

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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To be a Man

Louis Garbi

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

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.

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.

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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**).

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The More Excellent Way, Part 2

Steve Wright

Editor's Note: Part one of this article can be found in the March 2023 edition of The Gospel Message.

Jeremiah's godly service was in stark contrast to Balaam's. Jeremiah is known as "the weeping prophet" not only because of his own problems (which were real and great) but also:

- Because of the wickedness of his people
- Because of their refusal to turn to the LORD
- And because of the coming punishment from God that Jeremiah had to prophesy to his people about.

As a true patriot and in the character of our LORD and Savior Jesus when he wept over Jerusalem (see **Luke 19:41-44**), Jeremiah likewise wept over his people. Very early in his work, Jeremiah cried out,

My joy is gone; grief is upon me; my heart is sick within me. For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded; I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me. Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! (**Jeremiah 8:18, 21; 9:1**).

Jeremiah was a prophet with a broken heart, a loving heart, and a spiritual heart. I strongly identify with Jeremiah.

Regarding knowledge, what can any degree of spiritual or intellectual knowledge amount to? Nothing without love! Without love, these things are worse than mere ignorance! The greatest of our intellectual accomplishments, including biblical and theological knowledge and insights, are nothing when compared to that which God possesses! Without the demonstrated love of God being shown with these things, they are worth less than nothing! When love is missing, the result is spiritual snobbery, pride, and arrogance. In such a manner, even God's truth becomes Pharisaic and ugly! Spiritual knowledge is good, beautiful, and fruitful in the LORD'S work when it is held in humility and ministered in love. But it is ugly and counterproductive when love is not there. Mere knowledge "makes arrogant;" love is the absolutely essential ingredient for edification (**1 Corinthians 8:1**).

Paul, of course, did not depreciate knowledge, especially knowledge of God's word. To the Philippians, he wrote, "*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment*" (**Philippians 1:9**). We cannot be edified by or obey what we do not know. We can, however,

know but not obey and, therefore, not be strengthened. Only love brings “real knowledge and discernment.” We can know and not be edified. Love is the divine edifier.

God makes the impossible possible: “*faith so as to remove mountains*” (1 Corinthians 13:2). From the very first verse of this chapter, when Paul says “If I,” he has been making use of hyperbole. He does that here also. He speaks here not of saving faith but of the confidence and expectancy that one can have of the LORD. He is addressing believers who already have saving faith. Here he means trusting God to do mighty things on behalf of his children. Yet still, Paul says, a Christian is nothing without love.

It is not simply a coincidence that the apostle uses the same figure used on at least one occasion by our Lord Jesus. After his disciples had failed to heal the demon-possessed boy, Jesus told them, “*Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you*” (Matthew 17:20). Jesus was speaking in hyperbole just as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. The Lord’s point to his disciples was that by trusting him completely, nothing they would endeavor to do as they served him would be impossible. Paul’s point is that even if a person has that great degree of prayerful trust in the Lord but was unloving, he would be nothing.

Consider the prophet Jonah: everything Jonah acknowledged God to be Jonah was not. And he did not even want to be. A more loveless man of God than that is pretty hard to even imagine. Jonah’s faith told him that great success would come in Nineveh. And that success indeed came. As a man, however, the prophet himself was a failure. His preaching wrought a miracle as he knew it would, but the preacher was nothing.

In these two articles, we have considered three different prophets.

- One that conspired with God’s enemies to bring down God’s people.
- One whose heart was so filled with hate for the enemies of God’s people, that he did not want them to have the opportunity of receiving a warning from His loving God because they just might repent.
- One true patriot who loved his people – God’s people – so much that he cried and cried and continued to plead with them to repent so that they would not be condemned.

God used all three of these men to accomplish great things. When it comes to having love in my heart or not, which of these

three men do I want to emulate?

So, “What’s love got to do with it?”

Everything, my brethren, everything!

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“*But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.*” (1 Corinthians 12:31).

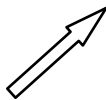
Glory to God!

The brethren who meet on **Prince Road** in **Alton, IL**, rejoiced when **Murray Harbke** was baptized on January 13.

Blessed Are the Dead

Betty Jeane Warren, 96, of Carlisle, IA, passed away at her home on January 2. Betty was born April 26, 1926, in Osage, IA, daughter of Omer Kenneth and Olive Bernice (Wernli) Payne. She grew up on farms around central Iowa where she received her education. Betty met **Carroll Warren** at a roller-skating rink at the Iowa State Fairgrounds and they were married on June 8, 1947 and were married for 70 years until Carroll’s death on February 6, 2018. Betty and Carroll lived on their farm outside Carlisle for 67 years where she was able to live independently until her death. She was employed at Hartford-Carlisle Savings Bank for 17 years. Betty was a founding member of the **Pleasant Hill Church of Christ** until her death. Gardening was her passion which she shared with her church family by creating beautiful flower bouquets every Sunday morning for many years. Her gardening included vegetables and fruit which she canned and froze for future use. She was an excellent seamstress from sewing matching dresses for her 3 daughters, to care bears and cabbage patch dolls and to alternations for many in the community. In her later years, she enjoyed sending hand-made greeting cards to family and friends and working on puzzles. Betty is survived by her daughters, **Pamela J. Climpson** and **Paula K. (Claude) Sampson**, three grandchildren, seven great grandchildren and two great great grandchildren, a sister, and a host of nieces and nephews. She preceded in death by her husband Carroll Warren, daughter Patricia A. Hermon, one grandson, her parents, and four siblings.

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Continued from page 3: "Blessed are the Dead"

Melda Marlene Ingle, 91, of Vandalia, IA, passed away on February 17. The daughter of Glenn H. and Golden Dawn (Quigley) Daugherty, Melda was born on February 8, 1932 in Prairie City. She graduated from Prairie City High School in 1949 as the class Salutatorian. On August 19, 1950, she was united in marriage to **Marvin William Ingle**. They made their home in Prairie City, IA and Indianapolis, IN. Prior to having children, Melda worked in the physical therapy department at Methodist Hospital, working with polio patients. She loved high school basketball, both boys and girls, whether it was in person or listening on the radio. Melda was a faithful member of the **Vandalia Church of Christ**. She was a devoted Christian wife, mother and supporter of her family and also anyone who was in need. Melda also enjoyed reading, traveling and working on puzzles as well as being famous for her homemade noodles and cinnamon rolls. Those left to honor her memory include her children, **Greg (Maggie) Ingle**, **Lynnette Dowdy**, **Lisa (Doug) Fiorentin**, and **Charles (Angela) Ingle**; 13 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren and one on the way, one uncle, and a sister-in-law. Preceding her in death were her parents, husband in 2021, a granddaughter, two sisters, and a brother.

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Special Meetings

The church of Christ on Smart Road, Greenwood, MO, is pleased to announce several upcoming events.

On April 15-16, the congregation plans a **special study for teens**. Evangelists **Tad Morris** and **Wade Stanley** will be the teachers, Lord willing. Please check the church's website

above for more information.

<https://smartroadcoc.org>

The congregation plans to host a **one-week meeting** during the week of **July 23-28**. More details will be available in future months.

2023 Meetings

April 15-16.....Teen Meeting, Smart Road, Greenwood, MO
May 27-28.....Murray Road, Lee's Summit, MO
June 10-11.....Vandalia, IA
July 3-7.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
July 23-28....Summer Meeting, Smart Road, Greenwood, MO
September 2-3.....Labor Day Meeting, Pleasant Hill, IA
October 6-8.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO

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