

Never Give Up Praying For Your Loved One's Salvation

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I want to share about how the Lord answered our prayer for our oldest son. Many of you've heard this with James, my oldest son.

My oldest son, he was a model child until he turned 17. We thought he was a true Christian. He had made a profession of faith when he was young. He was a very obedient child, a very good child. He was the kind of boy that if we had any visiting preacher or evangelist come over, he would wash their car and try to serve them every way he could. We thought he was the real deal. But when 17 came, it was like all hell broke loose and he decided he wanted the world. And it became quickly manifest to us that he had just been pretending, playing at this business.

There may be some of you that have been doing the same thing. You've just been pretending. Oh, we can be real good pretenders. We can play at this thing and really fool even the closest people to us. It became manifest in James' rebellion. He began more and more his rebellion and disobedience and stubbornness was growing in manifestation.

And our hearts were breaking. It came to the place where we finally had to say, "James, if you're going to not live by our rules and do what we say and submit yourself to our authority, you're going to have to move out." He said, "I'm moving out." It was a heartbreaking thing, but sometimes you've got to let go of folks. You've got to let go of your own family. In fact, God was teaching you let go of people.

We let him go. He moved out. Things went from bad to worse in his life. I mean, he plummeted the depths, folks. He went off into a life of sin and rebellion. Drinking. Went through a bad marriage early. All of this totally contrary, and our hearts were breaking. And we were thinking at the time, and many parents are tempted to think when you've got a son or a daughter that's out in rebellion, what have I done wrong? Where did I mess up? What kind of inconsistency was there that may have triggered this? So we had all this burden of thinking, not only the burden of our son being out in sin, but the burden of thinking, well, we haven't done things right because we saw other families that their children were walking in obedience and good and faithful and loving God. It was so heartbreaking to us that our oldest son, whom we had so much expectation and hope that he was going in the right direction. He proved to be just an absolute rebel.

My wife and I, I can't tell you how many hours that we spent for several years praying for him. Praying, fasting. My wife would spend whole nights up while James was off in Tennessee working on pipeline, living like hell. She would be so burdened and moved upon because of particular dangers that James was in at the time. She would be praying for his deliverance and that the Lord would protect him and watch over him and save him and bring him home. This rocked on for several years. He was in mid-Tennessee. This was about '96.

One Sunday evening, I was sitting in the living room, and I told Mae, I said, "Mae, I'm going to go out on the front porch and pray once more for James." I can remember it so well. I

walked out on the front porch and I got on the right side of the porch where I could see the heavens, and I got down on my knees before God, and I said, "Father, God, You are Lord over all, and You do as You please and no man can command You or tell You what to do. Lord, if You kill my own son and put him in hell tonight, You would be just in doing so. You have that right, but Lord, if You would, would You save him? You could save him. Would You save him?" And the Lord spoke to my heart as clear as I've ever heard anything. "I've heard your prayer."

I came back in. I said, "Mama, God's going to save James." You remember it, Mae? You remember it? God's going to save James. I don't know when and I don't know how. But the Lord's going to work.

The next day at noon, the phone rang. At noon. We were both home, in the living room. Guess who was on the other end of the line? James. "Daddy, would you pray for me? I've got to get right with God." The next day! "I've got to get right with God. Would you pray for me? I went out today and bought me a Bible. And I've started reading it. My life's falling apart. I need the Lord. Would you pray for me?" I said, "Sure, James. I'll pray for you." He called me back the next day. He said, "Daddy, the Lord hasn't saved me, but I'm reading the Scriptures." And he had met a girl over in Tennessee which invited him to a charismatic-type church, and he went to church. In fact, he'd gone to church that particular past Sunday. When the Lord started putting him under conviction, he told her, he said, "I don't need this hooping and hollering, I need to go to a church where somebody will tell me something I need to hear."

See, he had been raised under the preaching of the truth and he could discern the difference between what was being preached in this other group. I said, "James, surely there's some place over there that preaches the Gospel; some place over there that you can hear the truth." He said, "Yeah, that's what I told Shelly." He said, "We've got to find a church that preaches something." Sad thing, again, it's a burden.

So, he said, "would you have the people, Wednesday night, would you have a special prayer meeting for me that the Lord would save me? I want you to ask the people in the church to pray for me." I said, "Sure, James, we'll pray for you. You just keep reading your Bible and seeking the Lord." Because we both knew that this thing of being saved was not just saying a little prayer and it was not going through an A-B-C solution, that God had to save you; that God had to do a work in your life and change you. He'd gone through the little routine and knew that that didn't work, as it were. He had to have God save him. He said, "Pray for me."

That Wednesday night in our prayer meeting our flock had gathered. Here's what's so unusual, that day, we were in a study - something pertaining to Christian life and Christian living. That particular day, the Lord moved upon me and gave me a message from 1 John 1:8-9 and I couldn't understand why. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And the Lord just put upon me heavily a message on the forgiveness of sins, and how that if we'd be honest and faithful to confess our sins, God was faithful to His Word and would cleanse us regardless of what our sins were, regardless of how deeply wicked they were, He'd just cleanse us for the sake of His Son, the Lord Jesus. And I had that and I said I don't know why... but I'm going to preach it because that was what was on my heart.

Well, I had just finished telling the people that Wednesday afternoon, "Folks, James called and is under conviction. The Lord's dealing with him. And he wanted you to pray for him.

Praise the Lord!" And they said, "James?" People said, "James?" "You've got to be kidding! James?" "Wants us to pray for him?" I said yeah, James. And I just no sooner shared the fact that he was under conviction and that he was trying to find a church. I was still standing there. We had had prayer. And in the front door walked James. He had driven 6 or 7 hours straight to be in church with us that Wednesday night. He came in the church. He had long hair. Looked rough. Had been living a rough life. He came in and sat down by his mama and put his arm around her. My heart just swelled with praise. It expanded with worship. My heart was overjoyed. I couldn't hardly talk.

But I poured out the message that God had given me on the forgiveness of sins. Just a simple message. How God could forgive the deepest and darkest and ugliest of sins because He loved us so much that He offered His own Son in our place. And He was so pleased with the sacrifice and the suffering of His own dear Son that He could cleanse any sinner who would be honest and would come and lay his life before Him. And James just looked and I'll never forget the look on his face. He was like a starving man wanting a piece of bread. He was like a thirsty man wanting a drink with all desperation. He just drank in every word. When the message was over, he got up and began to hug everyone in the church and say, "pray for me." "Pray for me." He kept me up that night to the wee hours of the morning wanting to talk about how you could know if you were forgiven, how you could know if you're saved. He wore me out. I was just exhausted. I was so tired.

We finally went to bed. We got up the next morning, he had to go back to Tennessee - it was a job-related thing. And he said the Lord hadn't saved him. We had prayer and he said, "Dad, keep on praying for me." I said, "I will." He said, "I'll keep on seeking the Lord." A few hours later, he called me. He said, "Daddy, somewhere around Memphis, Tennessee, the Lord saved me." And he said when the Lord came into his life and saved him and gave him peace and forgiveness, he had a stack of CD's on his dash - worldly, wicked, rock & roll, hellish, rebellious music. He grabbed that whole stack and flung it out the window. Now that's not what saved him, folks. That's what he did because God saved him.

The real proof in the pudding was a few months later, we had opportunity and time to go over and visit with him in Tennessee. He wasn't the same James. He was nothing like he had been before. Old things have passed away. All things have become new. The life of God shown in his soul. The countenance of peace was in his brow. The joy of the Lord was in his heart. The high praises of God were upon his lips. Mama and Daddy, don't ever tire of praying for your children. The last chapter's not written yet. Keep calling. Keep hoping. Keep pleading. One day, you may have the fortune to hear the word, "I've heard your prayer."

Praise God. I praise God for you people. I praise God for you, Bob and Clint. I thank the Lord for knowing you. We may never meet again. This may be my last time at Sedalia. I may go home and fall over from a heart attack, or you may too. We've got a great day coming. We'll be together again. Let me recommend to you if you're not a Christian, get in on this. Don't miss this. Don't miss this great joy. Salvation can be yours today too. Believe it. You can be forgiven this very day. You can leave this house today a new creature in Christ Jesus. Bow your heart before Him. Give yourself up to Him. Ask Him for what you need most. See what He'll do. Let's pray.