Injuries that are present in the saints, who have been and are still going through horrific Suffering and Persecution
3. Dealing with the Sin; and the Compromise of those embattled saints- that normally *accompanies* protracted seasons of Suffering.

So, a discussion in this Passage on physical Healing has NOTHING to do with what James is talking about. There is NOTHING in the *preceding* or the *following* verses that would prepare James's readers for anything remotely resembling physical Healing. It just isn't there. And so, to make this Passage to be about physical Healing is to arbitrarily *create* it.

So, now let's get into the Passage itself. Let's look again at **James 5:13:**

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

Here, James is referring to two different groups of people:

1. The *suffering* saints
2. The *cheerful* saints

... and that is why a Holy Spirit inspired Teaching on how to help those who are currently going through severe Persecution through Prayer is given in these verses. And so, in verse 13- the first Pastor of the Church in Jerusalem discusses the relationship that Prayer has to bringing Comfort, Restoration, Fellowship, and Power to broken and weary believers- who have been and who are currently experiencing unmerciful Persecution and Suffering at the hands of evil people. So, let's look at these two groups one at a time:

## **The Suffering Saints**

### **James 5:13a**

**Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray...**

Here, the object of James's pastoral Care is identified *first* as the weary, **suffering** believers. Now the English word, “**suffering**” comes from a Greek word (*kakopatheō*; Strong's #2553) that has to do with: *suffering evil; or to be afflicted; or to endure hardships*. This is the verb form of the noun which was translated as "**suffering**" back in verse 10. Now what is important to know is that this word does NOT refer to either Sickness or physical Illness. And the only other two times it is used in the entire New Testament are in **2Timothy 2:9** and again in **4:5**:

### **2Timothy 2:9**

**for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.**

### **2Timothy 4:5**

**But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.**

So, from this we know that James was NOT discussing “suffering” from *physical* diseases- but those being persecuted, abused, and treated wickedly by evil people.

And as a great Help to their Suffering- James teaches these suffering saints to **pray**. We need to always remember that God is the ultimate Source of all Comfort that is lasting. And that is why we must understand that Prayer is vital if we hope to endure Afflictions. And that is why in **2Corinthians 1:3b&4a**- the Apostle Paul described God as:

**... the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction ...**

... and likewise, in **1Peter 5:7**- the Apostle Peter wrote,

**casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you**

... and from the stomach of a great fish the disobedient Prophet Jonah prayed this in **Jonah 2:7**:

**While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came to You, into Your holy temple**

Now the present tense of the verb translated, “**he must pray**” in **James 5:13** describes an *ongoing, continual, and consistent* pleading with God in Prayer. So, it *could* be translated as:

"let him *keep on* praying."

So, when life is difficult; when believers are weak in Faith; weary with Persecution; and crushed by physical Afflictions- James is teaching that they must *continually* plead with God to comfort them. And even though this is a fundamental spiritual Truth- it is often forgotten- *especially* when the “heat is on” and we are in the fires of Persecution at that very moment. And based on what James is teaching here- in 1855, Joseph M. Scriven wrote a poem that, in 1868, was made into a song by Charles Converse that says,

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.



Are we weak and heavy-laden,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Savior, still our refuge  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Ev'rything to God in prayer.

## The Cheerful Saints

### James 5:13b

... Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

Next, James teaches that those who manage to maintain a **cheerful** attitude- *in their Sufferings*- are **“to sing praises”**. Now the English word, **“cheerful”** comes from a Greek word (*euthumeæ*; Strong’s # 2114) that describes those who are *well in spirit; or those who have a joyful attitude*. Now we need to keep in mind that these “cheerful saints” are being persecuted- as much or more- than those who James categorizes as “suffering”. But even though they are being beaten and imprisoned and tortured and treated as horribly as the others- God has graced these believers with the supernatural Strength to remain cheerful IN their Torment.

So, the “cheerful” people here are NOT those who have, somehow managed to *escape* Suffering- but those who, by the Grace of God, are able to find Joy- as they burn. So, once again, this is NOT a “stand alone” verse that can be taken out of context to develop a Man-made Doctrine of what cheerful people ought to do- as they enjoy life in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America. These are persecuted believers, who have found a Delight in God- even though they have NOT been delivered from their Afflictions.

So, James is encouraging both of these suffering groups of believers- to pray. One is told to plead with God for Comfort; while the other is **“to sing praises”** to God for the Comfort He has already given.

Now I just said that *both* groups have been told to pray. Yet James tells the cheerful ones to “sing praises”- NOT pray. So, what do I mean by that? Well, the Hebrew word, that was translated here as, **“sing praises”** (*psallæ*) is the verb from which the noun translated as "Psalm" comes from.

## The Acts 13:33

that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, '***YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU!***'

### **1 Corinthians 14:26**

What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

### **Ephesians 5:19**

speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

... and this tells us that both Praise and Prayer are very closely related. And that means that singing praises is actually a *form* of Prayer:

### **Philippians 4:6**

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication [prayer] with thanksgiving [praise] let your requests be made known to God.

### **Colossians 4:2**

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving [praise]...

... and *both* are *essential* for the spiritual Strength for those who are enduring Persecution or Suffering.

Now what do you notice that is missing here? There is no Command; no Encouragement; no Teaching from James for these believers to do or to believe what would probably be the FIRST thing 21<sup>st</sup> Century American believers would do or believe- if we were to find *ourselves* in a similar situation:

1. No allowance here for Complaining or Confusion about why they are suffering in the first place
2. No entertaining the wrong and sinful Thought that God had forsaken them
3. No Teaching that if these people had enough Faith- they wouldn't have to suffer; or that God would always deliver them from it

From what James teaches here; and what he does NOT teach- we can see that those who had experienced the Miracle of the New Birth back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century believed that Suffering and physical Persecution- including imprisonment and even

death- was a very *important* and *common* part of the every- day life of all believers.

## The Crucial Part

### James 5:14&15

**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 this is the most *misunderstood* and *disputed* part of this wonderful Passage. And with a very *shallow* examination- these inspired Words *appear* to be teaching that physically sick believers can expect physical Healing through the prayers of the Elders- as they “anoint the sick” with oil. And that is *exactly* how this Passage is almost *universally* taught.

Now that demands that we take a few moments to examine a Doctrine that is commonly taught in the modern church, called, “*Divine Healing*”. And this Doctrine teaches that it is ALWAYS God’s Will to heal physically sick believers- as long as they demonstrate enough Faith.

And this Doctrine is very popular today- because, after all, who wants to be sick; and who wants to stay sick? Every sick person would love to be healed- whether they are saved or lost. Having good health is a Treasure and billions of dollars are spent every year by people trying to obtain good health.

But the Reality with this Doctrine is that the overwhelming *majority* of ALL sick people, who are “anointed with oil; and who are prayed for by Elders- in accord with this Passage in **James**- do NOT receive physical Healing. And that isn’t my opinion- it is an indisputable fact. And that has to be explained. And so, people have twisted themselves into knots- trying to explain that what James supposedly teaches here doesn’t work- IN THE MAJORITY OF ALL CASES! Here are some very common excuses that are routinely given as to why the sick were not healed:

- ✓ The sick person didn’t have enough Faith
- ✓ The Elders didn’t have enough Faith
- ✓ The sick person has unforgiveness in his/her heart
- ✓ The sick person has unrepented Sin in his/her heart
- ✓ The sick person has “generational Curses” that prevent the Healing

Other excuses are:

- ✓ The sick person didn't actually "call" for the Elders
- ✓ Somebody besides Elders prayed for them
- ✓ The Elders didn't use the correct type of oil
- ✓ The "sick" person is "injured" and not really "sick"<sup>3</sup>

Now I want to make sure that you understand WHY all of these lame excuses are offered. The overwhelming majority of ALL sick people- who are anointed with oil; and who are prayed for- supposedly in accord with what James teaches here- are NOT healed! In fact, it is common for people to witness hundreds, maybe even thousands of Services where oil was dabbed on the forehead; and where the Elders of that Church prayed- and yet they have NEVER see ANYONE healed! And so, these excuses are attempts to explain why.

Yet the Truth is that all of these "excuses" miss the entire point of this Passage. This Passage is NOT about "Divine Healing" in the first place.

*"Okay, but, Brother Blair, then why are SOME sick people healed using this or any other 'method'?"* And the Answer is because that particular Healing; of that particular person; at that particular time; was a wonderful demonstration of God's Mercy and Grace- in accord with God's Will. And it has absolutely NOTHING to do with *alleviating* any of the excuses given above.

My dear brothers and sisters, I beg you to trust that the Holy Bible does *NOT* teach that a sick person *stays* sick; and is *not* healed because of a lack of Faith on his part. The Bible does NOT teach that. And that is because *whatever* level of Faith you may have at this moment- is all subjective. Somebody has MORE Faith that you do right now- while others have LESS. But if you are saved- you have ALREADY demonstrated GREAT and POWERFUL and MIRACULOUS Faith. Because the Faith that it takes for a lost sinner to repent of their Sins and to trust in Jesus and in His finished Work- is *infinitely* GREATER and more POWERFUL and more MIRACULOUS a Faith that what it takes to believe God to be physically healed.

To teach that it is always God's Will to heal the sick bodies of believers is to sinfully presume that you have a certain insight into God's Will for that person at that moment in his life. And that simply isn't true. You don't. So, to teach that- is to propagate a false and Man-made Doctrine that is, probably, the most inhuman and barbaric and hurtful Teaching every devised. Because when the sick are NOT healed (which the overwhelming majority aren't) they know think that, in addition to being sick- they have failed God and are in jeopardy for their soul. And that is

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<sup>3</sup> These are actual reasons given during "healing services" that the writer has personally witnessed.

just about the most inhuman and cruel burden that anybody could place on a sick person.

The Truth is that the Holy Bible teaches just the opposite- that people *get* sick; they *remain* sick; and they are NOT healed; and some even die- because we are human beings- who live every day underneath the Curse of Death that God put on Adam after he sinned. And even though our souls may be saved through Faith in Jesus Christ- our bodies will continually march on- in the dying process- until we return to the ground. And that is why EVERYBODY dies. All saved people die; and ALL lost people die. And everybody who IS periodically healed of sickness- will eventually get sick again! It is a fantasy to suggest that Salvation eliminates Death- and Sickness; and Injuries; and the failing of our bodily functions is WHY we die!

We need to remember that Healing- like material Blessings and even Salvation itself CANNOT be earned or deserved by anyone for any reason- *including* us exercising powerful Faith. People are healed; and blessed; and used by God; and they are saved in the first place- because of the sovereign Prerogative of God. We don't initiate our own Healing anymore than we can initiate our own Salvation. And, like EVERYTHING with God- what God gives to us- from Blessings; to Healings; to Gifts; to Salvation itself- are given- UNCONDITIONALLY! We don't earn it; we don't deserve it; and God is NOT obligated to give it.

So, God heals sick people because it is His Will to do so- period. And so, if it is NOT God's Will to heal that person at that time- then no matter how much Faith that person may have- he will remain sick! Conversely, if it IS God's Will to heal that person- he will be healed- no matter how little Faith he may have.

Now I want to show you something about two groups of people- who are recorded for us in the Bible. BOTH groups had strong and powerful Faith. And BOTH groups pleased God with their Faith. And yet one group was healed and delivered; while the other group continued to suffer and were NOT delivered.

So, here is the *first* group of people, recorded in **Hebrews 11:32-35a**, who had strong and powerful Faith:

### **Hebrews 11:32-35a**

**32** And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets,

**33** who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,

**34** quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

**35** Women received *back* their dead by resurrection ...

Here we see that God allowed these believing saints to receive amazing things from God. And the Bible says that, “BY or THROUGH FAITH” these people:

- ✓ **conquered kingdoms**
- ✓ **performed *acts of righteousness***
- ✓ **obtained promises**
- ✓ **shut the mouths of lions**
- ✓ **quenched the power of fire**
- ✓ **escaped the edge of the sword**
- ✓ **from weakness were made strong**
- ✓ **became mighty in war**
- ✓ **put foreign armies to flight**
- ✓ **Women received *back* their dead by resurrection**

... and the Scriptures are clear- God did all of this to them and for them and through them...

“by” [through] **faith**

Now if this was all the Bible said about this Subject- then those who teach- that people are not healed because they have a lack of Faith- would be correct. But this is *not* all that the Bible teaches. There is *another* group- recorded for us in **Hebrews 11:35b- 38** that this writer talks about. And in describing this second group- the writer of **Hebrews** said:

**35 ... and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;**

**36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.**

**37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated**

**38 (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.**

Now here, the infallible Word of the living God teaches that these believing saints received very *different* things from God:

- ✓ **others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection;**
- ✓ **others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.**
- ✓ **They were stoned**
- ✓ **they were sawn in two**
- ✓ **they were tempted**
- ✓ **they were put to death with the sword**
- ✓ **they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins**
- ✓ **being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated**
- ✓ **(*men* of whom the world was not worthy)**
- ✓ **wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.**

... and the Bible also is crystal clear to say that these saints received these “bad” things from God for the very SAME reason that the other saints received all those “good” things from God:

**by [through] faith**

And then the writer of **Hebrews** went on to say that BOTH the saints who received “good” things from God; along with the saints who received “bad” things from God all had pleased God (or gained approval) by or through the SAME amount of Faith:

**Hebrews 11:39a**

**And all these, having gained approval through their faith...**

So, what was the difference between the faithful saints who received “good” things from God (including physical healing) and those who received “bad” things from God? God’s Will. It was certainly NOT a supposed “lack of Faith” on their part.

So, from this we can conclude two things:

1. When it is God’s Will to heal, deliver or rescue His people out of all sorts of Trouble- God uses the strong Faith of His people to bring forth amazing Miracles and/or Acts of Providence
2. When it is *NOT* God’s Will to heal, deliver, or rescue His people- but when it is God’s Will to *allow* them to suffer- God uses the strong Faith of His people to *sustain* them IN their Trouble and to keep them faithful to the end

... and God is glorified by BOTH.

So, it is a serious fallacy to assume that the strong Faith that God uses to bring forth amazing Miracles and Healings and Acts of Providence is somehow “better” or more “important” or more “honoring to God” than the strong Faith that God uses to *sustain* suffering believers IN their Troubles.

We are impressed with great “open shows of Glory”. But God is *equally* honored in the quiet Faithfulness of suffering believers as they remain steadfast to the end- even when they are *NOT* healed or delivered.

So, it is important to understand that there are times when it is absolutely God’s Will to heal, deliver, or rescue His people from all sorts of Trouble. And in those cases- strong Faith will produce amazing Miracles and Healings and Acts of Providence.

But we must also understand that there are times when it is NOT God’s Will to heal, deliver, or rescue His people. There are times when it is God’s Will for His people to *remain* in their Sufferings. And in those cases- equally strong Faith will produce the ability for those saints to remain *faithful* and *obedient*- to the end.

And the difference as to why God allows one to suffer while delivering another- is left to God- Who alone knows His Plan fully. So, as caring and compassionate Christians- we are to pray for the sick to be healed. And if God heals- then we are to praise His Holy Name. But when God does *not* heal- we are to praise His holy Name; and then trust that God is working a very wonderful Plan in the life of those, who God has chosen, to remain faithful IN their Suffering.

A basic fundamental Truth about God- is that God is a “healing God” by Nature. And therefore- there are times when it is God’s Will to graciously intervene in the life of an individual (saved or unsaved) and allow a temporary *suspension* of the Divine Curse on their flesh (from The Fall) to occur (Healing). And that Healing can occur in any number of ways:

- ❖ A miraculous and instantaneous Healing
- ❖ The natural process of Healing that God designed within the human body to repair or alleviate many of the physical problems that periodically occur
- ❖ The wonder of “Common Grace” that has allowed fallen humans to develop Medicines, Surgeries, and Treatments that *temporarily* relieve the physical Suffering

But in each of these cases- the individual who was graced by God to be healed will succumb to other physical problems at some later date and will eventually die- *including* those who did receive a miraculous and instantaneous Healing. So, we are to praise God for His Goodness when He sovereignly chooses to heal the sick



bodies of suffering people. And we are to praise God for His Goodness when He doesn't. And this is why the Apostle Paul said this in **Romans 9:15&16:**

**15** For He says to Moses, "***I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.***"

**16** So then it [Salvation] *does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.*

By definition- "Grace" and "Mercy" *cannot* be deserved or obligated. And they also cannot be earned or entitled. And that which is given and/or received based upon certain actions or conditions being met- is NOT an example of either Grace or Mercy. That is an example of a "Payment" or a "Wage"- but not Grace or Mercy. For Grace and Mercy to be Grace or Mercy and not a Payment or a Wage- it MUST be entirely free and unencumbered.

But that means, by default, that both Grace and Mercy- and those things that constitute Grace and Mercy (like Healing and Blessings and Deliverance) are NOT distributed to everyone. And even among those to whom Grace and Mercy *are* distributed- they are NOT distributed in equal amounts. In other words, there is no "standardization" in the distribution of either Grace or Mercy. The criteria by which anything associated with Grace and Mercy is distributed to us is:

### **Romans 9:16b**

**... it *does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.***

In other words, the criteria as to why *some* are healed; and others are not- is that God sovereignly chose to grant Grace and Mercy to *some* in the form of a Healing (miraculous or other) while God chose to grant His Grace and Mercy to others- by *empowering* them to remain faithful *in* their Sufferings.

But in BOTH cases- God remains steadfastly present in the lives of His people. So, the one, who DID receive the Grace and Mercy to be healed should be thankful and grateful and praise the Name of the Lord. And the one, who received the Grace and Mercy to remain faithful in their Suffering (and NOT healed) should trust that the God Who set His Love upon them to save them from before the foundation of the world- has NOT left them nor abandoned them.

The sacred Scripture clearly and repeatedly teach that when it is NOT God's Will to alleviate Sickness or Suffering- that God is very busy "working" that "bad" thing together; with all the other things that God has either sovereignly *caused* or

sovereignly *allowed* to come to that person- for the greater “Good” of the Glory of God; and, *ultimately*, the fulfillment of their Joy as well. And that is why the Apostle Paul wrote this in **Romans 8:28**:

**And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**

And the Bible is also faithful to teach us that when God allows Evil to pass through the “hedge of protection” around us and touch our flesh- that He only does this in order to bring about an infinitely greater “Good”. So, we are to praise God for His Goodness when He sovereignly chooses NOT to heal the sick bodies of suffering people; and has chosen instead to equip them to remain faithful and fruitful in their Distress.

But we must also understand that physical Healing is completely out of harmony with the context of this Passage here in **James 5**. The “Suffering” James has in view here is “Evil and unjust Treatment” and NOT physical illness at all. And if God is pleased- I will explain what James WAS teaching here in this Passage in the next Sermon.

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.