

May 13, 2018
Sunday Morning Service
Mother's Day
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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MOM'S TEACHING IS THE PRODUCT OF MOM'S LIFE **Proverbs 6:20**

The instruction of our text, *"My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching"* (Proverbs 6:20) was given by Solomon to his son Rehoboam. I find it intriguing that a guy could have 700 wives and 300 concubines but only produce three children. He had the one son Rehoboam who received this instruction and two daughters, Tabath (1 Kings 4:11) and Basemath (1 Kings 4:15).

Which of the 1,000 women referred to as "mother" in this text was Rehoboam's mother? Whose teaching was Rehoboam supposed to guard or protect? According to 1 Kings 14:21, his mother was Naamah the Ammonite. That fact is mentioned three times in Hebrew history (1 Kings 14:21, 31; 2 Chronicles 12:13). This mother strikes us as an anomaly. On one hand, her name comes from the same root as the name Naomi, which means sweet or pleasant. On the other hand, this woman was from the pagan nation of Ammon. The Ammonites were Israel's bitter enemies. The law stated in Deuteronomy 23:3 disallowed anyone of Ammonite heritage to enter the tabernacle or temple. Those people were relatives of Lot born through the incestuous relationship with his daughter. They worshiped false gods like Molech, which Solomon's pagan wives introduced into Jerusalem and to God's people.

Okay, why would Solomon instruct his only son to take heed to and guard the instruction of a woman who served idols? It is possible that Naamah converted from paganism to serve the true God Yahweh. Or, it is possible that Solomon simply stated a principle that it is generally good for children to listen to and obey their mother's teaching. Or, I wonder if Solomon was thinking about his relationship

to his mother's teaching. His mother was Bathsheba. Granted, she had this big, ugly scar in her life left by her adulterous affair with David. However, we assume she confessed the sin, like David did, and was forgiven by God, as David was. From the information the Bible gives us about her subsequent life, we can probably conclude that she feared God and reared Solomon with sound teaching.

At any rate, Bathsheba offers a good example for us to think about on Mother's Day. Like every mother we know, she was not perfect. She had her foibles. But the direction of her life was clearly God-ward and she taught her son well. Bathsheba's kind of teaching is what children ought to grasp and hang on to. Let's spend some time learning about this mother as she is presented to us against a background that is similar to the modern mother's circumstances; but at the same time, a background that was more challenging than what the modern mom faces.

The Lot of Old Testament Women.

Generally speaking, the Old Testament Hebrew wife lived an exalted life contrasted to the lot of the pagan women. That was because God's law set wives in unique circumstances. From the outset, God created Eve to be the suitable helper, not a slave. Therefore, many years later we discover that God's law protected the wife from false accusation and abandonment (Deuteronomy 22:13). Also according to God's law, even in divorce, the wife was to be cared for. And if a man violated a young woman, he was forced to marry her and could not ever divorce her (Deuteronomy 22:28). Those rules or laws undergird the Jewish society's treatment of wives.

Wives who lived in pagan settings were not so privileged. In contrast to the Hebrew law, in most of the surrounding pagan cultures, the wife was simply property to be disposed of on a whim. According to many pagan traditions or practices, the wife's only real purpose was to provide a posterity through childbearing. Therefore, circumstances for wives were quite unfavorable in most cultures and still are even up to modern days. The law of God and the Gospel has done much to remove abuse and stigma from wives.

It is not difficult to imagine that some of those practices and customs from the pagan cultures crept into practice in Israel. Even without the pagan customs, life was pretty challenging for wives living under Old Testament law and practice. Even for Hebrew wives there was the challenge of polygamy. By the sixth generation (5 after Adam) we read: *And Lamech took two wives. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah (Genesis 4:19)*. That is not a good custom, but we are probably headed in that direction as a culture that has abandoned God.

We also read about that time. *The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5)*. Right. Having multiple wives just fits in with hearts that think and intend only evil. Well, things didn't get better after the flood because Noah and his family brought the fallen nature with them out of the boat. We even read of God's friend Abraham, who was justified by faith, having multiple wives. Sarah, Abraham's first wife, gave her servant Hagar to Abraham as a wife (Genesis 16:3). He also had children through concubines (Genesis 25:6).

What might be even more shocking is the fact that God's law took the possibility of multiple wives into account. The rule for the inheritance was, *"If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him children . . ." (Deuteronomy 21:15)*. In others words, the husband wasn't allowed to play favorites in his will. Therefore, David did the typical "king thing" and had eight wives, counting Michal. And his son Solomon took the matter to historical extremes.

Competition is always a challenge for mothers. Husbands must never make their wives feel like they are in competition. Therefore, Solomon is not a good example to follow. Surely he did not follow his mother's teaching on this issue. Then, too, the principle works both ways, in that either spouse (if wise) will never say and do things that would indicate that there is competition to the marriage. This is especially an important principle after Mom has experienced the bodily trauma of the childbearing years.

And children also need to avoid pitting competition against Mom. Children must be taught that it is not acceptable to compare their mother to any other mother unfavorably. Sally's mother might

be beautiful, funny, an athlete, and a good cook, but it is not honoring to throw such facts into Mom's face. No doubt many Old Testament mom's suffered a fate much like Hannah who compared herself quite unfavorably to Peninnah.

However, at the same time, the Old Testament gives us several examples of mothers who God chose for special service. Those mothers demonstrate a rewarding life while serving God.

I guess we should start with Eve since she was the first wife and mother. She was the perfect wife – for a time. In fact, she is the only wife about whom we can conclude that she was perfect. She was the first of all created women. Therefore, Adam, *called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20)*. She was unique in that God created her from Adam's side according to our Creator's plan.

Because Eve was first, she was also the first wife who sinned – which means she was also the first wife to be forgiven and restored. And also the first mother to experience the consequences of her sin as her son murdered his brother. But still she received the promise of God that through her lineage would be born the Savior of the world who will crush Satan and sin (Genesis 3:15). What a wonderful example of God's benefit, mother's sin, and God's grace in response.

Sarah is another good example of God's chosen mothers. God chose her to be the mother of His special nation. To that end, God built an entire nation, the only eternal nation, through her. Through Sarah God continued the promise of the coming Seed of the woman, the Savior from sin. But Sarah ran ahead of God and, in her womanly desire to control, caused great trouble. She demonstrated that strong desire for control that God promised to be part of the curse on the woman. When God leveled the curse because of sin, He said specifically to the woman, *"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16)*.

Sarah proved that the curse still resides with us. She bought into the contemporary idea that polygamy was not only acceptable, but in her case beneficial. Through Sarah's willfulness a conflict among two people groups was formed and lasts till this day. But also through Sarah God brought Isaac who produced Jacob, who produced the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel whose names will be inscribed on

the gates of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:12). What a wonderful example of God's benefit, mother's sin, and God's grace in response.

Sarah's daughter-in-law was Rebekah. The Old Testament narrative tells how God chose Rebekah to be Isaac's wife through the most miraculous circumstances. There is no doubt, based on the evidence of the story, that God chose this particular woman to play a significant role in bringing the Savior into the world. God blessed her with unique twins whose lives, from conception, would not follow the normal, acceptable standards. It was God's will for the younger to rule over the elder. And Rebekah, demonstrating extreme willfulness, determined to take control of God's plan and created a family disaster that has become an international disaster. As far as we can tell, for the rest of her life, this chosen vessel of God reaped the sorrow of stubborn sin against God.

And yet, God used Rebekah in that long process of bringing the Savior into the world. What a wonderful example of God's benefit, mother's sin, and God's grace in response.

Then there is the example of Moses's mother. This mother is one of the first in the Bible who God chose for a very special task, but who does not even merit the mention of her name. She is destined to be anonymous until we get to heaven and meet her. Surely of the thousands of Hebrew mothers in Egypt, there were others who were of the opinion that they had birthed a "fine child" (Exodus 2:2). Obviously, God was working in the heart of Moses's mother to do whatever she had to do in order to protect this unique child. She broke Pharaoh's law because sometimes God's chosen servants must obey God rather than man. Through amazing circumstances, this mother's child was spared, was reared in the palace, was trained by the enemy so that God could use him to deliver His nation of Sarah's children. What a wonderful example of God's grace and mercy on a mother who is not even named.

Another unnamed, but chosen, mother was Manoah's wife. Unlike Moses's mother, at least we know her husband's name. God chose this mother to give birth to and rear one of Israel's most important and contradictory judges. There is little doubt that Samson's mother obeyed God's rule for rearing that particular child. *And the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall*

conceive and bear a son. Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:3-5).

No doubt there were many times when Samson was acting like a fool that this mother wondered where she had gone wrong in rearing him. But God was working His plan in spite of Samson's stubborn willfulness. The end of his story is sad and tragic. We cannot help but wonder if his mother was part of the "family" who went to Gaza to retrieve Samson's body after he paid the ultimate price for sinning? Though she lived a sorrowful life, God used this mother in a special way.

Ruth's story is all positive after she left home to live in Bethlehem. Ruth was not born into the line of special, unique Hebrew women. Nevertheless, God chose her in particular to play a special role in bringing to earth the eternal King who will reign on David's throne. She gave birth to David's grandfather, making Ruth David's great grandmother.

Mother Hannah experienced the common problem of being unable to bear children. This was a special burden in a culture where wives were expected to produce heirs for the God-given inheritance. She prayed to God for help, and God chose her to be a special vessel to bring to Israel a choice prophet. No doubt her heart broke as she kept her promise to God and delivered little Samuel to questionable Eli's care. What a demonstration of God's grace it was for her to give Israel their last judge.

The last example we will look at was David's mother. Again this mother is unnamed. It seems hard to believe that God would leave David's mother, or all mothers, unnamed. Obviously, she was Jesse's wife and there is no indication he had more than one. Surely she suffered while Saul was trying to kill her son and she had to move and live with the Moabites (1 Samuel 22:3). But surely she rejoiced when all Israel recognized her son as king. Was she still alive when God promised that Jesus the Messiah would reign on his throne? What a wonderful demonstration of God's grace to use her, a mere woman, to help bring the Savior to this world.

These mothers are examples of how God chooses women to carry out His eternal will for His glory. But, we need to remember that all mothers are special in God's work. It is a huge and important responsibility to rear the next generation to know God and love Him. It is an incredible privilege to bring servants of the Lord into this world. No mother knows what kind of servant God is raising up for His glory through normal people. But let's close by looking at one of those special mothers upon whom God showered special grace.

The Example of Bathsheba.

A brief review of Bathsheba's background reveals that she came from a "God-fearing" family. When we use the term "God fearing" we must understand that it is not the same as "Christian." We have to take into consideration the progress of doctrine throughout the Bible. We modern Christians know so much more about God and His work than the Old Testament people understood. We have the entire New Testament from which to learn – a privilege the old saints didn't have.

Nevertheless, people like Bathsheba's family loved God and highly respected God based on what they knew. We know that her father was Eliam. Eliam is listed among the thirty of David's bravest and most loyal soldiers. He was right up there with the sons of Zeruah, Abishai, and Joab who were actually related to David. He obviously was very loyal to David.

Bathsheba's grandfather was Ahithophel. He was a very wise counselor. It was said that his counsel was like the word of God (2 Samuel 16:23). David esteemed his word highly. In light of these connections, how could we think that Bathsheba did not know David.

Furthermore, this woman was married to a faithful convert. Bathsheba's husband was Uriah. He was from Hittite origins and was even referred to as "Uriah the Hittite." The Hittites had been in the land since before Abraham. They were one of the people groups that Joshua and the people dispossessed of the Promise Land. They were not Hebrews and not "God-fearers" but were considered pagan Gentiles. But somewhere along the line Uriah came to know the God of the Hebrews. He was a faithful and successful soldier to David, listed also among David's 30+ mighty men (2 Samuel 23:39).

Bathsheba had to know David (though not necessarily in a social context).

With her background in hand, we can now turn to Bathsheba's failure. Let's go back and read the story. *It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house (2 Samuel 11:2-4).*

Reading between the lines of this narrative, we realize that Bathsheba found herself in a challenging situation. On one hand, it is possible that Bathsheba was innocent in the David situation. Maybe she did not realize that her courtyard was visible from David's porch. It was very common for people to bath outside in the privacy of their courtyard. No one enjoyed our common conveniences of indoor plumbing, showers, and such. In fact, showering outdoors is still very very common in cultures of temperate climates.

That Bathsheba was purifying herself from her uncleanness might indicate that she was not fully unclothed. This was a matter of the ceremonial law. It indicates that she had finished her monthly cycle. How ironic that her keeping of the law led to her and David breaking an obvious law.

Add to the circumstances the fact that this woman was strikingly beautiful. The Hebrew wording strongly emphasizes Bathsheba's outward, physical beauty (*the woman was very beautiful (v.2)*). It is quite interesting that the same Hebrew word is used to describe David when we are first introduced to him. *Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome (1 Samuel 16:12)*.

On the other hand, Bathsheba did not do all that she could have done to avoid the situation. Legally and ethically she could have refused the king's invitation. She could have resisted putting herself in a compromising situation. She knew that she was married to the king's loyal servant, and she had to know the nature of the king's invitation. She also knew that she was at the peak of her conception

cycle. But the king was as physically attractive as she was and so she made a bad choice.

Bathsheba decided to go ahead and sow the seeds of sin with David and she reaped what she sowed. Uriah's wife became pregnant with David's child. God judged David and Bathsheba and the child died. She will forever be known as "she who was the wife of Uriah." She will always be the one dark blot on David's life of faithful service to God.

But God is gracious to forgive and restore, which is why we also read about Bathsheba's success as a mother. For starters, she reared "God-fearing" children or at least a couple of God-fearing children. David and Bathsheba had four children. That fact is stated: *These were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan and Solomon, four by Bath-shua, the daughter of Ammiel (1 Chronicles 3:5)*. Obviously, God used Solomon as a choice servant. Tradition holds that it was actually Bathsheba who composed Proverbs 31, the wise words to her son the king.

But beyond Solomon, God used Bathsheba to bring about His eternal plan. Matthew mentioned her in his genealogy where he showed Jesus's connection to David: *and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah (Matthew 1:6)*. Notice again how she was identified as the wife of Uriah. Also, Luke included a veiled reference to Bathsheba in his genealogy that traces Jesus back to David through son Nathan. Nathan was also one of David's son with Bathsheba. So we read, *The son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David (Luke 3:31)*.

Motherhood is a wonderful blessing but also comes with potential pitfalls, dangers, and sorrows. Which mother can look back through her years of child-rearing and conclude, "I was squeaky clean and could not have possibly done a better job of rearing my children"? No mother can do that because all mothers are human. The wonderful news is that no mother needs to look back at her failures and foibles and bemoan the fact that she failed and there is no hope. There is always hope because God is gracious. And who needs more to draw on God's grace than those who are saddled with the responsibility of rearing the next generation to know God and love Him.