



came an appropriate sign for performing miraculous cures. What, then, should we take and apply from all of this?

We must first acknowledge that miraculous spiritual gifts were given to serve a specific purpose—to

confirm the Word of God (cf. Jn. 20:30-31; Heb. 2:1-4). We find in 1 Corinthians 13:8 an explanation regarding the time of cessation of these wonderful gifts, namely, when the Revelation of God's Word had been completed. In light of all Bible teaching, anointing the sick with oil in our time would be inappropriate for the simple reason that miraculous gifts are no longer *available* for anyone in the Lord's church. However, we must not let this diminish in our minds the responsibility we have to our brethren to help them in their need whether they are sick or suffering in any fashion (cf. Matt. 25:34-40).



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ISSUE

13.27

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

July 3
2011

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Jason Garcia



Should the Elders Anoint the Sick with Oil?

By Jason Garcia

James gives a curious commandment regarding the sick of a congregation—that they should call the elders and be anointed with oil (cf. Jas. 5:14). There are many different ideas in the religious world about what James is teaching, is there any way to nail down specifically how this verse affects us today?

First we must decide what—if anything—can be gleaned from the passage and applied today. Certainly we can find in the Scriptures authority for a church to have elders, and find authority as well for caring and praying for the sick and needy (cf. 1 Tim. 3; Gal. 2:10; Jas. 5:13). Now then, what are we to make of this business about anointing one with oil? There is nothing in the immediate context that will shed more light on the procedure, so we must look elsewhere for an explanation. We should notice, however, that there isn't any spiritual significance to

the act, but rather it was conducted to heal a physical ailment.

Many commentators believe that whatever kind of oil was poured over or used to anoint the sick person must have had a medicinal quality, and so it is only logical that James instructs that all be done to aid the suffering in addition to pray-

ing over them. This conclusion is not unreasonable since oil was used for such purposes in ancient times (cf. Is. 1:6; Luke 10:34). However, oil would have been useless in treating many ailments, and this would be especially true today with the proliferation of numerous diseases. Furthermore, there were physicians in the first century just as there are today, and it would seem strange that we would call the elders for diagnosis and treatment of a sickness as it would have been in the first century. Other commentators suggest that James is simply stating that oil should not be withheld from an ill person simply because they are ill. This argument is based on the fact that during times of fasting or illness, the act of anointing with oil was suspended (cf. Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam. 12:20; 14:2; Dan. 10:2, 3; Micah 6:15; Matt. 6:16, 17). While this conclusion is feasible, it does not explain why the elders would be called to do the anointing. Still, there are others that believe this act was a simple token of compassion from one brother to another. Perhaps they would point to the instance in which Mary anointed Jesus with oil to demonstrate her affection and respect for Him (cf. Jn. 12:3; Luke 7:46). If this is the case, then James' instruction would be narrowed to providing a foreign cultural sign of affection and encouragement and would not be applicable in our time.



Olsen Park church of Christ

There is one final explanation that harmonizes with the Scriptures especially given the element of certainty in the passage that the man will be healed if the act is done by the elders. In 1 Samuel 10:1 we read, **“Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, ‘Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel?’”** and in connection with this verse consider what the Psalmist says: **“I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him”** (Psalm 89:20-21 ESV). These and a number of other passages show that the anointing of someone with oil was symbolic of God’s approval of someone. Within the New Testament we see the same act used to accompany supernatural healing as in Mark 6:13 which says, **“And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.”** These verses are the key to understanding James 5:14 especially since the gift of healing was given to first century Christians in a limited capacity (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28-30). This is the most feasible explanation since elders of churches would likely be the ones endowed with spiritual gifts as Paul says in Ephesians,

“Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men’...And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...” (Eph. 4:7, 11-12). This would explain why the elders were to be called as well as the peculiar use of oil to anoint the one who was sick. James promises if this procedure is done accordingly then the person suffering would be healed so long as the prayer of the elders was offered in faith. Since oil was both a curative amenity as well as a symbol of divine approval it be-