

## Bondservant of Christ = Endurance, Part Two

### Key Verses:

*"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. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 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 5:7-11*

*"But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgement." James 5:12*

*"Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 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; 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. 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. 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. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit." James 5:13-18*

### Teaching Outlines:

- A. Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord (5:7a)
  - 1. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil (5:7b)
    - a. Being patient about it (5:7c)
    - b. Until it gets the early and late rains (5:7d)
  - 2. You too be patient (5:8a)
    - a. Strengthen your hearts (5:8b)
    - b. For the coming of the Lord is near (5:8c)
  - 3. Do not complain, brethren, against one another (5:9a)
    - a. So that you yourselves may not be judged (5:9b)
    - b. Behold the judge is standing right at the door (5:9c)
  - 4. As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience (5:10a)
    - a. Take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord (5:10b)
    - b. We count those blessed who have endured (5:11a)
      - 1) You have heard of the endurance of Job (5:11b)
        - a. And have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings (5:11c)
        - b. That the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful (5:11d)
- B. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed (5:16a)
  - 1. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (5:16b)
    - a. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours (5:17a)
      - 1) And he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain for three years and six months (5:17b)
      - 2) Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit (5:18)

2. Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray (5:13a)
  - a. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises (5:13b)
3. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church (5:14a)
  - a. And they are to pray over him (5:14b)
  - b. Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord (5:14c)
4. And the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick (5:15a)
  - a. And the Lord will raise him up (5:15b)
  - b. And if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him (5:15c)

We continue our study of endurance in the epistle of James. In part one, we studied two passages where James addressed two basic things regarding trials and testing of our faith: The end result of enduring through trials and the proper attitude to have during trials. We continue in part two by looking at two more passages in James where he addresses endurance – James 5:7-11 and 5:13-18.

Endurance calls for patience, and James offers motivation for being patient in 5:7 by stating *“Therefore, be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.”* James encourages believers, “brethren,” to patiently endure in anticipation of Christ’s return. The Greek word James uses in verse 7 is *parousia* which means “presence, coming, return, advent.” He uses it a second time in verse 8 where he basically offers the same encouragement: *“You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.”* In other words, patience during hardship can be strengthened by remembering the *“coming of the Lord”* and understanding that it is near. What is James referring to by “coming of the Lord”?

Recall from the introduction to this epistle that James wrote *“to the twelve tribes scattered abroad”* (1:1) and to *“believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.”* (2:1) He wrote to fellow Jews who had become believers in Jesus Christ but who fled Jerusalem due to persecution. He did not address his epistle to a specific church as other New Testament epistles were, but to Jewish believers in general. Because he is addressing Jews, he knew they would have possessed an understanding of the coming of the Jewish Messiah based on the texts of the Old Testament prophets. However, James is addressing *“believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.”* One interesting note is that when addressing the “believers” he inserts the noun *doxos* before Lord Jesus Christ, which means “glory” or “most glorious condition or most exalted state.” This form of the noun is used 48 times in the New Testament and is most often used in reference to the glory of God or the glory of Christ. So, when James encourages those early Christians to be patient by remembering that the coming of the Lord is near, he is referring to *“our glorious Lord Jesus Christ”* from 2:1 as distinct from a Jewish Messiah.

And how did James mean his readers to understand his use of *parousia*? He uses the same noun in both verses. The difference in spelling is due to the one in verse 7 being in genitive case and the one in verse 8 in nominative case. James is referring to the literal coming, or return, of Jesus Christ to the earth. This noun is used in the same context in various other places throughout the New Testament: 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 8, 19; 2 Peter 3:4; Matthew 24:27, 37, 39; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 John 2:28. And this is to be understood as a literal, physical return of Jesus to the earth and should not be spiritualized in some way or made out to be metaphorical. Proof texts of this interpretation can be found in John 14:1-3 where Jesus talks about his going and coming again in the same terms, as personal and bodily. Jesus physically left the earth to go prepare a place and He will return in the

same way. Also, the angels in Acts 1:10-11 address this: *“And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’”*

There is more that can be said about the coming or return of Christ. However, I want to stick to this text in James and focus on his reason for referring to the coming of Christ. He referred to Christ's coming to encourage the scattered believers, who left Jerusalem to flee persecution and were struggling to settle in new locations, to be patient (v. 7) and to strengthen their hearts (v. 8). The word James uses in 1:8 is *sterixate* which is a verb in the active voice (indicating that the subject performs the action) and imperative mood (a command) meaning to stand, to fix, to set fast, to stabilize. One of James' contemporaries, Peter, used this same verb in his writing, such as 1 Peter 5:10, *“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”* In the New Testament this verb describes a person with an unwavering mind. This resonates back to 1:16 where James instructs his readers not to get distracted during trials and testing of their faith. It is the same type of instruction here, to be stable and unwavering, and to be patient during trials, and to let this be reinforced in the knowledge of Christ's return.

James offers several examples of the patient endurance of a stabilized and unwavering heart. First, the farmer (5:7). The farmer must be patient and strong of heart while waiting for the return of their labor, *“for the precious produce of the soil.”* The farmer must also rely on things that are out of their control, *“the early and the late rains”*. As an example of *“suffering and patience”* he also offers *“the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.”* (5:10) Often, the prophets were called upon by God to deliver very unpopular messages to the people which would have required a stable, strong heart, and an unwavering mind. Many times, they would see no results from their messages and would need to be patient for God's timing and purposes. James also offers *“the endurance of Job”* as an example. (5:11) His Jewish audience would have been familiar with Job's story much as we are familiar with the saying that someone has *“the patience of Job.”* Job suffered greatly but is also an example that we *“have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”*

James instructs those who are suffering, who are challenged to be patient and strong of heart, and who are struggling to endure, to not complain. (5:9) The verb he uses is *stenazete* from *stenazo*, and this construction occurs only here in this verse of the New Testament. It literally means *“to groan or sigh deeply.”* It seems that James is telling his readers that they need to be dignified in their behavior during hard times, to not go about moaning and groaning, especially as they are scattered and living among pagan nations. The temptation when facing difficult times is to carry on about your situation so that others know how challenging your circumstances are. There is an expression *“misery loves company,”* meaning that when a person is unhappy, they are comforted knowing that others are unhappy. This is what James is directing his readers to move away from.

He then states, *“so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.”* James uses two forms of the verb *krino* which means *“to separate”* or *“to distinguish”*. It typically does not describe the path to a judgment but refers to the scrutiny or assessment of the matter to be judged. In other words, it is not about someone performing an action and then having someone pass judgment on their actions, but rather someone does something and then their actions will be scrutinized to determine what judgment is necessary. It focuses not on the act of judging but on the actions that would be judged. Jesus used similar terminology in Matthew 7:1, *“Do not judge so that you will not be judged.”* The second use of *krino* in verse 9 is indicative of someone who is truly knowledgeable of the actions under consideration and can offer true and accurate assessments or

scrutiny. It is a reference to Christ and is translated “the Judge” indicating that Christ can pass true and accurate judgement on complaining. The first use of *krino* in the verse is in the passive voice (indicating the subject receives the action) and in subjunctive mood (expressing probability or possibility) and is referring to the one complaining. This phrase is basically telling the complainer that their complaints will be scrutinized by someone very capable of giving an accurate assessment of the truthfulness or accuracy of the complaint. James’ instruction is “*do not complain*” so that the one who is able to judge the true conditions of your complaint will not need to assess your situation and then, perhaps, determine that there is, in fact, little to complain about. Rather, be dignified in your situation with patient endurance and by maintaining a stable heart. Do not let your misery begin seeking company.

James then inserts a short statement with verse 12 that turns out to contain a lot of wisdom in it.

*“But above all, brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not be judged.”* (5:12) Previously, James addressed an unbridled tongue in his epistle and how inappropriate it is for one who is a follower of Jesus. He compares the tongue to a flame capable of setting a forest on fire (3:5), as deceitful (1:26), difficult to control (3:2), and a source of quarrels of conflicts (4:1). Complaining can also be categorized as a failure to control the tongue. Recall that the word “complain” literally means to groan or sigh deeply because of trials being faced by someone. James instructs his readers to be dignified, to be stable, to be patient during trying times. What ties verse 12 in with the previous paragraph is the statement “*so that you may not be judged.*”

What is interesting with this phrase about being judged, however, is what I consider to be the mistranslation of the Greek. What you usually read is “so that you may not be judged” or “so that you may not fall under condemnation.” And this is an accurate translation. However, there is more to this word than simply being judged. The term James uses is *hupokrisin* which is a combination of the preposition *hupo* meaning “under” and the noun *krisis* meaning judgment. This is the source of our English word “hypocrisy.” Merriam-Webster defines hypocrisy this way, “a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not; behavior that contradicts what one claims to believe or feel.” In other words, you are insincere, deceitful, dishonest or duplicitous. There is a saying which goes, “you can fool some of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.” And one whom you can never fool is Christ. He can look straight into your heart and determine whether you are being truthful or if you are being a hypocrite. Hypocrisy is condemned throughout the New Testament: Matthew 23:28; Luke 12:1; 1 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 2:1.

Another note of interest is the way James begins verse 12 with the preposition *pro* meaning “before.” This is not to be confused with the preposition *pros* meaning “before” as in a motion toward. The preposition James uses has a spatial sense meaning “in front of” or “earlier.” It is pointing to something that is pre-eminent or is to be before all else. So, James is saying, “this is most important.” He had just addressed complaining in the sense of being empty and meaningless, and the need for followers of Christ to stay away from that behavior. Now, he is addressing a matter he considers to be similar, in terms of being empty, meaningless words, but even more important. He instructs “*do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no.*” This is an example of where we can see how James was influenced by the teachings of Jesus. In Matthew 5:34-37 Jesus stated, “*But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is evil.*” What is the main point James is making with his statement on swearing and oaths?

Earlier in his epistle, James stated, “*Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.*” (4:14) The success or failure of being able to swear truthfully depends on that person’s knowledge of the future. Therefore, the failure of swearing results from not knowing what tomorrow will be like. No human possesses real, factual, complete knowledge of the future, so no human can legitimately swear accurately or make an oath. You simply do not know what you do not know, and you do not know what tomorrow will bring. No one does, except God. That is why both Jesus and James instruct that it is unnecessary to swear or make oaths. Just respond with a “yes” or “no.” If someone asks if you can help them move tomorrow, you do not have to respond with, “oh I swear by all that is in me that I will be at your house to help you move tomorrow.” Just simply respond with “yes.” If someone asks, “Can I trust you to keep a secret?” You can respond with a simple “yes” or “no.” You do not need to swear and make an oath that you will go to your grave with their secret. And if you have demonstrated that you are a trustworthy person, they will believe you when you respond “yes.” That goes back to what James was saying about complaining. It is better not to complain at all, to remain quiet and dignified even in the most difficult of trials. The same goes for swearing and making oaths. It is better not to do either of them and to just let your “yes” or your “no” be enough.

The next section of James that I include under the theme of endurance is 5:13-18. The reason that I include it with the other verses about endurance is that James addresses people who are suffering, sick, and in need of prayer. These are times when being prepared to endure the hardships of these circumstances is going to be needed. He also uses Elijah as an example, and he was a prophet who needed to endure some difficult challenges God directed him into. Therefore, this paragraph was placed into the theme of endurance, but it contains a lot that needs to be studied and understood. There has been mistaken teaching due to poor exegesis of these verses leading to misunderstanding and misapplication for many believers.

Recall that James teaches with brief speeches strung together in much the same way as the wisdom literature he was influenced by. He also has the occasional one-liner to emphasize his points and to make it easy to remember. In 5:13-18 the central idea he is getting at is verse 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.*” Prayer seems to be a central idea in this paragraph and prayer is indeed one thing that is needed when facing hardship and enduring trials. James encouraged his readers to confess sins to one another and to pray for “one another.” I believe that this is the central, but unstated, idea of the paragraph – “one another” or unity. When a person facing hardship is struggling to endure, what is really needed is the “one another.” The unity of the community of Christ followers is important. James’ audience was Jewish believers who had scattered from Jerusalem and were living among non-believing peoples. They seemed to be struggling to live as followers of Christ within their new surroundings and James understood the need for “one another.”

### ***Historical Background and Context: The Jerusalem Council***

In the earliest days of the Christian church, it was comprised mostly of Jews who had converted from Judaism to believing in Jesus Christ as Messiah, thus the term Messianic Jew. Then the gospel message began to spread among and be accepted by Gentiles. In Acts 10 Peter took the gospel specifically to Gentiles. In Acts chapters 13 and 14 Paul and Barnabas had a successful missionary journey to the Gentiles. The conversion of Gentiles to believing in Christ was causing concern among Jewish believers that is discussed in Acts 11:1-18 and Acts 15:1-5. There were two basic concerns:

1) Do Gentiles have to become Jews before believing in Christ? 2) Do Gentiles have to observe Mosaic Law after believing in Christ? The apostles and early church leaders met in Jerusalem to discuss these issues in what is known as the Jerusalem Council. In Acts 15:7-11 Peter spoke of taking the gospel to the Gentiles and gave an eye-witness account of their conversion and that the Holy Spirit had been given to Gentiles, and that Gentile believers should not be required to obey Mosaic Law. He summed up in 15:11, “Be we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.” James, who was by then recognized as the leader of the early believers in Jerusalem, agreed with Peter. “Therefore, it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles.” (15:19) He then stated that the leaders should send them a letter with this requirement, “that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.” (15:20) Why did he recommend these requirements? One reason, to maintain unity between the Jewish and the Gentile believers. He was asking the Gentiles to do these things to accommodate the Jewish believers so that they could all get along better. The requirements did not guarantee salvation but promoted unity in the early Christ-believing community. There was no organized church to go to in these areas, a place where believers could congregate and fellowship together. But they still needed one another, and James recognized the priority and necessity of unity. That is what I believe he is getting at with this brief speech in James 5:13-18 – the need for unity, for “one another.”

The council setting may have been when James decided to write a letter to the scattered Jewish believers. Paul and Barnabas conducted their first missionary journey in 46-47 AD and were then part of the Jerusalem Council which took place in 48 AD. James heard the reports of their missionary journey among the Gentiles which would have included reports of the trouble being stirred up within the believing community. As was stated in Acts 15:1-2, “Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ And when Paul and Barnabas had a great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.” It may have been around this time that James was motivated to write his epistle “to the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad.” Several times in his epistle he addresses them as “my brethren” which is also used in Acts 15:1. This was a period when the message of Jesus was beginning to grow outside of Palestine, but still, there would have been little organization of those believers. In this brief speech of 5:13-18, James hoped to encourage the Jewish believers to support one another, to pray for one another, and to encourage each other to endure the hardships they are facing and that they face them together.

James 5:16 gives us a one-liner meant to be easily remembered and it has a context we need to study it in. “*The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*” To be more literal in translation, you could state it this way: “*The expression of need from a just man works with dynamic strength.*” This one-liner comes right after James encourages prayer so that “*you may be healed.*” We will look more at this in a moment. Then, just after his one-liner, James uses Elijah as an example of the righteous man accomplishing much through prayer. Elijah is mentioned 30 times in the New Testament. He is the one who massacred 450 Baal prophets in 1 Kings 18, brought someone back from the dead in 1 Kings 17, and was taken up into heaven by a chariot of fire and a whirlwind in 2 Kings 2:11-12. This was the man who James says, “*was a man just like you and me*” meaning he was of flesh and blood just like any other man. Even so, Elijah prayed with dynamic strength. His prayers accomplished much, and James used for his example an incident from 1 Kings 17, “*he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.*” So, how

did this apply to James' audience? We need to move back into the first three verses of the paragraph where there has been misunderstanding and misapplication.

*"Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is any 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; 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."* (5:13-15)

First, is anyone suffering? "Suffering" is a Greek construction of *kakos*, meaning bad or worthless, and *pathos*, which means to experience misfortune or badness. This is literally referring to someone experiencing badness, who is enduring hardship. This person is to *proseuchestho*, which is a 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular verb in present tense and imperative mood, meaning "he/she must pray now."

Second, is anyone cheerful? This one is to sing. In other words, be honest about how you feel. If you are suffering, pray. If you are cheerful, sing. Let your actions, either prayer or singing, reflect the truth of your circumstances.

Third, is anyone sick? The Greek word for "sick" is *asthenei*, which means "to be without strength, to be impotent or infirm." This word is used 36 times in the New Testament. In the gospels and the book of Acts we find it 16 times and all of them refer to someone with a physical infirmity, as in sickness. Paul uses the word two times in his epistle to the Philippians in reference to Epaphroditus having been sick, and once in 2 Timothy 4:20 in reference to Trophimus being sick. That leaves 16 occurrences of this word, leaving out its appearance in James 5:14, where the word is used to refer to something other than a physical ailment or sickness. There is its use in Acts 20:35 where it seems to be referring to someone in need. The other uses, made by Paul, refer to a weakness in faith or in spiritual ability. For example:

Romans 4:19 – "Without becoming weak in faith"

Romans 8:3 – "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh"

Romans 14:1 – "Now accept the one who is weak in faith"

1 Corinthians 8:9 – "this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak."

2 Corinthians 12:10 – "for when I am weak, then I am strong."

2 Corinthians 13:3 – "and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you."

2 Corinthians 13:9 – "For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong"

So, how should we translate and interpret this word in James 5:14? Was James referring to someone with a physical ailment, or to one who was weak in faith or spirit? We need to consider the context of the verse and take into account what James says in verse 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."* The word translated sick here is the Greek participle *kamnonta*, from the verb *kamno*, which means to be exhausted from too much physical labor. It is also used only one other time in the New Testament in Hebrews 12:3, *"For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* This does not refer to someone with a physical ailment nor does James use it in reference to someone with a physical ailment. In both 5:14 and 15, James is referring to someone who is weak in faith or spiritually weak. And the instructions that he gives following the question, *"Is anyone among you sick?"* are not instructions on how to heal someone of a physical ailment, but to restore one who is spiritually weak or weak in faith.

And the instructions make more sense. *“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; 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.”* (5:14-15)

First, *“he must call for the elders of the church.”* There is a lot to unpack in this short phrase. The Greek word for elders is the adjective *presbyteros*. This word describes someone who is foregoing, as in someone who is older, or someone pre-eminent or higher in rank. In the Gospels and Acts it is usually translated “elder” and in Acts 2:17 it is translated “old men.” It usually refers to one who is an official leader in the Jewish community. In the epistles it could refer to an older man or woman who did not have an official leadership capacity. Because the epistle of James was probably the first epistle written in the New Testament and is addressed to a Jewish audience, James would be referring to an older Jewish man recognized as a leader within the believing communities where his readers have scattered to. Then James added *“of the church.”* This is the Greek noun *ekklesia*, which is a combination of the preposition *ek*, meaning “out”, and *kaleo*, meaning “to call.” The meaning of *ekklesia* is “assembly” or literally “to call out,” and describes a gathering of people summoned for a purpose. In the New Testament it is most often translated “church” although it never refers to a building or specific location. Here are some uses of *ekklesia* in the book of Acts which would have been referring to a community before there was any sort of real organization and is reflective of how James viewed his own use of the word in his epistle.

Acts 9:31 – “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”

Acts 14:24 – “When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”

Acts 15:4 – “When they had arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders”

Acts 15:41 – “And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”

Acts 20:28 – “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”

James directs the one weak in faith or spiritually weak to call for an elder, someone who is older and of eminence within their believing community, and they are to anoint that struggling believer with olive oil. We have seen that James was influenced by the teachings of Jesus and I believe this is a reference to Matthew 25:1-13 and the parable of the ten virgins. In that parable the oil is representative of the Holy Spirit and by pouring oil over the head of the spiritually weak it is an indication that they do have the Holy Spirit, that they are a true believer, and that they are ready to be restored in their faith. Verse 15, *“and the prayer offered in faith will restore one who is sick”* is a mirror of the one-liner in verse 16, *“the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”* By following this advice the weak in faith will be restored, the Lord will raise them up, and if they have committed sins they will be forgiven. That is why this short speech is not referring to one with a physical infirmity, but one who is struggling spiritually. The context makes more sense. The understanding that this is about someone who needs to be restored spiritually is also supported by what James says next. *“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another.”* This is advice to believers to support one another so that they can either be restored to spiritual health or avoid becoming weak. This is also supported by the short statement James makes just after this paragraph and the way he ends his letter. *“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and*



*one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*" This is not referring to someone who is sick, but to one who has strayed and become spiritually weak.