

A MOTHER'S LOVE - Sunday 11th May 2014

"Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people And will have compassion on His afflicted. But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me." "Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me. " Isaiah 49:13-16

Beloved in The Lord,

When God created the world, and created man, He in His infinite wisdom created family. God made man in such a way that in order to propagate, there has to be man and woman. Every child has a biological father and mother. The family is the foundation of society. When God made man and woman, He assigned different bodies to them and also differing roles. When a man and a woman are united in love and function in their God given roles, then in general society is healthy.

Today we celebrate Mother's Day and so we devote our reflections today in thanking God for mothers.

No matter where we come from and who we are, we all have one thing in common and that is that we have, or have had a mother. For many of us, our mothers have passed on and we remember them today in love and with a thankful heart. For those of you who still have your mothers, today is a good day to show your appreciation in some special and meaningful way.

Every time I think about mothers, I see that God has given them something very special, namely a mother's heart. A mother's heart, a mother's love is different to that of a father. That is how God has ordained it to be, that is how He has created us.

In our text today, speaking about the love He has for Israel, God poses the question: ***"Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb?"***

The answer of course is no (at least in normal circumstances). This text of course is not about a mother's love as such, but about the love God has for His people. God says that even if a mother could forget her child, He could and would not forget His people. I allowed myself to take this text out of its context today, because in so doing, the truth is not being distorted and this text is useful in highlighting a truth that we find all through Scripture and that is that a mother's love is very powerful.

A mother cannot forget a child she has carried in her womb for nine months. A child that has depended upon her and sucked from her breast.

There is a great example in The Old Testament that illustrates the power of a mother's faith and love.

In First Samuel we read of a man by the name of Elkanah. He has two wives Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah bore him children but Hannah was barren. Over a period of time Peninnah began to taunt Hannah and make her miserable. In those times to be barren was deemed to be forgotten by God. It was a source of scorn and shame.

Hannah prayed to God for a son, and she made a vow to dedicate him to The Lord forever if she were to have a son. She prayed this prayer: ***“O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head” (1 Samuel 1:11).***

God heeded her prayer and in the course of time she gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel. When Samuel had been weaned, she took him to Eli the priest and had him consecrated for God's service as she had promised. We read that she never forgot him:

“ Now Samuel was ministering before the Lord, as a boy wearing a linen ephod. And his mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, “May the Lord give you children from this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the Lord.” And they went to their own home. The Lord visited Hannah; and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew before the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:18-21).

Samuel turned out to be a very important man of God and was a prophet. The faith of Hannah, her trust in God and her obedience and prayers provided a great blessing for not only herself but for the people of Israel. It was a great sacrifice on her part to dedicate her son to God and leave him with Eli, but God rewarded her by providing her with three other sons and two daughters.

I do not think it is possible to count up the sacrifices mother's have made and are making for their children, but I do know that sacrifices that are made in faith and love are always known to God, and He repays in His time.

A mother's prayer is very powerful. We see this in the case of Hannah. Hannah prayed for a son, promised to give him to The Lord; God heard her prayer and she did as she had promised and many were blessed.

Praise God for faithful mothers. Praise God for the faithful prayers of believing mums. On a completely personal level I can witness that I believe I would not be here as your pastor, if it were not for the prayers of my mother. My mother taught me to pray, she placed a Bible in my hands and took me to Church every Sunday. She taught me to love God and encouraged me to walk and live in faith and obedience.

It was never easy for her. She had to make sacrifices. She had to deal with the lack of support from my father who was not a man of faith. Praise God for my mother and her love.

I pray that my testimony will serve as an encouragement to all mothers (and fathers) as well as grandparents to pray for your children and grandchildren. Prayer is very powerful if it comes from a believing heart. God is pleased when we uphold one another in prayer.

Sometimes it may be difficult to know what to pray/how to pray. There is a great model prayer in Paul's letter to the Colossians. we read:

“ For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ”

(Colossians 1:9-10)

We should resolve to pray that God would fill our children and grandchildren with the knowledge of His will; that He would also fill us with the knowledge of His will, that together we may live a life that is pleasing to Him and that bears fruit for His Kingdom.

As we do, and God begins to answer this prayer we will find that as Paul wrote: ***"we will walk in a manner worthy of The Lord , pleasing Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in our knowledge of Him.***

The continuation of this passage states:

" strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins"(Colossians 1:11-14).

It is only if we remain close to God, abiding in faith that we will be strengthened with all power, and be able to live in patience, thanksgiving and love.

Today, so many homes are broken, so many families are torn apart by divorce, violence and many other horrible things. The problem is that there is no foundation on God's Word. So few homes are built on the rock of God's Word, prayer and faith. So many are built on sand and they simply fall.

In His commandments, God tells us to honour our father and mother. As we do honour especially our mothers today, may we resolve to make our lives a living example. May we make the necessary sacrifices. May we pray every day for God to grow in the hearts of our children and grandchildren.

Today, more than ever we need mothers who are women of faith; fathers who love The Lord Jesus Christ. Grandparents who walk in the Spirit. We need people of faith and prayer, who love God and His Holy Word.

Today on Mother's Day, let us thank God for our families and may we recommit our lives and homes to God with the words of Joshua:

" If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.