

## Mother's Day Blessings

(from our heavenly Father)

### ♥ Tragedy turned to blessing (vv.19-21)

#### ♥ Grace on display (vv.22-24)

### ♥ Growing in God's Word (vv.25-26)

In the name of Jesus, who loved His mother even on the cross, dearly redeemed:

One of the greatest testimonies to a mother's love is her forgetfulness. All my life my mother of seven has been able to remember things in an amazing way. But often when I tell you stories in these sermons of foolish things I did as a child or discipline I needed, she does not remember. Such forgiving, forgetful mother-love runs so deep that the Lord uses it as an illustration to make His love more real to us. ***"As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem."*** (Isaiah 66:13 NIV84) Even though some mothers do forget their children, God promises never to forget us. ***"See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands"*** (Isaiah 49:16), He says. The one thing or multitude of things He does promise to forget is clearly stated in the New Covenant: ***"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."*** (Jeremiah 31:34) Our gracious God wants us to know that He loves us as a mother loves her child.

All over the Bible are stories to illustrate God's love. Today's First Lesson may seem like an unlikely place to find **Mother's Day Blessings**, but we find a gold mine here **from our heavenly Father**. For every mother whose ever feels helpless or challenged by seemingly hopeless situations, watch what God does when He turns all to good that seems most ill and helps us our calling to fulfill. Behold!

### ♥ Tragedy turned to blessing (vv.19-21)

***"There went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed...."*** (Luke 2) You remember how God got the mother of His own dear Son to Bethlehem by decree of the Roman emperor, to that tiny strip of land between the Arabian Desert and the Mediterranean Sea. From there God would turn the greatest **Tragedy** of our sins in the most awesome **blessing** of His grace. This He did by the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.

To get the Good News out God used the festival of Pentecost which we will celebrate in a few weeks. Jews from all over the world were in Jerusalem. Many heard ***"the wonders of God in [their] own languages."*** They returned to their home countries to tell of the **blessing** God gave us in the Savior.

But not everyone was happy. The Jewish religious leaders who had Jesus crucified tried to stop the apostles from preaching or doing miracles in Jesus' Name. They even had Stephen, one of the first Christian deacons, stoned to death.

***"And Saul was there, giving approval to his death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."*** (Acts 8:1-4 NIV84)

***"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus...."*** (Acts 11:19f NIV84)

That's how God used the death of His servant Stephen to spread the Good News like burning oil on water. Christians ***“went everywhere evangelizing the Word...”*** (Acts 8:4 literal) ***“...The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.”*** (Acts 11:21 NIV84) That's the only way any of us can succeed in our mission at home or abroad. Here we see...

### ♥ **Grace on display (vv.22-24)**

***“News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.”*** (Acts 11:22–24 NIV84)

Barnabas did not come like a haughty church official or an academic theologian looking down on the common man. He came as a fellow sinner-saint, washed in the blood of the Lamb, to be a blessing to his fellow Christians calling for help to teach and preach. He came with a pastor's heart, amazed at what God was already doing, determined to encourage God's people to be faithful to our faithful Lord. He was not just good with Christ on the inside. Jesus lived in Barnabas' hands and feet as well. He encouraged and did things that helped people immensely. He gave courage in Christ to God's people.

Then as now, this showed in the beautiful wives and mothers God made out of His daughters. Many were married to nonbelievers, but they learned from Christ how to win their husbands ***“over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.”*** (1 Peter 3:1–6 NIV84) Courageous women in Christ kept right on learning and loving the way Jesus loved them! Along with their Christian brothers they kept...

### ♥ **Growing in God's Word (vv.25-26)**

***“Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. ...”*** (Acts 11:25 NIV84) Paul spent what we might call his “vicar year” there with Barnabas. ***“So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”*** (Acts 11:26 NIV84) God's men kept growing up as Peter describes in his First Epistle: ***“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and [literally] honor them as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”*** (1 Peter 3:7)

God kept the Gospel moving along as promised: “When the church won its greatest victories in the early days in the Roman Empire, it did so not by teachers or preachers or apostles, but by informal missionaries.” (Harnack) “Lay Christians...knew that the best way they could serve another person was by introducing him or her to Jesus Christ....The early Christians were not universalists. Along with the apostle Peter, they believed unequivocally that ‘salvation is found in no one else’ (Acts 4:12). That's why outreach was not an add-on to their ministry. It, along with sharing and expressing their fellowship and nurturing and being nurtured, was their ministry.” (David Valleskey)

God promises for the wife of noble character, ***“worth far more than rubies,...her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”*** (Proverbs 31:28) She who is such a blessing will be richly blessed by God. He forgives all our sins, forgets all of them completely, and gives us mothers to show us what He means. For Jesus' sake, in her we all have **Mother's Day Blessings from our heavenly Father.** Happy Mother's Day! Amen.