

SERMON: PAUL'S PLAY MAMA

Romans 16:13

Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

Introduction

Paul would end many of his letters with special greetings to individuals he knew personally. It is easy to skim over these personal greetings as unimportant for us today. This is especially true since many of the names are hard to pronounce. While I was doing research on Rufus and Alexander, the great leaders of the early church, who were the sons of Simon of Cyrene, the African who carried the cross for Jesus, this verse jumped out at me and gave me the idea for this sermon. This proves that God's Word is both timeless and timely. It is good for all ages and eras. Although the Bible was penned centuries ago, it has an "app" for every current situation. Even the verses that at first seem insignificant, on further reading and meditation, can be the source of great truth and inspiration. This verse is one of those verses.

This verse could be translated this way: "Say hello to Rufus and his mother for me; his mother is just like a second mother to me."

This verse also brought thoughts of our culture, in which it is common to have "play mothers," "play fathers," and "play siblings." So, let me translate it through the eyes of our Black oral culture. "Say hey to Rufus and don't forget to say hey to his mama too. You know, she is my play mama."

"Play families" started in slavery when families were torn apart as members were sold to other plantations, many times in a distant state. This was devastating to all of the slaves, but especially to the children. "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child a long way from home," expresses this mental agony. The psychological damage was ameliorated but never erased. The creation of play family members, especially play mamas, was a way to nurture and support a person who was taken away from their biological family members. It was a loving survival strategy or tactic.

A conversation could have gone like this: "Honey, I know you miss your real mama, but I'll be your play mama. Nobody can take the place of your real mama, but I will take you in and do the best I can. I will treat you just like you are my own flesh and blood. When we eat, you will eat. When we pray, you will pray. Come and meet your play sisters and

brothers. We are family now. If your real mama is saved and you get saved, you can meet her again forever in heaven. Now, let's get on our knees and pray and thank God, that you made it here safe and sound."

Other cultures have ladies, who function as second mothers, but it is more prevalent in our community and we coined the term "play mother." After slavery, this survival phenomenon continued. It continues even to this day. This grew into "church mothers" and "mother's boards." The biological mothers and the play mothers never experienced conflict or rivalry for the play child's love. There was and is enough love to go around in these relationships. The biological mother appreciated the extra help in rearing the child. In addition, the play mother knew how far to go and not cross the invisible lines. The biological mother and the play mother had the same ideas about discipline and nurturing. These bonds between the play mother and the play child usually continued until the death of one of them severed the earthly relationship.

Now back to our Scripture. To repeat, Mark tells us that Simon of Cyrene, the man who carried the cross of Jesus, had two sons: Alexander and Rufus. Was this the same Rufus to whom Paul was greeting? If that is true, his mother would be Simon of Cyrene's wife. Many Bible scholars believe she was Simon's wife. We will not really know until we get to heaven, and then it really will not matter. Let's see what this verse teaches us.

Exposition

1. There Is Nothing On Earth Like A Mother's Love.

(It Extends From The Womb To The Tomb.)

(There Are Many Biblical Examples: Mary, Jochebed, Hannah, Elizabeth, Lois, Eunice, And Many More.)

(There Are Many Examples In Antioch-Lithonia.)

2. Mothers Have Amazing Impact- Even Outside Of Their Own Homes.

(This Woman Was The Play Mother Of The Man Who Penned Half Of The New Testament.)

(Perhaps, She Nursed Him Through A Serious Illness.)

(Perhaps She Let Him Stay In Her Home For An Extended Period During One Of His Missionary Journeys.)

(We Can Speculate About The Details, But We Do Know They Developed A Close Loving Bond.)

3. We Should Never Take Our Mothers For Granted.

(Never Forget The People Who Helped You Along The Way.)

(Don't Take Any Blessing For Granted.)

Closing Thoughts

I will close with a little poem written by an anonymous individual.

“Thank God for a mother who knows how to pray.

Thank God for a mother who reads the Bible every day.

Thank God for a mother who knows how to guide.

Thank God for a mother who walks by the Savior's side.

Thank God for a mother who knows God is real.

Thank God for a mother whose salvation is sealed.

Thank God for a Christian mother.

There is no need for her children to roam,

Because she makes her house a godly home.”

Related Scripture

Mark 15:21

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