

## A Mother's Faith

- A four-year-old and a six-year-old presented their Mom with a house plant. They had used their own money and she was thrilled. The older of them said with a sad face, "There was a bouquet that we wanted to give you at the flower shop. It was real pretty, but it was too expensive. It had a ribbon on it that said, 'Rest In Peace,' and we thought it would be just perfect since you are always asking for a little peace so that you can rest."
- We want to honor mothers here this morning, as the writer of this anonymous tribute to mothers has done: It is entitled, "The Meanest Mother in the World"
- We had the meanest mother in the whole world! While other kids ate candy for breakfast, we had to have cereal, eggs, and toast. When others had a Pepsi and a Twinkie for lunch, we had to eat sandwiches. And you can guess our mother fixed us a dinner that was different from other kids had, too. Mother insisted on knowing where we were at all times. You'd think we were convicts in a prison. She had to know who our friends were, and what we were doing with them. She insisted that if we said we would be gone for an hour, we would be gone for an hour or less.

We were ashamed to admit it, but she had the nerve to break the Child Labor Laws by making us work. We had to wash the dishes, make the beds, learn to cook, vacuum the floor, do laundry, and all sorts of cruel jobs. I think she would lie awake at night thinking of more things for us to do. She always insisted on us telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

By the time we were teenagers, she could read our minds. Then, life was really tough! Mother wouldn't let our friends just honk the horn when they drove up. They had to come up to the door so she could meet them. Because of our mother, we missed out on lots of things other kids experienced. None of us have ever been caught shoplifting, vandalizing other's property, or arrested for any crime. It was all her fault. We never got drunk, took up smoking, stayed out all night, or a million other things other kids did. Sundays were reserved for church, and we never missed once. We knew better than to ask to spend the night with a friend on Saturdays. Now that we have left home, we are all God-fearing, educated, honest, hard-working and happy adults. We are doing our best to be mean parents just like Mom was. I think that's what is wrong with the world today. It just doesn't have enough mean moms anymore.

- To honor moms this morning, let's jump ahead in our study of the pastoral letters to 2 Timothy and look at these two mean moms that we just heard read about. To give the context, though, let's begin with chapter 1 and verse 3.
- "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well." -- 2 Timothy 1:5 (ESV)
- Paul points to one quality about Timothy that I believe made him stand out: the quality of genuine faith. It was that genuine faith that made Paul long to see Timothy. He loved this young man not because of his rock star talent or powerful charisma: Timothy had none of that. He loved him because of his genuine faith: Timothy, with all of his weaknesses and faults was a man of genuine faith in Jesus Christ. And Paul reminds Timothy where that faith came from: his mother and his grandmother. We must never underestimate the power of a mother's faith.
- Dr. G. Campbell Morgan had 4 sons and they were all preachers. Someone once came into the drawing room when all the family was there. They thought they would see what Howard, one of the sons, was made of so they asked him this question: "Howard, who is the greatest preacher in your family"? Howard had a great admiration for his father and he looked straight across at him and then without a moment's hesitation he answered, "Mother."

- You might have said as you studied this passage this week, where was Timothy's father? Look at **Acts 16:1**, and we'll see. Timothy's mother believed. All we are told of Timothy's father was that he was Greek. Even the way Luke writes this is instructive. Timothy is called a disciple, and "the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed." Timothy was the son of a mother and a father, but Christ had divided the household, just as he said He would, and in matters of faith, Timothy was the son of his mother. Who was Timothy's spiritual father? Paul. "To Timothy, a true son in the faith." (1 Tim. 1:2) Paul was Timothy's spiritual father, but Timothy first witnessed life-giving faith in his mother! Let's look at one more text to see a more complete picture of the role Timothy's mother played in his faith: **2 Timothy 3:14-15**.
- Faith in God was on display for Timothy for many years. Listen, saints. There is no way we can begin to measure the benefits and blessings of a godly heritage. If you were blessed to grow up in a Christian home, where there was genuine faith on display, give God praise for that! I am grateful for a godly mother and grandmother. I am also very thankful for a godly great-grandmother. You have heard me tell the stories about Jessie Maud Hauser, my great-grandmother who taught Sunday School for fifty years and hardly ever missed a Sunday. She also loved to give her little tithe and was always prepared when the offering plate came by. Well, almost always. As she got older she sometimes didn't think or see very well. Like the time the offering plates were being passed and Grandma was trying to find her offering envelope in her pocketbook and was having no luck. She was muttering under her breath, "I KNOW I put it in here this morning," and the offering baskets were getting closer. Meanwhile the elderly lady sitting next to her was tugging on Grandma's sleeve saying, "Jessie, Jessie." Grandma paid her a great no mind and finally dumped the entire contents of the pocketbook in her lap and as she was rifling through it she said, "If I live to get home, I am going to clean this pocketbook OUT!" That's when the lady next to her finally got her attention when she said, "Jessie, that's MY pocketbook." That was my great-grandmother and it was her genuine faith, I believe, that God used to draw me to Himself.
- When I put all of these passages of Scripture together, then, I see that **the power of a mother's faith is magnified greatly when it is a personal, but not a private faith.**
- Genuine faith is personal.
- Paul had come to a town called Lystra on his second missionary journey and found a disciple there by the name of Timothy, and the implication is that Lois and Eunice had heard Paul and Barnabas preach the FIRST time through, heard the Gospel, and believed on Christ. Then perhaps they took Timothy to hear Paul preach, but clearly they were believers first. Timothy's mother had a personal faith in Jesus that Timothy witnessed first hand. Her faith was instrumental in bringing Timothy to Christ. Question. How many people did Timothy end up leading to faith in Jesus? We don't know, do we? The power of multi-generational faithfulness to the Gospel is unfathomable. Lois & Eunice heard the Gospel and believed. Their personal faith impacted Timothy and he heard the Gospel and believed. Then untold numbers heard the Gospel from Timothy and believed. And it marched on. But it would not have marched anywhere had it not been genuine faith, personal faith that was real. That word for genuine in verse 5 means not hypocritical, sincere, the real thing.
- Vance Havner said, "To some, Christianity is an argument. To many, it is a performance. To a few, it is an experience." Genuine faith is the gift Christ gives to all who truly meet Him.
- I think of Moses' mother, who had to give up her son by faith, putting her baby in a tiny basket and letting him float down the Nile. That took a genuine faith in a powerful God. But we all know the story of how God took that simple act of genuine faith and used it for the deliverance of a nation of one million people. Or I think about Hannah, who prayed silently for a son, promising to give Him to the Lord. God heard her prayer, gave her Samuel for a few

short years, and then she exercised her genuine faith in God by giving her only son to the Lord to serve in the house of Eli. Then the Scripture says that God attended to Hannah, opened her womb, and she conceived and gave birth to three more sons and two daughters. And the son she gave to God became prophet, priest and judge of Israel. Her genuine faith resulted in a blessing for an entire nation. Then there's Ruth, a Moabite woman who left her pagan culture and became a follower of the God of Israel. She became the mother of Obed and the great-grandmother of David. Ruth's genuine faith resulted in the birth of the Son of David, who was the King of kings and Lord of Lords. **Before the mothers of Moses, Samuel and Obed were known as the mothers of Moses, Samuel and Obed, they had to first be women of genuine faith.** I heard about a little boy who was reciting lines for a church play and his mother was sitting on the front row. Suddenly his mind went blank and he couldn't remember his name, much less his lines. Finally, his mother leaned forward and whispered the cue, "I am the light of the world." The boy beamed and with great feeling and a loud clear voice said, "My mother is the light of the world." Well, there is some truth in that, not that mothers are THE light of the world, but mothers who have genuine faith in Jesus Christ shine like the light of the world. That leads to the next point. Faith must be personal, but it must not be private.

- Genuine faith is not private.
- Remember what we read in 2 Timothy 3? Lois was a mean mother who insisted on reading the Scriptures to Timothy all the time when he was a child. The word for "child" can even be translated infant, even "child in the womb." Since Timothy was just a little boy, conceivably since he was in the womb, pun intended, his mother was reading the Scriptures to him. A faith that is truly personal is also not private. Just the opposite: it is a faith diligently shared.
- Charles Spurgeon said, "I cannot tell you how much I owe to the custom on Sunday evenings while we were yet children for Mother to stay home with us, and then we sat around the table and read verse after verse and she explained the Scriptures to us. Then came a mother's prayer; and some of the words of our mother's prayer we shall never forget even when our hair is gray." I don't know if there is a more powerful force on this earth than a mother's prayers for her children.
- Consider Susanna Wesley who was the youngest of twenty-five children and who gave birth to nineteen herself. Eleven of her children died in childhood. Her husband left her for a time, even serving extended sentences in debtor's prison. But oh how God used Susanna Wesley to diligently share her faith with her children. As each child turned five, she tutored them in the alphabet and then, beginning in Genesis, she taught them to read, word by word, from the Scriptures. "I wonder at your patience," her husband Samuel once said. "You have told that child twenty times the same thing." "If I had satisfied myself by mentioning it only nineteen times," Susanna Wesley answered, "I should have lost all my labor. It was the twentieth time that crowned it!"
- Susanna Wesley also wrote, "To inform the understanding is a work of time, and must with children proceed by slow degrees, as they are able to bear it; but the subjecting of the will is a thing that must be done at once, and the sooner the better, for by neglecting timely correction they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy that are hardly ever conquered, and never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child. In the esteem of the world, they pass for kind and indulgent whom I call cruel parents, who permit their children to get habits which they know must afterward be broken." Before she had ever given birth to the first of her nineteen children, Susanna Wesley had dedicated her children to be used by Christ in His church. Did God ever answer her prayer! Her son John Wesley was one of the fathers of the Great Awakening and her son Charles wrote over 9,000 hymns, including "O, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" and "And Can it Be?"

- We talk a lot in this church about the importance of fathers, and we do so because the Bible is clear on that point and because the culture and even the church today is becoming less and less clear, even antagonistic. But we do not in any way minimize the importance of godly mothers and the influence they have on our children, on our churches, and as we have seen today, on the nations. I praise God for the genuine faith of the mothers in this church.
- Genuine faith is personal. Genuine faith is not private. Why would you want to keep something that good, that powerful, that life-changing, to yourself?