

What is a Man? The Marks of Biblical Manhood, Part 1

Genesis 1–3 and Selected Scriptures

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Introduction

Well, we come again this morning to another sermon in a series I began at the beginning of the year, entitled *Confronting the Culture*. It has been my goal, throughout this time, to equip you, as the people of God, to be salt and light, as the Lord Jesus has called us, in the midst of the decay and darkness of this dying culture. Each and every week, as you go from this place—which functions as something of a haven for truth and holiness—you enter, Monday through Saturday, into a world of chaos and corruption. And it is a world vying for your allegiance. It is a world that lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19), under whose command are the spiritual forces of wickedness (Eph 6:12) who labor at deceiving the people of God—who seek to seduce you with fine-sounding arguments (Col 2:4), even as the Serpent did with Eve, to woo your thinking away from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ (2 Cor 11:3), unto the empty deception of the elementary principles of this world (Col 2:8). And so you must be equipped to stand against those attacks. Your minds must be prepared to resist those advances, and stand firm in the faith.

But you also must be equipped to confront the lies of the culture with the truth. You must not only play defense, in which you see to it that no one take you captive through empty deception (Col 2:8) You must also play offense, in which you tear down strongholds and demolish arguments raised up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:3–5). You need not only to withstand the lies; you must confront the lies. You must bring the light of the truth into the darkness. You must bring the salt of heaven into the corruption of earth. And so this series has been designed to equip you to do that.

And we began by confronting the culture's lie that there is no such thing as objective, absolute truth. We demonstrated from Scripture that truth does exist, that it *is* objective, that it is rooted in God Himself, revealed in the pages of Scripture, and corresponds to reality. And then we turned to address the fundamental identity of man—because after the wholesale rejection of truth itself—the biblical doctrine most under attack in our present culture is the doctrine of man. And so we turned to Genesis chapter 1—and particularly verse 27—as something of a foundation stone upon which to glean an understanding of ourselves from God's revelation.

And that confronted us with **three foundational truths** about man’s identity. First, man is a **creature**. “God *created* man.” We are not evolved animals, free to live our lives in any way we see fit. We are creatures, accountable to our Creator, subject to the law of His mouth as the rule of our lives. Second, man is an **image-bearer**. “God created man *in His own image*, in the *image of God* He created him.” And the fact that we are God’s image in the world means that our fundamental purpose in life is to be like Him in significant ways, so as to represent Him accurately to the rest of His creation. We are to tell the truth about God simply by virtue of our existing, by our living in a way that befits His image-bearers. That means that we are not free to forge our own identity. It means we *receive* our identity from the One in whose image we are made. And then, third, we learned that man is **gendered**. “In the image of God He created him; *male and female* He created them.” The creature, made in the image of God, reflects God’s image by being either male or female. And so we spent two sermons bringing the implications of that truth to bear on the transgender movement. And we found, contrary to transgenderism’s lies, that gender is not a socially constructed spectrum rooted in the self-perception of the creature. Instead, gender is granted by our Creator, grounded in our biology, as a gift of God’s loving care, whereby He graciously reveals to us this objective fact of our identity, along with the truths of the goodness of the body and the glory of our distinctiveness as men and women.

Men and women are different! They are alike in their humanity—unified as equal image-bearers of Almighty God; and yet they are distinct in their gender—complementing one another as a harmony of praise to the God who created them, the God whose own identity consists in the unity of His single nature and the diversity of the three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And so we learned that the distinctiveness of men and women is to be maintained even by the way we present ourselves in our physical appearance. Men and women honor the glory and beauty of God’s good design by presenting our physical appearance in accordance with the distinctiveness of their biological sex.

Men ought to carry themselves in a masculine way and not an effeminate way. Women ought to carry themselves in a feminine way and not a masculine way. And so, not only does that rule out *cross-dressing* and transgenderism, it also means that men glorify God when they look and speak and behave like men. And women glorify God when they look and speak and behave like women.

But what does that mean? What does it mean, according to Scripture, to behave like a man, or like a woman? Aside from the obvious biological differences, what does it mean to *be* a biblical man and not a woman? What does it mean to *be* a biblical woman and not a man (Piper, *What’s the Difference*, 17)? If men aren’t women and women aren’t men, what are they? That’s going to be the focus of my next several sermons in GraceLife: the nature of biblical manhood and womanhood. If there is glory in our distinctiveness—if God’s pre-fall, before-the-curse, very-good design of male and female differentiation is not just true, but beautiful—then it’s fitting for

us to devote ourselves to understanding the beauty of those distinctions, preeminently so we can order our lives according to the Bible's prescriptions, and thereby bring honor and glory to God. In my last sermon, I mentioned how the harmony of an orchestra illustrates the beauty of distinctiveness. There is something wonderful about hearing an orchestra play in unison. You behold the skill of the musicians when they play the same part in a unified way. But there's something of the *beauty* of music that you behold when each person is playing a note that's distinct, but that *harmonizes* perfectly with the other notes. We need to learn to play our parts, so that we harmonize in a way that brings glory and honor to the beauty of God's design.

And we're going to begin today with the nature of biblical manhood. And I know what you're thinking. Interesting that the time for a sermon on biblical manhood would fall on Mother's Day. It's the Lord's providence. In fact, I'm not sure I can think of a better Mother's Day present than to preach on the responsibilities of biblical manhood, because women never flourish more than when men act like men. The greatest thing that could happen to the mothers of Grace Church would be for the fathers of Grace Church to make progress in living out their calling as men in ways that more precisely accord with the biblical standard. But as I say that, let me caution the ladies against giving into the temptation to treat this sermon as an opportunity to give your husband a hard time—or to cause yourself to be discouraged—for the ways in which he doesn't measure up to the biblical standard of manhood. Actually, that wouldn't be very *womanly* of you, and we'll talk about why that's so in a few Sundays from now. Instead, use this sermon as an occasion to inform your prayers for him as he pursues biblical manhood, and to encourage him as he makes progress in these areas—even if the progress is slower than you'd like.

Now, when I say that women never flourish more than when men act like men, I am stating something so radically subversive to the orthodoxy of the secular culture that I'm surprised some feminist from somewhere doesn't rush the stage and try to arrest me for thought crimes. The accepted thinking of our world today is that masculinity is positively toxic. It's a relic of the outmoded patriarchal societies, that resulted in nothing but the subjugation and abuse of women. The only way that men can serve women is to repent—to think, speak, and act as little like *men* as possible! And certainly there *have* been abuses. Rather than what we'll see is the biblical pattern of loving, servant-hearted, sacrificial headship, the world's aggressive pursuit of depravity has corrupted the good gift of male headship into cruel, heavy-handed domination. And that is sin. It is wickedness. It must be repented of and forsaken.

But the answer to those abuses is not to so stress the truth of men's and women's equality that our distinctiveness is minimized, or even lost. The answer to misogyny is not misandry! The answer to men's mistreatment of women is not to mistreat men! The answer to injustice is not to perpetrate *more* injustice—just in the opposite direction! It's not to label masculinity as inherently toxic and seek to eradicate it from society! We're living amongst the rotten fruit of feminism's attempt to emasculate society, and the results aren't working out for them. It's

produced no genderless utopia. The deprecation of the distinctiveness of manhood and womanhood has bequeathed to us a culture of males who don't know how to be men and females who don't know how to be women—indeed, of men who *pretend* to be women and of women who pretend to be men! John Piper makes the helpful observation that “The consequence of this confusion is not a free and happy harmony among gender-free persons relating on the basis of abstract competencies. The consequence is rather more divorce, more homosexuality, more sexual abuse, more promiscuity, more social awkwardness, and more emotional distress and suicide that come with the loss of God-given identity” (*What's the Difference*, 16–17).

The chaos of the present moment only serves to illustrate that the deprecation of masculinity and femininity does not result in blessing, because it is *rebellion* against God's good design. God has designed that men flourish most when women act like women. And God has designed that women flourish most when men act like men.

And so what *is* a biblical man? Who does the Bible say a man is? Well, as I've sought the answer to that question, I've gleaned no fewer than **nine marks of biblical manhood**. And we'll aim to work through them both this Sunday and two Sundays from now. And as we go through these **marks of biblical manhood**, you'll notice that they most often relate to how a husband treats his wife. But it's important for me to say at the outset that we ought not tie manhood—or womanhood, for that matter—exclusively to marriage.

It is not the case that you are less of a man or a woman if you're not married. The most biblical man in the history of the world was a single man. Jesus of Nazareth never got married, never had sexual relations, never raised His own biological children, and He was the holiest, happiest, most fulfilled person in the history of the world! The greatest missionary in history—perhaps the second most biblical man in the history of the world, the Apostle Paul—labored for the glory of God and the propagation of the Gospel without taking along a wife, like Peter did: 1 Corinthians 9:5. And so if you are single, you are at no disadvantage to living out the calling of your manhood—not any more than Jesus was, or Paul was. There are biblical, appropriate expressions of masculinity from single men even toward the women in your life who are not your wife, and I'll seek to make application along those lines as we go.

However, having said that, marriage *is* the norm for God's image-bearers. In Genesis 1:27, we're told that God made man male and female. And immediately after, in Genesis 1:28 we're told that God commanded them to be fruitful and multiply. In Genesis 2:22–23, we're shown that woman is the suitable helper for the man in a way that all the animals were not. And immediately after, in Genesis 2:24, we read of marriage: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” No sooner is there talk of “male” and “female” than there is talk of procreation—which of course happens only by sexual union, which of course is to happen only in the context of the covenant of marriage. No sooner is

there talk of “man” and “woman” than there is talk of joining man and woman together in marriage.

Therefore, because marriage *is* the norm, much of Scripture’s teaching on masculinity and femininity relate to how we conduct ourselves in the marriage relationship, or how we are to prepare ourselves for that relationship. Which means: much application will have to do with marriage. But it also means: it’s appropriate for me to say to the overwhelming majority of you: Get married! Press hard after becoming the kind of man or woman that would attract a godly spouse. Mortify sinful patterns, put off annoying habits, and press into biblical masculinity or femininity, so that you might be a suitable leader or a suitable helper to a fellow believer. And with God’s help, these next several messages will guide you in that.

I. A Leader

Well, let’s come, then, to that **first mark** of biblical manhood. And that is, number one, a biblical man is a **leader**. And we could go to several passages to establish this. One thinks right away of Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 23, where Paul says that “the husband is the *head* of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church.” The headship of the husband speaks of his **leadership**. Or, you could go to 1 Corinthians 11:3, which speaks even more broadly than the husband-wife relationship and says, “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the *man* is the *head* of a woman.” These are clear-as-day indications of male headship.

But even more than these passages, the truth of male headship is found in the opening chapters of Genesis, concurrent with the creation of man. And that is because the roles of male headship and female submission are not incidental later additions to male and female identity. Even more importantly, these complementary roles for men and women do not have their origin in the fall, when sin corrupted our relationships with one another. No, the biblical complementarity of male headship and female submission are rooted in the *creation* of man and woman.

And we see that in a number of ways. First of all, God created the man first, Genesis 2:7. And you might say, “So? Is being created first an indication of headship?” Well, the Apostle Paul thought so. In 1 Timothy 2:12–13, Paul grounds man’s leadership *role in the church in the fact that Adam was created before* Eve. He says, “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. *For* it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.” Paul interprets the fact that God made Adam first as an indication of giving him a leadership role. And he gives that as the reason for why men are to take a leadership role in the New Testament church.

Second, God gave His command to Adam. Genesis 2:15–17 describes God giving Adam the command not to eat from the tree, and then woman is created in the next paragraph. And so, God entrusted Adam with the responsibility to be Eve’s teacher of the Word of God, not vice versa (*RST*, 2:212). Eve doesn’t receive her own set of instructions from God. She receives the words of God’s law through her head, Adam.

Third, God created the woman from the man, Genesis 2:21–22. He puts Adam into a deep sleep, takes his rib, and fashions the rib into a woman. In 1 Corinthians 11:7, Paul says that “the woman is the glory of man,” and the reason he gives for that is, 1 Corinthians 11:8, “For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man.” There’s something of hierarchy here. Not superiority or inferiority of essence, but hierarchy in function. Men and women fulfill different roles under God’s design. And that is grounded in the fact that woman comes from man rather than man coming from woman. Now, this is not to say that man is independent of woman, 1 Corinthians 11:11. Because, verse 12, “As the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman.” So, let’s not distort this into something ugly. There’s no oneness here. There is distinction of roles, but glorious interdependence.

Fourth, God created the woman for the man. Paul says this very thing in 1 Corinthians 11:9. He says, “For indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.” And that goes all the way back to Genesis 2:18, where God tells us that His design in creating the woman is that she would be a helper, suitable for the man to carry out the divine mandate given in chapter 1 verse 28 to “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” What it means to be woman, in part, is to be one who can suitably help a man to walk in obedience to God’s commands.

Fifth, the man’s headship is seen in the fact that Adam names the woman. Just as Adam named each of the animals in Genesis 2:19, and just as God named His creation throughout Genesis 1, Adam’s naming the woman shows authority. Genesis 2:23: “She shall be called *ishah*, for she was taken out of *ish*.” In the Old Testament, a monarch would rename a person to show his own greatness and authority. Genesis 41:45: Pharaoh names Joseph Zaphenath-paneah. In 2 Kings 23:34, Pharaoh made Eliakim king and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And of course Nebuchadnezzar renamed Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. So, when Adam names Eve, it’s intended to show authority. One commentator observed that Eve “found her own identity in relation to the man as his equal and helper *by the man’s definition*” (Ortlund, *RBMW*, 103).

And then, sixth, with respect to marriage, it is the *man* who is tasked with the responsibility of initiating the formation of a new family. Genesis 2:24, “For this reason *a man* shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife.” Now, you might have expected the passage to say that the woman is to leave her family and be joined to her husband. After all, it is the woman

who sheds her last name and takes the family name of her husband. But that's not what it says, because it's not the woman's responsibility to initiate the new household. That responsibility belongs to the head of the household (Ortlund, *ibid.*).

And so, what do we take away from all of this? That fundamental to the identity of man—from the very beginning of his existence, before there was sin in the world—is that **the biblical man is a leader**. And at the heart of that leadership isn't license to do whatever you please. At the heart of biblical leadership is the concept of *responsibility*. It's true that the leader is in charge, but the biblical emphasis isn't so much on the leader's *right* to govern as he sees fit as much as it's on the leader's *stewardship* to lead in a way that honors God and benefits those under his charge.

And we see that responsibility as it at the heart of headship without leaving the opening chapters of Genesis. In the account of the fall of man in Genesis 3, it's plain that Eve is the one who sins first. Chapter 3 verse 6: "When *the woman* saw..., she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." And yet, even though Eve sinned first, who does God come looking for in verse 9? "Then Yahweh God called to *the man*, and said to him, 'Where are you?'" Why would that be? Because as the **leader**, the man bears the burden of primary accountability for the spiritual and moral health of the family. Verse 17 says the creation is cursed because of Adam. Romans 5:12 says that sin entered the world through one *man*, and not one woman. First Corinthians 15:22 says, "In Adam all die." Adam is the head of the human race, and as the head, he bears the responsibility for the spiritual condition of his family.

Masculine **leadership**, men, means taking responsibility. It means being willing to be held accountable—even when you personally may not be at fault. If there is something spiritually amiss in your household, you as the husband and the father, bear the ultimate responsibility for that, because God has made you head. And that means that there is nothing that is less manly, than passively abdicating your leadership role, and shirking responsibility.

And in fact, it was that very passivity—that very abdication of headship, that very shirking of responsibility—that Adam's transgression consisted in, wasn't it? He was responsible to **lead** his wife, to teach her to obey God's Word, and to protect her against temptation. But he failed to do all these things. And Satan knows that's his way in. He comes to the woman first, inverting the God-ordained design of headship and submission, and he asks, "Indeed, has God said, '*You* [plural] shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" And Eve answers, "*We* may eat." Satan has made Eve the spokesman and representative of the family, an office which properly belonged to Adam. This was an immediate, subtle subversion of the very good created order of God, defined in the loving headship and sweet submission of man and woman in marriage.

And at that point, Adam should have been aware of what was going on, should have stepped in between his wife and the serpent, and said, “That’s the Word He spoke to *me*, snake! You leave her out of this!” And if he tried beguiling her with his crafty speech about becoming like God knowing good and evil, Adam should have exercised dominion over the creeping thing and crushed the serpent’s head with the heel of his foot.

But he does no such thing. He sat, passively by, while his wife lay vulnerable and unprotected from the spiritual temptation of the mortal enemy of their souls. He shirked his responsibility to lead her and protect her. And then, he submits to her sinful leadership, follows her example of disobedience, and eats the fruit God commanded him not to eat. See how sin and death enter the world by a reversal of God’s very-good design for the world! The creeping thing that creeps on the earth rules over mankind, and the woman exercises headship over the man (Strachan & Peacock, *Grand Design*, 39). All sin traces its origin to the first man’s abdication of **leadership**.

And so, men, if you are going to be a biblical man, you must be a **leader**. You must be one who takes responsibility, who eschews passivity, who takes action and takes initiative, who makes decisions with clarity and conviction, who confronts conflict with boldness and grace. John Piper says, “Mature masculinity...feels the responsibility to provide a general pattern of initiative” (*What’s the Difference*, 31). Especially in the marriage relationship, wives should not feel the burden of primary responsibility to make the household run, while husbands passively respond to her initiative. Men, you need to be imaginative and reflective, thinking about what needs doing for the family to thrive.

You need to pray at mealtimes, to gather the family for Bible reading and prayer, and to get the family out of bed on Sunday morning so that everyone gets to church on time. You need to think strategically about how to lead your wife spiritually. What topic of biblical instruction would be beneficial for her spiritual growth at the present moment? What encouragement needs to be given? What correction needs to be given? *You* need to think strategically about how to pursue your wife romantically—thinking creatively about date nights, or family vacations, or fun weekend activities. Your finger needs to be on the pulse of what the family needs.

You need to be reflective about behavioral issues with the children and how best to train them and provide discipline that results in their growth and not in their exasperation. You need to initiate conversation about what kind of disobedience will get what kind of consequence. You need to make informed decisions about what educational choices you’ll make for your children. Public school, private school, home school. How will you navigate that, and why? You need to be thinking through family finances, setting appropriate, God-honoring goals while devising a strategic plan to live within your means.

You need to be the one who addresses conflict first. Not to blame her for it, but to break the silence and seek peace. You're the one to apologize first, to seek forgiveness first, to say, "Something is amiss, and I hate it! and I know I'm responsible for a portion of it, and I don't want this to go on! Please, can we talk? Will you forgive me for..." whatever it might be. One of the greatest temptations in the world for men is to avoid conflict—or to pervert *everything* into a conflict! We face this temptation either to be a *cruel tyrant* who has to turn everything into a fight until we get our way, *or* to be a weak-willed, passive wimp who runs from conflict because we don't have the stomach for it. But like a firefighter who runs toward the burning building while everyone else runs away, biblical men run toward conflict. Not because he *loves* conflict—any more than a firefighter loves playing in burning buildings. But because he has the responsibility to protect those under his charge from the damage that the conflict will inflict if it remains unaddressed,

And you need to brainstorm about how best to involve your family in the ministry of the local church, how you can come alongside fellow believers and meet their needs, and how you can be intentional in speaking the Gospel to those the Lord has put in your life who do not yet know Him.

This is leadership. This is the delightful burden of being a man. That isn't to say that a wife has *nothing* to say about these matters. Not at all. She's given to you to be a *helper* to you in all of these things. And though the buck may stop with you, the good leader seeks out the input of those he's leading. He understands their needs and even their preferences, and he will often adopt their ideas. She may think of these things first. It's not that a woman can take *no* initiative. It's simply that the man bears the *primary* responsibility to lead in these things. When confronted with a tough decision, he bears the burden of having the final say—the burden of knowing that God will hold him accountable if he fails to lead in paths of righteousness and wisdom. And so, eschewing the weakness of indecision and procrastination, the biblical man runs *toward* responsibility. His leadership is deferential but decisive. He solicits input from others to make a wise decision, and then he makes it. He's not impulsive, but neither is he paralyzed. He seeks God's help, studies the Scriptures, applies biblical wisdom, and moves forward.

II. A Lover

A biblical man is a leader. A **second mark** of biblical manhood is, number two: a biblical man is a **lover**. He is one who **loves**. He exercises his leadership lovingly. In 1 Corinthians 16:13, Paul gives an exhortation to the Corinthian church that we've grown familiar with more recently, as it's been the subject of several sermons in the last several years. He writes, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." And we're going to have more to say on this verse when we speak about the biblical man as one who is strong. Strength, courage, and fortitude are all attributes of biblical masculinity. But notice: right after being told to "act like

men” and “be strong,” Paul’s next words, in verse 14, are: “Let all that you do be done in **love**.” There is an unmistakable connection between acting like a man, and **loving**.

In Titus 2:1, Paul instructs Titus to “speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.” And in verse 2, he begins with the “older men” in the congregation and says they “are to be...sound in faith, in **love**, [and] in perseverance.” Older men are to be sound in love. This is what men are to be **marked** by. In 1 Timothy 1:5, Paul tells young Pastor Timothy, as he leads the church in Ephesus, that “the goal of our instruction is *love* from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” The men of God, who serve the church as pastors, who work hard at preaching and teaching—they have as the goal of all their labors **love**.

And then, in Colossians 3:19, we see Paul apply this mark of biblical manhood to husbands in particular, when he says, “Husbands, *love* your wives and do not be embittered against them.” And in the parallel to this passage in the letter to the Ephesians, we have that famous instruction on marriage in Ephesians 5:22–33. Turn there with me. Starting in verse 25, Paul says, “Husbands, *love* your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to *love their own wives* as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.” Skip down to verse 33. “Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to *love his own wife* even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.”

And there is much to be harvested out of the fertile soil of that passage. In the first place, Paul points to Christ Himself as the model for men who would be **marked by love** for their wives. The greatest Man who ever lived was *love* incarnate! And His love for His bride, becomes the pattern for every husband’s love for his bride.

And there are several features of the love of Christ for the church that prove instructive for husbands’ love for their wives. We’ll only get to one of those today. But above all, the love of Christ for His bride may be characterized as a **sacrificial** love. “Husbands, *love* your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and *gave Himself up for her*.” The Lord Jesus Christ subordinated His own interests, convenience, and well-being to the benefit of His bride, when He “did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself [by] taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of men”—when “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Do you see? Leadership is loving. Headship is humble.

Jesus told His disciples in Luke 22:25, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’ But it is not this way with you.” In the kingdom of God, “the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.” And then, this astounding comment in verse 27: “For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table?” Isn’t the one waited on greater than the waiter? the one served greater than the servant? Of course! But then listen to this astonishing statement from the Lord of heaven and earth: “But I am among you as the one who serves.” The condescension and humility in that verse are unspeakable!

And how did He serve them? By ordering every aspect of His life to result in the benefit of the ones He loved! And that wasn’t just in His death—as if we could minimize that, right? As if bearing the wrath of Almighty God—the God whose smile He treasured more than anything and whose frown He never deserved to know—as if that wasn’t the greatest **sacrifice** that anyone could conceive of! But Christ’s sacrifice was more than a bad weekend. In order to qualify to be that perfect substitutionary sacrifice, He had to be the spotless Lamb. In order to be our righteousness—our justification—and not just our forgiveness—He had to live every moment of every day in perfect, surrendered obedience to the Father. Christ may have looked weak, as the One who served everyone else, as the One who died a criminal’s death. But it was nothing but pure, holy, manly *strength* that enabled Him to say no to the temptations of Satan, of the world that lay in Satan’s power, and of any preference of His own comfort or ease over and above the benefit of the church. Dear brothers, consider how exquisitely you have been loved by Christ your bridegroom! How noble, selfless, and **sacrificial** was and is His love to you!

And then beholding the glory of that sacrificial love, can you find your heart warmed by grace to love your wife like Christ loved you? The occasion may never call for you to die in her place—though, if it did, it would mean gladly sacrificing your life for hers. But the kind of sacrificial love that Paul is calling you to is *living* for her—laying down your life, not just in a singular romantic moment of heroism where you knock her out of the way of moving train or jump between her and a bullet. But laying down your life in the day-by-day, moment-by-moment decisions of life together. It means sacrificing the fleshly comforts of idleness, ease, and recreation for the sake of benefiting those you love and are responsible to lead. It costs something to live a disciplined life of daily prayer and Bible study—daily pursuit of Christ—to be a man worth following, to look like Christ and to please Christ, to learn to lead like Christ. That doesn’t happen apart from *communion* with Christ. And that will mean saying “no” to extra sleep, or extra leisure time. It may mean not catching up on that TV show, or not catching up on that hobby—because there’s work to be done in the secret place, at the feet of Christ in His Word and in prayer.

It will mean giving up those same preferences and leisure activities to be thoughtful and intentional in taking the initiative in the ways that we spoke about earlier—planning family vacations, managing the budget, or whatever are the needs of the household. It means you sacrifice the freedom of being driven by your emotions or the spontaneity of the moment, so that you live an ordered, disciplined, intentional life. Even down to the mundane. I'll be on the couch toward the end of the night, reading, or maybe watching TV, and Janna will say something like, "Do you feel like helping with the dishes?" And the answer to that question is, "No! I *feel* like finishing this chapter, or watching this episode." But that's because I'm a selfish, sinful person with the law of sin still waging war in my flesh! In that moment, "giving myself up for her" means getting up off the couch and helping with the dishes, or taking out the trash, or whatever it is.

Or I'll come home from a long day of ministry—wrestling with the biblical text and with the best way to craft a sermon, or pleading in counseling room with members stubbornly clinging to their sin, or praying for the many needs of the flock. And after a 45-minute drive back in the purgatory of the I-5 North, by the time I get home I'm exhausted. I want to change into my pajamas and veg out! But the kids want to play. Janna's been with them all day and she needs relief. What does the man do? He lays down his preferences and his comfort, and he serves. Men, you need to train yourselves to realize—get it in your head on that drive home—that you don't go home *from* work. You go home *to* work—to the good and noble work of giving yourself up in engaged, initiative-taking headship in service to your family. Why? Because Jesus looked at His disciples and said, "I am among you as the one who serves." It's been well-said that "the gospel makes men who hate selfishness and crave selflessness" (Strachan & Peacock, *Grand Design*, 154).

Mature, masculine, biblical **love** consists in **sacrificially** laying down your life in the service of others. The Second Adam got this right, as we've seen. But the first Adam didn't. Back in Genesis 3, one of the first results of Adam's abdication of his headship and fall into sin is blame-shifting. God calls Adam to account for what happened, and Adam says, Genesis 3:12, "The *woman* whom *You* gave to be with me, *she* gave me from the tree, and I ate." Such a disgusting display! In chapter 2 verse 23, Adam was *exclaiming*, "Bone of my bones! Flesh of my flesh! This *masterpiece* shall be called *Woman!*" And now, "The *woman.*" I agree with the commentators who interpret this as Adam effectively saying, "It was her fault; kill her, not me!" (*RST*, 2:354). It is just such a cowardly abdication of headship, the kind of thing that we see men struggle with throughout the rest of time. The loving thing to do—the manly thing to do, the Second-Adam-like thing to do—would have been to give himself up for her: to stand between his wife and the Judge of all the earth and say, "Lord, I failed to lead my wife and keep her safe from temptation. Take me instead of her. It was my responsibility. I'll bear the guilt of her sin *and* mine."

The biblical man doesn't make excuses for his sin and try to shift the blame onto someone else—least of all the good gift of a wife that the Lord has given him as a helper. Biblical men are eager to take responsibility—to lovingly sacrifice themselves for the benefit and protection of those they love, even being willing to shoulder the blame or the consequences for something they didn't do, if it means protection from danger and deliverance unto blessing for their loved ones.

Conclusion

And why is that? Because that's the Gospel, friends. Because that's precisely what the Second Adam did do. That's how *He* succeeded in the way the first Adam failed, and in the way that each and every one of us who are sons and daughters of Adam have failed. Some of you men sit here this morning and you hear the calling that God has placed on your life as a man and you think, "That is impossible! I could never do that!" And the answer is: You're right. It is impossible! It's a standard that cannot be attained—except by the power of divine grace working powerfully inside a believer by the agency of the Holy Spirit of God who dwells within you.

And if you're here this morning and you're outside of Christ, you need to turn from your sin and from yourself—to confess your failure to meet this standard, and every other standard that God has laid upon you as creatures accountable to Him. Every last one of us has sinned against this holy God. Every one of us has fallen short of the standard of perfect obedience to His commands. And so every last one of us must repent. You must turn away from a life lived in rebellion to God's commandments, and from the blasphemy of trying to earn God's favor by keeping His commandments in the power of the flesh. And you must turn to Christ in faith alone. Come to the Second Adam, who has obeyed where you have failed, and who has given Himself up for sinners by dying for them on the cross, bearing the full weight of the curse due to them for their sins, who rose again on the third day in victory, and who now calls every sinner come to Him and find forgiveness, and righteousness, and rest for your souls. You who have failed to be biblical men: come to the perfect Man, who pays the penalty for the failures of His people, who leads His own in sacrificial love, and who gives grace to make His own more and more like Himself.

Much more to say about the marks of biblical manhood. But these first two are absolutely foundational. The biblical man is a **leader**, and the biblical man is a **lover**, whose love is marked by **sacrifice**. Young men: this is what you are to aspire to be. Older men: this is what you must be and must model to the younger men. To the single women: this is what you are to seek in a husband. To the wives: this is what you are to help your husband to be. To all of us: this is what you must pray that the men of Grace Church would become. To all of us: despite how far short we fall—and we fall far short—let us press on by the grace of Christ to walk in the fullness of the power of what He has purchased for us.