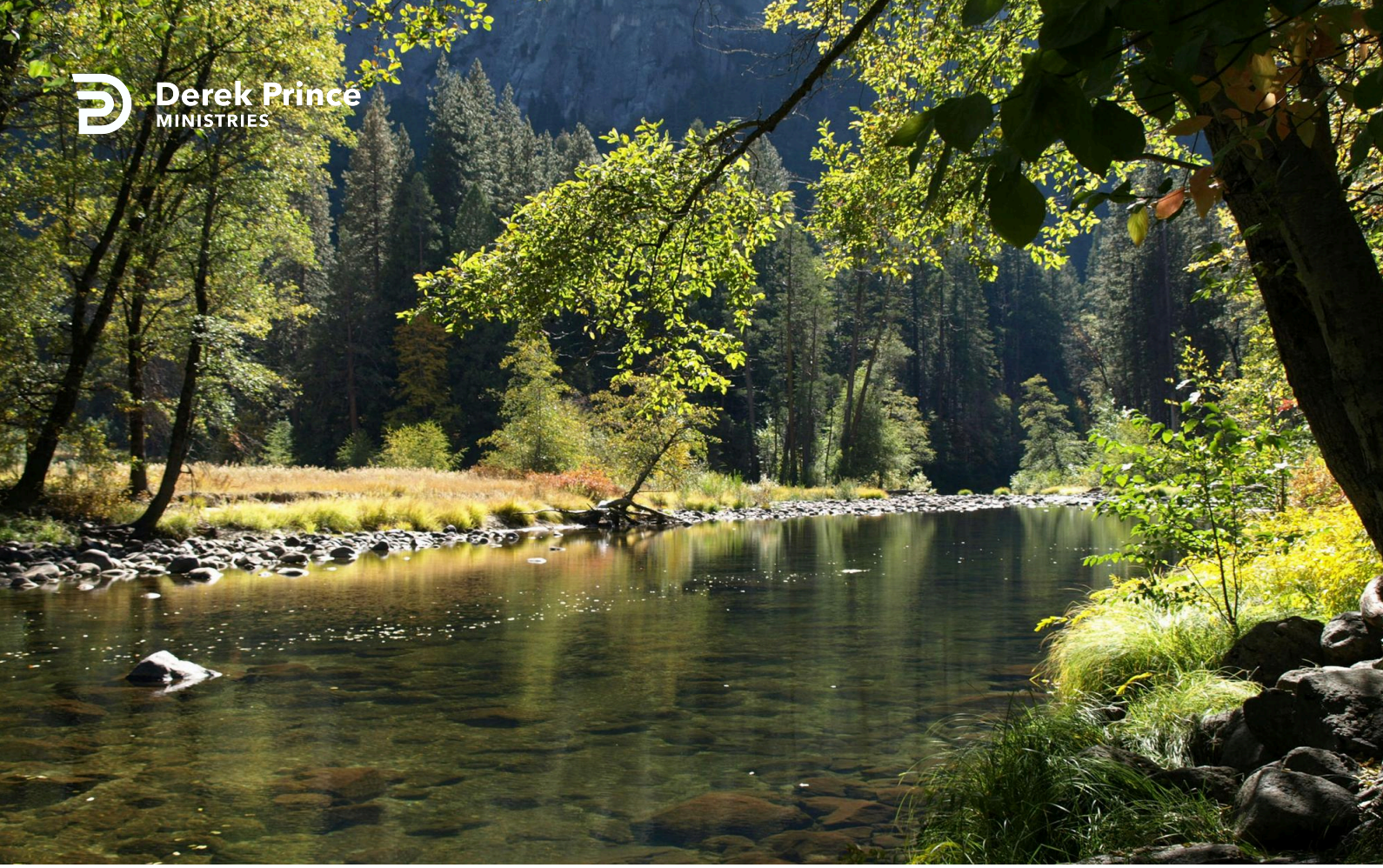

Anointing The Sick Is An Act Of Faith



Foundations (Day 251)
by Derek Prince

The question naturally arises: Is there any difference in use or purpose between these two ordinances – that is, laying hands on the sick and anointing the sick with oil? Are there times or situations when it is more appropriate to use one ordinance rather than the other? And if so, what are the scriptural principles guiding their use? The passage in the epistle of James about anointing with oil begins:

> "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church." (James 5:14)

Since the epistle of James is addressed primarily to professing Christians (albeit among the Jewish people), the phrase "among you" would seem to refer mainly to believers. This fits in also with the commandment which follows: "Let him call for the elders of the church."

A person who made no profession of faith and was not associated with any Christian church would not be included in the phrase "among you"; nor would such a person know who were the church elders for whom to send.

Interpreted in this way, this ordinance contains two lessons of great practical importance for every professing Christian. First, God expects every sick Christian to seek Him first, for healing through faith and by spiritual means. This does not mean it is necessarily unscriptural for a Christian who is sick to seek the advice or help of a medical doctor. But it is absolutely contrary to Scripture for any professing Christian who is sick to seek for human medical aid without first seeking for divine help from God Himself, through the appointed leaders of the church.

The second important lesson contained in this passage from the epistle of James is that God expects all Christians to associate themselves with a church and that the leaders of this church shall be ready to minister in faith, according to the Scripture, to the physical needs of their church members.

The phrase "let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14) carries both these implications:

1. That every Christian shall be associated with a

church in such a way that its leaders both know him and are known to him.

2. That these leaders shall be ready to minister physical healing to their members in faith, according to the ordinances appointed by God for the church.

In connection with this ordinance of anointing the sick with oil, there are two further points which need to be made plain. First of all, there is no suggestion that oil is to be used because of any natural healing properties it may possess. Here, as in many other passages of Scripture, the oil is simply a type or picture of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, placing the oil upon the sick person represents the claim of faith on behalf of that person that the Spirit of God shall minister divine life and healing to his sick body. This claim is based upon a clear promise from God.

> "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." (Rom. 8:11)

We may sum up this ordinance of anointing with oil by saying that it is an appointed act of faith by which the impartation of divine life and health through the Holy Spirit is claimed for the body of a sick Christian.

Devotional

Transcript: WD-B052-251-ENG
Last Updated: 04 Feb 2025
Website: derekprince.com

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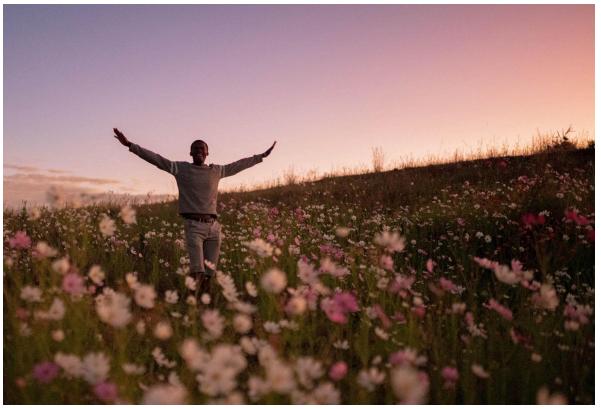

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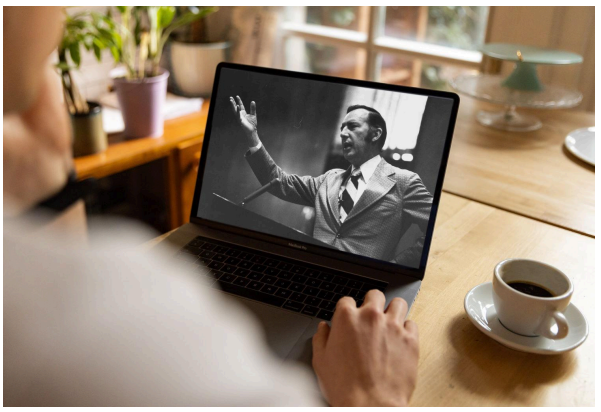

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