

# The Communion of Saints

## Delighting in God Together in 2025

### 4- The Power of Unity in Overcoming Sin and Spiritual Weakness

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Church February 9, 2025

#### **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 the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

This is one of the most *misunderstood* Passages in the entire Bible. Very few, who say they are saved in the modern Church- comprehend this Passage correctly or fully. And the Proof of that Misunderstanding is found in the little bottles that are found near the front of the Church or behind the Pulpit- that contain olive oil.

And when there is a sick person in the midst- they are encouraged to obey what verse 14 *seems* to say,

**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 Act of “*going down to the front of the Church*” is what many believe is the same as “**calling for the Elders of the Church**”. And the Pastor or other Leader will retrieve that small bottle of olive oil and put a small “dab” of oil on the sick person- usually on the forehead. He will then lay hands on that person and pray that God will heal them- *physically*. And that is done in hopes of receiving the biblical Promise found 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.**

.. and yet, the overwhelming Majority of people, who have the oil placed on them; and are prayed for like this- are NOT healed. And that is NOT my Opinion- that is a factual Reality.

But then- in an amazing Demonstration of Confusion- the sick person will go back to their seat- most of the Time- WITHOUT being healed- while everybody sings praises to God as though a Healing has occurred. And then they will do it over and over and over again.

I have not only personally witnessed this myself- I actually participated in this for several decades- earlier in my Walk with Jesus. But even then- I questioned *why* we were doing this- when it was obvious that it wasn't working.

First of all, there are very few Churches here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast that even have Elders in them. And that is a real Problem- if Obedience to this Passage will be carried out. But fewer than that- even understand *what* Elders are; and *why* they are Important. Secondly, if we are going to strive to obey this Passage in **James**- we need to define several Words and Phrases correctly and- IN CONTEXT- meaning that we understand what James meant as he was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write them down 2,000 years ago- and NOT what these words and phrases might mean to us today.

But then we MUST try to understand what James meant when God the Holy Spirit, through him- gave us this Promise at the End of verse 15:

**... and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.**

So, are we now supposed to believe that there are two different Ways of being saved: One through hearing the Gospel; believing the Gospel; and obeying the Gospel; and another Way of having Elders anoint us with oil and pray over us? Is that what James was teaching here?

Now inside the “*Roman religious System*”<sup>1</sup>- they have what they call, the “*Sacrament of Extreme Unction*”.<sup>2</sup> And the term, “*Extreme*” has to do with “*Final or Last*”; while the term, “*Unction*” has to do with “*an Anointing or Anointing with oil*”. So, their “*Sacrament of Extreme Unction*” is the “*Final or last Anointing with oil that deathly ill people receive from the Priest*”. And this is also known as “*Last Rites*”.

Now I am very critical of Rome because they have fabricated so many Doctrines that lead people astray- and they don’t have the Right to do that. But in this case- they actually *tried* to be biblical about this. But in their effort to be biblical- they *mis-interpreted* this Passage- and so, today, the “*Sacrament of Extreme Unction*” or “*Last Rites*” is far removed from what God the Holy Spirit “*moved*” on James to write down.

But then early in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century- the Group that came out of John Wesley’s Teaching (*Methodists*) took this very bad Interpretation of **James 5:13-18** from the Romans and adopted it as their own. And then in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries- the “*Pentecostal Movement*” took this same bad Interpretation from the Methodists and carried it forward into their Churches. And that is how it spread.

But for us to understand this Passage correctly this morning requires that we “*take out*” (exegete) of the Scriptures what God the Holy Spirit put into them. But we also have to do this- “*in Context*”- with what was going on with James and the Christian Church at the Time that James wrote this (49AD)- or again- we will get off base.

First of all, this Passage is NOT *primarily* about physical Healing. What God the Spirit “*moved*” on the first Pastor of the Church in Jerusalem to write here- is about the “*Power of Prayer*” in general. And that is *why* James said this at the End of verse 16 and all of 17&18:

**... 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.**

... but this Passage is also about the “*Unity of the Spirit*”; the “*Unity of the Faith*”; and the “*Communion of Saints*”. And that is why James said this in verses 14&16a:

**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...**

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<sup>1</sup> This religious “*System*” ceased to be a Christian “*Church*” when they officially and formally pronounced an “*eternal Damnation*” (Anathema) on the biblical Gospel at the Conclusion of their Council of Trent (1563)

<sup>2</sup> Peter Lombard (1096-1160) was the first person to use this term in writing

**Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.**

So, **James :13-18** is also about the Power of godly Unity- working through Believers- *through Prayer and Acts of Kindness*- to help other Believers overcome and defeat both Sin and spiritual Weakness. In other words, this Passage is about overcoming both Sin and spiritual Weakness through the Power of Prayer and Unity among the Believers. And that makes **James 5:13-18** to be a “one-another” Passage. So, let’s get into it. Let’s look again at verse 13:

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

... so, right off the bat- the correct Context of what James is teaching in this Passage is how genuine Believers are to respond to “*Suffering*”. He asked,

**Is anyone among you suffering?...**

And this reflects the Reality of Life as a Believer back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- when Suffering was everywhere. But specifically, the Saints in Jerusalem in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century where James had become the 1<sup>st</sup> Pastor- were experiencing *horrific* Suffering at the hands of evil men. They were treated as “*evil Betrayers*” by the Jews; and they were treated as “*Insurrectionists*” by the occupying Roman Army.

So, physical Beatings were common. Also, many Believers in Jerusalem were imprisoned for their Faith in Jesus- where they were treated far worse than an animal. And while in Prison, they were beaten; starved; and isolated from their Families for extended periods of Time. And the physical bodies of some of those “suffering Saints” needed medical Attention- that was very primitive back then. But others, who suffered- had grown “weak in their Faith” and had given in to the Temptation to feel abandoned- while some had even sinned against God and had denied the Lord; betrayed other Believers; and had renounced their Faith in Jesus.

Now there are two Problems today that cause many people who attend the modern Church to simply not relate to the Situation that James was addressing here:

1. It is hard for many of us to even imagine how awful the daily Life of Believers was back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century
2. It is hard for many of us to understand *why* it would be sinful for a person, who is suffering- to deny the Lord

... and the Ignorance of the first one- causes the 2<sup>nd</sup> one.

We must try to understand that the normal, daily Life in Israel in the 1st Century was terrible. It was far *worse* than the daily Life of those living in Rome. There was little or no running water and the sanitary systems that were in place- were both primitive and almost useless. Whatever Shelters were there were of poor quality- usually with no insulation and dirt floors. Death was everywhere- dead bodies were literally lying on the side of the streets. Poverty was everywhere- and so, beggars were everywhere- so, that the primary Topic of Discussion was finding the next meal. Jewish children were being routinely abused and raped by the Roman soldiers. Women were afforded little Dignity or Comfort. Sickness was everywhere; Leprosy was rampant; but other Diseases that are seldom if ever seen or heard about today- were common.

Remember that by the Time Jesus walked through the Streets- healing the sick; raising the dead; casting out demons; and preaching the Gospel- Israel had been occupied and brutally dominated by one Gentile pagan Country after the other- for over 300 years. And so, they literally *seethed* in their Hatred of the Romans and Prayers, asking God to *destroy* them were common- while thoughts of Freedom *dominated* their Lives.

And this is why the average Jew of the 1st Century was NOT looking for a “Messiah” to come and forgive them for their Sins. They were looking for a *military* Warrior- who would utterly destroy the Roman occupying Force and return the “Promised Land” to the Jews.

Now it is commonly thought that Christians were persecuted by the Romans for worshipping Jesus. But that isn't true. The Romans were *polytheistic*- so they worshipped *multiple* gods. The Romans couldn't have cared less what or who a Christian worshipped. What they persecuted the Christians for was, almost *exclusively*, for them *refusing* to confess openly that, even though Jesus was God in human Flesh- Caesar was the *supreme* god, who was over all the other gods.

Their Fear was that the Christians were not going to remain loyal to the Roman Government and would seek to overthrow it. So, the most common “crime” that caused the Romans to persecute; arrest; try; convict; and sentence the “little Christs” for- was Insurrection. It was the Jewish rulers who persecuted the Saints for Blasphemy and for Heresy and for trying to overthrow the Mosaic Law.

Now the prison System in Jerusalem back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century was harsh; brutal; unsanitary; and deadly. The Prisoners were usually kept below the street level where they seldom, if ever, saw daylight. The city sewage ran right through the Prison and the containers that Prisoners used the bathroom in- doubled as their bowl for eating.

The Prisoners were routinely beaten; tortured; and mistreated. Prisoners were usually chained to the wall with their arms above their head in a sitting position- with their feet and legs sticking out in front of them. And at night, the rats came out and bit and licked the feet; arms; hands and faces of the Prisoners- passing on whatever disease they may have had.

Now, in a demonstration of the Love of God- in spite of the dangerous and inhuman Realities of the Prisons- Believers on the outside- *voluntarily* came and visited with the Prisoners- offering Hope and Prayer and Food and Scripture to empower them to remain Faithful until they could be released or be killed. All of the Passages in the New Testament that speak about visiting those in Prison- are about visiting Believers, who had been thrown into Prison precisely because they were Believers.

Now I am all in Favor of Prison Ministries today. I was a part of that Effort at the Harrison County Jail for many years and preached God's Word every Lord's Day morning at 7am. And I didn't stop because I don't believe in it- because I do. I stopped for no other Reason than I simply couldn't split myself into any more parts. So, I pray and hope that some of you will pick up the Mantle and herald God's Word to the Prisoners every week. One of the Members of this Church was actually saved while in Prison because somebody had the Burden to give those Prisoners the Gospel.

But few if any of the Prisoners at the Harrison County Jail are in there because they are Christians. Most, if not all of them are incarcerated because they became Criminals and *violated* the Teachings of both Jesus and the Bible as well as the Law of this Land.

But in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century in Jerusalem- genuine Christians were *routinely* rounded up- and thrown into Prison- usually without even a Trial- because they were bearing godly Fruit and because the Authorities- both Jewish and Gentile- considered them to be a Threat to their Way of Life.

The Family would hear a knock at the door in the middle of the night and Soldiers would take the Father of that Family away- and they never saw or heard from him again. And those beautiful; faithful Saints- were *horribly* treated and- usually killed- without so much as the opportunity to defend themselves.

And as they were beaten and tortured- their bodies became racked with Pain. Cuts; scars; muscles; ligaments; tendons; and bones were broken and pulled out of place; and some were no longer able to walk or even raise their arms.

So, genuine, kind, loving Saints- would *voluntarily* go to those Dungeons and sit with the Prisoners- praying with them- encouraging them to remain Faithful- no matter what happened. Why? Because in **Matthew 10:32-39**, Jesus said,

**32 "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.**

**33 But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.**

**34 "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.**

**35 For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW;**

**36 and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.**

**37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.**

**38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.**

**39 He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.**

Now usually when this Passage is read or taught today- *especially* here in America- it is "minimized" to the Degree that it loses its Meaning. Jesus was NOT talking about a "Cross" that we have to bear in the sense of a wayward child; or a bad boss at work; or a low paying job; or a sore back. Jesus was talking about a literal Cross where Believers would suffer horrific Agony and then die by Crucifixion. Over 30,000 Believers died by Crucifixion along- side of genuine Criminals in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century.

And Jesus was also teaching that we CANNOT- we MUST NOT love anyone or anything *more* – or even the *same* as we love Him. And Jesus was talking about genuine Saints losing their Lives as a "Punishment" from evil men- for being saved.

And Jesus was also teaching that- as we are persecuted- if we *deny* Him- if we turn on Him; if we betray Him or His Word or the other believers or the Church- then He will *deny* us- meaning we will NOT go to Heaven!

Now people today would respond, "*But Brother Blair- you teach that Salvation is eternal. So, if they were truly saved- they WILL go to Heaven- even if they deny the Lord!*" But the Response I would give to that Statement is the SAME as the Response that Jesus, the Apostles, and the Leaders of the early Church would have given: "*If you have been truly saved- you would NEVER deny the Lord! The indwelling Holy Spirit would empower you to remain Faithful- until Death. So, the Fact that you DID deny the Lord proves that you have NOT been born again- even if you have been tortured!*"

Now I realize that I am in the minority Position about this Issue- *especially* with the Membership of the modern Church. But I would say to you that my Position is biblical; and those who believe that denying the Lord is no different than any other Sin- are NOT biblical. And it isn't even close. *"Oh come on- Brother Blair- you're just wound too tight! Who among us would remain faithful if we were tortured?"* Well, the Answer to that Question is, *"The millions and even tens of millions of Believers in the early Church, who absolutely refused to deny Jesus or to betray Him- even though they were flayed alive; hung; stabbed; pulled apart by horses; drowned; had their heads cut off; or were eaten alive by animals! Paul, Peter, James, John, and Philip and those listed in **Hebrews 11**- are Examples we can actually read about in the Bible- who were treated horribly and painfully- and yet remained Faithful to the End!"*

I suggest to you that what causes people in the 21st Century, who say they're saved, to treat "denying Jesus" no differently than running a red light- is that, *primarily*, they are already neck- deep in Worldliness and have no idea about biblical and historic Christianity!

If people would simply read Church History- they would find out that the early Church had to actually convene a "Council" to determine whether to receive those, who denied the Lord- because their Lives were at risk- back into Fellowship again. For example, in 250AD, the Christian Church called them, the "*Lapsi*" in Latin- which meant, the "*Fallen*". And those who feared for their Lives or who demonstrated Cowardice by denying Jesus during Persecution or Imprisonment- had to go through a very serious "vetting" Process to be allowed back into Membership again.

So, the Effort to encourage and strengthen Believers, who were already in Prison was a real important Activity among the people of the early Church. And so, in his "Inspired Letter" (Epistle)- the half-brother of Jesus (James) turned to those suffering Saints and offered them Comfort and Hope.

**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 the word that was translated here as "**sick**" is a Greek word (*kamnoe*)- which means: *to be tired because of exertion; to labor to the point of extreme weariness; to be exhausted; to be discouraged because of weariness*. What this word does NOT mean is: *suffering from a disease or illness*. So, this is NOT about



being “sick” in the *normal* Way we use that word today. James was NOT describing someone who is suffering from an Illness. This word was used to describe someone who had grown physically weak and feeble; as well as someone who had become *discouraged* because of extreme physical Exertion- like being beaten and tortured in Prison!

Now to prove my Point- beside this verse (**James 5:14**)- this same Greek word (*kamnoe*) was ONLY used one other time in the entire New Testament- in **Hebrews 12:3**, where the unknown writer said,

**For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

... where the Greek word, that the unknown writer actually wrote down originally (*kamnoe*)- was translated here into English as, “**weary**”.

So, we can see that by translating this Greek word as “**sick**” in **James 5:14**- a world of *misunderstanding* and actually an entire false Doctrine by the Roman religious System was developed *unnecessarily*- that was then passed down to the Methodists and then to the Pentecostals!

So, James speaks here of a “*spiritual* Restoration” of weak and defeated Believers- who had suffered horribly at the hands of evil men. And so, when James said this in verse 15:

**... the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick ...**

... the English word, “**restore**” comes from the Greek word, *sozæ*- which does NOT refer to physical Healing either.

This word is most commonly translated as “*save*” throughout the New Testament- which is *exactly* the way the King James Version translates it. So, verse 15 in the KJV says,

**And the prayer of faith shall save the sick...**

... and so, because of a bad Translation and real sloppy Exegesis- people were actually taught for many years that physically sick people could enter into Salvation itself- through having oil dabbed on their heads and the Prayers of the Elders!

But that makes no sense because the Scriptures are crystal clear that Salvation is entered into by Grace alone; through Faith alone; in the finished Work of Christ alone and NOT by having oil applied or through the Prayers of the Elders

or anybody else! Now we *can* and we *should* pray that God will save people. Yet EVERY individual MUST be first- sovereignly chosen by God the Father; and then be sovereignly drawn to Jesus by God the Holy Spirit- or they will NEVER be saved!

We have to understand that neither Elders nor anyone else can pray Salvation onto others. Each individual must repent and believe.

The Answer is that while the Greek word, “*sozoe*” means “saved”- in many places- that’s NOT all it means. This same word is also translated in other places as, “*delivered*” or “*rescued*” or “*restored*”! So, the idea that James is trying to convey here is that- *most of the Time*- when a Believer is being horribly Persecuted or Beaten- he must make sure that he himself is praying. But when he is beaten to the Point of Exhaustion and when that Exhaustion has so weakened him *physically*- that he is denying Jesus and renouncing the Truth- or is contemplating doing so- he should then call for those men, who are spiritually strong in the Lord (Elders).

And this is *exactly* what John the Baptist did in **Matthew 11**- when he sent two of his Disciples to Jesus to make sure that Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah. And that tells us that John had grown spiritually Weak while in Prison and needed Confirmation that his Declaration about Jesus in **John 1:29** was true.

So, the Elders will come to that desperate and weakened Saint of God and they will pray with him. And if he has already sinned- by renouncing the Truth out of Fear or in order to avoid more Beatings- those Elders will restore him back into spiritual Strength and beg God to forgive him. And the Promise of God is that the Lord Himself “**will raise up**” or “encourage” that pitiful Soul.

Now the Greek word that was translated into English here in verse 15 as “**raise up**” (*egeirō*) also means “*to awaken*” or “*to arouse*.” So, James is teaching here that through the righteous Prayers of godly Elders- God will “**restore**” or “awaken” or “arouse” His battered sheep's Enthusiasm and Trust in Him.

Now as an important foot note- James's also says that “**if**” one of these spiritually weak believers “**has committed sins, they will be forgiven him**”. And this provides further Evidence that this entire Passage has NOTHING to do with physical Healing. The Bible nowhere teaches that an Elder’s prayers can forgive Sin. God forgives Sin. God ALONE forgives Sin. So, the Elders simply pray for that sinning Saint that God will forgive him.

But what about the phrase that says the Elders are to “**anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord**” (verse 14)? There are at least two Reasons for us to NOT think that what many Churches do- in sincerely trying to obey this Passage- is actually what James was talking about.

First of all- almost NO Church today actually “anoints” the physically sick person with oil anymore- at least NOT in a genuine, biblical Sense. Back in the

Old Testament- when someone was “anointed” with oil- the Leaders took the horn of an animal- hollowed it out- and filled it with olive oil. And when the individual was called forward- they poured the oil over the top of his head and allowed the oil to run down his entire body!

And around 1,000 years before Jesus was born- God the Holy Spirit “moved” on King David to write **Psalm 133**- which gives us insight into what real, true, genuine, sure-nuff “Anointing” looks like:

**A Song of Ascents, of David. 1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!**

**2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron’s beard, Coming down upon the edge of his robes.**

**3 It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the Lord commanded the blessing— life forever.**

Now I am not simply “splitting hairs” or nitpicking” here. But those precious people- who sincerely put a small bit of oil on the forehead of physically sick people- are NOT “anointing” anyone. At best- they are simply “dabbing”. But the Reason people stopped pouring oil like they did in the Bible- was NOT because of some theological or religious or biblical Reason- but simply because it was ruining their clothes.

But this goes back into what I tell you about Symbolism versus Reality in the Bible. What David and all the other Old Testament Saints were doing- by anointing people with olive oil- was to *symbolize* what God was going to do with EVERY Believer in the New Covenant when it got here. You see, the oil *represented* God the Holy Spirit and His “spiritual Anointing” coming to an individual and REMAINING!

You see, Believers under the inferior Old or First Covenant did NOT have the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person of the Trinity abiding continually inside of them. God the Holy Spirit came down upon them; moved on them; and empowered them. But then He went back up and left them! The Holy Spirit NEVER remained with Believers 24/7 when the Old Covenant was in force. That is strictly a New Covenant Reality.

But again- once the Reality of the New Covenant comes- the Symbolism of the Old Covenant becomes obsolete and is no longer needed! Why would anyone need a Symbol if the Reality is here? In fact, if we are not careful- we are sinning against God by holding on to the Symbols; Signs; and Types that the Old Covenant offered those Saints. Here is what the unknown writer said about this in **Hebrews 8:13**:

**When He [God] said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.**

Okay but what DID James mean when he infallibly wrote that the Elders were to come to the Believer, who had been made “weak” through his Sufferings and they are to ,

**... anoint[ing] him with oil in the name of the Lord**

Now remember that medical Services were very primitive back then. And so, those Elders come in Mercy and Love to that battered Saint. And they will then take olive oil- which back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century was used by medical doctors as a “healing agent”. And the Elders will *physically* rub that oil over that man’s beaten body- from his head to his feet- and massage that oil into him as they pray.

Remember, there were NO antibiotics back then. There were few if any Remedies that were available for the physical body of a person who has suffered such horrific physical Suffering. So, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- it was common that olive oil was used as a type of ancient “Liniment” that when it was “anointed” or “rubbed” over the entire body- would bring some measure of physical Relief.

And in the Process of those Elders doing what they could to relieve the physical Results of that inhuman Suffering- they found out that this Saint had sinned against God by renouncing Jesus; or by denying their Faith in Him- they acted as Agents of Mercy and Compassion and prayed *for* him and *with* him- that God would forgive him- so he could be brought back into a “Right Relationship” with God.

But what they could NOT do- was to set that man free from Prison. What the Elders could NOT do was to bring an End to his Sufferings. So, the Reality is that this man was probably going to *continue* to suffer; his Beatings would *continue*; and the inhuman Treatment would go on- until he was dead. So, asking God to forgive this man- who- out of Fear- had denied the Lord- was to prepare him to meet with God- when ALL of the Pain of this Life would finally stop!

But now look at the *first part* of the very next verse...

**Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed...**

Now why did James write this? He is no longer addressing the man who is going through his terrible Torture. He is NOT talking about preparing a suffering Saint to meet God in “Right Standing” at his Death. And he is also NOT

addressing the Elders, either. Beginning with this verse- James is now addressing all the other Saints- who are NOT being beaten; who are NOT facing immediate Death; and who are Safe and Secure- back at the Church! And he told them,

**... confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another ...**

... and he told them to do those two things- so this would happen:

**... so that you may be healed**

... where the English word, “**healed**” comes from a Greek word, (*iaomai*)- which does NOT mean physical Healing, either. The Greek word, *iaomai* does not convey *physical* Healing. For example- in **1Peter 2:24**- the old Fisherman said,

**and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed (*iaomai*).**

The unknown writer put it like this in **Hebrews 12:12&13**:

**12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,**

**13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed (*iaomai*).**

... and James uses this same Greek word to refer to God's Forgiveness- making the repentant Believer “spiritually Whole” again.

This is talking about the very SAME *spiritual* Healing that the beaten man in Prison was given by the Elders. And this is also talking about the *greatest* Evil; the most *common* Sin; the *biggest* Hinderance; the most *certain* Failure that every single Believe on earth and throughout all Time has had to face: Pride.

You see, one of the Reasons that God reveals something about one person- is NOT to merely deal with that one person. Because his Sin; his Failure; his Struggle; his Problem- is probably very Common with ALL Believers.

For example, in **The Acts 5**- when God confronted Ananias and Sapphira about their Lie- and then killed them publicly- it was NOT to simply rid the Church of a single Liar; or even a married Couple- who “conceived of an evil Deed” in their Heart. What was also happening was that God was stopping others, who were actually doing the same thing as Anaias and Sapphira- or who were *thinking* about lying to God. And by God publicly confronting those two and

taking the Breath of Life away from them- God was issuing Mercy and Forgiveness to all the

Others, who were either sinning as much as Ananias and Sapphira- or who were planning to do so.

So, while God was publicly judging Sin- and cleansing the Church- He was also “healing” or “restoring” the others, who were there that Day- who were slipping down into that same Sin. But God was also “healing” or “restoring” all those countless millions of Believers, who down through 21 Centuries of Church History were deceived into thinking they could Sin in the same Way. But as they read this Account in **The Acts 5**- they were brought under Conviction- which brought about Repentance and Restoration!

You see, there is NOTHING “new” under the Heavens. There is NO “new Sin” that has not invaded the heart of countless numbers of people and destroyed them. But there is also NO “new Blessing” from God, either that He has not bathed tens of millions of other people with.

We need to remember that the Hero that God used to confront and defeat the “Heresy of Modalism” became the Heretic in the Battle against the full Deity of Christ (Arianism). Arias stood tall in defeating Modalism but fell into horrific Deception when it came to the full Deity of Jesus. So, a person does NOT have to be in Prison getting beaten to become spiritually Weak and Sinful.

And what has tripped up others throughout History- can also trip us up today. What has deceived others- can deceive us. And what has strengthened and blessed and empowered and encouraged many, many others- can also encourage us. And that is WHY we NEED each other!

But the Catalyst that will bring about that promised Restoration is setting aside our Pride and the Fear of Gossip and, *periodically*- confessing our Sins to each other. And this will allow God to move Sin and spiritual Weakness out of our Lives and bring spiritual Healing and Restoration! So, God’s Will for the Church- that Jesus is building and over which He alone is Head- is that we run *together*; that we cry *together*; rejoice *together*; pray *together*; learn *together*; sing *together*; suffer *together*; confess Sin together; so, we may be strengthened and blessed *together*!

So far in this Series- we have already discovered the “Unity” or the “Communion” or the “Oneness” of the Christian Church. And now we see that we are to apply the Truth of this Unity in all the “One-another” Passages that we find in God’s Word. And here, God said we are to confess Sin and pray for “One-another”.

And so, in His Mercy- God has given His Church several “Means”; “Tools”; “Vehicles”; and “Ways” by which we can overcome Temptation; fight off Sin; please the Lord; and obey the Bible. And two of those “Means of Grace” is:

1. Prayer
2. Confession of Sin

Now the word, “**Therefore**” in verse 15 marks a transition in the flow of thought. It is a legal term that means: “*Since all that I have said to you earlier is true- now therefore do this...*”

Here, James turns his attention *away* from the Sins of those believers who have been defeated in the spiritual Battle and now addresses the entire Congregation as a whole- exhorting ALL believers to *continually* “**confess their sins to one another**” and not wait until those Sins drag them into the depths of utter spiritual Defeat.

James was well aware that Sin is most dangerous to an *isolated* believer. You see, our Sin *always* seeks to hide and remain secret- but God always wants Sin exposed and dealt with- in the Light of God’s Word; and in the Power of the Holy Spirit; through the loving Unity of other Believers. Therefore, James calls for mutual Honesty and mutual Confession as believers “**pray for one another**”.

And as I have told you- there are really only two reasons as to why Sins are *not* confessed among believers in the modern Church:

1. Pride
2. Gossip

... and both of these are sinful. Pride keeps the sinning Believers from admitting that they have, in fact, sinned; while Gossip destroys the Confidence that what is confessed among Believers in the Church will stay in the Church and not become the topic of the evening news out in the World.

Developing and maintaining an ongoing, open, sharing, loving, and praying Relationship with each other will help keep Believers from bottoming out in their spiritual Lives. Such Relationships help give the spiritual Strength that provides Victory over Sin. And they also provide godly Pressure to confess and forsake Sins BEFORE they become overwhelming to the point of total spiritual Defeat and even public Scandal.

Yet one of the things that stops Believers from obeying James- is the thought that their Prayers are not strong enough to actually help anyone. And so, the 1<sup>st</sup> Pastor of the Church of Jerusalem then teaches why the Prayers of ALL genuine Believers are powerful. And to do that- James first makes a very important Statement:

**... The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.**

Now the English word, “**effective**” was translated from the Greek word, (*energeoe*; Strong’s # 1754) from which our English word “*energy*” comes. So, “**effective Prayers**” are Prayers that are sincere; honest; truthful; and energetic. The phrase, a “**a righteous man**” has to do with ALL genuinely born-again Believers- who, while certainly NOT Sinless- are honestly striving to obey Jesus- with Joy!

This tells us that *weak* Prayers come from *spiritually* weak people while *strong* Prayers come from *spiritually* strong people. And we need to understand that spiritually strong people are NOT those who are “strong” in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century American model of “strength” but those who model the characteristics found in the Bible.

So, spiritually Strong people are godly; humble; and merciful people. They are people who forgive their enemies and who refuse to enact Vengeance on those who have wronged them. Spiritually strong people are those who strive to obey Jesus- with Joy; and those, who see the Commands of the Bible- NOT as handicaps to their Desires but as paths to the Fullness of their own Joy.

But we also must keep these words of James in context with what he is talking about. James is NOT talking about being spiritually Strong in a general sort of way. Neither is he talking about being spiritually Strong for the sake of being spiritually Strong. Instead, James is teaching here that the energetic Prayers of righteous people (the spiritually Strong people) are a potent Force in calling down the Power of God for restoring weak and struggling Believers to robust spiritual Health. *That* is the context of James’ Teaching.

And then to convince the Saints at both the Church in Jerusalem in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century as well as the Covenant of Peace Church in the 21<sup>st</sup>- James gives us an Example of the Prophet Elijah.

**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.**

... and he begins this Section by saying,

**Elijah was a man with a nature like ours...**

... in other words, Elijah was NOT any different from any other genuine Believer. He suffered Persecution and was tempted and periodically fell into Sin- just like



we do. But then James goes over what the Old Testament teaches about how God used Elijah through Prayer that accomplished MUCH!

But ALL of this Victory through Effective Prayers hinges on ALL of us- confessing Sin and praying for one another. And so, I beg you this morning to ponder this biblical Command- and allow the Power of Unity to help overcome Sin and spiritual Weakness in ALL of us!

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.