



Volume 8, No. 11, November, 2020



THEME SONG

If I Could Hear My Mother Pray Again

1. *How sweet and happy seem those days of which I dream,
When memory recalls them now and then!
And with what rapture sweet my weary heart would beat,
If I could hear my mother pray again.*
 - *Refrain:
If I could hear my mother pray again,
If I could hear her tender voice as then!
So glad I'd be, 't'would mean so much to me,
If I could hear my mother pray again.*
2. *She used to pray that I on Jesus would rely,
And always walk the shining gospel way;
So trusting still His love, I seek that home above,
Where I shall meet my mother some glad day.*
3. *Within the old home-place her patient, smiling face
Was always spreading comfort, hope and cheer;
And when she used to sing to her eternal King,
It was the songs the angels loved to hear.*
4. *Her work on earth is done, the life-crown has been won,
And she will be at rest with Him above;
And some glad morning she, I know, will welcome me
To that eternal home of peace and love.*

*Pray Again, James Rowe, pub.1922
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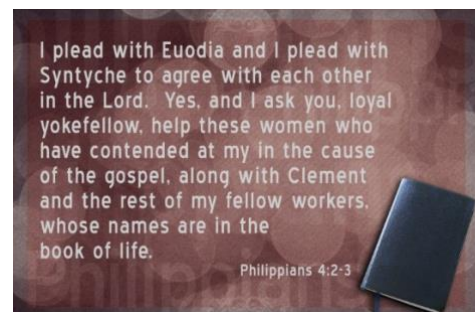
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Euodia and Syntyche

Well, so I had understood initially that the theme of this month's Sunrise was Women of the Bible, and it was only after I submitted my preliminary idea for a Sunrise essay that I realized the theme was actually - *Favorite Women of the Bible*. Now, if I had really thought about *Favorite Women of the Bible*, I would probably never have chosen Euodia and Syntyche. Because, you see, these two ladies had a serious problem. Yet the more I thought about it, the more I thought that they could perhaps have been among my favorites. But let's not jump ahead; let's start at the beginning.

The only place in the Bible we read specifically about these two women with the striking names is Philippians 4:2, 3 – two short verses that tell us a great deal:

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.



We know Euodia and Syntyche were members of the Philippian congregation, a church that had sent a gift to Paul in prison, had been so distressed when their messenger Epaphroditus fell ill, and had often seen to

Paul's needs in his ministry. We know Euodia and Syntyche had labored side by side in the gospel with Paul himself. We know their names were written in the book of life.

That, however, may not be the very first allusion to them in the Bible. Let us go back a little further in time to an event recorded in Acts 16:11, 12a, 13, 14:

So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi ... And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

Euodia and Syntyche are not mentioned here in Acts, but it is interesting to note that the church in Philippi began with a discussion with a group of God-fearing women and that a woman was the first to obey the gospel in that city. It is not too far a stretch to imagine that our two ladies were in that group at the riverside, or at least that they were among the first friends Lydia reached out to with her new belief in Jesus. Euodia and Syntyche had certainly labored side by side with Paul, indicating they may have been instrumental in bringing others to Christ in Philippi. They must have been among those Paul had in mind when he wrote in the first chapter of "...your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

Yet somewhere along the way, for some unknown reason Euodia and Syntyche had butted heads. Perhaps it was a serious matter; perhaps it was trivial. Whatever it was though, feelings were hurt, pride was offended, and a division had set in.

So, Paul decided the best way to address this entrenched conflict was to call them out – gently. He does not address them as a unit, but rather as individuals – "I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche..." Thus, he hearkens back to Jesus' teaching that it is up to each person in a conflict, whether perceiving self as the offender or the offended, to initiate an attempt at reconciliation (Matthew 5:24; 18:15). He asks an unknown "true companion," perhaps a long-time mutual friend, to help them.

Finally, Paul talks about the faithful actions of these women, calling them to live up to their sanctified selves.

So, can you imagine listening with the rest of the Philippian church to the first public reading of this letter? You no longer sit side-by-side with your dear friend and fellow worker, but instead awkwardly on the opposite side of the room. As you sit there, you listen to and contemplate Paul's words about faithfulness in imprisonment, about Christ's humility, about being lights to the world, about rejoicing in the Lord, about straining toward the goal. But then suddenly you hear *your* name *and* your estranged friend's name read in the letter – right there in front of everyone – and it's not exactly a glowing commendation!

That is all we know of the story of Euodia and Syntyche. Rarely does the Bible give us full biographies. Sometimes the Scripture just gives us glimpses of people's lives, often at moments of crisis or decision. We can fill in the best or worst ending ourselves, and in the process the lesson becomes our own. I really like to think that these two women were cut to the heart when they heard their names called out, that they were shocked to think how this conflict had drawn them off course. Or, if their consciences were still numbed, I like to think that Paul's words began the softening process so that eventually neither could get a good night's sleep until she had made it right.

Yes, I do like to think that they made it right, because then I could honestly say that Euodia and Syntyche are indeed in my list of *Favorite Women of the Bible*.

Ina McKune, Rolla, Missouri



FAVORITE WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

It is hard for me to choose a favorite woman of the Bible. There were so many of great faith, highly blessed and led by God. Then we have the other side—Jezebel, the epitome of evil. God does not hesitate to show us both sides of the human condition. When we see both sides, we better understand the holiness of God compared to the utter sinfulness of mankind. He shows us both sides so we can know the consequences of each. When God is absent from hearts and lives, the evil one takes over.

In Genesis 2, we read about the creation of the first woman, Eve. In her story, we see the difference between perfection (holiness) and sinfulness (evil) and the consequences they bring. I wonder what it felt like to have no childhood, no earthly parents, and no siblings. As long as she obeyed God, she would not mourn those things. She had the perfect husband and the perfect home in the Garden of Eden. She walked with her Creator in the perfect garden.

Yet, she gave it all away for one bite of forbidden fruit. How many times have we believed the lie? I wonder, did Eve carry the guilt and sorrow of her actions the rest of her life, or did she accept the forgiveness her Creator offered and move on? We don't know. We are not told. We only see and hear the consequences of her sin.

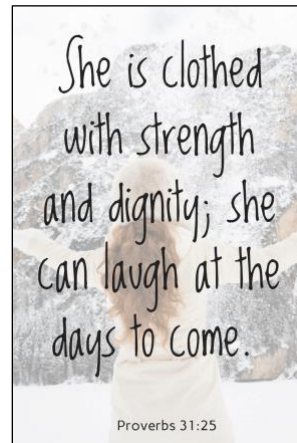
In Genesis 6-8, Noah's wife is mentioned four times but never by name. I wonder what it felt like to continually hear the ridicule and laughter of their friends and neighbors, while her husband built the ark and preached to the people about the coming destruction. Building the ark took approximately 120 years (Genesis 6:3). No one listened or took heed, much as it is in our own time. She was busy raising three sons to be righteous and marry godly women. I wonder if she was ever tempted to say to Noah, "Stop. Give it up. No one is listening."

When God shut the eight people in the ark before the rain began, did she grieve for all the lost people below? When God closes a door, only He can open it again. Do we grieve for the lost? Did she complain about the stench and the noise from all the animals? The ark was her home for about a year. We think we have it bad due to the pandemic. May we never complain!

Down through the ages, we read about many women who fit the description of Proverbs 31:10-13, the wife of noble character. Do we fit the description? (1) She



is "worth far more than rubies." (2) Her husband has "full confidence in her." (3) She works hard. (4) She gets up early and provides food for her family. (5) She takes care of her home. (6) She's thrifty. (7) She supplies clothing for her family. (8) She "helps take care of the poor." (9) She is "clothed with strength and dignity." (10) She speaks with wisdom. (11) She "fears the Lord." (12) She can "laugh at the days to come," (no worrying about tomorrow).



In the New Testament, the first two women we discover are Mary and Elizabeth. Mary was a young woman, a virgin, who was engaged to Joseph, a righteous man (Matthew 1:19). She was chosen by God to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel." Luke 1:28 says she was, "highly favored by the Lord." Mary was puzzled but did not doubt the word of the Lord. What an awesome privilege—to bring the Savior of mankind into the world!

Elizabeth was Mary's cousin. Though she was well past childbearing age, through the power of the Holy Spirit, she conceived and bore John, later called John the Baptist. Through her the prophecies of Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 4:5-6 were fulfilled. John was the forerunner of Jesus. He was, "A voice of one calling in the desert; prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the wilderness, a highway for our God." (Isaiah 40:3) (NIV)

My prayer for all of God's women in the church is for us to keep "growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," (2 Peter 3:18). May we strive to become more and more like the character of the noble wife/woman.

Mary Anna Melton, Rolla, MO



Advancing the Kingdom

The expression, “actions speak louder than words,” was first used in the US by Abraham Lincoln in 1856.

We meet Priscilla in Acts 18 and we might say her actions speak louder than her words. In the seven times she is mentioned in the NT, there is no recorded conversation Priscilla has with anybody. So, we do not have her words. We gain insight into her life by what is said about her and how her faith is expressed through her actions.

Luke records she is a *tentmaker* with her husband, Aquila (Acts 18:1-3).

Paul calls both Priscilla and Aquila *fellow workers* (Romans 16:3).

We learn that the couple are *risk takers* according to Paul (Romans 16:4).

Priscilla and Aquila *teach* Apollos further about God and baptism (Acts 18:24-26).

All these actions are admirable, but there is one action that seems to dominate Priscilla’s life. Hospitality! Hospitality that advances the kingdom. Priscilla uses her home to connect others with God and with each other.

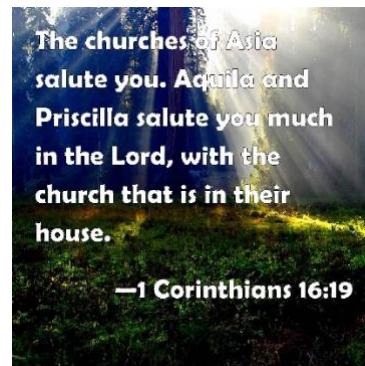
First – When Paul arrived in Corinth, he met Aquila and Priscilla who were also tentmakers. Priscilla *opened their home* to Paul, and Paul lived with them. As the three work together as tentmakers, they become good friends and partners in advancing the kingdom (Acts 18:1-3).

Second – They *invited the eloquent Apollos to their home* after he spoke in the synagogue in Ephesus. Hearing him speak, Priscilla and Aquila realized he did not know of Christian baptism and extended an invitation to their home. Most likely after eating together and enjoying fellowship, they spend time in conversation and study about God and his will (Acts 18:24-26). This knowledge is useful to Apollos as he continues to speak about God.

Third – Paul concludes his letter to the Romans with personal greetings. He greets Priscilla and Aquila and makes mention that the Gentiles are also grateful for them. In Romans 16:5 we learn the *church meets in their house*. The couple opens their home so the church can gather each week to have communion, sing

praises, pray, and study together. As the church meets each week, it is a time of encouragement to all.

Fourth – Again we see Priscilla and Aquila *opening their home* to the church. In Corinth as in Rome, the church meets at their house (I Cor. 16:19).



Priscilla seems to have an open-door policy. She uses her home to further the cause of the kingdom in whatever way she can.

Anne Ortlund in her book, “Open Home, Open Heart” says, “The only thing important in life is God and people and connecting the first with the last.” Priscilla, a connector, uses her home to connect people to God.

Priscilla reminds me that hospitality is key to advancing God’s kingdom. She challenges all of us to dust off our welcome mat, offer an invitation, and see how God can use our hospitality to His glory.

Sally Shank, Oklahoma City, OK

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AN UNLIKELY FAITH HEROINE

Rahab, if not my favorite woman in the Bible, is a very intriguing Bible character. Like the other people of Jericho, Rahab had clearly heard about the miraculous deliverance of the descendants of Israel from bondage in Egypt. Undoubtedly, they knew of Israel’s miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and the subsequent disaster for Pharaoh and his army and Sihon and Og. Did they also hear of the misadventures of the children of Israel as they wandered in the desert for 40 years as that generation perished in the desert? In any case, Rahab recognized the spies in Joshua 2 as the people of God.

Rahab is directly mentioned five times in the Old Testament in Joshua 2:1, 3, 15; Joshua 6:17, 23. She is also mentioned three times in the New Testament in Matthew 1:5, Hebrews 11:31, and James 2:25.

Described as a harlot in Joshua, Rahab was transformed into one of the few women mentioned by name in the Bible. More importantly, Rahab is one of the very few women listed as being in the earthly ancestry of both David and Jesus. Among the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, only two women—Sarah and Rahab—are mentioned by name. The assistance rendered to the two spies of Israel by Rahab was invaluable. Though the prying eyes of Jericho's citizens apparently spotted them when they came into the city, Rahab helped them avoid being discovered by the search party sent out by the king of Jericho. (Joshua 2:8-14)

Rahab had two characteristics that stand out. First, she was industrious and hard working. Though she was referred to as a harlot, she was also a merchant who manufactured and sold linen (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary). Her livelihood was apparently lucrative as indicated by her house being positioned atop the massive wall of Jericho. Archaeologists have excavated much of Jericho, and they have found that all the massive walls of Jericho collapsed—except the portion where Rahab's house was.

Secondly, Rahab was a caring person. Because of Rahab, her own family members (father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all her father's household) were included in her own deliverance (Joshua 2:12-13) from the destruction of Jericho and were protected during the destruction of Jericho. She cared enough about the two Hebrew spies to risk her own life to hide them from the prying eyes of Jericho's citizens.

Though initially placed outside the camp of Israel (Joshua 6:23), she became a part of the nation of Israel and eventually became the wife of Salmon (Ruth 4:20-21). Their son, Boaz, married Ruth. David was a direct descendant of Boaz and Ruth. Joseph (the earthly father to Jesus) was also a descendant of Rahab.

What can we learn from Rahab? No one is irredeemable. People who have less than stellar pasts can have very bright futures if they will follow God's teachings. Rahab obeyed all the instructions given her by the spies of Israel and continued to learn more about God. Otherwise, she would never have become a part of the nation of Israel, much less in the earthly lineage of Jesus.

Wouldn't you love to know more about Rahab's life after being brought into the children of Israel? We can only imagine the transformation that changed the entire direction of this unlikely faith heroine's life. Although at first glance, Rahab was not a favorite, I have gained a new respect for her.

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, Missouri

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Abigail | Samuel 25

With Samuel's death, there is no longer a conscience for King Saul, and David has to flee to the wilderness of Paran. David and his band of 600 rowdy men have been in the area; as a result, they have been a source of protection for Nabal and his men, especially during sheep shearing time.

A feast day is approaching, and David and his men want to be invited to the feast as a kind of payment for their protection of the shearers and shepherds. David sends men to Nabal for an invitation; but Nabal, being the rude, arrogant man that he is, has sent the men back to David empty-handed. David does not take this slight well. He has 400 of his men arm themselves while 200 remain behind to protect their belongings.

Nabal's wife, Abigail, is an intelligent and beautiful person. When she is told of her husband's refusal to pay and is warned of the consequences, she does not hesitate. She quickly gathers up food for David and his men and sends it out to meet them. She doesn't tell her husband but grabs a donkey and rides it out to meet David and his men to plead for their lives.

When she meets David, she gets off the donkey and bows before David. She apologizes for her husband's behavior and says she was unaware of it at the time.



She appeals to David by saying that if he will spare her family and goods, that when he becomes the prince of Israel, he will not suffer a guilty conscience from

destroying her family. David replies that she has saved her household from being wiped out.

Abigail returns to the feasting to tell Nabal what she has done, but he is too drunk, so she waits until morning to tell him. When he hears, he suffers a stroke and dies ten days later.

David is told the news that Nabal is dead and sends his servants to Abigail and wants her to be his wife. She again gets on a donkey, and with five of her maidens, she returns with his men to become David's wife.

There are several reasons why Abigail is one of my favorite women of the Bible.

1. She made the most of her situation. Most of the time, women were not allowed to choose their husbands. Nabal was not a savory character, but Abigail remained true to herself by being kind. Because of that, the servants felt like they could approach her with the news of her husband's rude behavior toward David and his men.
2. She was not afraid to act. Abigail was an intelligent woman. When she was warned by her servants of Nabal's refusal, she quickly devised a plan to try to placate David and his men by sending food to them.
3. She was not afraid to get involved. She got on a donkey and went herself to intercept David and his men and try to smooth over hurt feelings and avoid possibly dire results.
4. She was not punished as a result of her assertive actions but was rewarded. There is no mention of children when she lived with Nabal. It says she left with five maidens. But later in I Chronicles 3, it mentions that Abigail is the mother of Daniel. Not only did she gain a better husband in David, but she got to enjoy the wonders of motherhood.

Lorna Smith, Lubbock, Texas

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A Week of Good Thoughts

Suppose we start this very day

to live our lives in a different way;

Suppose we vowed and constantly tried

to help those in trouble on life's wayside.

If we showed by our deeds a hint of His love,

wouldn't earth be a bit more like heaven above?

On Monday: look for a smile today, and return it with one of your own.

Give someone faith and hope; it's such a beautiful loan.

On Tuesday: Gather a thought that's kind, one that's sincere and deep.

Be sure to pass it along, for such are too precious to keep.

On Wednesday: Forget yesterday's sorrows, mistakes, sadness, and pain.

Lift your heart with hope as flowers to sun and rain.

On Thursday: Offer a word of comfort and prayer to help someone in need.

A little thoughtful gift, some flowers, or a smile makes us all rich indeed.

On Friday: You shall not pass this way again, so do any good you can do.

Don't put it off till tomorrow, or the chance may be lost for you.

On Saturday: Today will soon be a memory, so don't let it come to an end

Without a smile, a song, or just a word from a friend.

On Sunday: Don't let worry and care depress you or brush your joy away,

But arise and give thanks to God above

For His love and another "blest day."

"Let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." Philippians 2:3-4

via House to House, Heart to Heart

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