

## TEXT SERMONS

## GREAT MOTHERS OF THE BIBLE

## Ezekiel 16:44

***"Like mother, like daughter."***

Mothers are essential links in the great episodes of the Bible. When we consider some of the great children of the Bible, we soon discover that, standing somewhere in the shadows behind them, is a mother who was in touch with God. God-like children are not born, they are formed and fashioned by loving hands.

Mothers write on the hearts of their children what the hard and harsh hand of the world cannot erase. A mother's mark is written with indelible ink! Throughout the Bible there are such mothers.

The word "mother" or "mothers" appears in the Bible almost 300 times. Great stress is laid upon the influence of mothers. The Hebrews understood a mother's influence and it is underscored in the phrase, *"Like mother, like daughter"* in Ezekiel 16 verse 44. The love of children was deep in the hearts of the Hebrew women, and the mother was regarded with the deepest reverence.

Let us review some of the women and the exceptional spiritual qualities that they exhibited, which men and women alike should emulate. First, observe:

**I. MOSES' MOTHER AND HER COURAGE.**

Moses' mother's name was "Jochebed" - *"The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam."* (Numbers 26:59)

Her name lives on, not by how many big things she accomplished, but by how courageous she was as a mother. Pharaoh had commanded that every new-born male child of an Israelite must be killed. (Exodus 1:16, 22) Jochebed was not about to permit her new-born son, Moses, to meet that fate so she courageously disobeyed the edict of the mighty Pharaoh. For the first three months of his life, she kept him hidden.

Then she wove a basket out of bulrushes and put Moses in it and *"daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank."* (Exodus 2:3) She was able to save Moses by her courage and innovation. Someone has said that Moses was a "basket case" before he was six months old!

If there was ever a mother who should have been given a medal for bravery, it would be Jochebed. You just have to admire her for her act of civil disobedience which preserved the life of Israel's future human deliverer. Moses was born but had to be sent down the river, literally, with his sister serving as lookout, only to be pulled out of the water by Pharaoh's daughter, who secured the services of Moses' biological Mom to nanny him. Talk about the sovereignty and providence of God!

Moses' mother, Jochebed, shows us that the courage and ingenuity of a desperate mother can save the day. We have had, throughout history, courageous mothers whose children have risen up and called her blessed. In this day, when modern-day "Pharaoh's" at the local, state and national level are making decisions that support abortion for the unborn and abandonment to godless teachings of those who are allowed to live, we need courageous mothers who will "go against the flow" as did Jochebed. May her tribe increase!

## II. SAMUEL'S MOTHER AND HER PRAYING. I Samuel 1:10-13

*"And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, "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 male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head." And it happened, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli watched her mouth. Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard."*

Hannah was the wife of Elkanah. "Hannah" is from the Hebrew word meaning "grace, or favor." She was childless for many years, but after much prayer, she became mother to Samuel the prophet. Hannah had named her son "Samuel" meaning, "asked of the Lord."

She had prayed for his birth and made a promise that if she was rewarded with a son, she would consecrate her child to God. Then when he was about three years old, she took him to Eli the priest for training. Once a year the family went to Shiloh for the yearly sacrifices and each time Hannah took with her a robe made of blue fabric for Samuel to wear. We can be sure Hannah put love into every stitch.

When she left her young Samuel in the House of the Lord at Shiloh, she said, "I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord." (I Samuel 1:28.) Is there a mother who knows this story, who thinks that once Hannah had taken Samuel to the temple to serve, that she stopped praying for him? I am certain that she was faithful in her prayers for her prophet son as long as she lived.

Praying mothers are national treasures. Mothers who receive their children as trusts from the Lord and pray for them, send their children out into society as blessings to society, not as menaces!

I remember preaching in the world famous Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. All along one wall were these words: "Mother's prayers are following you." Many a derelict has entered that mission and, seeing those words, were brought to the Savior or came back to the "straight and narrow way."

President William McKinley had a very close relationship with his mother, who was very proud of him. He was raised in a Christian home and in his youth, she boasted he would become a Methodist Bishop. Little did she know he would go on to become President of the United States!

When “Mother McKinley” fell ill in the winter of 1897, she lived some distance from the capital, so the President had a special telegraph line installed between Washington and her home town. When word finally came of her impending death, he quickly wired back, “Tell mother I’ll be there!”

Upon reading of the death of the mother of American president William McKinley, Charles M. Fillmore, in 1898, wrote a song titled, “Tell Mother I’ll Be There.” The chorus of the song is as follows:

*“Tell mother I’ll be there, in answer to her prayer;  
This message, blessed Savior, to her bear!  
Tell mother I’ll be there, Heav’n’s joys with her to share;  
Yes, tell my darling mother I’ll be there.”*

The song was very popular in the early 1900’s. American Evangelist Charles M. Alexander was holding an evangelistic crusade in Liverpool, England and one night, at the end of the service, while the choir was singing “Tell Mother I’ll Be There,” one hundred and sixty men arose and publicly accepted Christ before all the people.

There is something powerful about a mother who has given physical birth, praying for the spiritual birth of that child. There will be many children in heaven in answer to their mother’s prayers. Mothers, you can do much to raise your child, but you can do no greater thing for your children than pray for them. Never underestimate the influence of a praying mother!

### **III. SOLOMAN’S MOTHER AND HER ADVICE.**

*“The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him: What, my son? and what, son of my womb? And what, son of my vows?” (Proverbs 31:1)*

*“Lemuel” or “Lemoel” is a symbolical name for Solomon. Lemuel means: “belonging to God.” Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, was a remarkably powerful woman. She must have been a great teacher for Solomon possessed unexcelled human wisdom. Yes, I know, God endowed him with wisdom beyond that of the normal human being, but he also had a mother who gave him good advice, as Proverbs 31 shows.*

In this chapter we see:

The preciousness of a godly mother -- *“Her price is far above rubies.”* v.10

The performance of a godly mother -- verses 11 through 25;

The posterity of a godly mother – vs.28-29

The praise of a godly mother – *“A woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates.”* (vs. 30-31)

Throughout the book of Proverbs Solomon has warned his readers about the wrong kind of women, especially in Chapter 6, but now in this closing chapter he shares the advice of his mother concerning the quality and dignity of a godly wife and mother. There is no passage in all of the Word of God which so clearly sets forth the scope of the ministry of a mother and wife as this passage does.

Spurgeon writes of the Proverbs 31 woman: "She is not a religious recluse, shut out from the world. The virtuous woman is a common-sense being, not at all ashamed to earn a living. She knows that those who would thrive must rise at five! She is not afraid of hard and homely work, and is not too great a lady to soil her fingers. Her industry enables her to be charitable; her thrift fills the home with comforts; her happiness is noticed and noted by all; she is a jewel indeed."

Women of this caliber is God's answer to broken homes, juvenile delinquency and the moral collapse of our national life. Will you take up the challenge and become a woman after God's own heart? How do you measure up to this picture?

#### **IV. JAMES AND JOHN'S MOTHER AND HER AMBITION.**

Salome was mother of the disciples James and John. A few scholars suggest that she was a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Certainly, she and her sons were very close to Jesus. We think of her as an ambitious person. She was so desirous for her sons to enjoy extra prestige during Jesus' ministry that she made a special public request of Him: *"Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom."* (Matthew 20:21)

Jesus rebuked her gently, *"To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."* (Matthew 20:23) We should not severely criticize her, for she remained one of the most faithful followers of Jesus to the end. She believed that He was who He claimed to be, that He would have a Kingdom and she wanted her sons to have a part in it. She handed down a rich spiritual legacy to her sons. It was to her son, John, that Jesus entrusted His own mother at the end. And it is commonly agreed that James was the first apostle to be martyred.

The unusual request from Salome came from a maternal pride and desire for the best for her sons. She had not realized that suffering was to be connected with the kingdom. Jesus told her that to be near Him on His throne also meant that they would have to share in His sufferings. History tells us that both James and John were indeed martyrs.

I think that mothers need to be slow in criticizing Salome's request of Jesus. We must keep in mind the very positive benefits she gave to her children. We must learn to appreciate just how much the influence of godly ambitions can have on the lives of children. So often it is because of parents aggressively living for the Lord and serving Him that children surrender their young lives to the Lord. There is no happiness compared to that of a Christian parent who lives long enough to see their children living for the glory of God and dedicated to the service of Jesus Christ.

Because Salome loved her Lord her joy must have been overflowing because both of our sons became followers of Jesus and followed him to the end of their lives. Godly ambition is to be encouraged. The atmosphere in the world, and the attitude in most homes, is that the parents encourage children to be ambitious in being successful in this world and little emphasis is placed upon the world to come. Salome was ambitious for her children. That is not wrong if the parent is ambitious that the children love and live for the Lord.

**V. JESUS' MOTHER AND HER PURITY.**

*"The angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:28-38)*

Mary is the world's most revered mother. She is the greatest illustration of purity, humility, obedience and perseverance, as a woman, wife, mother and servant of God, that we have. When told the life-altering news by an angel she only asked, "How." Not "why?"

Mary's life was a life of purity. No one, male or female, who is impure is said by God to be "highly favored." The Holy God would not send His Holy Son into the womb of an unholy woman! Her hymn of praise is from a holy heart:

*"And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 'For He has had regard for the humble state of His slave; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name. "And his mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear him. 'He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. 'He has filled the hungry with good things; And sent away the rich empty-handed. "He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever." (Luke: 1:46-55)*

As a relatively young widow, she witnessed her eldest son put to death in a time when the loss of an eldest son meant losing everything: Home, security and provision. As she stood at the cross, there were those shouting ugly taunts, as the sword pierced His side it must have pierced her heart. She knew better than all His sinless and divine nature. She stood and witnessed His death with dignified grace and courage.

One of Jesus' last acts on earth was an expression of love for His mother: *"When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household."* (John 19:26,27) He made sure she was going to be cared for. She was blessed and she knew it; she praised God and submitted to His leading.

Of course, there are many lessons that would-be mothers can learn from Mary. One lesson that is needed in this promiscuous age, and should be heeded by young ladies as they approach marriageable age is this: to be highly favored by God, there must be purity of life!

## VI. TIMOTHY'S MOTHER AND HER FAITH.

Paul wrote to Timothy saying, *"I am mindful of the sincere faith with the new, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well."* (II Tim. 1:5)

The Bible teaches us very clearly that the training up of a child in the fear and admonition of the Lord is the definite responsibility of parents. When we look in on the home of Timothy we see a home that is a positive example of this truth. The lady of the home was named Eunice. The child that she raised was Timothy. The Bible does not tell us the name of Eunice's husband, it just makes sure that we know that he was a Greek. (Acts 16:1) Perhaps he had died earlier. Whatever the situation was in the home, it is the training of Timothy which is emphasized in the scriptures.

In 2 Timothy 1:5, we read that Paul wrote to Timothy: *"When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also."* This reflects just how well Eunice had instilled in Timothy the right characteristics that were pleasing to God. And God blessed her by using her son in his service. As parents there is no greater joy than to see our children living and laboring for the Lord.

I think there are two important lessons to be learned from Eunice and her example of teaching Timothy. The first and most obvious is the value of positive Christian training in the home and in the lives of the children. Proverbs 22:6 says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it."*

The second lesson we need to understand from Eunice is that just because she trained Timothy and instilled her beliefs into him, it was not her faith that made Timothy acceptable before God. Timothy had to personally put his trust in Jesus Christ in order to be saved. This is important for all parents to understand. We need to bring our children into a place of understanding their own needs before God. Once they trust him as their own Savior, then we must help them grow in their faith as we demonstrate our faith before them in the home, as did Eunice. It was in this demonstration before Timothy, that Eunice leads the way to show all parents the extreme importance and value of faith.

Timothy was only a teen-ager when he left home to go with Paul and Silas to preach the gospel. We can only imagine the pride coupled with sadness that mother Eunice and grandmother Lois experienced as they told him goodbye.

Timothy could have said, what George Washington was to say later, "All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her." Or, what Abraham Lincoln was to say later: "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."

## VII. A BAD EXAMPLE: JEZEBEL, THE WICKED QUEEN MOTHER

We admire and respect people whose lives exude godly qualities. But sometimes it is helpful to have examples of what we should *not* be like. The Bible includes some bad examples of mothers along with the good examples.

In the Old Testament books of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, we find the life story of Jezebel, a very wicked woman. She was the daughter of a heathen king who worshiped a god named Baal, and was the wife of Ahab, the King of Israel.

The Bible does not describe her as having any of the finer feminine qualities. But it does describe a series of events that show her as a very evil, strong-willed and forceful woman. She used her forcefulness to eventually destroy her husband, her children and to pollute the life of a nation. She was a worshiper of the false god Baal. Her aim was to kill all the people who worshiped the Lord God of Israel.

God raised up His prophet Elijah to confront King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Elijah commanded that all the priests of Baal be killed. Jezebel's reaction is recorded in 1 Kings 19:1-2 as follows: *"Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.'*" Jezebel threatened Elijah with death and planned and carried out the death of a man named Naboth, in order to steal his vineyard, making her a murderess.

Can you imagine the kind of motherly influence Jezebel had upon her children, not only by her words but by her actions; not only by what came from her lips but what they saw in her lifestyle? Her oldest son was a devout worshiper of Baal; her daughter was a murderess; her second son was just as corrupt as she was.

What does the story of Jezebel teach us?

First, God is in control. It does not matter how things seem to us, for his sovereign plan will come to pass.

Second, Jezebel stands for all eternity as proof that the wages of sin is death. She was thrown down from a tower into the courtyard and the dogs ate her! God will not be mocked.

Third, we see how important it is for a wife and mother to be a godly influence. Jezebel was just the opposite of all that God intends for a woman and mother to be. Her evil influence upon her husband and children was very real. Think about how different things would have been in Jezebel's home, and in the nation of Israel, if she had used her influence to move her husband and children to love God and obey his commandments.

Fourth, God's principle of reaping what you sow is vividly seen in the life of Jezebel. There are Jezebels who live today. Maybe you know some. They defy God, live for the world, flesh and devil. But remember: what we sow we reap! (Galatians 6:7) Jezebel's life should make all mothers think about their own commitment first to the Lord Jesus Christ and then to their husbands and their families.

**CONCLUSION:**

The mothers of Moses, Samuel, Solomon, James & John, Jesus and Timothy were channels whom God used to bring leadership, wisdom, salvation and blessing to the world. The characteristics of courage, prayer, wise advice, godly ambition, purity and faith, mentored and modeled by Christian mothers will make for healthy, happy and holy children; will help heal society and honor God.

As Christian parents, we must give an account to God of our parenting. What kind of children are we sending out into the world - children who represent and reflect a godless home or children who represent and reflect a godly home?

**Remember, "*Like mother, like daughter.*"**

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