

## **Struggle with Me** **Sharon W. Betters**

### **Today's Treasure**

*I URGE you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my STRUGGLE by praying to God for me.*  
*Romans 15:30*

“PLEASE, PLEASE DON'T STOP PRAYING. I DON'T KNOW HOW IT WORKS BUT I KNOW IT'S THE ONLY REASON I CAN FACE THE NEXT MINUTE.”

My friend could barely speak through her tears. Her circumstances reminded me life turns on a dime, to use a familiar cliché. And when it does, we know what was normal one minute ago will never be normal again. In the days following her traumatic news, my friend and I often talked about the mystery of prayer. Her anguished cries resonated with my own journey and experience with the supernatural power of prayer in the days after the death of our son, Mark. We wondered at the ability to do something as mundane as sleep, when the ghost of grief stalked us every waking minute. Comments of faithful friends solved the puzzle. They were sleepless and praying for us through the night.

My broken-hearted friend confided when sleep eluded her early in the morning, she thought it might be because her prayer warriors were sleeping. In every conversation, she wondered at her ability to face each moment of the day and said the only answer could be that God's people were obeying His mandate to pray for her family.

Prayer is a channel of God's compassion. We don't understand how but we know it's true. James 5:16... *The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

### **LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT**

Prayer is a privilege that takes us into the sacred place of another person's anguish. The Apostle Paul conveyed the power of prayer in Romans 15:30. Notice the urgency and passion of his plea:

*I URGE you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my STRUGGLE by praying to God for me.*

The root word for “struggle” is sunagonizomai, which means to struggle in the company of; i.e. to be a partner (assistant), to strive together with. Its root word, agonizomai, means “to endeavor to accomplish something: fight, labor, fervently, strive,” for example, to compete for a prize or to contend with an adversary. Paul considered intercessory prayer an opportunity to battle the forces that threaten the honor of Christ. His choice of words made clear that any who accepted his invitation to pray were agreeing to hard work and were actually present with him in his journey. Notice the word agonize in this root word. When you say, “I’ll pray for you,” are you agreeing to agonize for that person’s needs? Are you saying you are willing to become a partner in his or her circumstances? Perhaps the reason we don’t pray as we should is because real prayer takes us to the front lines of the spiritual war zone. Prayer mysteriously connects us to one another emotionally and makes us participants in the soul work God is doing. It gives us a means to express our deep love for one another. Paul often reminded the early church that although he was not physically present, he was supernaturally connected to them through prayer. (Adapted from Treasures of Encouragement, pages 148-149)

I wonder if like my friend, tears and sobs accompanied Paul’s pleas. Instead of feeling helpless in the face of great anguish, prayer enables me to help carry my friend’s deep sorrow as I run to Jesus, collapse at His feet and trust Him to give my friend the treasures He has designed to help turn her heart toward Him.

The next time a friend pleads, “Pray for me” know God is offering you a priceless opportunity to be a treasure in the darkness that will help your friend remember that He is the Lord her God, the One Who calls her by name (Isaiah 45:2-3).

*Adapted from Treasures of Encouragement blog post 2016*