

“Lessons Learned from Zipporah”

By Brother Parrish Lee

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You may be seated, all except for the moms. Everybody except for the moms. Yeah, I'm waiting for all the men to be seated. Aren't they beautiful? Aren't they beautiful? Before y'all get seated, my mom told me one thing—she told me a lot of things, but, one of the things that she told me, she said, “Parrish, I don't want you slapping a whole lot of flowers while I'm gone, if you ain't going to give me my flowers while I'm living. I don't want you sitting all up there, talking about how you miss me while I'm gone, if you ain't going to tell me you love me while I'm living.” Amen? Amen? Do we love them? Are they beautiful? Thank you, thank you.

Mother's Day; happy Mother's Day to everybody.

Giving honor to God, Who is the Head of my life, Who is the Head of our lives. That Maker, that Creator, the omnipotent One, that omniscient One, the omnipresent One, the One without whom nothing would be in existence. The One whose love and compassion keeps us every single day. The One who never takes anything for granted, though we might. The One who forgives us for things that we can't even bring to mind when we offend. The One who is the true Lover of our souls. Giving honor to Him, that great and wonderful God. Giving honor to all of those who have come, and stood in the gap to make up the hedge, from Adam, down through the ones who lived in Scripture times, down to the ones who lived even in the founding of our ministry, from our founding pastor, and our pastor whom we have now, Pastor Paine, our general pastor. And all the load that they bear, those, and those that labored with them. Which, actually, we're going to talk a little bit about, today, those who labored with the men. Giving honor to all of them, who put their lives for the love of the Gospel, who, for the love of the Lord, hazarded their lives for ministry's sake, for the love of God's sake. And, giving honor to all of y'all, who come and say, “There is nothing else, nothing higher, nothing better, nothing outside, nothing worthy of my time, outside of God. And, because of Him, all blessings flow.”

I want to say happy Mother's Day to everyone here. Today is the *official* Mother's Day, the second Sunday—at least, in the United States, at least in the United States; it's not that way everywhere. Mother's Day is different everywhere, because, here in the United States, it started here in 1914, but, it was already going on around the world, people honoring their moms for different things. And, it actually came in—I've got to give a little excerpt before we get, and read our Scripture text for today—it actually came into being, because there was one woman, here name was Ann Jarvis. And, because of her love for her mom, and she actually helped, during the Civil War, on both sides. She played the role of a nurse, to nurse the wounded back, so, truly she was a mother to many who were wounded. And, she wanted to have a Mother's Day celebration, so, she labored for it and labored for it, and President Woodrow Wilson, he actually signed it into law, but, right after he signed it into law, as the case was, and this was 1914, before TV's, before telephones like we got them, before big billboards, and all the stuff that we got going on now; this was before that. There was already a commercialism for Mother's Day; people were trying to make money off of it, and, yeah, Hallmark was one of them. It goes back that far. And, she, actually, got angry about it, because she knew, if you commercialize something, it takes away from its importance. She said, “We don't need to make a general holiday; people need to take care of their moms, in their homes. And this needs to be a real personal thing, because, once you generalize things, then it takes away from its importance.” She really got upset about that. So, Mother's Day, it actually is on the onus of all of us. And that is my introduction for Mother's Day. If you have any ability, any capability to honor your mom today, please do so, please do so. I'm not even asking the circumstance. Just treat your mom right. As much as lieth within you, give her a blessing. IF

y'all are estranged—and I'll say this before God Almighty—if y'all are estranged, take it to the Lord, the great healer of everything. Take it to Him. For those of us who's mothers have passed, we ask for a blessing and a comfort from God, because we will never find anyone who will do for us what mom will do. And, as this point, we're not insensitive, in fact, there was a few people who called today, and said, "You know, I just can't think of them; it's just that hard for me." And I understand. I'm sure we all would. We ask for a comfort from the only One we know who gives that kind of comfort, and that's God, Himself.

So, our text for today, our text for today is about a woman with a very famous husband. I'm going to ask our sister, Linda Alford, if she would come, please, and she's going to read from the Book of Exodus, in chapter two, verses sixteen through twenty-one.

Exodus 2:16-21 *Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to day? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock. And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread. And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.*

Could we bow our heads, for just a moment? Almighty God, what a joy You bring unto Your people, God, to be able to worship You. And, God, with blessings that You pour out. God, we thank You for all You have done for us, for we know none like You. God, You are the giver of all good and perfect gifts. And we thank You, first and foremost of everything, God. And, as we come before You, Lord, we ask, we ask for a blessing on our families, we ask for a blessing on ourselves, we ask a blessing on our very lives, and this, God, this, as we turn to You and ask for a blessing during our time of listening to Your Word, of delving into it, that You might feed us, according to Your Scriptures, with our daily bread. And, grant it, God, that You said, that Your Word would not return unto You void, but surely accomplish that to which You sent it. And that it what we claim, this morning: A blessing, in the name of Jesus. And everyone said, amen. Amen.

So, we see, here, there was this Moses guy, and we know the story—well, we know most of the story—and, if we didn't, about a month ago, at Easter-time, there it was, "The Ten Commandments." And, he looked a lot like Charlton Heston, Moses. Big staff, long flowing robe, you know. So, whenever I say Moses—if you saw the movie when you were young, that's the image that keeps coming to you. But, anyway, the title of the message, today, is, "Lessons Learned from Zipporah." So, we see here that Zipporah was a Midianite, a Midianite. But, we have to define, 'Midianite.' We have to define it, and this is important for the set-up of who she was and what she did. Now, many of us know that Abraham had two sons, but, that's not where the story ends. In fact, after Sarah died, Abraham had another wife. And, his next wife's name was Keturah.

Genesis 25:1-2 *Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, [Midian] and Ishbak, and Shuah.*

So, she bore him six more kids, one of whom was Midian. So, Midian was actually a son of Abraham. And, if we could skip down to verse number six, we would see:

Genesis 25:6 *But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.*

Into the East country. So, we see here, and this is important, not only did Ishmael get sent away from Isaac, but *all* of his other kids got sent away. All of them. This is important. Now, we know that it must have been something to know that your father is the father that received the Promise of God. And, yet—I don't know how many of us have siblings, here, but, sometimes it becomes a problem when one of the siblings perceives that the parents play favorites with the kids. Sometimes it is perceived that, when parents have more than one child, they always—I don't know this to be a fact; I've seen it in my family, but—it seems like, when kids are together, and the two parents—and, sometimes, just the one parent—and there's more than one kid, they strive and vie for that attention. They all want to be recognized, and they all want to be special in the eyes of the parents. This would have been the case. Ishmael, of course, was the oldest, and then you have Isaac, and then you have all the rest of them. But, they all got sent away from Isaac. I don't know, I don't know if anybody here has ever got that, where they got put second, or pushed down in the order of pecking order, or, maybe, at this time, the parents chose this one over, you know, over you. It had to be such a feeling. Well, this tribe of Midian, the lineage of Midian that came from Abraham, they would have been able to call Abraham to their father. And, the Midianites, having that, and being sent away, when Moses comes back to them, and he finds this small group of people, the Bible says, as we just read, that he encountered these women who were trying to feed the flock, but the shepherds were there, and they pushed them aside, letting them know that their turn is not yet. But Moses, Moses, according to the Bible, did something about it.

Now, Reuel, who was her father, and this also was important, he only knew what they told him. So, he asked them, “How come you got finished so soon?” And they said, “Oh, there was an Egyptian...” so he knew that Moses was an Egyptian, and, let's face it, at that time, Egypt was a swinging place. And he knew that this man, one man, chased away all the shepherds. So, he knew that, whatever this man was about, it was strength. This man was something to be reckoned with, something to be recognized. Maybe he was taught some Jiu Jitsu in the house of Pharaoh, who knows? But they knew you couldn't mess with him. And, the other thing that Reuel, or the father of Zipporah, would have known, was that this man had compassion. He drew the water for both them, and their sheep. This is a man that will take care of the house. He'll take care of family. This man, for one, he's strong, he must know something, he comes from the place where it's happening, he's also, he's strong enough to chase away, he's a protector, he also has compassion; and this man got seven daughters. Seven daughters. And, so, what's the only question he asked them? “Where is he? Why did you let him go? I got seven of y'all! Are you kidding me?” So, they went and got him, and brought him back, and the Bible says he was pleased to dwell with them. So, he was pleased to dwell with them, and, so, it's important, it's important to know that he chose one of them to be the wife of Moses, and Zipporah must have thought, “Yeah! I hit the jackpot! This guy came all the way from Egypt, and he chased away—he's as strong as an army, yeah! And, you know what? He is a compassionate man! Got it! I hit the lotto!” And, so, from that point, she would have thought, “This is going to work out all right.”

And then came, the burning bush, the burning bush. You see, everything changes at the burning bush. Before the burning bush, the Midianites would have thought, “Well, yeah, the Israelites got their thing going on, over there in Egypt, yeah, they're slaves, and they're supposed to be the chosen people, but we got Abraham to our father, too, you know? So, we got things going on with us, too. We're not completely left out of the picture.” And, those things, that thing, that special covenant that God set up on Abraham, that would divide him from every other person, that covenant between him and God, they were part of that. They knew about that God. And, so, they would have thought, “Well, yeah, we're part of the chosen people,” and it's amazing, because I had the opportunity to go and have dinner with some friends of mine, some Pakistani friends, and, one was Muslim, and one was Christian, and we went down to another family, who were Jewish. And, so, there we had, in one house, we had Christian people, Muslim people, and Jewish people. Yeah, yeah. And, it was amazing; you could see that everybody was trying to be nice, but everybody was also trying to take a stand on something. And, it's

amazing, because one of the Jewish women, she just shut it down, she said, "Well, the fact of the matter is, whatever we say, we all claim to be children of Abraham. We all do." And I thought, "You know what? This is..." And you could see that she was planting a flag, here. So, do you want to proceed? Do you want to cause a fight? Are we going to have a war, right here in this little house? I don't think so. But, it was amazing how that was the defining moment. And, so, this is how it might have been, prior to the burning bush. And the Midianites, the Midianites would have thought, "We're all children of Abraham. We've all had access to the promise." But, see, the burning bush changes everything.

The burning bush, after the burning bush, instead of Moses coming in, talking about how shepherding the flock went that day, what kind of animals he had to scare off, or whoever he had to fight and strive; now, he's coming in the house to Zipporah, saying, "God's been speaking to me! God has been talking to me! God has been dealing with me! There's some things that's going to have to happen, because God says so. Changes is going to have to be made, because God says so." And, I can imagine, I can imagine what Zipporah must have said. Zipporah must have said, "Hey! I didn't ask for all this. I thought I was getting an Egyptian that was compassionate, and he was solid, he was strong. I thought that this man was going to be home every night. I thought this was the kind of man that I was going to excel, and have no worries, no more. And, now he's talking about something greater, and something more personal than anybody else is talking about. Now this man is talking about God. I mean, how are you going to compete with that?" Poor Zipporah must have thought, "Wow, I'm getting more than I bargained for in this whole deal." So, it had to bring her to a certain point.

Now Moses had to realize that that first forty years that he spent in Egypt was a time of preparation. And, then, he had to figure, well, that next forty years was also a time of preparation. So, on the one hand, in Pharaoh's court, in Pharaoh's house, he learned about all the things that Pharaoh, and, let's face it, they were the kingdom of the world, at the time. They would have had knowledge, they would have had instruction, they would have known how to do things. In fact, the only ancient seventh wonder of the world, they say, the only one still standing is the one in Egypt, the pyramids. They wonder how they did it. That's the ancient seventh wonder of the world. One of them, anyway. Now, this place had to be incredible at that time, and they were a feared army. They were a very feared army, at the time. They were prosperous, because they had learned from the days of Joseph. So, they had learned irrigation, and the things that were going on in their civilization was quite a bit. So, Moses had it going on, and he had to know that that was a time of preparation, and maybe he didn't know for what, but he had to know that was a time for being prepared for something. And, then, he had to learn how to be a shepherd, how to be a shepherd. And this is really important: How to be a shepherd, how to be humble, how to get down there with the sheep. And they say sheep are basically dumb animals. But, how do you care for dumb animals?

Moses had to have a time of being prepared for what God was calling him to do. Now, this was a great work, and there was a great expectation on this, because it was going to be a great work. And Zipporah had to know, she had to know, in seeing that preparation that something was coming, something was coming, and you might say, "Well, what's this got to do with Mother's Day?" This is all a set-up for it. This is all a set-up for it. You see, in all of the things that Moses was learning, every one of them was important. And, why, why so long at being a shepherd? It doesn't say exactly how long. He might have been out there for years, and shepherding might have come much later; it doesn't say. But, he had to spend some time learning how to be a shepherd. And, why a shepherd? Why is that so important? Why is it so important? Shepherds stink! Shepherds don't have time to take care of themselves like they want to. They have to deal with animals that get into trouble all the time; animals that are fodder for enemies that come along. Why? Why a shepherd? The same reason, the same reason why it was the angels who came from Heaven to give the news of the birth of the Savior to the world to shepherds first. Why shepherds? Because shepherds have to care, have to tend, have to feed the flock. They have to learn, they have to learn how to feed the flock. And, in this case, it is the

awesome flock of God's people, themselves. But, in learning this lesson, you see, Moses wasn't the only shepherd in the house. Because, when we read the story, we also read Zipporah was a shepherd. She had to learn that these things are needed for leading people. So, when she saw some of the things going on in Moses, she had to understand that's what a shepherd has to do for that flock.

If we could skip on down to verse number twenty-two, Exodus, chapter four, and verse number twenty-two. Here is where the next call comes, and God is calling Moses to do even yet, more. And He says, here:

Exodus 4:22-24 *And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn. And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.*

Whoa! Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa: Two verse of go and talk to the great Pharaoh, and the very next verse, God is going to kill him? God will kill Moses? Yes, yes.

Exodus 4:25-26 *Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go: So, God let Moses go; God did not take his life.] then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.*

A bloody husband. And whenever we see blood, you see blood outside of the body, you always say, "Wooo! Somebody's bleeding. I wonder how much? I wonder how bad they're hurt?" Too much blood being gone means death. We are entering a dangerous situation here. And she was coming to her husband, saying, "You are a bloody husband! You are bringing something of harm into our house! You're a bloody husband, shepherd of the great flock! You're a bloody husband, you testator of the new testament!" Because, you see, it's Zipporah's job to also watch over her flock to make sure no sin is in the camp.

Now, when this all came into mind, this has to reinforce, in our minds, that, even if you're called, God wants you to be faithful. Even if you're called. God wants to bless you, and He wants you to be faithful to Him. Now, when Zipporah saw Moses, she didn't just see her husband, she saw the father of her children. She had to. She saw the father of her children, and what was going to happen. She saw the leader of this great nation, and what was going to happen. When she saw that, she had to see all that preparation going on, and she said, "This might not have been what I chose, but here I am, now. Here I am, and God's calling me, like He called my husband. And it's my turn to help him, to do what's right, to support this house, to be a guardian over my children. I just can't leave everything up to him, because God called me, too, and God taught me, too."

We were—we had to learn a real important lesson—well, I learned a real important lesson, last week. We had congregational worship; it was really nice. We were talking about women in the Bible. We wanted to get through women in the Old Testament and the New Testament; we only got through the Old Testament. And, we asked, "How many people can name ten women in the Bible?" A few hands went up. "How many can name twenty?" A few less hands went up. "How many can name thirty?" And, then, I got some looks back, and then, "How many can name forty?" "How many can name fifty women in the Bible, and what they did and why they stand out?" And this was for a reason. Anyway, it was supposed to jog our hearts that, if we can't, that is something to seek for. Why would there be a less importance there? There are lessons that we learn from women in the Bible. So, anyway, as we got to one of the questions, one of the young ladies, Brother Arman and Vergie, their daughter, little Ashley. She couldn't—her little hand was raised, the answer, of course, was Esther, and we had to say what lessons we've learned from these woman. And she went on to say that the lesson

that she learned from Esther—and I made the comment, “Wow! That's really special that you know so much about Esther.” And she said, she said—I think she's seven or eight; she's right in there. She's much younger than I am. And she said, “Well, yeah, Esther's one of my favorites, and I can identify with her, because, like her, I feel like I have to care for, and help, my people.” And, when she said that, it was like, reaching out the mike, dropping it, and walking away. There was nothing to say to that, and you realize how God is even moving on young ones, young ones.

So, this was all to help us signify that we, too, have things in our lives, that we're called of God, and last part, last part of this message: Zipporah wanted to keep sin out of the camp.

Zipporah wanted to keep sin out of the camp. Now, as a shepherd, shepherd—I don't know what's the right terminology for a woman shepherd, shepherdess? I don't know, I didn't see it in there. But, she also had to know that, when sheep get sick, one of the dangers is, all the sheep could get sick. She had to notice that, if an enemy comes in, that enemy can take one sheep, depending on the enemy, or he could take many sheep. If it's a lion, it could be a pride of lions. If it's a bear, it could be a bunch of bears. If it's a cougar, if it's a snake, whatever. It could take one; it could take several. Whatever the case, it's going to harm the flock. So, for her to recognize that, not keeping the precious covenant of God was going to have harm in her house, that's her job. So, to go to her husband and say, “Thou art a bloody husband to me,” she had to know that the responsibility to this fell to her. You see, she knew how important keeping the covenant of God was going to be to her house. And just like all mothers, just like all mothers do, they tell their kids, “I want to know who you're hanging around with.” Yeah, they tell their kids, “I want to know what you were doing when you got real quiet for so long. What are you doing? What are you doing?” “How are you doing in school? I want to see your grades.” And, if moms feel like they're getting the treatment, they say, “What's your teacher's name and number? I want to do a check-up on you.” That's how moms are! They protect over the kids. Fathers do, but this is Mother's Day. Fathers do, too, absolutely, but, today, on Mother's Day, we're going to talk about the moms. Yeah. And, what else do moms do? They don't just do the local look, because, if—one of the young kids was telling me that she got a bump, and her mom nearly fainted when she saw blood. She was like, “Ohhhh, my child! My child! She's bleeding! Auggggh!” She said she quit doing that because, everybody's going to pass out, and, “All I got is a scratch.” But, her point was that her mom cares for her so much that affects her. And moms don't just see it on a local level, they see it on a peripheral level. They see it in its perimeter and all its parameters.

So, when she wanted to keep sin out of the camp, she realized that all that sin was going to bring damage into the house. And that damage could always be to death and destruction. And all moms want their kids to work out to be positive. So, Zipporah, yes, was a great example.

And, our last Scripture. For those of you women who—we talked about—who are not just mothers to your own kids, and some who aren't mothers yet but are mothering others. And, I thank you, personally, because some of you have been a mother to me, and thank you so much. But, to those of you who did not come, who mother to those, outside of your own bodies, there is an apostle who recognizes you. But, there is an apostle who recognizes all of the ladies who are mothers outside of their own bodies.

Romans 16:13 *Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.*

Rufus's mom didn't just extend her maternal-ness to Rufus, she also extended it to Apostle Paul. Amen?