

A Tribute to Godly Women

Preached at HBC May 2009

Text: Romans 16:1-16

INTRO:

A police recruit was asked during the exam, 'What would you do if you had to arrest your own mother?' He answered, 'Call for backup.'

Real Mothers

Real Mothers don't eat quiche; they don't have time to make it.

Real Mothers know that their kitchen utensils are probably in the sandbox.

Real Mothers often have sticky floors, filthy ovens and happy kids.

Real Mothers know that dried Playdough doesn't come out of shag carpets.

Real Mothers don't want to know what the vacuum just sucked up.

Real Mothers sometimes ask, "Why me?" and get their answer when a little voice says, "Because I love you best."

Real Mothers know that a child's growth is not measured by height or years or grade. It is marked by the progression of Mama to Mommy to Mom...

The Images of Mother

4 years old: My Mommy can do anything!

8 years old: My Mom knows a lot! A whole lot!

12 years old: My Mother doesn't really know quite everything.

14 years old: Naturally, Mother doesn't know that, either.

16 years old: Mother? She's hopelessly old-fashioned.

18 years old: That old woman? She's way out of date!

25 years old: Well, she might know a little bit about it.

35 years old: Before we decide, let's get Mom's opinion.

45 years old: Wonder what Mom would have thought about it?

65 years old: Wish I could talk it over with Mom

When you apply for a school or for a job you have to have recommendations. In the ancient world people often had recommendations to move and live in a new town. They were known as *sustatikai epistolai*, letters of recommendation.

Many of these letters have been preserved on papyrus. A certain Egyptian olive-planter named Mysterion, sent his servant to Stotoetis, a chief priest with the following letter of introduction.

Mysterion to his own Stotoetis, many greetings. I have sent my Blastus to you for forked sticks for my olive-gardens. See then that you do not detain him, for you know how I need him every hour.

That is exactly how Paul begins the sixteenth chapter of Romans. In this chapter he greets 26 individuals by name, as well as two unnamed saints; he also greeted several churches that were meeting in homes. Paul did not live an isolated life. God does not want us to live in a monastery. We are sheep and sheep block together. Come early to services and stay late. Meet and greet people you don't know. And don't just say "hello" get to know them. Pray for them.

Of the 26 names 9 are women (Phoebe, v. 1; Priscilla, v. 3; Mary, v. 6; Tryphena, v. 12; Tryphosa, v. 12; Persis, v. 12; the mother of Rufus, v. 13; Julia, v. 15; and the sister of Nereus, v. 15). This proves that Paul was not guilty of the accusation of belittling the status of women. We must make the distinction between status and role. Thirteen of these 26 names occur in inscriptions that have to deal with the imperial household and the

Emperor's palace in Rome. In Philippians 4:22 Paul speaks of the saints that are of Caesar's household. Many of the palace slaves had become believers.

I. A Tribute to Sacrificial Moms - Phoebe – Rom. 16:1-2

(Rom 16:1-2 NIV) I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. {2} I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

Phoebe was a business woman, and probably a widow, from the Cenchrea, the port of Corinth on the Saronic Gulf [Acts 18:18]. She was a servant of the church, a deaconess who helped distribute food to the poor, visit the sick, train the younger women and assist in many duties of the church.

Phoebe was preparing for a business trip to Rome. Since, as a private citizen, Paul did not have access to the Postal system of Rome, he sends the Letter to the Romans via Phoebe. No more important letter in history could have ever been delivered than this one. It is the greatest treatise on theology and redemption ever written. Here he advises the Roman believers to welcome in Christian love as God's people ought to welcome each other.

Life Lesson: Remember your mother's sacrifice. Mothers and all of us need to sacrifice for others. Phoebe was a "great help to many people." Follow her example. Visit the sick. Help the poor. Help someone with a project around their house. Help a neighbor with their yard work. Take a meal to a hurting family.

Life Lesson: The church should never become a closed society.

It must be more than the welcome time in the worship services. Get to know people and seek to minister to people. Show that you care. The International Plaza provides a wonderful place for fellowship before and after services.

Get to know someone right now. [Break up into pairs and take one minute to find out all you can about another person you don't know well].

Life Lesson: We need to help one another. The church was to help Phoebe in her business and personal affairs. Help other Christians in their business.

Single moms, widows and divorcees need extra help from the body.

One Mother's story: She writes: My son Zachary, 4, came screaming out of the bathroom to tell me he'd dropped his toothbrush in the toilet. So I fished it out and threw it in the garbage. Zachary stood there thinking for a moment, then ran to my bathroom and came out with my toothbrush. He held it up and said with a charming little smile, "We better throw this one out too then, 'cause it fell in the toilet a few days ago."

Remember the old saying:

The hand that rocks the cradle usually is attached to someone who isn't getting enough sleep.

II. A Tribute to Servant Moms - Priscilla – Rom. 16:3-5

(Rom 16:3-5 NIV) Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. {4} They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. {5} Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.

Priscilla and Aquila appear first in Acts 18:2 in Corinth. They had just left Rome due to the banishment of all Jews from Rome by Emperor Claudius. Anti-Semitism is no new thing. They were tent makers, Paul's trade as well.

When Paul left Corinth and went to Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila went with him [Acts 18:18]. When the brilliant scholar, Apollos, came to Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila befriended him and instructed in the deeper things of God [Acts 18:24-26].

Priscilla and Aquila had an open door policy in their home and an open heart policy for themselves. Since they no doubt had a large room for their business, they used it as a meeting place for the Church at Ephesus. In writing to the Corinthians Paul speaks of the church in their house [I Cor 16:19].

Now they are back at Rome after the ban by Claudius had been lifted. And again a group of Christian people meet in their house. The last time we see them in Scripture is in II Tim 4:19 and they are one again in Ephesus. Aquila had been born in Pontus in Asia Minor [Acts 18:2], but they moved a lot. However, every place they went they had a church in their home. Perhaps part of this was because of the hospitality of Priscilla.

Life Lesson: Is your home a church? Is your home a center for evangelism? Is your home a center for instruction? Make your home the place where the neighborhood kids want to hang out. Much better to have a patchy yard where the kids play than a golf course green yard and no kids around.

The royalty of being a housewife. Ladies never apologize for being a housewife. Hospitality was a primary responsibility in the New Testament.

One day a man spotted a lamp by the roadside. He picked it up, rubbed it vigorously, and a genie appeared. "I'll grant you your fondest wish," the genie said.

The man thought for a moment, then said, "I want a spectacular job. A job that no man has ever succeeded at or has ever attempted to do."

"Poof!" said the genie. "You're a housewife."

We have lost the art of hospitality in our culture. One reason is because of the American obsession for a double income family, which is often fueled by a desire for material things, keeping up with the Joneses.

Why is Priscilla named before Aquila?

There is a Priscilla cemetery in Rome where an ancient Roman family known as the Acilian family is buried. Acilius Glabro was consul of Rome in 91 AD. He died a martyr's death. He was one of the early Christians who suffered for his faith. When a slave received his freedom he took one of the family names of the great Roman families. One of the most popular names in the Acilian family is Priscilla. Perhaps Priscilla and Aquila received their freedom through this family.

Or perhaps Priscilla was a noble lady who came to Christ, met Aquila, fell in love and they got married. Christianity destroys the barriers of race, rank, wealth and birth. Perhaps here we have an example of a Roman aristocrat and a Jewish artisan who joined forever in Christian love and Christian service.

Life Lesson: The team ministry of the family. Make your family a team for God. One common denominator of great Christian leaders who have kept their families is that they have included their children on the team. III. Get your kids to help clean up after Sunday night Praise Gathering. Get your kids to help greet people as they come into church. Make **church a place of ministry and not just a place of entertainment.**

Example – Scott & Robin Tschetter and family

Example of servant moms: You are a servant mom when...

1. Your children tell you that you said "yes" and you don't even remember the question.
2. You go to the grocery store and find yourself having a good time.
3. Your husband asks how your day went and you rate it on a scale of 1-10 repeats of "stop that!" or "no!"
4. You can't remember the last time you didn't have to share your drink.
5. You mistakenly tell the kids it's "sanity" time when you meant to say "bed" time.

III. A Tribute to Soul-winning Moms - 16:10-11

A. Household of Aristobulus

The greeting is to the household of Aristobulus and not to Aristobulus. J.B. Lightfoot suggests that this Aristobulus was the grandson of Herod the Great and the brother of Herod Agrippa I. If so, he was a private citizen living in Rome and was a close friend of Emperor Claudius. Perhaps Aristobulus was dead or more likely he was unsaved. His household, wife, family and servants perhaps were all believers. At any rate he had a witness right in his home, but he was last.

Life Lesson: Many a Godly wife has witnessed for years to her husband. The kingdom of God was right in his house and he missed it. God's messengers of grace were through the man's wife and children. He will have the greater condemnation than one in an unreached land with no witness of the Gospel.

B. Household of Narcissus -- 16:11

(Rom 16:11 NIV) Greet Herodion, my relative. **Greet those in the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.**

There was a Narcissus who had been chief of staff of Emperor Claudius. He was one of the wealthiest men in Rome. He got his wealth by receiving bribes from people who wanted to see the Emperor. He was a wicked man. The halls of his house echoed to blasphemous songs, luxurious gluttony, and unbridled licentiousness. Yet there was salt and light in his household in the form of many Christian slaves.

Life Lesson: Some of you may be very successful and lost. Yet there is a Godly secretary in your office. Or you have many Godly employees.

IV. A Tribute to Shepherding Moms - The Mother of Rufus -- 16:13

(Rom 16:13 NIV) Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and **his mother, who has been a mother to me, too.**

In Mark 15:21 Simon of Cyrene is described as the father of Alexander and Rufus. If this is the same Rufus, then the reason the father is identified with his sons is because he was not known to the recipients of the letter. Mark writes to the Church at Rome. The chance meeting of Jesus on the road to Calvary changed Simon's life forever and changed his family. Simon's wife became like a mother to Paul and others. Rufus' mother was a shepherd.

Life Lesson: The most important ones to reach are our own children. The most important ones to teach are our own children.

Teach character – Character is more important than accountability. You can have an accountability partner, but if you don't have character you will lie to your accountability partner; or you will blame

your accountability partner for your failure. Character is what you will do or not do when no one can see or ever find out. We need people of character today. Mothers and fathers make a list of biblical character qualities and teach them to your children constantly. Teach them systematically during family devotions. Don't make excuses for not having family devotions because of the busyness of modern life. Make it a priority. Teach character systematically. When our Bryan was little he loved the "Character Sketches" series.

Then teach character in daily living. You will have countless opportunities to teach character in the activities of daily living. This is the command of Deuteronomy 6:6-9.

(Deut 6:6-9 NIV) These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. {7} Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. {8} Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. {9} Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Take the myriad of opportunities to teach character when you are working on the car, weeding the garden, cutting the grass, doing yard projects, cleaning the house, washing the dishes, etc. And don't ever let an able-bodied teen sit behind a TV, computer screen, or text message while you are out working in the yard.

If you teach your children character you will not have to worry about what they are doing when you can't see them. And kids remember the shame and reproach you will bring on your parents who love you dearly if you should violate the character they have taught you. And when you are tempted remember the greater shame and reproach you will bring on the Lord Jesus if you disobey Him.

Set the example before your children. The greatest lessons they will learn they will learn from watching you, especially when you don't know they are watching.

One day a little girl was helping her mother do the dishes at the kitchen sink. She suddenly noticed that her mother had several strands of white hair sticking out, in contrast on her brunette head.

She looked at her mother and inquisitively asked, "Mommy, why are some of your hairs white?"

Her mother replied, "Well, every time you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white."

The little girl was silent for a while, and then said, "Poor Grandma. You must have been a very, very bad girl."

Teach your children to hate evil

(Psa 12:8 NIV) The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men.

(Isa 5:20 NIV) Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Life Lesson: Rufus' mother had been a mother to Paul and all God's servants.

Love in the home

If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place, but have not love, I am a housekeeper--not a homemaker.

If I have time for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements, but have

not love, my children learn cleanliness--not godliness.

Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laugh.
Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window.
Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk.
Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys.

Love is present through the trials.
Love reprimands, reproves, and is responsive.
Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child, then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood.
Love is the key that opens salvation's message to a child's heart.

Before I became a mother I took glory in my house of perfection.
Now I glory in God's perfection of my child.
As a mother, there is much I must teach my child, but the greatest of all is love.

A mother can touch a whole generation just by loving her own child well.

But winning the Mother of the Year award or Father of the Year award or Kid of the Year will not get you into heaven.

Why?

A. God is Holy and Demands Holiness

Exodus 15:11 "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"

Hebrews 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

1 Peter 1:15-16 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; *{16}* for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Revelation 21:27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

B. Man's Condition:

1. All have sinned.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:10-12 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

2. The penalty for sin is death.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Revelation 20:14-15 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

3. The penalty is certain.

Hebrews 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

Proverbs 27:1 Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

4. No one can save himself.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

C. God's Provision: Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

I Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

D. Man's Response: Trust Christ by Faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast.

Romans 10:9-10 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

John 1:12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

Mother's Prayers Have Followed Me ([Bentley D. Ackley](#), c.1912)

1. I grieved my Lord from day to day,
I scorned His love so full and free,
And though I wandered far away,
My mother's prayers have followed me.

Refrain:

I'm coming home, I'm coming home,
To live my wasted life anew,
For mother's prayers have followed me,
Have followed me the whole world through.

2. O'er desert wild, o'er mountain high,
A wanderer I chose to be;
A wretched soul, condemned to die,
Still mother's prayers have followed me.
3. He turned my darkness into light,
This blessed Christ of Calvary!
I'll praise His name both day and night,
That mother's prayers have followed me.