

Biblical Manhood: Denying Excuses, Taking Responsibility

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Tim 6:11-12)

As I view what it means to be a man through the lens of this instruction from Paul to Timothy, I am reminded again of the holy activity of true masculinity (and true personhood, generally). Flee, pursue, fight, take hold. Paul is nothing if not verby.

I am struck, though, by how often I fail at these things. I am busy about things that so often don't matter and passive about things that do. I am lazy. I can't be bothered. And when I look for where I ought to get the oomph of holy pursuit from, I see Paul couching the masculine imperatives in the masculine indicative: "O man of God." If this is what I am, this is what I can do. Furthermore, I see the importance of "taking hold of the eternal life to which I was called" for the other actions.

The godly man is a gospelled man. He has seen who he is in Christ, he is moved by what God has done for him in Christ. If I don't get this part, all the rest will just be a self-salvation project, an exercise in self-righteousness.

I need a better vision. I need a better vision than simply that of myself as a "manly man" going about some religious busywork. I need a vision of the conquering, saving, loving Savior who has done all these things for me and covers my failures at doing them myself.

If biblical manhood is about denying excuses and taking responsibility—and I think it is—I begin to think of all the excuses the God-Man could have made when it came to loving and saving me. He could have shaken his head and cataloged my list of deep unworthinesses:

- Father, he's so sinful. He's always struggling with lust and he looks at pornography.
- Father, he's so lazy. He doesn't deserve all this effort.
- Father, he's so unspiritual. He won't even pick up the Word to read a few lines.
- Father, he doesn't treat his wife the way she ought to be treated.
- Father, he's not the kind of guy who could set the world on fire, is he?
- Father, he's so passive. He's so timid. He's such a coward.
- Father, he's so prideful. He enjoys praise too much and he's selfish.
- Father, he's short-tempered. He leaps to defend himself too much.

Father, he's such a failure, a nobody, a loser. He's a stuttering wimp, just like that girl in the fifth grade said he was. He is what he always feared his family thought he was. He doesn't deserve a second glance like those bosses at his first job proved. He is what his critics say he is, worthy of scorn and derision and unworthy of forgiveness. He is what the Accuser says he is, only as good as what he has failed to do and deserving of eternal condemnation.

But with his atoning sacrifice Jesus doesn't say any of those things about me. He says "Father, this man is your son and you've set your affections on him. So I am pleased to die for him."

So I write this not as a perfect man, but as a *gospel*ed man,

because I have taken hold of Christ having taken hold of me (Phil. 3:12). I have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. And now, by God's grace, I am empowered to love well and serve well and husband well and daddy well and pastor well. And so can you, men of God, if you will but lay hold of it.

Take hold of this precious truth. The Son of God has set aside all the charges against you, all your sins and failings, and has taken them to the cross, killing them by dying with them, leaving them dead as he himself raises to new life—*your* new life, which is eternal and into which he is calling you.

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1)

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