

September 2, 2010

...Praise Him with the timbrel and dance. (Psalm 105:4)

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## Rise up, O men of God!

*Wm. Merrill 1867-1954*

Rise up, O men of God!

Have done with lesser things.

Give heart and mind and soul and strength

To serve the King of kings.

Rise up, O men of God!

The church for you doth wait,

Her strength unequal to her task;

Rise up and make her great!

Lift high the cross of Christ!

Tread where His feet have trod.

As brothers of the Son of Man,

Rise up, O men of God!

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## Quote of the Week

*Charles Spurgeon 1834 - 1892*

“If we really believe a truth, we shall be decided about it. [However,] we are not to show our decision by that obstinate, furious, wolfish bigotry which cuts off every other body from a chance and hope of salvation and the possibility of being regenerate, or even [of being] decently honest...

Don't go about the world with your fist doubled up for fighting, carrying a theological revolver in the leg of your trousers... Be prepared to fight, and always have your sword buckled on your thigh, but wear a scabbard; there can be no sense in waving your weapon about ...to provoke conflict.

If you really believe the gospel, you will be decided for it in more sensible ways. Your very tone will betray your sincerity; you will speak like a man who has something to say, which he knows to be true.

●t&dw

*Feature Article:*

## Act Like Men!

*When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. ...Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." John 2:15-17*

*...He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts... Mark 3:5*

*You serpents, brood of vipers! How shall you escape the condemnation of hell? Matt 23:3*

*Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ... 2 Corinth 10:1*

*Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Eph 4:26*

*Watch, stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love. 1 Corinth 16:13*

Jesus is generally known as being meek and gentle. That is biblical. He continually showed uncommon compassion, kindness and love to sinners who were rejected by society - and by the religious leaders, especially. The prophet says of Him, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench” (Isa 42:3). Paul admonishes Christians by “the meekness and gentleness of Christ.” So it can be disarming when we encounter him cleansing the temple with a whip and overthrowing tables, or when we hear him frying the Pharisees with scathing words, or displaying his anger at hypocrites. I have heard more than one Christian say, as they pointed to such instances, “Well, even Jesus sinned when he was on earth.” I shudder.

How difficult it is for us to *equate* meekness and gentleness with strength and “manliness”. It's ok for the ladies to be meek and gentle (in fact, they should be); but for a man to be meek and gentle evokes ideas of weakness or effeminacy. Of course, we would quickly refrain from applying such adjectives to Jesus.

The reality is that the biblical picture of “manliness” always fuses great strength with a meek and gentle spirit. Moses, the world's greatest human leader, was the *meekest of all men* (Num 12:3); the warrior David's adorning of gentleness made him great - he was also known as the *sweet psalmist of Israel* (2 Sam 22:36; Ps 18:35; 2 Sam 23:1); The Apostles, having been beaten, *went forth rejoicing that they were counted worthy of suffering for his name* (Acts 5:41); Paul's apostolic power was manifest in the guise of a nursing mother (I

*Thess 2:7*), and with tears of compassion and concern (*Acts 20:31*). Jesus' description of the beatific (blessed) citizens of his kingdom is a far cry from the stereotyped superheroes of this world (*Matt 5:3-12*). Therefore, don't expect the world to "get it." They may, for a season, call you "whimpy" or a "sissy"; but we are not to be seeking the admiration of the world - we serve the Lord Christ!

On the other side of the coin, we live in a world of evil; and evil must be resisted and/or defeated, at times, with *outward* demonstrations of strength. Jesus became incensed as the temple merchants and moneychangers disgraced God and took advantage of His people for a buck. Not in a rage, but with determined purpose he "cleanses" the temple area with *manly* force. Angered at the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, he stands firm, and mercifully heals a withered hand on the Sabbath, knowing that they would seek to kill him for it. As he is preparing to leave his disciples, he advises them to sell their cloaks and buy swords for self defense (*Lk 22:36*). Clearly, unconditional pacifism is neither demonstrated nor commanded in the Bible.

Only the Spirit of Christ can produce the balanced and controlled character of Christ as a man. In the flesh we either tend to be "macho" tuff guys, or milk-toast pushovers. But principled, unwavering strength has no need to prove itself. It acts always in love for God and love for man. It does not "turn to the left or the right" under pressure. It courageously stands in the gap against evil and its threats to the Lord's sheep. It is interesting to note that every occurrence of Jesus' displaying anger is directed against the elite self-righteous, or toward those who lay burdens on the backs of the sheep, or who take advantage of them in the name of God. Never once does he show anger against "the sinners of the world."

More than ever, we need *men* in the pulpits, today, with courage and conviction; men who, standing in the meekness, gentleness, and love of Christ, fearlessly proclaim, "Thus saith the Lord" - let the chips fall where they may. How many preachers will not proclaim certain truths because they fear men more than God. We might offend and lose half our congregation; the highest givers might not approve and withhold their money; we might be attacked by fellow preachers; the government might try to revoke our tax exempt status; we may end up in jail. How far we have come from the example of our Lord and his apostles! We must always seek peace, and speak in love; but we are also commanded to be strong in the Lord and the power of his might (*Eph 6:10*).

Men, let us all prayerfully be emboldened to act like

men - like our Lord. If we are weak and fearful, so was Paul. Stand in that strength of faith that is most powerful in weakness.

Women, support, encourage, and promote your husbands in being the men of compassionate, unwavering leadership God has called them to be. It may not be culturally "acceptable" - even in the churches; but nothing will encourage men to act like men as much as women acting like women. Ladies, your greatest strength will be manifest in the honoring and uplifting of your man. Men, whatever the circumstances in your family, job, church, or community, you are called to "*stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.*" *1 Corinth 16:13* ●ejr3

***Walking with Jesus... a devotional minute.***

### **By-passed for Outsiders?**

*I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elijah sent, except to Zarephath, a city of Sidon, unto a woman who was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, except Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath... Luke 4:25-27*

What a slap in the face to these proud Jews! However, all Jesus did was point out a scriptural truth: because of obstinacy and self-righteousness, God by-passed the Jews, even in the Old Testament, and sent some of his choice prophets to bless gentile "dogs" (consider also, Job). And so it has been in the history of the church. The self-sufficient, smug portions of the church are often by-passed as God moves among unlikely "outsiders", both to teach his people, and to provoke them to jealousy.

Let us learn the lesson ourselves. Perhaps we should even expect that God will challenge us from very unlikely sources. A group of Christians we least respect may have a message from God for us. I have often received truth, or pointed admonition, from individuals I have not really cared much for (and, like those in *Luke 4:27*, I have not always received it graciously). God has a way of thus humbling both his church and individual Christians. He isn't bound to play by our rules or expectations. May we be humble enough to always listen for his voice, or willing to see his hand, among the "undesirables" and "outsiders."

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