

17. Learning to Pray for One Another

In our last topic, we saw that we are to show our children how to learn to be patient. Patience is the first characteristic of love given in 1 Corinthians 13:4. We are actually showing our children how to love as we show them how to practice patience in their lives. There are many different situations where we need to show patience. In our topic today, we will see that we are to show our children how to pray for one another. One of the times we need to show patience is when we suffer. As a result, we see that we begin the topic about praying for one another with the topic of suffering.

James 5:13 says, “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.” The word that is translated “suffering” means *to suffer hardships or troubles*. The other three places where this word is used, in the New Testament, are all in the book of 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy 2:3 says, “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” When soldiers are on the battlefield, they do not have an easy life. They experience various hardships that they have to endure. As our physical and spiritual children learn to serve Christ, they will also have to endure hardships of various kinds. Here, we see that the Lord used James to tell us what to do when we are going through times of hardship or trouble in our lives. We see that we are to pray and ask the Lord for His strength as we endure various hardships.

We also want to help our children understand that they will experience times of great joy as they serve Christ. This verse also tells us what they should do in such situations. The word that is translated “cheerful” means *to be joyful, to be in good spirits, or to take heart*. This word is only used three times in the New Testament. The other two times are in Acts 27:22-25, where we read, “And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, “Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.” Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.” In these verses, it is translated “take heart” both times and has the thought of being in good spirits. At times, when our children have a joyful heart, we see that we are to encourage them to sing praises to the Lord.

As we go on to James 5:14-15, we see what we are to do when someone is sick. Those verses say, “Is anyone among you sick? 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 will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” The word that is translated “sick” here means *to be weak, to be without strength, to be powerless or to be sick*. This word is used thirty-six times in the New Testament. Several times, it is used when Christ healed a person who was physically sick.

However, many of the other uses of the word help us to understand the word more fully. The word is used twice, in Romans 14:1-2, to speak about a Christian who is weak. Those verses say, “Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables.” In these verses, it talks about a

person who is weak in their faith. Paul gives us an example to follow when he uses the word again, in Romans 14:21. That verse says, “*It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.*” Here, we see that we help weaker Christians by making the choice not to do anything that would cause the weaker brother or sister to stumble. Three times, in 1 Corinthians 8:9-12, this word is used to speak of a brother who is spiritually weak. We need to show an attitude of concern and helpfulness, by our actions, so that our children can learn from our example.

Paul also used this word when he was talking to the elders of the church at Ephesus. Acts 20:35 says, “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘it is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Here, we see that Paul says the weak can include those who need support of various kinds.

Paul used this word to speak of his own weakness in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. In those verses, we read, “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Paul said that at the very time he was weak in himself, the strength of the Lord was able to work most effectively.

As we said earlier, the word that is translated “sick” here means *to be weak, to be without strength, to be powerless or to be sick*. We see what a person is to do when he is sick or weak. James said that when a brother is weak or sick, he is to call for the elders of the church and let them pray for him. Some Christians have only looked at these verses when physical sickness is involved. However, we see that the word is used many times to speak about spiritual weakness as well. We need to also encourage our children to ask the leaders of the church for special prayer when they are going through times of spiritual weakness, just as Paul did. Through such a ministry, the elders will strengthen, encourage and comfort our children in their times of spiritual or physical weakness.

We also see that the Lord will respond to the prayer of faith. Since the elders are to be asked to pray, they are the ones who are to pray in faith. In addition to talking about salvation, this word can also talk about restoring one to physical or spiritual health, preserving a person in danger of destruction, or saving a person suffering from disease. Whether it is physical sickness or spiritual weakness, we see that the Lord says He will work in the life of the afflicted person as a result of the prayer of faith.

There are times when a person is experiencing physical sickness or spiritual weakness as a result of sin. In such a case, James 5:16 says, “Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” The word that is translated “trespasses” is the same word that is used in what is often called the

Lord's Prayer, in Matthew 6:9-15. It is also the word that is used in Ephesians 1:7, where we read, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." In this verse, we see that the word is translated by the word "sins".

Many times, a Christian can have a struggle with a particular sin even though he or she is a Christian. In such a situation, this verse says they are to ask the elders, or even another Christian, to pray that the Lord will give them victory over that sin. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says, "Two *are* better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, for *he has* no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm *alone*? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken." When a Christian, who is struggling with a particular sin, is open and honest, and shares that struggle with one or two others, the others are able to pray for the person who is struggling. This can be a real ministry for our children to others also.

The Lord reminds us that He will answer when a Christian shares a struggle over a particular sin, with one or two others in openness and honesty, and they pray for the person who is struggling. Galatians 6:1 also tells us about the attitude that those who pray should have. That verse says, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." Here, we see that the person or persons who are praying are to have the restoration of the brother or sister who is struggling as their goal. They are to show gentleness. They are to realize that they will open themselves to temptation if they do not have these attitudes. We want to help our children realize that they can have a great ministry helping others if they will pray for others with the right heart attitudes.

We see that the key in prayer is that the person or people who are praying are righteous. The word that is translated "righteous" means *one that is approved or acceptable to God*. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Then, 1 John 3:7 says, "Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous." The Lord placed His righteousness on us at the moment of salvation. As our children learn to be obedient to the Lord, they are practicing righteousness. Here, in James, we see that one of the ministries God will give those who are walking in obedience is the opportunity to pray for Christians who are struggling.

God promises that the prayer of a righteous person will accomplish much. The word that is translated "effective" or "fervent" means *to work effectively*. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure." Our children will see the Lord work mightily through their lives, to help others, as they walk in obedience to Him and pray for others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to have a very effective ministry as they pray for others.