

## *“A Word to Christian Men, Husbands, and Fathers”*

(If you are anything but female, you fall into one or more of those three categories)

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*“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, **act like men**, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love” (1 Cor. 16:13, 14).*

What an incredible statement; simple and direct, why? Were they failing in this regard? Did they know what “acting like men” meant? Was there something out “there” defining manhood and its resultant responsibilities, roles and obligations? Was this only for married men, or was it generic enough to encompass all men regardless as to status? What about our sisters-in-arms? Are they not equally in the battle for the souls of our children and families? Most assuredly they are. I mean no slight by speaking to men, nor do I lessen the intense battle you fight everyday for the souls of your children. Much of what I say is equally, and perhaps doubly true of our fellow female warriors. But my intent is to note the admonition that is directed specifically at men. Let us consider such a thought.

Recently in reading through the Prophets (both major and minor) I found myself attracted to the resilient spirit embodied in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Both men were contemporaries of one another. Both ministered to the people of Judah during the dark days of their national demise by the Babylonian empire. Both had decade long ministries, and both were tried severely by their community.

What impressed me were two passages that appear to compliment each other. The one I’ve been familiar with since my college days when I was inspired to pick up the ministry mantle and follow the Lord to the hard place. The other I am not as friendly with but am an acquaintance of the idea.

<sup>28</sup> “Her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,’ when the LORD has not spoken. <sup>29</sup> The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice. <sup>30</sup> **I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.** <sup>31</sup> ‘Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads,’ declares the Lord GOD” (Ezek. 22:28-31).

<sup>5</sup> “So the city was under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. <sup>6</sup> On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. <sup>7</sup> **Then the city was broken into, and all the men of war fled and went forth from the city at night by way of the gate between the two walls which was by the king’s garden,** though the Chaldeans were all around the city. And they went by way of the Arabah. <sup>8</sup> But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him. <sup>9</sup> Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence on him” (Jer. 52:5-9).

As noted earlier, the context for both passages is a nation under siege by her enemies. It is true that they “deserved the severe judgment befalling them,” but regardless as to the context they were still to stand fast. Ezekiel speaks to this idea of someone standing between the people and the judgment of God in the form of the enemy’s onslaught. This same idea is echoed elsewhere.

“Therefore He said that He would destroy them, **Had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him,** To turn away His wrath from destroying them” (Ps. 106:23).

“Roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, And look now and take note. And seek in her open squares, **If you can find a man.** If there is one who does justice, who seeks truth, Then I will pardon her” (Jer. 5:1).

“**You have not gone up into the breaches,** nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the LORD” (Ezek. 13:5).

God was seeking and fully expecting to find someone who would stand in the gap in order to stay the coming judgment. Jeremiah speaks to the idea that the city was under siege and a breach was made in the walls and the men of war fled at night. Those who were responsible for keeping the city safe fled under cover of night. In fear they fled. They gave up the fight. These men of war failed to stand in the gap before God in order that judgment might be stayed.

Place yourself in their situation. Your enemies are outside the gate. Their intent is to rape and murder your wives and daughters. Those who are pregnant will have their children forcefully aborted. Your young men will be taken into bondage in a foreign land. The options are two-fold: stay and fight knowing you will probably die or flee to save your own life knowing the inevitable outcome for those left behind. What choice do you have? Is there really a choice? What

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if your family was being attacked? What if someone threatened your daughter and sought to forcefully take her moral purity? What if someone was forcefully taking your male children or grandchildren into slavery without any chance of seeing them again? Would you let them go freely, would you flee in order to save your own life, or would you stay and fight until your last breath was removed from you? What if you were under attack by your enemies? Would you fight or would you surrender or would you run away in order to save yourself? Perhaps you are a single mother seeking to raise your children. I would guarantee you there is no fury like a mother's fury if anyone sought to harm and destroy your children physically, and this is no less true spiritually. As a community of faith we are called to protect all the families who are a part of this flock.

Friend, when we are confronted by an enemy that is tangible, the answer always seems more apparent. Yet we are under attack. Our homes and churches are under siege by the relentless adversary. The world, fallen flesh and the adversary of man's soul is seeking to rape, pillage and destroy all that we count dear. They are after you, but more significantly they are after your children and grandchildren. They might not be able to break you, but they will be able to indoctrinate your children to reject God, abandon His relationship and rebel against His rule.

How can we imagine that this onslaught of evil is any less true for us? The world, the flesh and the devil are in an unholy war against God. They are besieging the city of God and the men of war are called upon to stand in the gap before God so that evil will be kept at bay. Gentlemen, it is time we "belly up" to the table and throw our chips into the pot (there are other ways of saying this, but I'll leave that to your own imagination). How can we allow our women and children to be pillaged by the pagan hordes of Satan's brand? Does not the Scripture warn us of Satan's relentless pursuit?

<sup>8</sup> "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world" (1 Pet. 5:8, 9).

We are not only responsible for our own immediate family, but the families of families that make up our community of faith. The call to arms and the trumpet of war has blasted long and loud. It is now time to awaken and stand in the gap.

O God set our hearts fast. Let us as men, husbands and fathers stand against the onslaughts touching our own souls and those of our families, friends and communities of faith. May we not give in - if (and when) the walls are breached - may we not flee, **BUT MAY WE STAND!!**

Dear God, may we like Nehemiah weep when we see our city in disarray (Neh. 1:3, 4). May we be people of fortitude who will call the people of God to arms and action. May we sound the trumpet and may we rally to the call. May we set our hearts on rebuilding what has been neglected and needy. May we not sleep until the city is secured. May we refuse the comforts and conveniences of our culture so that we might with attentiveness and blood-thirst keep our eyes on the Captain of our salvation. When the work demanded a man to stand in the gap before the LORD and against His enemies, the men of Nehemiah's day answered the call.

<sup>17</sup> "Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took their load **with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.** <sup>18</sup> As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter stood near me. <sup>19</sup> I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, 'The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another. <sup>20</sup> **At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.**' <sup>21</sup> So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared. <sup>22</sup> At that time I also said to the people, 'Let each man with his servant spend the night within Jerusalem so that they may be a guard for us by night and a laborer by day.' <sup>23</sup> **So neither I, my brothers, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us removed our clothes, each took his weapon even to the water**" (Neh. 4:17-23).

Notice the striking balance of work and war. In one hand we go to work and secure the means of maintaining physical life and on the other hand we keep our weapon at the ready. The two are not in conflict. O watchman what of the night (Ezek. 33:6)?

**"But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned, and a sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand"** (Ezek. 33:6).

O may God, the Holy Spirit, quicken us to our holy task. May He awaken us to the spiritual warfare that unfolds all around us and seeks to devour and consume. Father, I beg you to build strong walls around your people. May we receive this sacred trust and protect the walls against the enemies of our souls. May we not fear, but may we fight and when and if the walls are breached may we not run, but stand. May our lines be drawn and may we die before we surrender, Amen.