

Mother



The morning of March 19th, 2012 I received news that my mum had only a matter of hours, perhaps days, to live. Despite a long illness it comes as a blow, and going down to my study I looked at her pictures and thought of how I loved and still love her. Many years ago, as a young teenager, I would sing to her “A Mother’s Love is a Blessing”, for no matter who else there is in the world, mother is someone special. Al Jolson and those who have heard him, could never forget their heart tugging as with that deep throated voice he sang: “I’d Walk a Million Miles For One Of Your Smiles, My Mammy”.

Mother is more than dad’s wife. From earliest days she is there, and no matter what happens or who despised us, mother’s love is constant. She cried over us, protected us, and was our first nourisher. Mum is special. Songs of long ago glorified mothers, whether it was that of a young soldier telling of his love for her, or “wanting a girl, just like the girl, that married dear old dad”.

It is not surprising that the scriptures record a great deal about mothers, for God has so ordained that mother has more affect on her children than dad. Indeed, one of the greatest preachers of all time, Dr. Graham Scroggie, had several boys. Once they were asked: “Who is the greatest teacher you have ever known?” Without exception, they all answered “My mother”. One has only to think of the impact that Jochebed had on her son Moses (Num. 26:59); Hannah on Samuel (1 Sam.1:24; 2:18), and mother and grandmother on Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5). They had their sons for a few years, but true values were taught, and divine lessons which the sons never forgot. Yet, this is where we often make one of the greatest mistakes of a lifetime, specializing in the non-important and neglecting the vital. The book of Daniel, in chapters one, three and five, bring to our attention very important dangers:

- 1) The danger of taking precious things and them becoming common. (Dan. 1:2; 6: 5:3-4)
- 2) The danger of taking common things and making them important. (Dan. 3:1-30)

The basic problem in Daniel’s day was the same as ours, “distorted” values. We live in a society of falsified values where the emotional life of a little child becomes secondary to the “rights” of an abuser; where the sacred gift of motherhood is common and of little value, and the gathering of “things” becomes the major point of life.

On the morning of October 21st 1966, the town of Aberfan in Wales was stunned when the sludge from a coal mine swept over a school and 116 little children who had just sung “All things bright and beautiful” in the assembly hall died. When the mothers first heard of it, they hastily went to that which was left of the school. Then, with husbands holding their wives, and tears running unashamedly down the faces of the strong coal miners, they were forced to accept the heart tearing grief that their little David, Mary or Jill had died. A wail of grief engulfed the many gathered as one little body after another was dug from the mountain of dirt. For so many of them, that little girl in her floral dress was their wee daughter. How deep was the lamentation when that mother went in to the child’s bedroom again and saw her PJ’s lying on the bed, and her belongings left exactly where she had placed them. Never again would the child run down the hall, never again would there come the old familiar cry “mommy”. That mother would never see her child grow up to go to high school, get married and have children. How dark was the future. Scalding tears flowed down many faces that day and night, and those following. What did it matter what things they had, what car they drove, or what part of the town they lived in? The most precious “possessions” were gone forever.

Over fifty years ago I sat in the Easter conference in Belfast where a brother spoke on Mothers. Even though I was only about 14, it made such an impression. I want to share it with you.

- 1) Samuel was a mother’s desire - he was a granted child. (1 Sam. 1:11-27)

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- 2) Moses was a mother's determination - he was a goodly child. (Ex. 2:2-4)
- 3) Timothy was a mother's delight - he was a goodly child. (2 Tim. 1:5)
- 4) Hannah prayed for her child before he was ever conceived and dedicated him to the Lord. (1 Sam. 1:27)
- 5) Jockabed nursed her son - she gave of herself to him. (Ex. 2:9)
- 6) Samson's parents asked the Lord for wisdom on how to bring up the child. (Jud. 13:8)

No matter how many children parents have, each is different and wisdom is needed for the rearing of each little one. Some years ago my daughter sat in our living room admiring her little baby. Calling her by name I said: "That little child will never die!" She looked at me and then I said: "In time the body may die, but the soul will live forever". That is a solemn truth for that little one will live forever in eternal light or eternal night, and mother had a major responsibility concerning its future.

In seeking their understanding from God and not man, Samson's parents knew how vital personal fellowship with the Lord was.

Lifting these to a higher level, Jockabed could only nourish the child by what she had been nourished herself. Spiritually, that which mother gives to her child is that which she has experienced herself. The mothers who never read the Bible will never be able to instruct their children in the ways of God.

The Mothers of Salem's children were brought to Christ. How wonderful to be able to show your child the way of salvation. How important it is for mothers to give a solid groundwork for the child's full understanding of the gospel. Many parents will be in heaven and children and grandchildren in hell because of the parent's failure to teach and live out spiritual principles. Edward, the father of Queen Victoria, was a believer, as was his daughter Victoria. From all the evidences, the present Queen's father was also a believer. How quickly things can change. The homes of our parents may have been godly, and even our own homes, but I cannot help but wonder: "What will the spiritual homes of my children and grandchildren be?" What a role mother has in this directing.

The faith and prayers of mothers can have a profound impact on the lives of their children. The scriptures urge us to be serious about training the children the Lord has given to us and to equip ourselves for the struggle by holding unflinchingly to the Word of God. Children are gifts from God, but they're born with sinful hearts. Like the mother of John 6, may the Lord help each mother to give their child something that God can use. It begins with prayer which follows the example of Samson's mother and father who asked God for help to know how to "order the child" (Jud. 13:12). This was before the child was ever born! The word "order" means to "have a right disposition toward the child" so that "the child will produce a favorable verdict" by God. This is not an absolute, for when the scriptures say: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6), this does not necessarily refer to spiritual upbringing alone. It indicates to observe the general bent of the child, that which they are inclined toward, ie; occupation or vocation, that which they have been naturally gifted. This is the parents duty to encourage them along that line. If a child is not trained in the way he should go, he will nevertheless be trained by the principles of the secular world, molded by his own selfish and undisciplined desires. This "training" will ingrain in him thought patterns and habits that will turn his desire away from the things of God. High on the list of biblical priorities for our children should be the reverential fear of God in their lives. May we delight in our children enough to train them up for God!

Let us never forget that a mother's work is mainly twofold:

- 1) The physical and emotional welfare for the child, which has to do with time.
- 2) The spiritual welfare of the child which has got to do with eternity.

Tragically, many a mother is anxious for the first but neglectful of the second, yet the second is by far the more vital.

*O give us homes built firm upon the Saviour,
Where Christ is head and counselor and guide;
Where every child is taught His love and favour,
And gives his heart to Christ, the Crucified.*

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Godly mothers not only bring their children up, they seek to bring them to God.

**On this special day, may we thank God for the mothers who have molded our hearts.
As we honor them, we fulfill the truth of Proverbs 31:28:**

“Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her”

. . . Rowan Jennings