

What is a Man? The Marks of Biblical Manhood, Part 3

Titus 2:2, 6–8 and Selected Scriptures

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Well we return again to our series entitled, *Confronting the Culture*, and we come specifically today to a third sermon on the nature of biblical manhood. Who does the Bible say a man is? How can we “act like men,” according to the infallible Word of the God who created us? And in answering that question, we’ve been working our way through **nine marks of biblical manhood**. In our first two sermons, we’ve managed to work our way through four of those. Today, we’ll cover the final five. But before jumping right back in, I’ll spend just a few moments on a brief review.

Review I: A Leader

That first mark of biblical manhood was, number one, that a biblical man is a **leader**. And we established that from several passages. Ephesians 5:23 says “the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church.” First Corinthians 11:3 says that “Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman.” The man’s headship speaks of his leadership.

And we mentioned that the heart of that leadership is not license, but initiative-taking responsibility. Biblical leadership isn’t so much the right to rule as much as it is a stewardship to lead in a way that (1) honors God and (2) benefits those you lead. There is nothing that is less manly, than passively abdicating your leadership role, and shirking responsibility.

Review II: A Lover

The second mark of biblical manhood was that he is a **lover**. He is one who loves, and loves *sacrificially*. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for her.” Leadership is loving. Headship is humble. Biblical, loving leadership means laying down your life every day—sacrificing the fleshly comforts of idleness, ease, and recreation for the sake of benefiting those you **love** and are responsible to lead.

Review III: A Provider

Third, the biblical man is a **provider**. Just as Ephesians 5:28–29 says that Christ does for the church, the biblical man’s love for his wife is marked by *nourishing* and *cherishing* her—both of which terms speak of providing for the needs of others. And we saw how that applied to both physical and spiritual provision. Man is to work hard, because the primary responsibility for putting food on the table and a roof over the heads of the family falls to the husband. And he is to

press hard after God, so that he might also put *spiritual* food on the table, so that the family may be sustained by the blessings of the Word of God and the means of grace. He is to lead in personal worship, family worship, discipleship, and discipline.

Review IV: A Protector

Fourth, the biblical man is a **protector**. Adam is charged to protect the Garden of Eden from the very beginning of man's existence. And Christ, our great example and pattern, Ephesians 5 says, "loved the church and gave Himself up for her," protecting us from the wrath of God that we so richly deserved by bearing it in Himself. And so in the same way, the biblical man protects those under his charge.

And like the previous, he does so both physically and spiritually. If there is a physical threat of any kind, "mature masculinity senses a natural, God-given responsibility to step forward and put himself between" that threat and the one he's protecting (Piper, *WTD*, 41). And men are also *spiritually* watchful, so that they can spy out the spiritual dangers that threaten those you're charged to lead, and issue warnings and perhaps even intervene, so that no spiritual harm comes to your loved ones.

V. Strong

Well, after that brief review—with a reminder that the previous two sermons can be downloaded from our website—we come to a **fifth mark** of biblical manhood. And that is, number five, that a biblical man is **strong**. We've spoken of 1 Corinthians 16:13 early and often in this series, and rightly so. That verse provides ample support for this point. In a series of concluding exhortations to a Corinthian church riddled with problems and persecutions, Paul writes, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, *act like men, be strong*." What does it mean to be a biblical man? What does the Bible say it means to "act like men"? Well, at the very least, it means to be strong. You say, "'Strong' in what sense?" Well, in several senses.

A. Physical Strength

When you look at the words themselves, it becomes obvious that Paul is drawing upon familiar phraseology that was very common in the Old Testament—and particularly the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which Paul quoted from often. The verb that the NAS translates "act like men" is *andrízomai*. It's got the word for "man," *andros*, right at the front, and the ending is a way to turn a noun into a verb. It means, literally, "Be men," or we might say more colloquially, "Man up." "Act like men" is a good translation. And the word translated "Be strong" is *krataíómai*—literally, be strengthened, or become strong.

And these two words show up in the Greek translation of the Old Testament in a couple of places. In 1 Samuel 4:9, the Philistines had just routed Israel in battle, but they heard the shouts of the people of God rejoicing that the Ark of the Covenant had been returned to Israel, and they feared the presence of the true God. And so to stir themselves up to battle with courage, they used these same words Paul uses. First Samuel 4:9: “*Take courage and be men*, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, *be men and fight*.” This is a battle cry! It’s a call to war! In 2 Samuel 10, the armies of Israel are flanked by the Ammonites on the one side and the Arameans on the other. And Joab, the commander stirs them up with this same battle cry, 2 Samuel 10:12: “*Be strong*,”—*andrizomai*—“and let us show ourselves *courageous*”—*krataiōmai*—“for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God.”

The familiar refrain throughout the Book of Joshua—“Be strong and courageous”—is *close* to the phrase we have in 1 Corinthians 16:13. It uses the term *andrizomai* for “be courageous,” but then uses a synonym of *krataiōmai* for “be strong”: *ischūō*. It’s a different word, but it carries essentially same meaning. And in fact, the phrase *andros ischuros*—the noun/adjective forms of the verbs *andrizomai* and *ischūō*—is often translated “valiant warrior” in the Old Testament (e.g., Dan 3:20). Paul is drawing a familiar phrase from his Bible to call the Corinthian church to display a kind of manly courage that one would have to display as he roused himself for hand-to-hand combat to the death.

I think we can conclude from this that the **strength** Paul calls us to when he tells us to “act like men” is marked both by physical strength and courage. If these terms are used to describe valiant warriors, I don’t think it’s a stretch to say that biblical men are to be physically strong. God has designed men to be the ones employed in physical labor, and, if necessary, even physical altercation, under righteous circumstances. On average, men have denser bones, larger hearts, and greater muscle mass than women (Griffo, 28). They can run faster, lift heavier weights, and outperform women in combat situations (Strachan & Peacock, 30). God has designed us, then, as men, to steward those natural gifts of creation, and to keep our bodies healthy and strong, so that we might be both the provider and the protector that God calls us to be—strong enough to work hard to provide for our families, and strong enough to protect them should they meet physical danger.

Now, I’m not saying that every real man has to lift weights, climb mountains, and be a mixed-martial artist. There are plenty of overgrown boys with chiseled bodies. But I *am* saying that part of the Bible’s prescription for men to be strong is to steward the natural strength God has given us as men by keeping ourselves physically fit. That means having the discipline to control our appetites; the discipline to eat well and exercise, and to mortify patterns of indulgence and laziness. It means we keep ourselves strong—to provide for and protect those God has entrusted us to lead.

And just another word about that. Though biblical men ought to be physically strong, we ought not to be bullies. The sinful secular world has corrupted the good gift of strength. Physical strength in an unregenerate man is often perverted into an obnoxious, self-aggrandizing boastfulness—a cocky, condescending arrogance that takes advantage of those who are weak. That is not manly. It’s the *opposite* of manly. It’s the *loud weakness* of little boys who have grown physically, but not in character. Masculine strength is to be harnessed, exercised with self-control and proportionately, in order to serve others, for *their* benefit—not to *subjugate* others, for *our* benefit. The truest, noblest strength is meekness—best defined as strength under control.

And the greatest example of that, of course, is Jesus. As to His strength, He was Almighty God incarnate. He healed diseases with a touch. He stilled the seas with a word. He subdued demons by His own command. He could call down legions of angels to destroy His earthly enemies—but He didn’t. That strength was under His sovereign control. One writer puts it this way: “This all-powerful God-man dealt gently with His disciples, who were but dust. He bore patiently with the faithless and twisted generation into which He was born. He graciously restored His followers who had abandoned Him, not the least of whom were the likes of Peter and Thomas. He allowed Himself to be arrested by thugs, farcically tried, mocked, and abused by those ‘strong men’ around Him, and hung on a cross before breathing His last rather than calling upon the legions of angels at His disposal” (Griffo, 55–56). The greatest Man who ever lived—the Man who was the epitome of strength—was strong enough to keep His strength under control, and to use it not as an abusive chauvinist, but as a gentle and humble servant, who would rather *bear* pain than inflict it on others.

B. Moral Strength

And that point leads us to say this strength that we’re called to is not *just* physical strength. The battle that Paul is calling the Corinthians to “act like men” and “be strong” for isn’t a physical battle like it had been for Israel. It’s a *spiritual* battle, and it calls for *moral* strength—the kind of courage and fortitude that, as the verse also says, stands firm in the face of danger, that refuses to *fold* at the threats of persecution, that will not compromise faithfulness because of what it costs.

And we see a great illustration of this principle of moral strength in 1 Kings chapter 2. First Kings 2:1 says, “As David’s time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, ‘I am going the way of all the earth. *Be strong*, therefore, and *show yourself a man*.’” Familiar language to us by now. But what does that manly strength entail, in David’s mind? Verse 3: “*Keep the charge* of Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that Yahweh may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me.” The truest biblical strength is the strength to obey—to walk in accordance with God’s commands. It involves the courage to

renounce the world, the fortitude to resist the devil, and the resolve to mortify the flesh. A man is never weaker than when he rejects the commandment of God and yields to the power of sin. The strongest man in the room is the most Christlike man in the room.

And just two quick words of application of this moral strength. The first—one that I’ve mentioned in both of the previous sermons: strong men don’t run from conflict. They don’t *relish* conflict! They don’t seek it out or *instigate* conflict! But they don’t *flee* from it! In fact, they run *to* it, as I’ve said, in the way a firefighter runs toward a burning building—the way a police officer runs toward the sound of gunfire, while everyone else is running in the opposite direction. Not because they love getting shot at! But because they know it falls to them to neutralize the threat. While everyone else may flee from unresolved conflict—“You know, I really don’t like the way he treated me. I think I’ll change fellowship groups!”—the biblical man is strong enough to run *to* the conflict, in order to resolve it biblically.

And second: strong men receive correction well. They’re strong enough not to let their ego get in the way of their sanctification. They’re not discouraged or debilitated by criticism or correction—even if it’s not offered in the perfect way. Strong men welcome correction, because their greatest desire is to be pleasing to the Lord in all things, and they know that they don’t always see for themselves how they fail at that, and so they rejoice when the Lord uses another brother or sister to expose sin in their lives, because now they can go to work on that! They can get rid of that! Strong men understand Proverbs 12:1: “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.” And Proverbs 15:32: “He who neglects discipline despises himself, but he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.” And so, so far from being offended by criticism—so that he either wallows in self-pity or lashes out in anger—the strong man *invites* correction. He says with David in Psalm 141:5: “Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; it is oil upon the head; do not let my head refuse it.” The reproof of the righteous is like anointing oil that refreshes the head. That’s the way a strong man talks.

VI. Sensible

Well, we must move on to a **sixth mark** of biblical manhood. A biblical man is not only strong, but he is, number six: **sensible**. And we see this with special emphasis in Titus chapter 2. Turn there with me. Paul’s letter to Titus, as you know, gives the Apostle’s directions to the young pastor to “set in order what remains” in the establishment of the church on the island of Crete. And after setting out the qualifications of an elder in chapter 1, Paul exhorts Titus, in chapter 2 verse 1, to “speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.” And then come instructions for the various demographics of the church: Older men, older women, young women, young men, and slaves. And in the exhortations to both older men and young men, Paul says they are to be “sensible.” Verse 2: “Older men are to be temperate, dignified, *sensible*.” And then again in verse 6: “Likewise urge the young men to be *sensible*.”

The term is *sōprhonéō*. It means “to be of sound mind” (Knight, 310). It’s translated that way in 2 Corinthians 5:13. Romans 12:3 translates it “to think so as to have *sound judgment*.” It speaks of a strength of mind that is able to exercise discretion and discernment. And recognizing that there are many applications of that, I think a main implication is that a man is a *thinking* person. He’s a reasonable person. He has a sense of himself, and a sense of what’s going on around him. He’s dialed in. He’s not aloof. He’s not driven along by the wind and the waves of his circumstances, but his discretion allows him to be discerning of what’s going on around him and to make principled decisions that may go against the grain.

And that needs to be said, because of how so totally opposite that is to the image of manhood portrayed in the culture. The media often portray men as checked out, helpless and hapless, grunts who go to work to earn a living, and then come home only to be overwhelmed by the demands of their families. Ray Romano’s character in *Everybody Loves Raymond* is a good example of that. He’s funny and goofy, but really all he cares about is sports, food, time with the guys, and a merely-physical relationship with his wife. Years ago, Bill Cosby put his finger on this popular view of men when he said in one of his stand-up routines, “Fathers always say the same thing: ‘Where’s your mother?’” And he joked about how the father doesn’t know where anything is in the house, and how if you ask him to do something he intentionally messes it up, so everyone will realize that he’s useless and won’t bother him. That is the opposite of what it means to be sensible. The sensible man is a thinking man, who has a sense of himself and what’s going on around him, so that he’s able to lead well.

But another connotation of *sōprhonéō* is to be self-controlled. The term speaks of self-mastery. This is someone who has learned how to control his instincts and his passions. A biblical man is not driven by his emotions. He’s not impetuous or reckless—running headlong in one direction one day, and then reversing course and going 90 miles-an-hour in the other direction the next day. He doesn’t fly by the seat of his pants. He’s a planner. He sets biblical goals, and then he takes the time to plot out how to achieve those goals in a way that maximizes efficiency and brings most glory to God. And then, he sticks to that plan, and in that way he brings stability into his own life and the lives of those he’s responsible to lead. There’s nothing worse than trying to follow someone who’s moving in fifteen different directions depending on the day. But a sensible man has a steadying influence on those he leads.

That self-control also extends to controlling one’s anger. A biblical man doesn’t fly off the handle. He is not easily provoked. He heeds James’s admonition in James 1:19, that “everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and *slow to anger*,” knowing that “the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” He lives out the truth of Proverbs 16:32, which says, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.” You see, the sensible man rules his spirit. He is not ruled *by* his spirit. He *mortifies* rage

and anger and brawling, Ephesians 4:31. He puts to death those outbursts of anger, which Paul includes in the list of the deeds of the flesh in Galatians 5:20. The biblical man controls his temper. And so you don't hear him say the words, "Well, she just made me so angry that I..." No! It is juvenile weakness that surrenders control of one's temper to others in such a way that you're driven into sin by your anger. A man is sensible. He is of sound mind. He rules his spirit, and he acts in accordance with sound judgment.

And that same self-control also extends to a man's purity—to controlling one's lusts. I'm not sure there is a greater *ruiner* of men than lust. Jesus said in Matthew 6:22 that "the eye is the lamp of the body." "If your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" And if you yield yourself to the lust of the eyes—giving unrestrained freedom to indulging your lusts, Titus 1:15 says your mind and your conscience are defiled. You become a lecher. You become one who is incapable of seeing women as sisters to be served, and you see them only as objects to be used. The world tells you that it's manly to ogle women—to give full vent to your lusts. And certain women without respect for themselves are flattered by such things, and they lust after *being* lusted after. And so they make it easy for you to so disgrace yourself. But the world's way is hell's way, and it leads only to death. Proverbs 7 says the lustful man follows the adulteress "until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life."

The **sensible** man doesn't hasten to a snare. He flees youthful lusts, and pursues righteousness, faith, love, and peace (2 Tim 2:22), because he knows that this is the will of God for him. First Thessalonians 4:3: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel [i.e., his own body] in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter." Verse 7: "For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification." The world lies to us and says that real men sleep with loads of women, are admired by many women, have the affection of many women. Paul says real men are **sensible**. They have developed a level of self-mastery and self-control over their passions, that they possess their bodies in sanctification and honor, that they don't defraud one another by taking advantage of their sisters. They think so as to have sound judgment. And so be reasonable: if the sexually immoral will not inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Corinthians 6; and if the pure in heart shall *see God*, Matthew 5:8; then the only **sensible** thing to do is to discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.

VII. Dignified

A **seventh mark** of biblical manhood may also be drawn from Titus chapter 2, and that is, number seven: a biblical man is **dignified**. He is **dignified**. And once again, we see Paul

command Titus to exhort both older men and younger men to cultivate this grace. Titus 2:2: “Older men are to be temperate, *dignified*...” And Titus 2:7: “...in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, *dignified*...”

The word is *semnos*, or *semnotēs*, used only a handful of times in the New Testament, and all but one of them in the pastoral epistles. In 1 Timothy 2:2, Paul instructs us to pray for our leaders, “so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and *dignity*.” In the list of elder qualifications in chapter 3 verse 4, he says that an elder must keep “his children under control with all *dignity*.” He makes it a qualification for deacons as well in 1 Timothy 3:8: “Deacons likewise must be men of *dignity*.” And then in verse 11 he says, “Women must likewise be dignified.” The word literally means “seriousness,” in the sense of being “worthy of respect” (Knight, 305). One commentator says the term “denotes a high moral tone and serious manner” (Kelly, 242). And in fact, the King James Version translates the word as *gravity*. To be dignified is to have an appropriate sense of gravity or weightiness about you—to be a respectable person, one who lives a life that inspires respect.

Now, it’s important to say what being “dignified” does *not* mean, because there are several ways to misunderstand this. We don’t hear the word very often, and when we do, it can give the impression of someone who’s haughty or condescending—someone who looks down their nose at those undignified, low-class people! You almost pronounce the word like Sean Connery: “Well, the man of God must be dignified.” But that’s not it! Neither does the connotation of seriousness or gravity mean someone who always has a dour expression on his face—his brow always furled and his lips always pursed. It’s not talking about being joyless or morose—someone who never smiles or laughs at anything. The dignified man is not that famous (and inaccurate) caricature of the Puritans: someone possessed by “the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.” That is not it at all! The dignified man is happy! He is joyful in the Lord! He enjoys life as a sweet gift of God! He is marked by a grave gladness. The dignified man is glad, but he is grave. He’s not goofy. He’s not flippant. He’s not frivolous. He’s not trivial.

What’s the opposite of gravity? It’s *levity*. Undignified, immature men are marked by a perpetual levity. Everything is always a joke. They can never let things get too heavy without injecting some sort of humor. “We can’t get *too* serious! Gotta keep it light! Don’t harsh my mellow, bro!” I’m telling you: there are some grown men who just refuse to be serious about much of anything. They’re just goofy. You couldn’t take them seriously if you wanted to, because of the way they carry themselves. But someone who is constantly joking, constantly trying to keep things light, hardly ever willing to have a serious conversation—that’s not a mature man, who is able to lead, love, provide for, and protect others. That’s a little boy, who refuses to be exercised about things that matter.

The dignified man is affected by the realities of heaven and hell. He feels as if he's in the presence of heaven, before the face of the omniscient God who searches the heart, and he feels as if it were the flames of hell nipping at his feet, reminding him that souls are perishing every day, and that as a preacher of the Gospel he traffics in matters of life and death. The dignified man is awed by the glory of God. In fact, the Hebrew word for "glory" is *chavod*, which actually means *heaviness*, or *weightiness*. There's nothing about *God* that encourages us to levity! Levity is the enemy of all worship, because worship is a response to the glory, the weightiness, the gravity of God's character. When you meditate on the things of God, the Word of God—when you go before the Lord in prayer and seek to do battle with your own sin—you *can't* keep it light, because those are heavy, weighty realities! And the godly man is constantly ruminating on the Word of God, he's praying at all times without ceasing, he knows his transgressions and his sin is ever before him (Ps 51:3). You can't live life in the presence of God and be a man of perpetual levity.

And again: I'm not saying you can never laugh, or have fun. Not in the least! But the dignified man doesn't find himself entertained by the sins that drove Christ to the cross. He doesn't make jokes about sin, and he doesn't sin in order to make jokes. He doesn't make light of vulgarity. One pastor writes that the dignified man doesn't laugh at what is tragic, and he doesn't laugh at the expense of others. I think that's spot-on.

The dignified man also doesn't seek to draw attention to himself but does all he can to point attention to Christ. There is a real sense in which the dignified man seeks to be unremarkable. He doesn't stand out because of his boorishness or his unfaithfulness to his commitments or his thirst for attention. And that extends even to his physical appearance. He doesn't present himself as odd or exceptional. He dresses appropriately for the occasion. He doesn't want his hair or his beard or his clothing or whatever to be what leaves an impression on people. He wants his godliness, his patience, his graciousness, his edifying speech to be what leaves an impression. He's the kind of person that, when you're with him, you leave thinking less about him and more about the Christ into whose image he is being transformed. To sum up, our friend, Pastor Chris Mueller, defined this **dignity** as "a blend of humility, courtesy, seriousness, and respectfulness" (*Let the Men Be Men*, 154).

VIII. Sound in Doctrine

And again, so much more could be said, but we must move on to an **eighth mark** of biblical manhood, also drawn from Titus 2. Number eight: a biblical man is **sound in doctrine**. And here again, we have this same exhortation for both older men and younger men. Titus 2:2: "Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, *sound in faith*..."—which is to say, to be sound in *the* faith: in that body of doctrine that was once-for-all delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3). And then to the young men in Titus 2:7: "Show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with *purity in*

doctrine...” And again, at the beginning of chapter 2, Paul introduces all this instruction with a command to Titus: “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for *sound doctrine*.”

We mentioned this when we discussed the man’s duty to be a spiritual protector. There is no mistaking it: men must know theology. In a real sense, we can say that theology is *life*, because theology is the study of *God*. And, as Jesus said in John 17:3, eternal life is what? To know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Men, there is nothing more important in the world than the truth. And we who have turned from our sins and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation—we who claim to be disciples of the One who said, “I am the Truth”—ought to be eager to devote all our energy to searching out the divine mind as He has revealed the truth to us in the Scriptures.

It used to be said that Theology is the Queen of the sciences. By that it was meant that there is no higher, nobler, more worthwhile inquiry for the human mind to be occupied with than the contemplation of God and the glory of His attributes and works. Disciplining our minds and hearts to patiently and faithfully dig through the Word of God in order to accurately and adequately understand who our God is and what He has done for us through Christ is what it means to have a relationship with our God. It is the substance of the Christian life.

And absolutely everything else in your life flows out of that. Everything in your life is downstream of your theology, because everything you do is shaped by what you believe. Which means that if you are amiss in your doctrine, you will be amiss in your devotion. If you are wrong in precept, you will be wrong in practice. And you’re responsible, men, not only for your *own* spiritual health, but also for the spiritual health of your wife and children. Which means, brothers, that you must be the resident theologian in your home. You must be able to divide truth from error—to be able, Titus 1:9, “both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

The Word of God commands men to maintain purity in our doctrine—to not let our understanding of the teachings of the Christian faith become polluted with error. And that means we must devote ourselves to be ever examining our doctrine, ever subjecting it to the searching light of Scripture, constantly conforming our thoughts to what we see in the text, repenting of our faith in falsehoods, and eagerly embracing the truth. In 1 Timothy 4:6, Paul says to Timothy, “In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly *nourished* on the words of the faith and of the *sound doctrine* which you have been following.” Sound doctrine, friends, is the nourishment of the child of God. It is the food for your soul, and the souls of those God gives you to lead.

And if you’ve got time for the garage, for the lake, for the shooting range, or for the driving range, for the TV, the theater, the cell phone: whatever— but you *don’t* have time for the

Holiness of God by R. C. Sproul, for *Strange Fire* by Pastor MacArthur, for *The Glory of Christ* or *The Mortification of Sin* by John Owen, for *A Body of Divinity* by Thomas Watson, for *The Religious Affections* by Jonathan Edwards, and for Augustine and Athanasius and the Gregories and Anselm—you're missing the point of your calling as *men*. Men know their God, and make their God known to those within their sphere of influence. And I don't know of a more fearful thing than to take God's own infallible and inerrant Word about Himself and His world, and to teach error from it—to so twist God's own words to say something that's not true about Him. And so a biblical man must be **sound in doctrine**.

IX. Sound in Speech

Well, finally we come to the **ninth mark** of biblical manhood that we'll consider in this series—once again from Titus chapter 2. And that is, number nine: the biblical man is **sound in speech**. Look again at verses 6 through 8: “Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, *sound in speech which is beyond reproach*, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”

No wild beast upon the earth is more difficult to tame than the unglorified human tongue. James 3:7–8 says, “Every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.” One verse earlier, James says, “And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity.” Proverbs 18:21 says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” And Jesus Himself makes a most startling statement in Matthew 12:36–37, when He says, “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Men—and young men especially—can tend to be careless in our speech. But the biblical man must not be. If we will give an account for every careless word we speak, it's no wonder that Paul instructs Titus to urge the men to be **sound in speech**.

“Sound” is the term *hūgiēs*. It's where we get the word *hygiene*. And it speaks of *healthiness*, of *wholesomeness*. “There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword,” Proverbs 12:18, “but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” The speech of a biblical man is to be life-giving—the kind of speech that restores spiritual health. This is just a way of saying that our words are to be edifying. They are not to tear down, but to build up. Ephesians 4:29 is absolutely paramount here. Paul says, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” What a pregnant verse of Scripture! So few words in just one sentence, and yet a lifetime is necessary to apply them!

A. No Foul Language

Just several quick comments, as we keep watch on the time. First, there is to be no unwholesome speech. For some strange reason, people seem to think that cutting, profane, vulgar speech is manly. It's not. When movies are rated based on how much foul language is in them, we're told that such and such movie is rated R for "Adult Language," or "Strong Language." Such euphemistic nonsense! Foul language—cursing, swear words—are neither "adult" nor "strong"! They are juvenile and weak. When I hear a man who lacks so much self-control as to be unable to speak without cursing, he immediately looks like a boy to me. Like a middle schooler. Someone so deprived of intelligence and self-discipline that he can't even learn to express himself like a sensible, respectable adult. Paul says, the biblical man is **sound in speech**, and lets no unwholesome word come out of his mouth.

And he'll go on to say, in Ephesians 5 and verse 4, that "there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks." If it's not outright foul language, men seem especially prone to the temptation to speak crassly, in sexual innuendo, and then try to cloak it under the excuse that, "I was only joking." Paul says there's to be none of that. He says that's not fitting. That doesn't match who a Christian is. That doesn't characterize a biblical man. Your speech is to be wholesome, healthy, sound, hygienic.

B. No Complaining

Second, not only is your speech not to be filthy, it's also to be devoid of complaining. I've often said that complaining is the mother tongue of the unregenerate human heart. The native language of sinners is grumbling and grouching. And yet Paul commands us, in Philippians 2:14, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." Eliminate complaining from your lives! Why? Because complaining is nothing other than verbalized dissatisfaction with the providence of God. "I see no reason for this, God! I deserve better than this, God!" That ought to make every last one of us tremble. Who are we, mere creatures of the dust, to tell God how to be God—how to providentially order His universe? And so there are few things that are more juvenile, and less manly, than a guy who sits around and complains about everything. We are to be **sound in speech**, and so our speech is to be free of complaining.

C. No Gossip

Third, our speaking is to be devoid of gossip. And for the sake of time, I'm going to refer you to my sermon, "How to Kill Your Neighbor," for further comment on this. But notice how many times the phrase "malicious gossips" occurs in the Pastoral Epistles, and note that that phrase translates the Greek word *diabolos*, which the word for *devil*. The bottom line is: men don't spend time like idle busybodies whispering about other people's business—especially if it has

the potential to destroy other people's reputations. If it's not (1) true, (2) necessary to be said, (3) kind, and (4) your business, don't speak it, or listen to it (Mueller, 177).

D. No Lies

Finally, our speech is to be devoid of lies. Ephesians 4:25: "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, 'speak truth each one of you with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another." Colossians 3:9: "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices." Lying is utterly unacceptable for the man of God. Why? Because he has been saved by a Savior who calls Himself the *Truth*, John 14:6. We have been saved by the *word* of truth, Colossians 1:5. We owe our lives to the truth. Our entire existence—we ought to be walking expositions of the *truth*! I can hardly think of anything more incongruent than a Christian whose word cannot be depended upon to reflect truth. A biblical man's word is trustworthy! What he says is dependable! It is not carefully crafted to deceive. It is not full of exaggeration and hyperbole, such that it could mislead those who take his words at face value. It is, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:2, "the open statement of the truth." A man gives his word, and it stands inviolable. His yes is yes (Matt 5:37; 2 Cor 1:17–20), and he does not go back on his word, even if, Psalm 15:4, he swears to his own hurt, he does not change. To be **sound in speech** is to speak as a faithful witness to the truth.

In everything, the biblical man asks, "Will this build up? Will this give grace? Are *these* words necessary *right now*?" As someone who still struggles with talking too much, I can say that few things have been more transforming in my own life than meditating on this standard in Ephesians 4:29. I should only speak if my speech will edify, if it will give grace, and if the moment calls for it.

Conclusion

And here we are again, humbled to the dust before the standard of God's Word. The biblical man is a leader, a lover, a provider, and a protector. He is strong, sensible, dignified, sound in doctrine, and sound in speech. This is what we must be. This is what Almighty God has created us to be, in fulfillment of His very good design for us as his creatures. And I'll say this: all your protestations against the wickedness of the homosexual and transgender movements amount to very little if you're unwilling to put your hand to the plow of living out your calling as biblical men. It does little good to shout from the rooftops that men are not women if you don't go to work on being the kind of man that Scripture calls you to be. Some of you need that kind of wake-up call. And I pray these last three messages will be a benefit to you in awakening your conscience from its slumber, and setting you to action.

But for all of us, we do grieve at how far short we fall in one or another of these areas. That grief is good. Godly sorrow works repentance. But it does not work *despair*. Those of you who feel

defeated by how short you fall from this standard—remember *the Man* Christ Jesus. He is not only your perfect example—though He is that. How gracious of God to show us the perfect Man—the perfect image of God: holiness in our own nature!

Jesus is the great head of the church, who takes responsibility for the bride He **leads**. He is **love** incarnate, who lays down His life in sacrifice for our good. He is the great **provider**, who nourishes us and cherishes us with the spiritual food that saves and sustains the soul. He is the foremost **protector**, who steps in between us and our Judge, and bears the awful, wrath-filled punishment in our place, and once in His hand, no one can be snatched out. He is the **strongest** man to ever live, living His entire life as strength under control, wielded only for the benefit of others. He is not just **sensible**, but the wisdom of God incarnate: always self-controlled. He is **dignified**—the most grave man ever to walk the earth; the man *of* sorrows, as if He were made up only of sorrows, because He saw how people so carelessly forfeit the joys of heaven, and cling to the miseries of sin and hell. He is the Great Prophet—the teacher of only **sound doctrine**. And He is the *Word* of God Himself, always **sound in speech**, to the point that the people wondered at the words of grace that would fall from His lips.

He is everything that we must be! And because of that, He is not *merely* our Example! He is our Substitute! Christ doesn't just come to show us how to live! He comes to show us how we've *failed* to live, and yet He lives *for* us! He obeys in our place, so that, not only does His death pay our penalty, but His life accomplishes our righteousness! And for all you men who are humbled to the ground by this standard—who are tempted to despair because of how faithless you can be—raise your eyes to the cross of Calvary and see Him there, who made an end of all your sin! Behold Him there, the Risen Lamb: your perfect, spotless righteousness! And looking away from yourself, and trusting entirely in Him, fall on His grace to be *for* you what you could not be in yourselves! And receive the perfect robe of His righteousness that makes you stand in the presence of Holy God!

And then, having feasted on that Gospel, walk in the *strength* of that Gospel. Apply the grace that purchases your pardon unto the power of holy living. Taste how gracious Jesus is with you in the Gospel, and then in His day-to-day dealings with you as you walk with Him! And then bend that grace out to others to lead, love, provide and protect! To be strong, sensible, dignified, and sound in doctrine and speech! You can be this man, brothers! Christ has purchased grace for you to do it! God has prepared these good works for you, that you would walk in them! O, give yourselves to your wives, to your children, to your brothers and sisters in Christ, so that Christ would get what He's worthy of from you.