

To Be a Man

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What is it to be a man? When my mother raised me, she said, “Stand up and act like a man.” Where did she get that? Let’s take a brief account of the book of Job. Whether or not she spoke from her own recollection of Job or whether it filtered to her through common expressions, I cannot say. But the book of Job may well have been the origin of that expression. Let us see.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, “From where do you come?” So Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.” Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?” So Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (Job 1:6-9).

Though the Lord addressed Satan, the reader is also engaged when He asks, “Have you considered My servant Job?” Job endured incredible losses and pressures. His prosperity and the lives of his children were taken. His health was taken. He was denied moral support and comfort by his wife (**Job 2:9**, “Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!”). Job held fast and patiently accepted his calamity.

Reading further, the issue of justification emerges. Job was comforted by his three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They sat in silence with him for seven days and nights. But that was not the end of it. Job spoke and mourned his existence. His friends counseled him to repent. They supposed Job had some hidden sin, which caused God to punish him. There ensued a very lengthy dialogue between Job and his friends. Job argued that he committed no sin, and he did not deserve the things he suffered. Essentially, he impugned God with a miscarriage of justice.

Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark. Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, that my Prosecutor had written a book! Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, and bind it on me like a crown, I would declare to Him the number of my steps, Like a prince I would approach Him (Job 31:35-37).

Not long after Job said those things, the Lord confronted him, “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (**Job 38:2**). Is justification found in our ability to suffer loss? Is it that we can faithfully say we have lived up to the commands of God? Is justification a self-declaration of virtue? The answer is found in what God required of Job. “Now prepare yourself like a man, I will question you, and you shall answer Me” (**Job 38:3**). After God put Job under the white-hot spotlight with questions he could not answer, He again commanded Job, “Now prepare yourself like a man, I will question you, and you shall answer Me” (**Job 40:7**). Our justification is shown or denied by how we respond to God. Will we answer like men?

When the Lord said, “like a man,” He was not speaking of gender. “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them” (**Genesis 1:27**). Regardless of being male or female, the body’s shape is subordinate to what God created – man, created in the image of God. A small minority of people do have biological confusion concerning gender. How they choose to address this, if at all, is a personal matter. However, some in the world are slipping into the mental confusion of gender identity. It spirals down to how they feel about their sex, regardless of gender. As a result, there are those who teach children to treat gender as if it were putty to be reshaped according to their imagination. Horrible consequences emerge from this, the greatest of which is the suppression of virtue (i.e. moral excellence). The capacity for virtue is not channeled by the body’s gender.

When the Lord commanded Job to prepare himself like a man, He required Job to face his sin and accept responsibility. This is the beginning of what it is to be a man. Job had responded to the misguided

pressure of his friends. He fell into the sin of self-justification. Job received the Lord's rebuke, as recorded from chapter thirty-eight to the beginning of chapter forty. Note the change in Job after hearing God. "*Behold, I am vile, What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer, Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further*" (**Job 40:4-5**). After receiving a lengthy second rebuke, Job had clarification, "*I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes*" (**Job 42:5-6**). Job listened to God. He sacrificed his pride and his sense of personal dignity. He removed himself from the shadow of self-righteousness and received the humbling awareness of his sin. He received God's rebuke without hiding behind his suffering. He faced the truth of his self-justification. He repented.

The Lord's wrath was aroused against Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. They were charged by the Lord for not speaking of God in the right way as did Job. It is evident they were privy to God's rebuke of Job, yet they did not confess they had spoken foolishly. However, they obeyed God's command to go to Job and offer burnt offerings.

Job was accepted by the Lord, He called him "*My servant.*" Job went from being addressed, "*Who is this who darkens counsel,*" to being called "*My servant.*" On this point, we understand that Job was justified and could make intercession for his friends. He prayed for them. Job transitioned from arguing with his friends over his innocence to praying for them. The goodwill and earnest prayer for those who had wronged him was the fruit of Job's repentance. So, he stands in the lasting record of God's word as a man of patience and perseverance. He bore great loss without complaining. More importantly, he endured the correction of God and kept his soul.

What is it to be a man? It is to answer because we are made in God's image. This is more than being male or female. To be a man is to yield to the will of God. This means facing the truth of who we are in the light of our Creator's revelation. It means to repent. It is God alone who can justify our existence. What is it to be a man? It is to be righteous.

"...he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (**John 3:21**).