

FAMILY

A Beautiful Tribute (Edith Dunwoody)

Edith Dunwoody was born in the Twin Groves community of rural Carl Junction on November 15, 1891. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Freeman who were Swedish immigrants to the U.S. She was a lifetime resident of this area and a member of the Christian Church here in Carl Junction. She was taken by God from this earth on August 18, 1981.

I was privileged to participate in her memorial service and spoke from Hebrews 11:4. This passage reveals that Abel, though he is dead, still speaks. The influence of his righteous life lives on. His memory has never been forgotten, even though our lives are separated by literally thousands of years. Since Abel experienced the world's first physical death it is impossible to find anyone who is more remote from our day or more separated from modern society. Yet, he still speaks.

It is also evident that Edith Dunwoody still speaks to us. Her picture is in our latest church directory acknowledging her many years of service as a teacher in our Bible School. Her influence

lives on in the lives of her students and in the memories of her friends and neighbors.

Our memories of her will be enhanced by a beautiful organ which was donated by her family to our church just this past Sunday. It is a brand new 1981 model that represents the "top of the line" in Hammond organs. It will bring melody to our hearts for many years to come.

I could not help but believe, however, that the greatest tribute to her role as a teacher and Christian worker is reflected not in the organ, but in the life of her son, Francis.

Since Francis and his family have lived out of our area for many years, I have only been casually acquainted with them. The more I discover, however, the more I appreciate the hand that rocked their cradle.

The gift of this beautiful organ is like the proverbial "tip of the iceberg." It only reflects a tiny fraction of the dedication and service which have helped to make this church what it is. Down through the years Francis has been an example of generosity and Christian love. When our church needed land he was there to provide the necessary funds. When interest was lagging in a building he was there to help and encourage. He is so convinced that giving brings blessings that he has challenged others to tithe with the promise that he will reimburse those who will try it for a year and who feel that it was not a wise investment. When he and his wife spoke of a memorial gift they were eager to invest in the best and literally radiated with happiness and joy when the organ was delivered. Such a son does not grow up by accident. With apologies to Edgar A. Guest permit me to change a few words and apply this beautiful poem to Edith Dunwoody and to her son, Francis, who is a living tribute to his mother.

He came in to me with a wide-spreading grin.

He stood as he talked and held up his chin.

His eyes looked into mine and polite was his speech.

His manners were those it takes patience to teach.

A BEAUTIFUL TRIBUTE

And I thought in the moments which together we had
I could envision in him both his mother and dad.
I said when he left and I say it again:
"That sort of a man takes devotion to train,
That man wasn't left to the strangers he'd meet
Or the dangers and problems of life in the street.
You could tell from his actions that man has had
The love of a marvelous Mother and Dad."
He went on his way but his tribute is paid
To his parents because of that visit that he made.
From the shine of his shoes to the part in his hair
It was certain that man had been cherished with care.
Thus to sum it all up; what a marvelous ad
A person can be for his Mother and Dad.

The Disappointment

(Will Rogers)

Every father has certain expectations of his son. The following story details the life of one son who was a tragic disappointment to his father. We recount the painful details of this disappointment with the hope that something good can be learned from the experience.

Because the father had means, he placed a premium upon education and did everything within his power to provide his son with the best.

He enrolled him at the Droomgule School . . . but he quit.

He enrolled him at the Harrell Institute. This was a religiously affiliated Seminary. He soon came home because of illness and never returned.

He enrolled him at the Cherokee Seminary . . . the Halsell College, the Scarrett Collegiate Institute, and the Kemper Military Academy. In each instance the boy either ran away or was expelled from each of these institutions.

He was described as "careless and untidy". . . "spoiled and impetuous". . . "lazy and miserable in academics."

The youngster began to drift around the country, periodically returning home penniless and destitute for help from his father.

Once after squandering an unusually large sum of money he wrote to his father:

All that worries me is people there all say, "Oh, he is no account, he blows all his father's money." And all that kind of stuff, which is not so. I am more than willing to admit that you have done everything in the world for me and tried to make something more than I am out of me (which is not your fault) but as to your financial dealings, I think I paid you all up and everyone else.

I only write these things so we may understand each other. I cannot help it because my nature is not like other people, and I

THE DISAPPOINTMENT

don't want you all to think I am not good because I don't keep my money . . . I have always dealt honestly with everyone and think the world of all of you and all the folks, and will be among you all soon as happy as anyone in the world, as then I can work and show people that I am only spending what I make. . . ."

The boy arrived home on a freight train and was so broke that his friends kidded him about "wearing overalls for underpants." His father felt sorry for him and gave him a job . . . soon, however, he was back into his old habits of having a preoccupation with parties and entertainment.

The father's fears for his son intensified when the boy began hanging around professional actors and sought out a career in the entertainment world.

The boy lived to regret his disappointments and once told his wife that there "wasn't a day in his life he didn't regret not taking advantage of his educational opportunities."

This boy, however, never met a man he didn't like, and certainly his father was a man whom he loved very much.

It is to be hoped that this story of Will Rogers, who was such a disappointment to his father, will provide some guidance and hope to the rest of us who have similar disappointments.

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Honor Thy Father (Eli)

“Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Eph. 6:1-3).

The Ten Commandments are listed in two places: Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. They were of particular interest to the Nation of Israel for they constituted their “covenant” with God. They are also of great interest to us for the things written aforetime were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). Those who do not study history are doomed to repeat it.

The reason why the covenant was repeated twice is quite simple. It was given the first time to a generation which disobeyed God and perished in the wilderness. Forty years later a new generation had arisen and the commandments had to be repeated. The word “Deuteronomy” literally means “second law.”

The divine requirement to honor parents is distinguished by being the first commandment with promise. If the Hebrews would honor their parents, their days would be prolonged and it would go well with them in the land which the Lord was giving to them (Deut. 5:16). In other words, a failure to honor parents would multiply their internal problems and reduce the longevity of the nation.

A nation which does not honor parents is just one generation from disaster. Someday those rebellious and inconsiderate juveniles will be holding the reins of government. If they have never learned to take orders, it is doubtful that they will be wise enough to give them. If they have been derelict in family responsibilities, what reason do we have to believe that they will be responsible in the affairs of the Nation?

This truth is aptly illustrated in the national disaster that came upon Israel during the days of Eli, the priest. Our limited space

HONOR THY FATHER

will only permit a brief overview, but perhaps it will be sufficient.

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord (I Sam. 2:12).

Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord (I Sam. 2:17).

Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation (I Sam. 2:22).

And the Lord said . . . I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, AND HE RESTRAINED THEM NOT. . . . (I Sam. 3:11-13).

Note that Eli was responsible for the outrageous conduct of his sons. "He restrained them not!" As the twig is bent so the tree will grow and little children must be taught early to respect authority. The child who had no respect for his parents will likely not know how to command respect from his own children. The magnitude of the problem will, therefore, increase with each new generation. If the vicious cycle is to be broken, it will be done so by fathers who learn to restrain their children and demand their honor.

In the historical setting mentioned above, this came about through the influence of a father named Jesse. His son David was a man after God's own heart. David was obedient to his father and, therefore, found it natural to respect national authority. Though Saul was demented and irrational, David refused to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed. The success of David as a king was a tribute to his family.

The national prosperity of Israel was directly related to honoring his parents — SO IS OURS!

Letter To Dad

Susan Scott, one of our teenagers, wrote the following letter to her father while on a mission trip in the poorest country in this part of the world:

Dear, Dad

It's coming up on Father's Day pretty quick so I thought I'd write a letter to tell you thanks. Here in Haiti, time is very unstable . . . sometimes slow . . . sometimes fast. You never know what to expect. As one of my peers said, "Haiti is very spontaneous." That is very true. So I thought "what better time than now to write to Dad." I was going to draw you a palm tree, too, but my artistic talents aren't up to such heights.

Right now, our whole group of 32 people are living in a six-room house, not counting the one bathroom and kitchen. We have electricity and running water, which we can't drink unless we want to get the Haitian two-step. Also, we have Rick the rat, Rhonda his girlfriend, a back porch full of Wolfe spiders and enough lizards to fill the state of Missouri full to brimming. Needless to say, I miss home.

Right now, I'm sleeping on the hard Haitian tile floor because I loaned my mat to a friend with a back problem. The water we're allowed to drink tastes like Clorox. The food is simple, stuff like oatmeal, rice, beans, peanut butter sandwiches, tuna salad, etc. . . . there is never enough to satisfy all our hunger. Last night we had something called Soup Goup which tastes a lot like its name. Needless to say, I miss home.

Right now, I need to take a shower. We have two outside running facets but they're occupied by my friends doing their laundry by hand. Yesterday we had no water at all because a dump truck ran over our line while delivering dirt for our driveway. It took all day to fix and all night wait till the Haitians decided to turn the water back on. The bathroom is open right now, which is unusual, but I have no strength to spare, except in pushing this pen. My hand is shaking because my muscles are so overworked. Needless to say, I miss home.

Right now, I'm sitting on a low wall over-looking the patio. It's

LETTER TO DAD

one of the best seats in the house because we have no furniture or tables, unless you consider a sleeping bag furniture. We always are constantly cleaning house and doing laundry because Haiti is dirty and dusty, sweaty and hot. The children outside playing are noisy and distracting. There is a little Haitian black boy talking with my friend. The little boy is using a "beakin," a Haitian word for cane, to stand with. He comes to watch the "blanc," another Haitian word meaning white person, play and work. He has nothing better to do just like thousands of others here. Needless to say, I miss home.

Dad, we've got it good here in Haiti. We've got food, good water, a sturdy roof, and solid floor. We've got a song in our heart and the hope of going home soon. I guess what I'm trying to say, Dad, is thanks for home. You've fought for your country, for your family. You've endured many hardships to become the man you are and to provide for us, your family. Thanks, Dad, once again.

I love you,
Susie

Joash Remembered Not!

(A meditation for Father's Day)

(Joash)

“Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son” (II Chron. 24:22).

Joash, the King of Judah, was the son of Ahaziah. When Ahaziah was killed because of his sin, his mother, Athaliah (the daughter of Jezebel), decided to kill all the children in the royal family so that she could reign as queen.

She was successful in killing all of her grandchildren but one . . . that was Joash. He was rescued from death by his aunt Jehosheba who was the wife of Jehoiada the priest (II Chron. 22:11).

For seven years the priest and his wife risked their lives to hide little Joash from his murderess grandmother. At last Jehoiada, the priest, strengthened himself with the courage to make the seven-year-old Joash the king (see II Chron. 23).

The coup was successful, Joash became the king of Judah, and the wicked Athaliah was slain. All of this was a tribute, not to Joash, but to the courageous Jehoiada and his family.

Because Joash had been orphaned, Jehoiada had become his father. The wise priest directed virtually every aspect of his foster son's life. He saved him from death, installed him as king, broke down the altars of Baal, provided him with wives, directed him in repairing the house of the Lord, and spearheaded religious reform which brought peace and harmony to the kingdom.

Then Jehoiada waxed old and died. Since he was 130 years old at the time of his death he must have been approaching 100 when he dared to take on the rigors and responsibilities of being a foster parent. (The reign of Joash lasted forty years.)

After the death of Jehoiada an incredible thing came to pass.

Joash forgot all of the training which Jehoiada had given him. The people left the house of God and served groves and idols . . . and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this trespass (II Chron. 24:18).

A series of prophets were sent by God to call Joash to repentance. Notable among these prophets was Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, and thus a foster brother to Joash himself.

Zechariah stood above the people and said, “. . . Why transgress you the commandments of the Lord. . . ?” (II Chron. 24:20).

Instead of repenting, the King commanded Zechariah to be stoned. “Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. . . .”

As Zechariah lay dying he asked for God to observe what was going on and bring Joash to account. God honored this request and Joash was murdered by his own servants (v. 25).

I must, however, return to the shocking reality that Joash “remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him. . . .” As ridiculous as it may sound he actually thought that he was a “self-made man.” He reflected upon his own accomplishments, his own plans, his own dreams, and must have even come to consider the kingdom as his own.

In reality, the only real wisdom, strength, and stability in his life had come from others . . . and from his father, Jehoiada in particular.

The more I think about it, the more I think there may be a little of Joash in all of us. The human infant is the most helpless creature in all the earth. For the first seven years in all of our lives we are totally incapable of surviving by ourselves. Then in our years of adolescence and maturity we still continue to ride on the wake of those who have gone before. Virtually every aspect of our adult lives rests upon foundations which were provided by the labors of our fathers.

May God help us to put to death whatever amount of Joash

PERSONAL VIGNETTES

we may have in our hearts and to remember our fathers with deep gratitude and appreciation.

Luxurious Livin' (Zola Mae Mouton)

Growing up in the post depression days of the late thirties brought a certain measure of austerity into our little family. We canned our own food, made our own soap, butchered our own meat and somehow survived. My mother did our washing on a scrub board and carefully patched our ragged clothing which a future generation would have casually discarded. Just around the corner lay the rigors and hardships of rationing and war with all of its tears and tribulation. But somehow, in retrospect, those days were much better for little children than our own. Juvenile crime was low, teenage suicide was unheard of, and a boy who lost his marbles went to the dime store instead of the psychiatrist.

By contrast with modern infants I was living in the lap of luxury. I was blessed with a mother whose main ambition in life was to raise her family. At that juncture I had no interest in shiny new cars and plush carpet, I wanted my mother. I needed her more than I needed a baby sitter or a nursery school. I profited more from her presence than from a hundred new toys or a thousand suits of expensive clothing. I never knew the loneliness of coming home to an empty house or the sadness of finding her bed vacant in the middle of the night. I didn't know what it was to be embarrassed because my mother was divorced and my new daddy had a different name.

My heart bleeds for the millions of our modern children who have never tasted home made bread or smelled the aroma of a mother's hot rolls on the evening breeze. The real luxuries of life are not to be found in mass produced items which are stamped out by some machine or produced on the assembly line . . . the real luxuries are in the hand made specialty items . . . the unique efforts of the craftsman which produce the "custom" job especially suited to our personality and needs. So, I was raised in luxury. My meals were prepared by my own personal connoisseur of

gourmet delights. I was diapered and handled by my own personal doctor and diagnostician. I was the recipient of perpetual maid service, my own tailor altered and repaired my clothing, and my own tutor read me stories at bed time. When I went someplace I was accompanied by my own personal chauffeur and body guard. When I was lonely or afraid I would cling to the apron strings of my own special companion and counsellor. The fact that all of these important functions were performed by only one mother does not diminish from their significance. It gave to me a measure of confidence and security which I could have known in no other way.

Certainly it is not wise or practical to turn back the clock or to endeavor to live in the auld lang syne. It would be folly to destroy our technology while millions are starving without a crust of bread or a bowl of rice . . . but it is also folly to sacrifice our children upon the pagan altars of progress. It is insane to place more value upon an automobile or a piece of new furniture than upon the eternal welfare of our own offspring. It is a crime against God, our society, our children, and ourselves to abandon our homes to the ravages of materialism.

Socrates said it like this: "Could I climb to the highest place in Athens, I would lift my voice and proclaim: 'Fellow citizens why do ye turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth and take so little care of your children, to whom one day you must relinquish all?'"

The problem faced by Socrates lingers yet to plague our modern world. It has filled our juvenile courts and crowded the waiting rooms of the psychiatrists and psychologists. It is the cancer which eats away at the church of tomorrow and the arthritic pain which has crippled the church of today.

When mothers recognize this need and return to their God given station in the home — then little children will once again know what "LUXURIOUS LIVIN" is all about.

Honor Thy Father (Henry Boyce Mouton)

In some respects, I must confess, it is indeed a woman's world. For more than thirty years I have been conducting wedding ceremonies and it seems that seldom, if ever, has anyone been interested in what the groom wore. A father may spend most of a million hours training his son to play football, but when the young man's moment finally comes to say his first words on television after scoring the winning touchdown, he will smile into the camera, wave his hand, and say, "Hi Mom!"

I, too, have fallen into this habit pattern of thinking. As a matter of fact this is the first article I have ever written especially intended to give honor to my earthly father.

My father always worked hard, paid the bills, put food on the table, and in every other way provided those necessities which we are prone to take for granted.

When he and my mother were married, a part of their commitment to each other was the understanding that he would care for his widowed mother. This he did until the time of her death.

When I was privileged to make the all-star team in baseball it was a tribute to the patience of my father who practiced with me by the hour.

Once he was assessed a few cents' penalty for a late payment on a utility bill. He promptly gathered up his records and after the confrontation was over he had convinced them that the error was theirs and not his. Not once had he ever been late on a payment or a bill.

Out of my vast treasure chest of memories, however, is the overshadowing realization that my father is now known, and undoubtedly shall always be remembered as a hunter. The priority which he assigned to this borders on fanaticism.

I received my first shotgun when I was eight years old. Under his expert guidance I learned a great deal about safety and even

attained a measure of marksmanship. Together we spent many happy hours hunting and fishing. Each outing, however, possessed a businesslike intensity. My father was not a casual hunter.

I remember one morning when he had taken me out of school to hunt quail out of state. We were up before dawn to scrape the ice off the windshield and jump-start the car. An untimely snow was on the ground. No cold or discomfort, however, was allowed to keep us from bagging our limit . . . which we did.

I remember another occasion when we traveled 800 miles to Western Colorado to fish for trout.

I just spoke with my father by phone. He is 82 years old, but had just come in from hunting deer. His excellent physical health is a tribute to the many miles he has walked in pursuit of game.

The intensity and dedication of purpose which I have observed in my father is now hopefully a part of my own life.

Jesus once called Peter and his partners to become fishers of men. The excitement and satisfaction of the sportsman is similar to the radiant joy of those who are winners of souls. There is, however, no thrill to compare with that search for souls that leads men to make their peace with an Eternal God.

I do not consider myself to be very capable at those things to which I have devoted my life. Every article I write, every message I deliver, every call that I make, every task I begin fills me with the gut-level feeling that there are others who could do the job much better than I.

I do feel, however, that I have an intensity and determination which enables me to carry through to completion in spite of my lack of credentials.

It dawns on me now that this has been a part of my training. In this regard I shall forever be grateful that God permitted me to have Henry Boyce Mouton as my father.

Happy Anniversary

(A Tribute To Henry Boyce and Zola Mae Mouton
On Their Golden Wedding Anniversary
September 14, 1982)

After more than 25 years as a minister and marriage counselor I have a perspective about marriage which deepens my appreciation for my parents on this happy occasion. Surely by modern standards there must have been many times in the last half century when either one or both of them could have felt justified in tossing in the towel and calling it quits. I shall forever be grateful that they did not.

The nearly 15 years that my aged grandmother lived with us must have been particularly trying. I presume that there never is an ideal time to have two cooks in the kitchen, but especially so when the family is big and the house is small . . . and when the bills are high and the funds are low. In times like these when other families came unglued or raveled at the seams we somehow survived as one. Whatever hardships and privations may have been associated with those early days seem only to have forged something into our characters which has been beneficial beyond our ability to adequately analyze or appreciate. Somehow a visit to my Grandmother's grave seems only to promote and perpetuate our family's love and unity. It provides us with a treasure of memories that are past . . . and joyful expectations of reunion yet to come.

A love story is never quite the same to those who are backstage. Behind the curtains there is a practical mindset which the dreamy audience may find difficult to understand. No attempt has been to adorn or beautify those things which are only backstage. They are unvarnished and practical and valued only for their ability to function. The young romantics may be totally disillusioned if they were permitted to see the ugly ropes and pulleys which make the beautiful love story possible. But it is im-

possible to have the one without the other. For every hour of romance seen by the admiring public there are many hours "behind the scenes" which make it possible.

From my backstage vantage point I have been privileged to gain an insight into what makes a marriage really work. It is not some veiled mystique or profound mystery, it is rather a great deal of hard work and sacrifice. It is the dogged determination that the show must go on regardless of how you feel and regardless of the unexpected obstacles which have just occurred. This sublimation of selfish ego is not only at the heart and core of a successful marriage but is the very genius of Christianity itself.

Because my parents thought more of their marriage than they did of themselves, they have bequeathed to me a rich heritage indeed. The problems of life are greatly simplified for someone with only a single set of parents. Life is complicated enough without additional controversy about custody and child support. I never had the hassle of having to determine who I would live with or where I would spend the summer. Every Christmas and every holiday was made that much more delightful by the absolute assurance that we would all be together.

Such a life has meant so much to me that I am determined to pass it on to my children. Perhaps I can give to my parents no greater gift on this their Golden Wedding Anniversary than to renew my own wedding vows and to pledge again my utter determination to be faithful to my wife until death do us part.

Surely there will be times when stress and strain will wear away the aura of romance kindled by the moonlight and kissed by the fragrance of Springtime and flowers. There may be moments of frustration when anger and impatience threaten to erode away the foundation of love and trust which was laid at the marriage altar so many years ago. In times like these I will try to emulate the example of my parents and remember that the "show must go on." We are on stage before a great cloud of witnesses. Not only are our lives the major object of interest before the inquiring eyes of angels and redeemed men, but our performance is also

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

scrutinized by a host of our fellow travelers on this brief pilgrimage to eternity.

Someday, if the Lord should tarry, perhaps my wife and I can celebrate our Golden Wedding Anniversary and pass on to our children the same rich heritage which we have received from Henry and Zola Mouton.

CONGRATULATIONS MOM AND DAD!

Your son,
Boyce

A Tribute To Robert William McCaslin By His Brother

Today is February 9, 1985, the day of my brother's funeral.

It was thirty-four years ago tomorrow that my Grandmother Mouton passed away. She was the first person in my family that I remember dying. Her funeral was the first I had ever attended.

In many respects I am a very forgetful person — yet, throughout the years the memories of my Grandmother continue to stand before me with remarkable clarity. I can even remember the name of the soloist and also both songs which she sang. To this very day I never hear either of those songs without thinking of my Grandmother. I even remember the name of the man who dug her grave.

I mention this to underscore the power and importance of memories. If we should live to be 100 we will never escape from our memories of Bill nor from the influence of his life upon our own.

Bill was born in abject poverty on October 7, 1927 in Covington, Oklahoma. He was even living in a tent at the time his father was killed in an oil field explosion and fire.

Because he was born with a twisted foot he learned to crawl with the heavy burden of a cast upon his leg. No doubt these early years helped to forge in him that rugged constitution which enabled him to face adversity without bitterness and pain without complaint.

It was nine years to the day after he was born that I made my entrance into the family. I suppose it is only natural for a young man to admire his older brother, which I did, but I think these emotional ties were even made stronger by the fact that we shared the same birthday.

I still remember my sadness when Bill enlisted in the Navy and

went away to war. By the time he arrived on Guam the war was over, but I still remember his description of the belated death of one Japanese soldier. This wretched soul, perhaps unaware that the war was over, was shot after attempting to plunder their camp. Bill seemed strangely above the hatred for Japanese people which was then popular and sowed good seeds in my own heart about the insanity of war.

It was also Bill who first taught me to make paper airplanes, and the fact that he became a pilot may help to explain the reason that I have also learned to fly.

Throughout the years though sometimes separated by thousands of miles he has yet been a part of my life. I have seen him strong in areas where I am weak, patient and courageous in times that would bring most of us to utter desperation and despair.

Bill's struggle with cancer has been typical of the way which he faced all of life. From the very first moment his colon ruptured he was, medically speaking, the victim of a terminal illness. Bill, however, was not one to take such a verdict lying down. Even when the National Institute of Health gave up on him . . . he did not give up. He continued to do work, to study, to experiment, and pray.

The hundreds, and perhaps thousands of hours which he spent in prayerful study and meditation about life led him ultimately to publicly confess his faith in Jesus Christ. This decision he related to me by phone just a few short months ago. This confession represented the best judgment of a man who was well educated and widely traveled and is today a Gibraltar of hope for his family and friends. It is, in fact, the only rational hope there is for life beyond the grave.

Early last Thursday morning, February 7, 1985 his faith became reality and I believe that he is now at home with the Lord.

Someday I hope to be there too!

Jesus Had A Mother

(Mary)

Because He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, Joseph was only a foster parent. But Jesus had a mother. His relationship to her was no different from that of any other normal child.

On the day of His conception two microscopic cells combined in His mother's womb. Within two weeks a bubble-like sac had formed around the baby Jesus. Today we call that sac the *amnion* which is a Greek term meaning "little lamb." At only six weeks little Jesus could already experience pain. At two months brain waves began to flow and by the third month he was sleeping and waking and "breathing" amniotic fluid. At four months he was half as tall as he would be at birth and possessed the capacity to move with ease and even suck his thumb. Somewhere between His fifth and sixth month, the unborn baby Jesus could hear his mother's voice and open his eyes to gain His first physical awareness of darkness and light. During the last three months before His birth the baby Jesus could also taste and touch and relate to the moods and emotions of his mother.

When He was born the baby Jesus was cold, and hungry, and unable to even hold up His head. In that moment of utter helplessness He felt the tender and loving hands of His mother who wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and held Him to her breast. He felt the warmth of her body and heard again the comfort of her heart beat as He snuggled up His arms and legs as He had in her womb and nursed Himself to sleep.

Thirty-three years later His beaten and mutilated body would be nailed to a cross. Convulsing in agony He would find it impossible to speak without straining to lift His sagging body on the cruel nails which pierced His hands and feet. Through eyes that were bleared and delirious He looked down from the cross and saw His mother.

The agony of her weeping face brought back a thousand precious memories. She had been His constant companion dur-

ing those early days when He was unable to care for Himself. She had fed Him when He was hungry, clothed Him when He was naked, and she had lovingly washed His body during those times when He was too young to do it by Himself. She had held His hand when He learned to walk and helped Him frame His words when He learned to talk. As He sat at her feet He was exposed again to the wonder of the world which He had created. Through her eyes He gained His first human perspective of God. Through her lips He came to experience the melody and meaning of those Psalms of praise which had originally been inspired by His eternal Spirit.

At that moment Jesus gazed into the future and anticipated the time when Mary would be too old and feeble to fend for herself. The days would come when she too would require a steady hand to help her walk. Someone would have to feed her when she was hungry, and clothe her when she was cold and naked, and bathe her when her withered hands became too old and arthritic to perform the necessary functions of life.

Standing by His mother's side was that disciple whom Jesus loved. Straining on the nails Jesus raised Himself enough to gasp "Woman behold thy son!" Stretching for another breath of air He agonized again and said to His disciple, "Behold thy mother."

The Bible then records that after this Jesus knew that all things were accomplished. Now He could say "I thirst" that the Scripture might be fulfilled and get on with the grisly business of dying. In the mean while, however, He has given us reason to pause and devote some serious reflection upon what it means to have a mother.

His Mother And Mine

(The Mother of Rufus)

“Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine” (Rom. 16:13).

Simon Peter once said to Jesus, “Lo, we have left all and have followed thee.” To this Jesus responded, “Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house . . . or mother . . . but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses . . . and mothers . . . and in the world to come eternal life (Mark 10:28-30).

Tucked away in a long list of greetings in Romans 16 is an obscure reference to someone who is described as the “mother of Rufus”, but also in some respect Paul’s mother.

First of all let us consider the identity of Rufus. The name “Rufus” means “red” or “reddish” and it occurs but two times in the Bible. The first time it is found in Mark 15:21 and the second time in Romans 16:13. The reference in Mark indicates that those who originally received that gospel were familiar with Rufus. While relating the account of the crucifixion Mark comes to the name of Simon the Cyrenian who carried the cross for Jesus. He then paused to parenthetically explain that this Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus thus identifying the father who might not be known by the sons who were. It is both interesting and significant to note that Mark is thought to have written his Gospel for the Christians in Rome. There is, therefore, no reason to doubt that the Rufus of Mark 15:21 and the Rufus of Romans 16:13 are one and the same person.

But now the question arises, “how did Paul make contact with this family, and in what respect was the mother of Rufus also the mother of Paul?” There are at least two viable possibilities. First of all they could quite easily have made contact in the city of Jerusalem, and secondly they could have known one another in Antioch of Syria. For no particular reason I prefer the latter.

Though the following comments contain so much speculation that some would classify it as historical fiction, I beg your indulgence. May these thoughts cast some light upon Romans 16:13 and perhaps also inspire some godly woman to magnify the office of motherhood.

Simon was a Jew from far off Cyrene in North Africa. At great personal sacrifice he saves his money for the sacred pilgrimage to the Passover Feast in Jerusalem. During that trip to Jerusalem he is forced by the cruel Romans to carry the cross for a man who was condemned to die. This chance encounter transformed his life forever. His family is with him in Jerusalem and he rushes home to tell his wife about Jesus. His two sons, Alexander and Rufus, are also there and the whole family becomes Christian. A short time later Stephen is stoned and Simon and his family flee to Antioch.

"Now they that were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice and Cyprus, and Antioch . . . and some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene. . ." (Acts 11:19-20). Barnabas comes from Jerusalem to help them for a great number had believed and turned to the Lord. Saul (who became Paul) is also summoned from Tarsus and for a whole year they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people.

During this time Paul has such a close association with Simon and his family that the mother of Rufus becomes like his own mother. Years later when Paul returns from his second evangelistic tour he is possessed of a burning desire to preach the gospel in Rome and to use that as a base to evangelize as far west as Spain (Rom. 1:10-13; 15:24, etc.). Accordingly he encourages Simon and his family to move to Rome with a team of workers to prepare the way. Twenty-four workers in the Roman church are greeted by Paul, and it is highly possible that several of them came from Antioch. Remember that Paul as yet had not been in Rome.

He begins his third tour and comes to Ephesus. He finds

Aquila and Priscilla there (I Cor. 16:19), but sends them on to Rome with the team. He also sends Epaphroditus, his first convert in Asia (Rom. 16:3-5). He travels around to Corinth and discovers that Phebe from Cenchrea is making a trip to Rome. He takes advantage of the opportunity and dictates the Roman letter so that Phebe can take it with her in her journey. As he concludes the letter his mind is flooded with depths of gratitude for those whose selfless efforts have enriched his life. His mind drifts back to Antioch and to the delightful aroma of fresh bread baking in the oven, and he turned to Tertius and said, "Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine."

The Mother of Sisera

Sisera was the captain of the Canaanite army under King Jabin. For twenty years the Canaanites paralyzed Israelite commerce and subjected them to intolerable oppression.

The military superiority of the Canaanites is indicated by the fact that they had 900 chariots of iron (Jdgs. 4:13) and apparently the Israelites had none.

Under the guidance of the prophetess Deborah the people of God gathered at Mt. Tabor to challenge the Canaanites. God promised to lure Sisera and his chariots to the River Kishon and then deliver them to the hand of the Hebrews.

A sudden rainstorm played a key part in the victory (Jdgs. 5:4). It turned the dry river valley into a death trap for iron chariots and forced Sisera to leap down into the mud and flee for his life on foot.

The death of Sisera came at the hands of a woman named Jael who drove a nail through his temples while he slept in her tent.

The song of victory over the Canaanites contained these words about the mother of Sisera:

The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, "why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?" (Jdgs. 5:28)

Her wise ladies attempted to console her with possible explanations. They assumed that he was busy dividing the spoils of war. They were wrong. This mother's vigil was in vain. Sisera would never come home again.

Yet, gentle reader, is it not touching to see her gazing thoughtfully through the lattice of her window. Can you not see in her face a love and a concern which transcends the barriers of race and religion? Is not motherhood an experience so universal

and so emotional that it touches the human race in totality?

She looked out the window. Undoubtedly she had done it hundreds and perhaps thousands of times before. A look of deep concern was etched upon her face. That too was nothing new, for now her brow was wrinkled by the withering hand of time, and the lines upon her face gave added evidence to that special kind of love which is uniquely that of mothers to give.

In more than twenty-five years of preaching I have seen that look of Sisera's mother many times. I have seen it in the hospital where pain and death have threatened the fruit of her womb. I have seen it in the courtroom where justice waited on a wayward child. I have seen it across my desk grappling with the delusions of alcohol and drugs.

Not only have I seen the agony in their faces but I have also heard the anguished cry of mothers who echo the plaintive question, "Why?" Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why must she date that kind of a boy? Why isn't he home by midnight? Why don't they want to go to church?

Sometimes the look of deep concern gives way to a relaxing smile. The sound of his chariot comes lightly on the evening breeze. His familiar form shows up again on the far horizon. Soon he will be at supper and the dangers of the day will be the subject of an evening's conversation.

Sometimes . . . there is no smile . . . forever!

Such is the penetrating insight we can gain from the mother of Sisera.

A Mother's Treasures

(Leona Pratt Townsend)

A few days ago I received a bundle of old letters. They may not mean much to most people, but to one mother they are treasures which no amount of money can replace. They are letters from her son who was killed in a tragic plane crash on December 24, 1974.

The letter is from Mike Pratt to his mother, Leona. The reference to "two years and nine months" needs to be explained. It was on that day that Leona's husband and daughter were killed in a plane crash . . . and she sustained 52 fractures but somehow survived.

As I examine my motives for reproducing this letter, I think it is more for the benefit of children than for mothers. As we think of giving our mothers something for Mother's Day, I think they would treasure something like this most of all.

April 7, 1969

Dearest Mom,

Got into Kansas City on time. I grabbed a hot-beef sandwich from 5:15 — 5:30. We're now up in the air, between K.C. and Joplin, as I write this.

I wish to thank you for being a really wonderful mother to me. I have learned some important lessons from you, & I hope they will stick. Thank you especially for your unselfish attitude which you always show forth to me. I'm thankful that you have disciplined yourself with that kind of "inner tranquility" that will permit you to simply stay at home and enjoy the kittens & Fritz & farm with a genuine contentment. My heart was really warmed when I got back from Omaha that nite of your wedding anniversary, & found you in good spirits and even in a state of gratitude. You have come far, and I'm truly grateful that you do not take time to indulge in the luxury of self-pity, for I am sure that many people would if they were in your position. I'm thrilled that you can seek out the good that has come these past 2 yrs. & 9 months, & that you do not dwell on the hardships & heart-aches. I truly believe

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with all my heart that we as Christians should "live up to our privileges", and keep looking up regardless of the darkness of the surrounding circumstances.

Thank you for loving me and for wanting the best for me, and for overlooking my many faults.

I'll be praying that you can continue in your Christian influence & witness, and that somehow you can provide the light that can penetrate the darkness that many are lost in.

Always let us remember II Cor. 4:8,9, and I Cor. 15:58!

Love, in our Savior,
Mike

A Mother's Comfort

(Verna Lois Butler
Nov. 12, 1907 – Mar. 23, 1984)

Human language probably does not have a more emotional word than "mother." The physical and emotional ties which we have with our mothers are so profound and deep that many cultures actually worship goddesses which are but personifications of motherhood.

Most of us who are Christians received our first information about Jesus from the lips and the life of our mothers.

Paul Butler's mother passed away on March 23, 1984. Here is a written legacy which she left behind for her family to bring them comfort. May this mother's comfort to her family also bring comfort to you.

After attending a memorial service and noting the heartbreaking grief of the loved ones of the deceased, I determined to put into words a message for my family, telling them that *Death is not the END, but the BEGINNING*, and now the door has been opened wide for those in *CHRIST* to enjoy things that one can never experience while in the flesh.

A Message To My Loved Ones

What meaneth that lump in your throat, that tear in your eye?
Is it for me or for you that you sigh?

My darlings, I've told you many times never to be sad;
I've gained all the good and left all the bad.

And if you are grieving because I've gone from your view,
Remember, I'll always be close to you!

Moments we've shared will always be there locked in your hearts,

And these can be "letters" while we're apart.

PERSONAL VIGNETTES

There's now no more worries, no pain, no struggling for peace;
I'm free at last — what a blessed release!

So when you're missing me sometimes and feel very blue,
Look up, and know that I'm waiting for you.

Heaven is just one step away from earth and its care,
And it won't be long 'til you will be here.

Our family circle can't ever be broken again;
We'll live in the Light, and out of the rain!

So live with a song in your heart and Jesus as guide,
Know that tomorrow we'll be side by side!

We'll catch up on our visiting, and all the little things,
And walk up together to praise the King!

Verna Lois Butler (November 12, 1907 — March 23, 1984)