

A Word to the Elders

James 5:14

Some think by "oil" it means to comfort your sick brethren. Others think it may include medical attention. Some say it means pray for the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Perhaps all three can be applied. Still, staying with the context of a brother who is sick in error, which we have seen throughout this study, James may mean this is what the elders are to do as opposed to upbraiding the erring, sin-sick brother. The "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" may be in contrast to the pretense of that self-righteous prayer of the double-minded, religious man who thinks himself a master, lording over men (James 1:5-8; 3: 1; 4:3, 8-10; 5:15). This one thing is certain, if a brother is afflicted in trial or in bodily sickness, rather than grieving him with your words, use your tongue to pray for him, with a pure heart and use your words to comfort him. You might say, "No one would be so cruel to someone sick or to an erring brother." Job was sick in every way, yet, his friends were just that cruel (Job 16:2). The kind of comfort they showed upbraids and gives no glory to the Lord, it divides brethren, it adds to affliction and comforts no one (Isaiah 40:1, 2).