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# “Gird Up Now Thy Loins Like a Man”

– A Fitting Command for Us Today –

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We have all undoubtedly been told at one time or another that we need to stop acting in a childish manner about something, and instead need to act like an adult. Naturally enough, we usually hear this either in our adolescent years, as we approach adulthood, or as a young adult. At these stages in our lives it is not so much a shame to be told to act like an adult, as it is a reminder to us that this is what we now are, or are becoming. However, when we as established adults act like children, then these words are a shame and a reproach to us. It truly is a shame when an adult acts like a child.

Now it's one thing when we hear this kind of reproof from a friend or family member. It is something else entirely, however, when we find God saying it. And indeed we do find God saying this on the pages of His word. In fact, we find Him saying it more to us, His “new creation” the church the body of Christ in this dispensation of grace, than to anyone else. For example, on at least two occasions in I Corinthians such a reproof is found.

**20** Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

(I Corinthians 14:20)

**13** Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

(I Corinthians 16:13)

Actually, it should come as no surprise to us to find such reproofs and exhortations in our epistles. For we in this dispensation are being dealt with by God as adults, having received “the

adoption of sons.” The adoption of sons is the issue of passing from childhood to adulthood. It is the issue of being treated by one's father no longer as an immature child and a minor, but as a mature adult.<sup>1</sup> Therefore being “sons” and not “children” God is not dealing with us as children and so He does not expect us to act like children. Rather, God naturally expects us to act in accordance with the way in which He is dealing with us. He expects us to act like the adult sons He has made us to be “in Christ.” Hence, the many exhortations and reproofs in our epistles for us to act like men and not children.

**11** And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

**12** For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

**13** Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

**14** That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

(Ephesians 4:11-14)

Verses 12 and 13 in particular set forth what God wants, for which He has made full provision. Verse 14 makes reference to what Satan wants. He wants Christians to be “children” and not men. Sadly, in view of the determined work of his policy of evil, there is an abundance of Christians who are “children in understanding” and conduct. And this is indeed both sad and a

shame, for the great privilege of being an adult son, along with intelligently functioning as one, has few equals.

Unfortunately, all too often we do not act like men. Indeed, some Christians never do. For the most part this is due to the fact that the doctrine of our sonship status in this dispensation of grace is one of the least understood and appreciated doctrines that there is. This in turn is bolstered by the fact that one of the determined aims of Satan's policy of evil against us in this dispensation is to keep us thinking and acting like "children." Paul declares this to us, for example, in Ephesians 4 when he describes the provision God has made for us to be the "perfect man" He wants us to be.

### **The Privilege of Acting Like Men**

There are many distinguishing issues, features, and privileges to our "sonship"/adulthood status in this dispensation of grace. Yet the most fundamental issue of them all truly is the privilege of being able to act *like a man*. At first this may sound almost silly, but it actually is quite profound and an astounding privilege of God's grace unto us. For in being able to act *like a man* God has privileged us to act like He originally designed and created man to act.

We can acquire some valuable insight and understanding into this issue of acting like a man by considering something that God said to Job when He gave him the counsel that he needed to hear.

In Job 38 it is recorded that "the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind" when He began to personally deal with him. After first declaring the futility of the words and counsel that Job had been hearing from his "friends," God said to Job,...

**3** Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

(Job 38:3)

Packed into those 8 words of command, "Gird up now thy loins like a man," is the issue of at least 3 matters that were vital for Job to recognize and respond to if he was going to possess and comprehend the counsel that he needed. Of the 3, however, the most fundamental one is the issue of Job acting "like a man."

Obviously, when God says to do something "like a man," He does not have in mind some weak or wishy-washy idea of what a man is, nor some trumped up macho idea. Instead, He has in mind exactly what it is that He created a man to be in the first place. And with man, God created a creature capable of having the closest possible fellowship with He Himself. A creature with whom He could commune in an highly intelligent and deeply intimate way. In truth God created a creature with a special spiritual capacity capable not only of having a personal rapport with Him, but increasing in it as well. In creating man so, God designed man to be an help meet for Himself.

### **What Is Man?**

Genesis chapter 1 not only makes it evident that man is a very special creation of God on this earth, but it also makes plain what is so special about him. Man is not just another "living creature," or another kind of animal. Instead, man was created in the image, and after the likeness, of God.

**26** And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

**27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

(Genesis 1:26-27)

Being made in "the image of God," man bears resemblance to the expressive member of the

Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ, who actually did the work of creation. Being made after God’s “likeness,” man was created to be God-like, or Godly. This, of course, does not mean that man was created to be a god or to somehow attain godhood. Rather, man was created with a makeup that would allow him to be intelligently occupied with God and so have some very particular things in common with God. Man was created with the capacity for godliness, and with it the issue of possessing an intricate living union relationship with God. Indeed, therefore, man is a very special kind of creature on the earth.

Being made after God’s “likeness” is man’s most distinctive feature. The capacity for godliness, therefore, is man’s most important component. In essence, it is what makes man so special and distinct as a living creature. The capacity for godliness provides for an intimacy of fellowship with God unparalleled by any other creature of creation, including those of the heavenly realm. It, in truth, provides for man to be an help meet for God Himself.

### Godliness

Briefly put, godliness is composed of three main issues: 1. To think like God does. 2. To do things God’s way. And, 3. To labor together with God in what He is doing. These are the issues that comprise being intelligently occupied with God. In being made godly, God created man to operate like Him and with Him in these three particular ways.<sup>2</sup>

It is this designed godliness of man that God has in mind when He commands Job to “gird up now thy loins like a man.” Job needed to act “like a man” because God was going to deal with him “like a man.” Hence God was going to deal with him in accordance with the three components of godliness. For this cause God first declared the futility of the words Job had been hearing from his “friends.”

2 Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

(Job 38:2)

Job definitely needed counsel. However he needed counsel that was true to, and in accordance with, thinking like God does, doing things God’s way, and laboring together with God in what He is doing. He needed *godly counsel* from that kind of “knowledge.” His friends did not provide this kind of counsel. Instead, all they did was to darken counsel by their “words without knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>

In essence, Job needed the adult counsel of a father to his son, and he in turn needed to respond “like a man”; that is like an adult son. Hence, when God began dealing with Job “like a man,” He said to him, “for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.” That’s exactly the kind of intelligent rapport that God designed for Himself to be able to have with man. Then, as God proceeded to give Job the counsel that he needed, that counsel came to light as God addressed all three of the components of godliness. By means of “words with knowledge” God brought Job’s thinking into line with His own; enabled him to do things God’s way in the situation he was in; and gave him reason to rejoice in the fact that he was laboring together with God in what He is doing.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, when God told Job to act “like a man,” He dealt with him as an adult, and He dealt with him in accordance with godliness. In God’s thinking adulthood and godliness go together, and acting like a man means to act in accordance with godliness.

### The “Mystery of Godliness”

One of the astounding riches of God’s grace accorded to us Gentiles in this dispensation of grace is “the mystery of godliness.” Godliness — the very thing that did not characterize us in “time past,” and that we by no means displayed,

is now a privilege of God’s grace unto us.

In “time past,” being “Gentiles in the flesh,” we were not only “dead in our sins,” we were also dead “in the uncircumcision of our flesh.” As such, we were “without God in the world” and were therefore actually consigned over to ungodliness by God. Ungodliness was the hallmark of our natural offensiveness to God. It was our first, middle, and last name, so to speak. As such we were the good citizens of another “world of the ungodly,”<sup>5</sup> as we followed the course of this world charted by Satan.

With we Gentiles being consigned over to ungodliness, God’s program in “time past” was with Israel. He created them to be His godly nation on this earth. Godliness, therefore, was their privilege and prerogative. In accordance with this, God made every provision for them to be His godly nation and for them to make an impact with their godliness to His glory. He provided for their education in His thoughts and His ways so they could labor with Him in His purpose for this earth. Israel, however, rebelled at the very outset of their education, rejecting the most fundamental issues that belong to thinking like God does. Though Israel was God’s son, and He called His son out of Egypt, Israel did not act like an adult son. Instead, Israel would have none of God’s counsel. In so doing when they agreed to the Law covenant they rejected sonship, opted to be dealt with by God as a child, and thereby put their national prerogative of godliness on hold until the time of their adoption.

Israel will yet receive their adoption when God resumes and fulfills His program with them. At that time they will be the godly nation God designed them to be, and they by their godliness will make an impact on this world to God’s glory.

It is to us, however, in this dispensation of grace that God has given the great privilege of being dealt with by Him as adult sons, of putting godliness on display, and of making an impact to His glory thereby. This is what “the mystery of

godliness” is all about, and it is one of the riches of God’s grace unto us “in Christ.”

### “Quit You Like Men”

Hence, in like manner to Job, we ourselves in this dispensation of grace need to “gird up now our loins like a man.” We need to act like men in accordance with the privilege of God’s grace given unto us in “the mystery of godliness.” Indeed, Paul’s words to the Corinthians, “quit you like men,” charge us to do this very thing. Moreover, like a double-edged sword, that charge cuts in two directions. First, it reproves us for acting like children. Quit acting like children and act like men, it says. Be no more “children in understanding,” but “in understanding be men.” However, it also exhorts us to acquit ourselves to be the very men that God has made us to be, and glorify God thereby in the face of the very one who wants to see us act like children. Indeed, when we act like children we give the Adversary the opportunity to speak reproachfully of us. Yet when we act like men, we glorify God in the heavenly places in accordance with the “mystery of godliness.”

Therefore, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” (I Corinthians 16:13) —  
*Keith R. Blades*

<sup>1</sup> A more detailed examination of the doctrine of the “adoption of sons” can be found in the First Quarter 1996 issue of *The Enjoy The Bible Quarterly*, and in the author’s video series *The Adoption of Sons*.

<sup>2</sup> See the author’s booklet *A Very Simple Survey of The Bible: Volume II: Genesis* for a further treatment of this issue.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, much of what is called Christian Counseling today also darkens counsel by “words without knowledge.”

<sup>4</sup> Further information on Job and the doctrinal role of the Book of Job in God’s program with Israel can be found in the audio tape series *A Survey of God’s Program with Israel: Part 10*.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. II Peter 2:5. Another “world of the ungodly” is what has been developing ever since the judgment of the flood.