

Mother's Day 2019

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, May 12, 2019

Main Theme – Considering the elements of a godly mother-figure based upon an interesting text.

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Regular Events**
 - Women's Ministry – Taking Place Tuesday, May 14, from 6:30–8pm

- **Special Events**
 - Royalty's 1st Birthday Party – Open to All (Post-Service – Sunday, June 2)

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers. Two offerings will be collected this morning:

- 1) The 1st offering goes to support this local work and community outreach
- 2) The 2nd offering goes to support our regular missionaries (foreign/domestic)

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

WOMEN'S RETREAT TESTIMONIES

Last weekend a large number of our women went on a spiritual retreat (led by our own Ginger).
-I will open up the pulpit to any of the women who want to share a BRIEF testimony of the retreat.

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- **CHILDREN TO REMAIN IN SERVICE (MOTHER'S DAY)**
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INTRODUCTION

Allow me to WISH you all a Happy Mother's Day.

MOTHERS – today we CELEBRATE you. Whether you are a mother biologically, adoptively, spiritually or through the foster-care system, we pay TRIBUTE to you, your labor and your ongoing influence. We say THANK YOU and we HONOR you as unique creations that reveal the genius of the Lord. May He bless you on this Mother's Day!

NOTE – Year-in and year-out I have the PRIVILEGE of sharing the Mother's Day message from this pulpit—a privilege I am now experiencing for the TENTH time. This honor is AMPLIFIED by the presence of my mother and—for the first time—my wife (incredible foster mother). Your motherly examples astound me and give me a particular insight into the heart of God. For that and more I am GRATEFUL.

TO THE WORD PT. 1

This morning I want to open with a portion of Scripture that will seem somewhat UNRELATED to the theme of Mother's Day. Yet, if you stay with me, I believe the Lord has much to say and affirm in our hearts. Please turn to the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Romans.

NOTE – The Book of Romans is an INCREDIBLE work, penned by the apostle Paul to the Christians in Rome (c. A.D. 56). The first 11 chapters are THEOLOGICAL in nature, as Paul articulates spiritual realities central to our faith. Chapters 12–15 are more PRACTICAL in nature, as Paul brings previously-shared spiritual principles to bear on daily life and living. The FINAL chapter—chapter 16—contains little more than a series of personal greetings (containing foreign/hard-to-pronounce names and locations).

KEY – Yet it is from this section I want to read. Let's consider ROMANS 16:1–16

TO THE WORD PT. 2

Romans 16:1–16 (NIV)

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. 2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. 4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

5 Greet also the church that meets at their house.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

6 Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

8 Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.

9 Greet Urbanus, our co-worker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.

10 Greet Apelles, whose fidelity to Christ has stood the test.

Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.

11 Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew.

Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.

12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord.

Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.

14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the other brothers and sisters with them.

15 Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas and all the Lord's people who are with them.

16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

NOTE – Now you may be saying to yourself: “WHY in the world is Pastor opening his Mother’s Day sermon with this text?” But what you may NOT realize is that buried within this portion of Scripture there is a small—yet significant—gem.

Romans 16:13 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, **who has been a mother to me**, too.

NOTE – When you think of the apostle Paul, it is easy to think of his spiritual insight, tireless ministry, pastoral heart, unwavering courage, and his many sufferings. You may think of spiritual giant unmatched by any figure in Church history. Yet, what we often FAIL to consider is that Paul was a man of rich interpersonal CONNECTIONS. i.e., A man who derived great benefit from meaningful human relationships. Yet this is precisely what chapter 16 indicates.

KEY – Paul, as great as he was, needed and benefited from many EARTHLY connections

KEY – Paul, as great as he was, celebrated a woman who had been like a MOTHER to him

Romans 16:13 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, **who has been a mother to me**, too.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

There is something MYSTERIOUS about this text. i.e., It raises more Q’s than it A’s...

Q. Exactly who was this woman?

Q. How did she ‘come to know’ Paul?

Q. How long had they been connected?

Q. What was this mother-figure’s name?

Q. In what WAY had she been “like a mother” to this preeminent apostle?

KEY – It is this final question that I am most curious about and want to touch upon (speculation)...

INSTRUCTION/WISDOM

Q. Had this woman offered Paul some needed INSTRUCTION or meaningful WISDOM?

NOTE – Please DON'T think that Paul had reached such a place of maturity that he couldn't benefit from the instruction and wisdom of an elder woman! Those who are TRULY wise are always open to insight and learning – regardless of the source.

KEY – And let's be HONEST – who better to learn from than from a mother (i.e., a mother figure).

ILL – Each year I come across some ARTICLE that addresses “Lessons I Learned from My Mother.” Let me share a SAMPLING of one that I recently encountered...

-My mother taught me about **RELIGION**
“You better pray that comes out of the carpet”

-My mother taught me about **TIME TRAVEL**
“Knock it off or I'll knock you into the middle of next week”

-My mother taught me about **LOGIC**
“Because I said so – that's why”

-My mother taught me about **IRONY**
“If you don't stop crying, I'll give you something to cry about”

-My mother taught me about the **CIRCLE OF LIFE**
“I brought you into this world and I can take you out of it”

-My mother taught me about **ANTICIPATION**
“You just wait until your father gets home”

NOTE – These lines HUMOROUSLY touch upon a timeless truth: we learn MUCH from our moms...

“One good mother is worth a hundred schoolmasters”
“An ounce of mother is worth more than a ton of priest”

KEY – This is why the Word CONTINUALLY calls us to heed our mother's teaching and instruction:

Proverbs 1:8–9

8 Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

9 They are a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Q. Had this unnamed woman offered Paul some much-needed ENCOURAGEMENT?

NOTE – Let’s be honest—the apostle Paul faced an INCREDIBLE amount of difficulty in the course of his life and ministry (enough that would cause most of us to quit/compromise). I WONDER how many times the apostle Paul felt hopeless and wrestled with a sense of despair.

Q. Is it possible that God used this woman to instill confidence hope in Paul (as every mom does)?

As one author wrote: “A mother is a woman who shows you the light when you just see the dark.”

Q. Did this woman FULFILL the following commands of Scripture in the life of Paul? DID SHE...

1 Thessalonians 5:11a, 14

11 . . . Encourage one another and build each other up . . . 14 encourage the disheartened, help the weak . . .

Hebrews 10:24b

24 . . . spur one another on toward love and good deeds . . .

Colossians 3:16

16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

Q. Was she a woman who REALIZED the truth of Proverbs 12:25?

Proverbs 12:25

25 Anxiety weighs down the heart,
but a kind word cheers it up.

ILL – I read this past week about the need for parents to develop a VOCABULARY of encouragement. i.e., Parents should be a people who employ phrases like: Go for it; Keep up the good work; Good job; I am so proud of you; Hang in there; Don’t give up; Keep going; Stay strong; You can do it; I believe in you; I’m behind you; etc.

Q. To what degree did this woman potentially SPEAK THUSLY to Paul (encouragement)?

INFLUENCE/EXAMPLE

Q. Had this unnamed woman positively INFLUENCED Paul in some way? GODLY EXAMPLE?

NOTE – Such information is lost to history, but let's be honest...

Q. Can we exaggerate the IMPACT and INFLUENCE of a godly mother? NO.

“All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother” -Abraham Lincoln

“The real religion of the world comes from women much more than from men - from mothers most of all, who carry the key of our souls in their bosoms” -Oliver Wendell Holmes

“Only God Himself fully appreciates the influence of a Christian mother in the molding of character in her children” -Billy Graham

KEY – Mothers, please do NOT downplay the influence you wield in the home/on your children...

ILL – The story is told that when Robert Ingersoll, the notorious skeptic, was in his heyday, two college students went to hear him lecture. As they walked down the street after the lecture, one said to the other, “Well, I guess he knocked the props out from under Christianity, didn't he?” The other said, “No, I don't think he did. Ingersoll did not explain my mother's life, and until he can explain my mother's life I will stand by my mother's God.”

NOTE – There is deep spiritual/scriptural PRECEDENT for what I am touching upon...

2 Timothy 1:3–5

3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

TENDER AFFECTION

Q. Had this woman demonstrated some loving AFFECTION/tender NURTURE to the apostle Paul? Did she extend to him a particular compassion/act of service that shone brilliantly against the backdrop of his dark torments and heavy burdens?

Q. Was it the making of a meal?

Q. Was it a letter lovingly penned?

Q. Was it the mending of a garment?

Q. Was it a wound gently treated/cared for?

KEY – A mother’s love/tenderness is BOUNDLESS and TRANSFORMATIVE. Though it is hard to capture with words, the following STORY—previously shared—does about as fine a job as possible. Consider the following...

ILL – William Gladstone, in announcing the death of Princess Alice to the House of Commons, told a touching story. The little daughter of the Princess was seriously ill with diphtheria. The doctors told the princess not to kiss her little daughter and endanger her life by breathing the child's breath. Once when the child was struggling to breathe, the mother, forgetting herself entirely, took the little one into her arms to keep her from choking to death. Rasping and struggling for her life, the child said, "Momma, kiss me!" Without thinking of herself the mother tenderly kissed her daughter. She got diphtheria and some days thereafter she went to be forever with the Lord. Real love forgets self. Real love knows no danger. Real love doesn't count the cost. The Bible says, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

NOTE – Mothers have the CAPACITY to vividly DEMONSTRATE the love of God. i.e., A love that is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional and beautiful. Jesus said the following in **John 15:13**: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends." Mothers demonstrate such love DAILY – and it is wondrous to behold!

ILL – A teacher asked a boy this question: "Suppose your mother baked a pie and there were seven of you--your parents and five children. What part of the pie would you get?" "A sixth," replied the boy. "I'm afraid you don't know your fractions," said the teacher. "Remember, there are seven of you." "Yes, teacher," said the boy, "but you don't know my mother. Mother would say she didn't want any pie."

MOTHERLY PRAYER

Q. Had this unnamed mother-figure labored in PRAYER for one who became her spiritual son?

NOTE – Paul OFTEN called upon the church to pray for him (even great apostles needed prayer):

Ephesians 6:18–20

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Colossians 4:2–4

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

NOTE – We have to WONDER if this spiritual mother took Paul's request to heart – prayed!

KEY – Mothers who pray make ALL the DIFFERENCE...

"No man is poor who has had a godly mother. I remember my mother's prayers and they have always followed me. They have clung to me all my life" -Abraham Lincoln

"I cannot tell how much I owe to the prayers of my good mother. I remember her once praying, "Now Lord, if my children go on in sin it will not be from ignorance that they perish, and my soul must bear swift witness against them at the day of judgment if they lay not hold on Christ and claim Him as their personal Savior" -Charles Spurgeon

James 5:16b

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

CONCLUSIONS PT. 1

- Q. Had this motherly-figure offered Paul some special instruction or wisdom?
- Q. Had this motherly-figure encouraged Paul in his life/outworking of ministry?
- Q. Had this woman provided Paul with some form of 'godly' influence/example?
- Q. Had this woman offered Paul some tender affection/met a 'deeply-felt' need?
- Q. Had this unnamed motherly-figure labored in prayer on behalf of the apostle?

A. We really do NOT know. Such answers are forever lost to time it would appear.

NOTE – However, we DO KNOW that Paul esteemed & honored this woman deeply:

Romans 16:13 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother, **who has been a mother to me**, too.

NOTE – HE WANTED HER TO KNOW SHE WAS LOVED AND CONSIDERED!

CONCLUSIONS PT. 2

KEY – And I also know that—all these centuries later—it is FITTING/RIGHT for us to honor our moms. i.e., It is RIGHT for us to communicate our love and our consideration to them. Thus, Whether you are a mother biologically, adoptively, spiritually or a foster mom, we HONOR you.

- We HONOR you for the instruction & the wisdom that you offer
- We HONOR you for the encouragement that you faithfully provide
- We HONOR you for your godly example and your ongoing influence
- We HONOR you for your nurture, tender affection & abounding love
- We HONOR you for the countless prayers you have offered/con. offer

KEY – We HONOR the Lord who created you and placed you into our lives

NOTE – As a small TOKEN of our affection we have a small gift for each woman here. The ushers will stand at the stairwells to distribute. We ask that you only take one until everyone has been served. If there are extras, we will allow you to take more.

Numbers 6:24–26

- 24 The Lord bless you
and keep you;
- 25 the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
- 26 the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.