

"THE PRAYER OF FAITH SHALL SAVE"

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL: –

A few weeks ago, while reading the *Diaglott*, I noticed that the word translated sick in James 5:14 was *astheneo*, a word derived from *a-sthenes*, meaning without strength (*a*, without; *sthenos*, strength). From this is derived *asthenia*, a word much used in medicine. From my knowledge of medicine I knew that a person might be asthenic without being diseased or sick, so I looked up the word rendered sick in the 15th verse, and this I found to be *kamno*, a word which occurs only three times, and means, "to labor, suffer from fatigue." The two other passages are Heb. 12:3 and Rev. 2:3, which Young's translation renders as follows: "For consider him who endured such gainsaying from the sinners to himself, that ye may not be wearied (*kamno*) in your souls – being faint." (Heb. 12:3.) "And thou didst bear and hast endurance and because of my name hast toiled and not been weary (*kamno*)." (Rev. 2:3.) These passages would indicate that it was the weary and weak in faith who was told to call for the elders, and not the one suffering from disease. There are other words which mean sick, such as *nosos*, meaning sickness, unsoundness, disease; *echo kakos*, meaning to be ill.

These two words are never used to denote moral or spiritual sickness, while *asthenos* in its various forms is so used, and while it is frequently rendered sick in the common version, it is never rendered sick in Young's translation, and the revised version has the number of times reduced.

I also looked up the word healed, and found that there are three words rendered healed, *viz.*, (1) *therapeuo*, meaning to attend to, to heal, cure; *sozo*, to make sound or whole; *iaomai*, meaning to heal. This last word is the one used by James, and it

has also the significance of saved, as the following passage will show: Matt. 13:15, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they [R4099 : page 362] have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart and should be converted and I should heal [*iaomai*] them." (See also Acts 28:27,28; Luke 4:18.) "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal [*iaomai*] the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Jno. 12:40, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and be converted and should heal [*iaomai*] them."

Acts 10:38, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing [*iaomai*] all that were oppressed of the devil." I Pet. 2:24, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed [*iaomai*]."

These passages can be applied only in a moral or spiritual sense, while *therapeuo* is never applied in such a sense but always relates to a cure of a physical disease.

As examples of the use of *astheneo*, I quote the following: Matt. 8:17, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities [*astheneia*] and bare our sicknesses [*nosos*]." Matt. 26:41, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak [*astheneia*]." Rom. 4:19, "And being not weak [*astheneo*] in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." Rom. 5:6, "For when

we were yet without strength [*asthenes*] in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. 6:19, "I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity [*astheneia*] of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." Rom. 8:3, "For what the law could not do in that it was weak [*astheneo*] through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." Rom. 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities [*astheneia*], for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. 14:1,2, "Him that is weak [*astheneo*] in faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another who is weak [*astheneo*] eateth herbs." I Cor. 8:11,12, "And through thy knowledge shall the weak [*astheneo*] brother perish for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren and wound their weak [*asthenes*] conscience ye sin against Christ." Heb. 4:15, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities [*astheneia*], but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." [R4100 : page 362]

Nosos is the word most commonly used to denote sickness or disease and occurs in the same verse in contrast to *astheneia*, viz., Matt. 8:17, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, Himself took our infirmities [*astheneia*] and bare our sicknesses [*nosos*]."

From the foregoing I would conclude that James referred to Christians who had become weak in faith, or, to use a common expression, had "backslidden." This is indicated in verse 16, the word "faults" being translated from *paraptoma*, meaning a falling away.

I hope I have made myself clear, and I very much desire your comments. The following is a more literal translation of Jas. 5:14-16: "Is any weak among you, 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: and the prayer of faith shall save the wearied one. And the Lord shall raise him up, and though he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him. Confess your fallings away one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Yours in our dear Redeemer,

J. E. TAYLOR, M.D.

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Evidently the weakness and faintness are spiritual, and the restoration and healing also spiritual. In accord with this is the exhortation that we "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we become *weary* or *faint* in our minds," as respects the Lord and his promises, and thus become unfaithful, covenant-breakers, alienated from God. Any in such a condition will find it difficult to return to rest in the Lord and should follow St. James' prescription.
