

MEN OF ACTION

Genesis 14:14-16, Revelation 1:12-18, Selected (NASB)

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We live in a day where many people have an eerie passivity toward things which really matter. Women, who are the main subject matter of pornography, maintain a guilty silence about the destruction it is wreaking on the soul of our nation. Where are the women of action?

Men today reveal a deadly passivity about abortion. Unbelievably, the U.S. Supreme Court has held that when an unmarried man and woman conceive a child together the woman is the mother but the man is not the father in any real sense. The woman can abort the baby at any time without the father's consent. Married men have only slightly more rights than unmarried fathers. No woman has to get her husband's consent to kill their baby. Why is there not a civil war over this? Where are the men of action?

Our society has taken a decided turn against men of action. It is reported that boys are 3-4 times more likely than girls to be drugged with Ritalin because of Attention Deficit Disorder, or ADD. Let's see: they want to jump around, throw things, speak out, and wrestle. But we are demanding that they sit quietly and take notes for seven hours a day. It seems clear that we are drugging them to get them to stop acting like boys.

In the musical *My Fair Lady* an English gentleman named Henry Higgins wagers that he can transform a working class flower girl named Eliza Doolittle into a woman of refinement. He teaches her how to dress, walk, talk, and relate to people of class. At one point he becomes frustrated with her progress and bursts out with the line: "Why can't a woman be more like a man?" Our culture, our schools, and even our churches have been doing the reverse for more than half a century.

Many men avoid church like the plague because we have allowed it to become feminized in the wrong sense of the term. In dramatic contrast the Bible is full of both godly men and godly women of action from Genesis to Revelation. We have already done the study entitled *Women of Action*, so in this study we shall take just a sampling of Biblical history to see what godly men look like.

1. MEN OF ACTION FIGHT FOR THEIR FAMILIES

By faith Abram followed Yahweh God's leading and settled in the promised land. His nephew Lot had settled nearby in Sodom which at the time was a fertile agricultural region. A war brewed up between the pagan kings of the area and both Sodom and Gomorrah were completely overrun. All of the people, livestock, and possessions of those cities were carried off. We find Abram's response in Genesis 14:14: "**When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen,**

and went in pursuit as far as Dan. He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people" (Genesis 14:14-16).

As long as the war did not affect him in any way Abram stayed out of it. The moment it involved his own family members he mobilized his army and went to war. Have you thought of Abraham as a king and a general? We speak of him as the father of our faith, but he was also a man of action who fought for his family.

You may also find it surprising that that the father of our faith kept a trained standing army which was more powerful than four local kings' armies put together. He no doubt understood that God expects men of action to defend their families. Furthermore, it would be no defense at all to send untrained shepherders against the trained warriors of the region. So part of the time Abraham was in the promised land he spent teaching his men to fight fiercely. It wasn't all worship services! Faith and action were wedded together at the foundation of the people of God.

Faith and action should be wedded together in godly men today. There will always be a need to defend our people physically, but this is rare in America. Yet our families are under attack in other ways. In the past I have recommended that Christian families use a filtered internet service to counter the attack of pornography. I am now convinced that it is not enough. On our home computer we also run accountability software which automatically emails two partners with a log of our web accesses. [Currently a free service at www.xxxchurch.com.] If we have firewalls, antivirus software, and spybot killers to stop hackers from damaging our computers we ought to be willing to use filter and accountability software to keep pornography from damaging our families and our own souls.

Abram fought for his family. Will you fight for your family by teaching them the ways of God? Who has more responsibility to do that than you? No one! Will you teach your family members about the dangers of smoking, drug abuse, excessive sun exposure, the occult, the new age, secularism, and sin in general? If not you, then who? And when you see your family in danger, have you prepared yourself in advance to march in with your trained army to do battle to save them? Men of faith are also men of action.

2. MEN OF ACTION DEFEND THEIR COUNTRY

During the days of the Judges in ancient Israel lived a man whose entire contribution to the people of God is described in one verse: "**After him came Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also saved Israel"** (Judges 3:31). The national program of Israel was broken down in the days of the Judges. The priesthood seemed not to be functioning, and Israel was not prepared to defend herself from attacks. In addition, Israel kept falling into deep idolatry with the pagan people of the land. Periodically Yahweh God raised up a leader outside the national system to deliver the people.

Shamgar was a farmer who evidently looked around and saw no one else prepared to lead the defense of the people of God. So he picked up his most familiar weapon, an oxgoad, and went to war. The oxgoad was a very sturdy stick that a farmer would use to keep his oxen plowing. It was used as a dibble stick for planting, and also to defend against wild animals. It probably served as a walking stick, a pry bar for rocks, and no doubt helped him win arguments with wayward people. It was very likely tipped in metal of some kind to prevent wear and tear.

Israelite women were being abused, flocks stolen, food carried off, and valuables plundered. How long must a nation tolerate this? Only so long as it takes for a godly man of action to decide that any weapon put to good use would be more valuable than merely watching the destruction of the country every day. Shamgar personally dispatched about six hundred of the enemy with his domestic tool.

Historian Steven Ambrose tells the story of a group of American soldiers pinned down outside a farmhouse on June 7, 1944, the day after D-Day. Brigadier Gen. Norman "Dutch" Cota came across them doing nothing. He asked the captain why they had not taken the building. "Sir," he replied, "the Germans are in there shooting at us." So the General took two of his grenades and told him to watch carefully. He assembled a squad of men, sneaked up on the house from behind a hedge, and then suddenly, with a whoop, ran straight at the front door. His squad followed, yelling like wild men. They kicked the door down and tossed in the grenades. After the explosions they rushed inside firing in every direction. The surviving Germans streamed out the back door, running for their lives. Then the General went back to the captain and panted: "Do you know how to do it now?" [quoted in *Wild at Heart*, John Eldredge, p. 86]

Men of action must be willing to defend their country, and we should honor those who have undertaken military service during these days of terrorism and Islamic extremism. There are many circumstances besides war where we encounter even highly-trained people refusing to address the problem at hand. Will you stand up and respond?

3. MEN OF ACTION TREAT WOMEN RIGHT

Ruth was a beautiful Moabite woman who was the widow of an Israelite man. In ancient Israel it was customary for the closest male relative to take the widowed woman as his wife to prevent their family from losing their heritage and their lands. Foreigners like Ruth had no standing in Israel, and single women had no one to protect them. One day a man named Boaz discovered Ruth gleaning leftover grain in his fields. Standing before him was a young, beautiful, needy, and extremely vulnerable woman. We learn from Boaz' first encounter with Ruth that men of action treat women right: **"Then Boaz said to Ruth, 'Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw'"** (Ruth 2:8-9). Though Boaz owed Ruth nothing we see him already drawing a protective covering over her. Godly men of action are those with whom we can entrust our loved ones.

Men of action also meet the needs of others: **"At mealtime Boaz said to her, 'Come here, that you may eat of the bread and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar.' So she sat beside the reapers; and he served her roasted grain, and she ate and was satisfied and had some left"** (Ruth 2:14). He met her need and gave her enough to take some back to her mother Naomi.

Naomi realized that Boaz was the best candidate to restore the heritage and lands of her family, so she sent Naomi to present herself to Boaz at night. Boaz woke up in the middle of the night to find Ruth under the covers at his feet dressed in her best clothes and emanating sweet perfume. In the custom of that day this was not a sexual offer from Ruth but an appeal for the man to become the kinsman redeemer. Listen to Boaz' response: **"'Now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you ask, for all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence. Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning'"** (Ruth 3:11-13). This could easily have become an opportunity for a man of low character to take something he wanted. Men of action do not exploit the sexual vulnerability of women.

Finally, Boaz accepted the cost, the risk to his own lands, and the disgrace in Israel of marrying a foreigner in order to redeem Ruth and Naomi. **"Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, 'You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. Moreover, I have acquired Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Mahlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be cut off from his brothers or from the court of his birth place; you are witnesses today'"** (Ruth 4:9-10). Are you this kind of man, who will even put himself at risk in order to grant the women around him the treatment they deserve? Are you and I the sort of men with whom other men can entrust their wives and daughters? Can the women around you relax or is there always an annoying undercurrent of sexual tension? Godly men of action treat women right.

4. MEN OF ACTION FOLLOW JESUS

If godly men are men of action, what actions are we to take? How do we find out what to do? We find out by following Jesus: **"As [Jesus] was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him"** (Mark 1:16-20).

Because Jesus Christ has ascended to heaven and is no longer around to consult, we must consult his word, the Bible. There is no way for our actions to be right unless we are constantly in the word of God. But that is not enough. The point of being in the word is to follow Jesus Christ in every area of our lives. The first disciples jumped when Jesus called them. Do we?

Notice that these men had to leave their livelihoods behind in order to follow Jesus. When you and I discover what following Jesus means in the Bible are we willing to leave behind whatever is in the way?

Furthermore, Jesus has told us to follow the leaders in the church whom he has appointed. It is bogus for us to say that we follow Jesus but we reserve the right to resist the leaders Jesus told us to follow. From where I sit I think this is one of the worst problems of the American church. Pastors all over are telling me that when they call a special prayer meeting or arrange a special outreach, almost no one comes. Notice that the specific subject of the calling of the first disciples was the spreading of the good news of Christ. We've been commanded to go fishing for people. The only way to overcome paralysis and passivity in the church is to jump into action according to the calling of Jesus.

5. MEN OF ACTION SUBMIT THEIR HEARTS TO THE LORD IN FAITH

It remains a rebuke to Israel in the time of Jesus that his finest example of faith was found in the heart of a Gentile, a Roman centurion who went to Jesus to seek healing for a paralyzed servant. When Jesus announced that he would go to the servant, the centurion replied: **"Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, 'Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel'"** (Matthew 8:8-10).

Do you see what the centurion was saying? He was saying: "Lord, I get who you are. Men have to jump when I command them, and I jump when my commanders give me orders. Everything under the sun is under your command. Just give the word and it will be done." Faith and total submission of heart were welded together in the heart of that centurion, and here is the result it evoked from Christ: **"Go; it shall be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed that very moment"** (Matthew 8:13).

The spirit of our age tells us that to get stuff done we have to blow off all restraints. In God's kingdom the reverse is true! He releases more power when we accept more of his restraint, not less. Do you hunger for God to do something great? Then do a great act of heart submission by faith. Godly men of action walk in faith welded together with total submission to Christ.

6. MEN OF ACTION WORSHIP CHRIST WITH THEIR ALL

John the Apostle was an old man when he was exiled to the island of Patmos where he received the revelation of Christ which we have in the Bible. What kind of man is in a position to receive a revelation like that? A man who is ready to fall down in total worship before Christ: **"Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of**

fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades'''
(Revelation 1:12-18).

No other action in a man's life will matter in the end without the willingness to fall down in worship before Christ. John was slain in the Spirit when he saw this revelation. But what does it mean to be slain in the Spirit? He was not dead, not unconscious, and not in a trance. How do we know? Christ spoke to him as someone who was alert and then John successfully wrote the words down for us to read!

John was prepared to give total worship to Christ to the point of throwing himself down at his feet. Whether you would ever fall down physically or not, is your heart compelled to fall down before the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you moved by this vision of his supremacy and glory to abandon yourself to him in worship? Or will you defend your composure? When was the last time you knelt, lay prostrate, or danced before the Lord? When did you last go forward at an altar call or make a public act of repentance? Men of action throw themselves into the worship of Christ because he is worth it.

CONCLUSION

Is it possible that you are not yet saved because of your desire to keep your composure and self-respect in the face of Christ? If so I urge you to re-evaluate the profit and loss of that decision. Admitting your sins publicly, receiving Christ's atonement, and being baptized expose you to ridicule only in the eyes of those who still don't get it. The deal is: lose a little face, gain eternal life. Real men of action take that deal.