

## A Stranger No More

Ephesians 2:19 KJV

**Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;**

A couple of weeks ago Berean's oldest female member died and was buried. Her name was Rose Parks. She had lived 97 years. You were indeed blest if you knew Rose. She was though, if truth be told, a bit hard to know. She was an Oriental in the mysterious and elegant flavor of the word and the child of the main wife of a genuine Japanese Shogun.

Jackie and I met Rose and her husband Jim in the Summer of 1976 at The Grace Baptist Church in Canton. My brother Holmes had been invited there to preach the Doctrines of Grace for the entire week. Jackie and I (not members of Grace) attended as often as we were able. In the process of our visiting, we also made the acquaintance of Chuck and Jan Pugno. One day fairly recently Mike Zajac reminded me that he and Denise were there as well (still has the sermon tapes too).

During our 45 or so years of acquaintance with Rose, we were able to gather some rather limited insights into her childhood story. One that I remember had to do with the fact that her mother (for reasons never disclosed to us) ended her life by sitting on the railroad tracks and being struck there by a train.

Rose and Jim's meeting, courtship, marriage, and transition to America is an absolutely captivating story for another time. It was, just to whet your appetite a bit, the kind of stuff that, as it was unfolding, made the front pages of Detroit's three big newspapers (News, Times, Free Press) and involved high government and military personalities.

All of this occurred before either Rose or Jim had ever heard and imbibed the Gospel. Jim was first to be saved and then shortly thereafter, Rose came to faith. As a newly married immigrant to this country, she was then under the impression that ALL Americans were Christians. She took her little girls with her to all the neighbor houses announcing that she had been saved. Rose assumed that they would be thrilled that she too had come to faith. Things did not turn out badly, but also not as innocent young Rose expected. Some recipients of the news were just flabbergasted. Others gave Rose presents. She returned from her little foray excited, perplexed and bearing gifts.

A strong and personal witness was always a feature of Rose's walk. At one point she was employed as a Japanese / English language teacher. American business entities would hire her to teach Japanese to Americans going to Japan for training and English to Japanese workers in this country needing improved language skills for their tasks here. What made Rose's teaching unique was that she always assigned the Scriptures as the student reading assignments.

Rose was a tiny woman. I think that perhaps only her family had an accurate sense of her real height. During the years that we knew Rose she was never separated from her spiked high-heel shoes. Jackie and I traveled some with the Parks over the years of our friendship. My memories of those journeys are oddly punctuated with the clicking noise made by her little feet trying to keep up with our party while wearing her stiletto heels.

At the time of her death, Rose had not attended Berean for some years. Following Jim's death her mind had begun to fray. The process was slow but inexorable. The last time that Jackie and I visited with our dear friend she was living in a group home for similarly affected elderly people. We found her to be sweet, polite, and gentle as always, but both of us were also sure, at the end of our visit, that we were unknown to her.

Rose Parks, the daughter of the old Japanese Empire elite, wife, mother of five, Godly witness of grace and always, in this land, somewhat a stranger, is now departed from this life. She has found her place within the boundaries of another realm. There she is a citizen, a member of the Household of the Father. Never again will she ever be a stranger.

George Moore

Elder Emeritus