A Mother’s Voice

This thought originated with Steve Johnson on WordShare. I have revised it, extensively, to make it my own.

Galatians 4:19-23, 30-31
19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,
20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.
21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?
22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.
23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.
31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

A Mother’s Voice
It is the first sound that you ever learned to recognize.

• It was the first source of soothing comfort that you ever experienced.
• While you were still in your mother’s womb,
  o while your intellectual abilities were just being formed,
  o the most familiar sound to you was the voice of your mother.
• From the moment when cognitive processes
  o began to fire through the tiny synapsis of your brain,
  o your mother’s voice was a constant source of auditory stimulus.
• You heard it constantly.
  o Other than your physical environment,
    ▪ it was the single constant in your life.
• After you were born,
  o the voice of your mother was an integral part of your development.
    ▪ As you learned and grew,
    ▪ her voice was constantly with you.
• She comforted you with her soft whispers,
  o she encouraged you as she fed you,
  o she cooed at you when you were playful
  o and she sung to you as you drifted off to sleep.
• Your mother’s voice framed your first experiences in this life,
  o it was the constant thread throughout your early development.

As you grew, that familiar voice stayed with you.
• You learned to speak from listening to your mother’s voice.
  o You learned the difference between good and bad,
  o between right and wrong,
Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

A Mother’s Voice

She taught you the first things that you needed to know about life
and she encouraged you to fully experience life as you grew up.

It was your mother’s voice
that encouraged you to keep trying when you got frustrated.

It was your mother’s voice
that calmed you when you were frightened
and comforted you when you skinned your knee.

You learned to love, to laugh and to live
from the sound of your mother’s voice.

It would be hard, this morning, to overstate the importance of a mother’s voice.

It guides us, it comforts us, it soothes us, it encourages us
and – when necessary – it even scolds us!

We are so familiar with our mother’s voice
that we can tell from the way it sounds
exactly what the intent of her words are
from the instant that we first hear the tone and pitch of her voice.

When she scolds us, or corrects us there is a difference in the way her voice sounds.
When she cautions us or tries to instruct us
her voice takes on a different character
than when she is lovingly adoring us and patiently encouraging us.

We learned from the earliest of ages that when momma’s voice changes, she means business!
Its time to stop and take notice when that hard edge
and authoritative tone find their way into mothers voice.

To Change My Voice
The power of that changed voice is exactly what Paul is trying to convey to the believers in Galatia in our text.

Basically, he says, I wish I could be right there with you,
I wish I could stand face to face with you,
because if I could, I would change my voice as I told you this.

What he’s saying is, this is very important.
This instruction that I am about to give you is critical.

If you were listenting to me speak it to you,
you would note the change in my voice as I said it
and you woud instantly recognize the gravity of the situation.

Notice that Paul is speaking from the perspective of a mother:
“My little children, of whom I travAIL in birth again until Christ be formed in you...”

It’s the voice of a pastor,
the voice of the church,
it is the voice of a spiritual mother.

God is our spiritual father,
• we are each the children of God,
  ▪ but the church is our spiritual mother.

• It is the church that has birthed us
  o and it is the church that will travail with us
  o until Christ is formed in us.

So Paul speaks with a mother's voice
• and he says, if only you could hear me,
  o you would notice the change in my voice
  ▪ and immediately you would know how serious I am.

• It's kind of like when Mom uses your middle name.
  o You know right away, when she calls you by all three names, that you've had it!
  ▪ You know right away that she means business when she calls you by all three names.

• That's the sense of what Paul is trying to convey to the church – this is a serious matter.
  o As a matter of fact, he says, I stand in doubt of you.

Nothing ever bothered me more than when my mom or my dad
• expressed the feeling that they were disappointed in me.
  o Whip me, beat me, ground me,
    ▪ take away the phone, the x-box, the car keys –
    • but don’t tell me how disappointed you are in me!

• That always hurt so deeply
  o because I always wanted my mom and dad to be proud of me.

• That’s the kind of emotion that Paul is trying to invoke here:
  o I’m worried about you,
  o I’m starting to doubt you,
  o I’m disappointed in the direction you’ve taken in your walk with God.

Fleshly Things
Briefly this morning let me touch on the things that had Paul so concerned.
• Having birthed this church into existence
  o and having established it in the grace of God,

• Paul has taught his converts to live for God, by faith,
  o to follow after the things of God
  o not after the ordinances and rudiments of the flesh.

• But word has reached him, now,
  o that they have begun to forsake the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus
  o to return to the complexity of the Old Testament Law.

• The tendency of the flesh is to trust in things that our flesh can comprehend.
  o We understand that the tenets of the law were impossible for man to uphold,
    ▪ we understand that the law was always an unattainable bar of righteousness
    that no man could fully achieve on his own.

  o And you would think that, having been set free from that carnal system
and having been grafted into the spiritual church,
  o that believers would have celebrated their emancipation from the law
  o and never desired to return to it.

But the problem with that lies in our flesh.

- You see, the ordinances of the Old Testament Law were carnal,
  o they were physical,
    - they could be seen,
    - they could be handled,
    - they could be understood.
- The spirit calls us to walk by faith,
  o not by what we can see and understand
- but our flesh is much more comfortable
  o to walk after the rudiments of flesh
  o and to be guided by what it can see and understand.
- So, as the nature of man is,
  o the New Testament Church, when it grew spiritually cold,
    - would gravitate back to the Old Testament ordinances of the law.
- Now that is a problem
  o because that which is flesh is flesh
  o and that which is spirit is spirit
    - and the things of the flesh can never satisfy the things of the spirit.
- God does not delight in the works of our flesh,
  o he delights in the works of the spirit within us.

Abraham’s 2 Sons
So Paul addresses the issue.

- He begins to tell the story of Abraham.
  o Abraham had two sons.
    - Both were the children of the patriarch.
    - Both would bear the heritage of Abraham.
    - Both would father great nations,
    - both would have 12 sons who would be princes in the great nations that they birthed.
  o But their lives would be markedly different.
    - One would inherit the promised blessing of God,
    - the other would inherit the things of the world.
- The important thing to note here, according to Paul,
  o is what makes the difference between the two sons.
    - They had the same father.
    - The difference is the mother!
- The difference is the voice that guides them
  o and forms them from their earliest childhood.
- The difference is the nature of the mother.
o One was born of a bondwoman,
o the other was born of a freewoman.

Ishmael was born into a climate of bondage by virtue of the fact that his mother was a bondwoman.

• Ishmael would never fully be free
  o because the voice that guided him, molded him, and informed him
    • was the voice of a slave.
  • Ishmael was fashioned after the bondage of slavery
    o and, no matter where life took him,
      • no matter how much acclaim and prestige he might attain,
      • he would always view the world as the son of a slave.
    o It was his heritage.
      • It was who he was.
  • Paul puts it very bluntly, Ishmael was born after the flesh.
    o He was born because Abraham and Sarah
      • decided that they would help God out.
  • They had a promise from God,
    o but a promise, while it is still just a promise,
      • is not something that you can hold,
      • a promise is not something that you can handle.
    o You can’t wrap a promise in swaddling clothes
      • and nestle it to your chest
      • and speak soft words of encouragement to it in the dead of the night.
  • They wanted something real.
    o They wanted something tangible.
      • They wanted something that would appease their fleshly longings.
      • That’s how Ishmael was born.
  • He was the product of their carnal effort to fulfill the promise of God.
    o And because of that, he was doomed from the start.
      • He was born after the flesh
        • and he would always be marked by that truth.

Isaac, on the other hand, was born by promise.

• More than a dozen years later,
  o when Ishmael was already a teenager,
    • faith in God produced the promised child.
• What had been impossible in the flesh,
  o was accomplished in the spirit
    • and Abraham and Sarah gave birth
    • to the child of promise that would inherit God’s blessing.
• He was born of a free woman,
  o his life would not be marred by the heritage of slavery –
    • his life would be a testament to the heritage of faith!
Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

• His birth was not associated with the flesh,
  o he was born by the power of God!

• His very existence was a testimony
  o to the faithfulness of the God
  o who promised Abraham a child.

• Ishmael testified of the works of the flesh.
  o But Isaac testified of the works of God.

• Two children with the same father
  o but very different mothers.

• Two different lives with two different trajectories,
  o all determined by the heritage of their mother,
    ▪ not their father.

Failure To Thrive
Have you ever noticed how that some people grow in grace but some don’t.
• Some folks come into church and flourish
  o and grow in the things of God,
    ▪ while others struggle.

• Some instantly grasp the spiritual things,
  o some learn to thrive in prayer and fasting,
    ▪ some very quickly learn to find refuge in the word of God
  o but, for others, it is an entirely different story.

• While others around them are maturing in their faith
  o and growing in the grace of God,
    ▪ they seem to wither on the vine,
    ▪ they don’t seem to make any progress at all.

• Have you ever wondered what the difference is?
  o The difference is not the Father.
    ▪ We are all the children of God.
  o The difference is not the name of Jesus,
    ▪ we were all baptized into that name.
  o The problem is not with the power of the Holy Ghost,
    ▪ we have all been filled with that glorious gift.
  o The problem is not the church,
  o the problem is not the pastor,
  o the problem is not the heritage of heaven.

• The problem lies in what voice you are listening to.

In the third chapter of John,
• Jesus told Nicodemus that, in order to enter the kingdom of God, a man has to be born again!
  o We were all born after the flesh.
  o We all have been born into bondage.
  o We all carry the heritage of a slave mother
but every man who desires to be born into the kingdom of God
  • must be born again.

• We must be born of the spirit.
  o We must be born into the heritage of the free woman.
  • We must be born into the things of God.
• That’s why it is so important that you are baptized in the name of Jesus
  o and that you receive the gift of the Holy Ghost –
  • because that’s how you are born again!

Two births implies the presence of two voices of influence trying to guide your life.
• You were first born after the flesh,
  o and then you were born after the spirit.
• First you were born unto natural things,
  o then you were born unto spiritual things.
• First you were born in the heritage of slavery,
  o then you were born in the heritage of freedom.
• The difference between those who grow and flourish in the kingdom of God
  o and those who fail to thrive
  • lies in the nature of the voice that they allow to speak into their life!
• Some are born of the spirit
  o but then, like the Galatians, return to following the voice of the flesh.
• Some are born of promise to a new life of freedom,
  o but then turn back to the old habits and old way of living.
• If you have been born into the kingdom of God,
  o your spiritual mother is the church!
    • You need to hear the mother’s voice!
    • You need the church
    • You need Godly preaching and teaching

This was the problem in Galatia.
• Instead of pressing on into the spiritual things of God,
  o they clung to the carnal things
  o that they could see and understand.
    • They were listening to the wrong voice.
• They were no longer the children of bondage,
  o but they were still heeding the voice of the bondwoman!
• When you find yourself regressing spiritually,
  o when you find yourself struggling to grow in grace,
    • you will always find that the root of the problem
      • lies in the voice of the flesh.
• As long as you follow after your flesh
  o and neglect the things of the spirit,
    • you will struggle in your walk with God.
• As long as you walk by sight,
o you will never walk by faith!

- As long as you really on your knowledge and understanding,
  o you will never know what it is to truly trust in what you cannot understand.

**Not The Children Of Bondage**

Paul was very plain:
- We are not children of the bondwoman!
  - We are not children of the flesh!
- We are children of the free woman.
  - We are children of the spirit.
- We have been born again
  - and we have been born into the heritage of the promise of God.
- Don’t settle for anything less –
  - you are a child of God,
    - not a child of this flesh!
- Eventually the time came
  - that Abraham had to cast out the bondwoman and her son,
    - he had to put them out of the camp,
    - to send them out on their own
  - **because the child of the flesh cannot inherit the promises of God!**
- That’s the message that Paul strives to convey to the Galatians,
  - just as Abraham had to cast out the bondwoman,
    - you have to cut off the influence of the flesh.
  - You've got to stop listening to the wrong voice.
    - You've got to stop following the whims and desires of your flesh.
    - You must strive to walk after the spirit, to pursue spiritual things.
  - Because a child of the flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God!

Mom, your kids need a Godly mother!
- Dad, your kids deserve a Godly father!
  - Ladies and gentlemen, the world needs to see a godly church!
- But, if we are ever going to be what God has called us to be,
  - then we must decide which voice we will allow to guide our lives!
    - We can’t halt between two opinions.
    - We can’t linger between the two voices.
  - We must make up our minds:
    - Are we the children of bondage
    - or the children of liberty?
- If we are going to pursue the things of God
  - then we must put away the influence of the fleshly man
    - and embrace the influence of the spiritual man!

I want to encourage you this morning – you are not the child of the bondwoman.
- Don’t live like it!
Don't let your fleshly nature wrap you up in chains of bondage.

- Don't let your carnal man lead you back into the rudiments of slavery
  - to the whims and desires of the carnal man.
- This morning let me encourage you to cut off the voice of the bondwoman,
  - cast off the influence of the flesh
    - and embrace the promises of God for your life –
      - he has better things in store for you!
  - He has spoken better things over your life.
- If you continue in your old ways
  - after having been made a new man
    - then you are neglecting the very promise of God into which you were born!
- Our theme this morning is Grow In Grace,
  - and the first key to growing in grace
    - is to cast off the chains of slavery,
    - to cast off the chains of the flesh.

CLOSE

God's grace really is amazing.

- Ishmael was born after the flesh
  - and, because of that,
    - he could never become an heir to the promise of God.
- We too were born after the flesh.
  - We too were born into bondage.
    - But God, in his amazing grace
      - has made it possible for us to be born again!
- The grace of God has set us free.
  - We are NO LONGER the children of the flesh.
    - We are now the children of God!
- The challenge, this morning, is to live like it.
  - The challenge is to recognize that truth
    - and to stop heeding the voice of the flesh
      - but instead follow after the voice of the spirit.
- The challenge is to embrace the grace of God and to grow in it.