

The Man of God

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June 7, 2007

Introduction

Several years ago on a Florida highway, a businesswoman was on her way home from the airport and noticed an Indian woman on the side of the road. Feeling a bit of compassion, she pulled over and let her in. After a few minutes, the Indian woman noticed a small bag in the back seat and asked, "What's in the bag?" The driver answered and said, "It's a bottle of wine. I got it for my husband." The two passengers were silent for a moment until the Indian woman nodded and said, "You made a good trade."

No doubt our wives have often looked at us and wondered what they signed up for on that remarkable day that they had planned since childhood. I can personally attest to the disappointing reaction my own wife gave on the first quiet evening that I gave up trying to hide my smells. Today it's a running joke in our house as it is in many homes across the nation. Who knew when we asked these women to marry us that we'd eventually be willing to let them witness the things we were trying so hard to hide? Perhaps that's why they say that even the man who has everything needs a woman to show him how to use it.

We are indeed a unique creature on this earth, but our daily experiences in life tend to play a key role in how we view ourselves spiritually as well. In many cases, we end up tracing our manhood to our masculinity and vice versa. Rather than seeing ourselves as men because of who we are, we see ourselves as men because of who we are not. The proverbial skeleton in the closet is that we see ourselves as men simply because we are not women. And this, my dear friends, is one of our great downfalls. What's worse is that we take this invisible notion and begin writing mental notes to ourselves about what women are to be... all the while evading the nagging truth that our first responsibility is to know what WE are to be. This lesson has been written that Men of God might come out of the shadows and find out who they are.

Part One: The Masculine Man

Warriors.¹ Soldiers.² Athletes.³

These are the types of men we like to think of ourselves. If we're not filling the shoes of Jack Bauer on the city streets, we like to watch brave heroism on television and the big screen (yes, I can admit that I've now seen every episode of the Fox series 24). If we're not fighting over seas in a war, we like to

wave flags and support our military in any way possible. If we're not playing football in the backyard, we're rooting our teams and isolating Sunday afternoons for the faithful couch that never let us down.

For every man's man, there's an active life he either attempts to live out himself or vicariously through someone else. Riding horseback on the American Frontier, racing a sports car down the interstate, or testing a new shotgun video game on the newest program is the expectation of our day to day life. This is the nature of man. Or so we've been told.

Why, then, does the Scripture use examples like warriors, athletes, and soldiers to describe the experience of faith? Are these not illustrations of the masculine man who functions on the basis of his might and his strength?

"The glory of young men [is] their strength: and the beauty of old men [is] the gray head." Proverbs 20:29

Without question, the Lord has designed young men as strong and appeals to their understanding by way of experience. But bear in mind that Paul used the warrior and soldier example with a "young man" named Timothy. And upon using those lessons, he drew a much bigger truth.

"But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself [rather] unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Timothy 4:7-8

The Greek word translated "exercise" here is *gumnasea*, from which we are more familiar as *gymnasium*. We "go to the gym" for a variety of reasons, but the core of which involves being men of strength versus men of weakness. I, for one, have attempted to take on this form of exercise and proved that I could easily play a character from *Revenge of the Nerds* (in fact, put me on a treadmill for three minutes and my legs will forever be as vanilla pudding). But whether we are experienced or not with this process, we understand it and admire it for the example that it sets of discipline and development. Timothy was also familiar with the *gumnasea* and recognized that vigorous exercise of the mind and body constituted a Greek measure of strength.

Thus, when Scripture speaks about warriors, soldiers, and athletes, it is not appealing to modern masculinity, but the disciplined masculinity of exercised men. If we are to understand our masculinity, we must understand it with regard to self-control, patience, and a certain level of restraint. Discover this aspect of yourself and turn it toward godliness rather than contemplating strength on the basis of male and female traits.

Part Two: The Profitable Man

Several thousand years ago, just outside of Egypt, the patriarch Isaac saw the birth and rising of his two sons, Jacob and Esau.

“And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.”
Genesis 25:27-28

Both children eventually became men. Esau was deemed a “man of the field,” but why the association with the field? Why not refer to him as a person of the field or a child of the field? Verse 28 teaches us that Esau’s mastery of the field provided for the lips and eager tastes of his father. He was a man of the field because his proficiency in the field made him profitable for someone other than himself.

Jacob’s manhood revolved around something very different. He was a “plain man” because he did little more than sit and wait for life to come his way. By today’s standards, we might call him a momma’s boy (or as my wife said the other day, “a sissy”). In the very next verse (25:29), we see Jacob cooking soup that appeals to his brother who has been working tirelessly in the field. When asked for a portion of the food that has been prepared, Jacob manipulates his brother into giving away the birthright.⁴ Why, then, is Jacob a plain man and not a “man of the kitchen?” All of his work is a means toward personal gain. Jacob does what he does to profit himself.

A second example can be found in the Book of Ruth when we encounter Boaz in chapter 2.

“And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband’s, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name [was] Boaz.” Ruth 2:1

Boaz was the recipient of an inheritance passed along to him from several generations of Hebrew captains. His father, Salma, had arguably founded the city of Bethlehem after being born to Nahshon, the prince of the children of Judah.⁵ So when we read about Boaz being a “man of wealth,” it might be easy to presume that his nature could be that of a spoiled rich kid. Yet, the Scriptures lead us to see that anyone noted as a “man of this” or a “man of that” is such a man because their strength is made profitable to others. In this case, Boaz becomes the hero of the remaining text. Some have often used the phrase of “kinsman redeemer” when speaking of this man’s heroism.⁶ He was profitable to the community and all those who entered the gates of his city.

On the off chance that this point hasn’t begun to sink in, let’s consider one more very popular example located in the Book of I Samuel.

“And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring [him] to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, [that is] cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord [is] with him.” I Samuel 16:17-18

David was the youngest of eight children to Jesse.⁷ So by what measure could he be known as a man of war? David himself provides the answer.

“And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered [it] out of his

mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught [him] by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.” I Samuel 17:34-35

David was a “man of war” because he kept his father’s sheep by protecting the flock when they were attacked. In order to become proficient in this, he would have had to learn about war and battle, but the “man of war” in him would only become evident when he actually exercised the actions of war that would profit someone other than himself. In this case, he profited his father.

You may now be feeling as though the point is overdone and more than clear. If this is the case, then I’m grateful to the Scriptures that they might lead us to something much more close to home. For in seeing all these stories that some of us learned as children, you have every reason now to ask yourself whether the Hebrew experience can actually be our tutor with regard to manhood. If we are the Body of Christ in a new dispensation, hasn’t the life story of Israel been put on hold therefore to become irrelevant?⁸ The continuing drama has indeed been set aside for a time, but the past now serves as an illustration to lead us into becoming the very “man of God” that we were intended to be.

“All Scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” II Timothy 3:16-17

By now, if you’ve truly grasped the message and content of this running theme, two terms should quickly jump out at you from II Timothy 3. Let’s look at it again together.

“All Scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” II Timothy 3:16-17

The man of God is to be profitable. In one sense, we are profitable to ourselves in that we are to be made perfect, but when we are furnished unto good works, we are not furnished for works that feed our own glory. We are furnished to the betterment of the Body. We are furnished that we might edify others. And in the end, a man is most profitable when he has been of aid to those who needed what he could provide.

Part Three: The Mature Man

Now is an appropriate time to begin asking yourself about how someone then becomes a man of God. If we are to be men such as this, aren’t we always maturing? When do we end our childhood and admit that we are actually full grown? Is there a point when this happens? Can we ever know?

Much of this will be addressed in the fourth and final portion of our study, but it’s absolutely crucial that we use this time to examine the process of infancy to adulthood. In order to do this, we’re going to look at a family in the mountains of Samaria.

“Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name [was] Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: And he had two wives; the name of the one [was] Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.” I Samuel 1:1-2

This, along with the next few verses, really gives us a backdrop for the maturing process more than anything else. In the mountains of Ephraim (otherwise later known as Samaria), a man named Elkanah has two wives. One has children and the other does not. We quickly learn that although Hannah has no children, he loves her more than the wife who has children.

“And when the time was that Elkanah offered (sacrifices of worship and sacrifice unto the Lord), he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the Lord had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb. And [as] he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.” I Samuel 1:4-5

Perhaps it would be one thing to have love and not enjoy the pleasure of one’s own children if there is contentment. But in the case of Hannah, the second wife continues to provoke her from year to year until she can do nothing but weep and desire for that which she does not have.

“Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? And why eatest thou not? And why is thy heart grieved? [am] not I better to thee than ten sons? So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon the seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. And she [was] in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore.” I Samuel 1:8-10

If you can picture the image in your mind, it’s about sundown and Hannah leaves the dinner table to take her concerns before the Lord “in bitterness of soul.” So she prays with great passion:

“And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.” I Samuel 1:11

Here we find the roots of our counterpart, the Woman of God. Even prior to conception, a plan is put in place that if the Lord will open her womb to conceive a boy (or “man child”), she will give that child over to the Lord all the days of his life. Some of you will remember the next few verses as they show Eli watching her pray from a distance. He comes to believe that she must be drunk because it appears that she is babbling in silence.⁹ When he confronts her on the inappropriate behavior, she states her case as a “pouring of her soul” before the Lord.

“Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant [thee] thy petition that thou hast asked of him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more [sad]. And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her.” I Samuel 1:17-19

She had asked to be remembered (1:11) and the Lord did just that.

“Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, [saying], because I have asked him of the Lord.” I Samuel 1:20

So begins the journey of little Samuel under the prayers of a godly mother. Watch closely now as the little kernels of God’s Word appear in the Biblical text.

“And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, [I will not go up] until the child be weaned, and [then] I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide forever. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.” I Samuel 1:21-23

Notice here that although Hannah had made a vow to the Lord regarding her son, she would not take the infant up to the temple in Shiloh until he had been weaned. Weaned from what? Samuel was to be weaned from the milk that was essential to his early survival.

“Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.” Isaiah 28:9

Both Hannah and her husband knew that Samuel could not be of any benefit to the Lord until he had first been “weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.” But take note of what Elkanah says to his wife after agreeing. “Only the Lord establish His Word.” Does it seem a little provocative to consider that the establishment of God’s Word is discussed as a contrast to an infant needing to be weaned from milk? Perhaps you remember the following passage:

“For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.” Hebrews 5:13

Hannah had no other children at this point, but she knew her responsibility to “wean” Samuel from the breast so that he would actually be ready for the Lord to establish His Word.

“And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her... and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child [was] young. And they slew a Bullock, and brought the child to Eli.” I Samuel 1:24-25

Now fully able to survive without milk alone, the child is turned over to Eli in the house of the Lord. Thus, we have watched a baby grow into a child.

The second chapter of I Samuel is quite intriguing because it tells the story of Eli's crumbling family ministry and all the while, little Samuel grows up in the same house with tidbits of his own storyline. As we read about the brokenness of Eli's family, we're given the privilege of watching a little child ministering to the needs of the house.

"And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest." I Samuel 2:12

"But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice." I Samuel 2:18-19

"And the Lord visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the Lord." I Samuel 2:21

"And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men." I Samuel 2:26

Four times in the midst of a turbulent home we see reference to the growing child and his relationship to the Lord. How, one might ask, could a child minister to the Lord without maturity? In order to answer this, we must look at a couple of passages regarding ministry.

"And the damsel [was] very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not." I Kings 1:4

"And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away." II Kings 25:14

Earlier we read that young Samuel was dressed in a linen ephod. The ephod was the white or purple garment given to various levels of the priesthood. He was a child of Bethlehem, an Ephrathite, who was not part of priestly lineage. Thus, when he wore the garments given him by Eli, this was not because he fit the bill or because he was destined to become a priest. Rather, because he was a child in need of clothing (more of which came from his mother as she traveled to the temple each year and provided a coat). His ministry, then, was subjective to those in authority.

The passage in I Kings refers to a damsel who had a ministry to the king and yet the king knew her not. II Kings suggests that men ministered through the use of pots and pans. How are these things a ministry? Perhaps this is where, for the first time, you may stop and consider that ministry is not relegated to the brilliant, the well-studied, or the aged. The child Samuel was a ministry to Eli and the Lord for reasons that can only be speculated, but in the midst of this broken home, it's reasonable to consider that Samuel "ministered" through hope as any child might represent the possibilities of a family's restoration. Yet, the most amazing truth is made known in the first few verses of the third chapter.

"And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision." I Samuel 3:1

First and most important is the fact that divine communication was not in play at this time. The “word of the Lord” was precious because it was all they had to rely on. No such “voice” was to be expected during this time as there was “no open vision.” Thus, God’s supernatural connection with men would not be unexpected by anyone. Especially a child.

“And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;” I Samuel 3:2-3

If you read carefully the first three verses, what you’ll notice is a three-fold darkness upon those who should otherwise be prepared to hear the voice of the Lord.

1. No Open Vision (Scriptural Darkness)
2. Eli’s Blindness (Physical Darkness)
3. The Lamp of God (Spiritual Darkness)

Perhaps you momentarily hesitate from drawing conclusions too quickly about these different levels of darkness. By no means do they mean to reflect an absolute, but they are meant to incite one to consider what is about to happen. Bible students are often very familiar with David’s famous words found in the Psalms:

“Thy word [is] a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

If the lamp of God has gone out, then there is no light by which one might be confident that God’s Word is being spoken.

“That the Lord called Samuel: and he answered and, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.” I Samuel 3:4-6

By the time you reach verse 6, most of us are already asking ourselves, “Why doesn’t the kid just figure it out already? He’s been ministering to the Lord, so why not just respond?” And then we read verse 7:

“Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him.” I Samuel 3:7

These types of things should absolutely jump out at you. He’s been a blessing, he’s been a ministry, he’s been a young servant in the temple, and here God is calling to him directly. Yet, the Scriptures say that he did “not yet know the Lord” and that the “word of the Lord” had not yet been revealed to him. Talk about a shocking and sobering reality for many readers.

Samuel did not know the Lord, but for one reason alone... because the “word of the Lord” had not been revealed to him. How else would we expect that he should have known God? Should acts of service,

ministry, or one's growth imply that he has knowledge of the one he serves? Surely not. Knowledge of God comes through His revealed Word and not through any other means.

“And the Lord called to Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.” I Samuel 3:8-10

Finally, we all say, the child figured it out. But notice something had happened this time that hadn't happened at other times. On the fourth call, the Lord came and “stood” in the room of absolute darkness. He did not simply make the call and wait for a response; he actually came into Samuel's living space and stood. At this point, we might imagine that the Word to be given would include some sort of introduction and friendly remarks.

“And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.” I Samuel 3:11-14

If you've ever attended a Bible study where the content was incredibly heavy, imagine Samuel's overwhelming reaction to this. He has grown up ministering to the Lord in a broken home and is now being told that Eli, his sons, and his house will be judged according to their known iniquity that was not restrained. There were no soft words of encouragement by the Lord; just a strong message to deliver. As you might imagine, Samuel's first experience with the Lord was not exactly the ideal first conversation.

“And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision.” I Samuel 3:15

The scenario could not be more troubling to this young child. Surely we read that he “lay until morning,” but you almost get the sense that he laid there without sleeping a wink. For when he finally arose, Samuel opened the doors of the house as if to leave for fear that Eli might ask him something he was afraid to show.

Recall earlier that there was “no open vision” at this time and that Eli had such poor eyes that he could not see. Thus, when Samuel feared to show Eli the vision, he was fearful of telling him the Word of God. “Showing a vision” meant relaying a message from the Lord as new revelation that was not previously made known.

Without a moment to leave the house, Eli calls to Samuel and asks to hear the message. The child spoke immediately of all that had been given to him by the Word of the Lord. In turn, we see a new phase of Samuel's development.

“And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel.” I Samuel 3:19-4:1

From this point forward, Samuel grew in the Lord, but by way of a very different experience than the one that had existed previously. Now he was growing by way of God’s Word. His establishment in the Word became known among all Israel.

By the time we reach Chapter 9, readers are introduced to a young man named Saul who was lost and in search of some assistance. The young servant with him speaks and for the first time, we see Samuel referred to in a way never before mentioned.

“And he (the servant) said unto him (Saul), Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go.” I Samuel 9:6

When does a child become a man? And more importantly to our story, at what point does Samuel cease to be seen as a child and is now known as a “man of God?” If we pan back just one chapter, we see that by physical standards, Samuel is definitely no longer a child.

“And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.” I Samuel 7:15

“And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.” I Samuel 8:1

When Saul arrives in town in need of some assistance, it is he and his companion who note Samuel as a “man of God.” But his reputation is due to something we saw just a moment ago. The servant had said, “He can show us our way” that they might know where to go. Significance of this detail is crucial to our understanding of the man of God. During the second part of this study, we learned about the “profitable man” and how he can only be a man of something specific if and when he is able to be of some benefit to someone other than himself. Here, for the first time, though he has long been in service to Israel, he is defined as a “man of God” because his life’s purpose has become about “showing the way” or “showing the vision” that others might know the Word of God.

The remainder of this particular chapter carries the point through to completion. Saul arrived in Samuel’s company not knowing that the Lord had already spoken about this encounter to the man of God. For it was at this time that Saul was to find he had been selected as “captain” over Israel in order to engage war with the Philistines. Just before the future king of Israel left, the following words capped off their conversation:

“And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.” I Samuel 9:27

At what point did a ministering child to the Lord become a man of God? Without question, this took place when he began showing others the Word of God. So it is that we should draw a lesson regarding the maturing man and the mature man. The Man of God is he who knows the Lord and can show others His Word. As time permits, please take advantage of any opportunity to read through those passage which reflect the value of God's Word to all men.¹⁰

Part Four: The Workman

Surely those of us who consider the Scriptures from a dispensational standpoint have no choice but to step back and acknowledge that something must be different about how we relate to God in contrast to how Samuel related to God. Such a voice does not randomly sound off in our home and neither does the Lord come and stand in our midst to make Himself known. Perhaps at times we wish that He might do so in order that we gain some sort of personal revelation, but even in Samuel's case, the things he was told had nothing to do with his own life. Remember, he was a "man of God" because he was able to profit others with information the Lord had given him about their circumstance or need. Thus, our relationship must be considered in a different light. That is, in light of the dispensation of the grace of God.¹¹

"Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." II Corinthians 5:17

One of the most distinguished messages among Christians today is the belief that we are "born again" as Christ refers in the gospels.¹² How easy it is to consider even the reference that our Lord makes to children when he says:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3

By this very measure, Christians often find themselves believing that the newly saved have come "as little children." But let us consider what Paul just said previously with regard to the "man" who is now in Christ (the saved). If a man is "in Christ," he is a "new creature." And thus, all things are made new. But are they made newborn? This is a question you need to ask yourself as we continue. Keep in mind that if one is a newborn, he is therefore a babe in Christ.

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, [even] unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able [to bear it], neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas [there is] among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men." I Corinthians 3:1

At no point in this reference do we find that Paul is encouraged by Corinthians who "walk as men" but are as "babes in Christ." He wishes to speak to them as men, but must feed them with milk. Surely we all recall from the story of Hannah and Samuel that she was unwilling to send him on into service of the Lord until he had been "weaned" from the breast. For until that time, he required sustaining milk to prepare for growth.

During the earlier portions of this study, we saw a couple of passages that really bring into focus this reality.

“Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.” Isaiah 28:9

“For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.” Hebrews 5:13

The Lord can do nothing with a baby because he is not ready to be fed with meat (that is, doctrine). Thus, he requires someone older. Could we conclude then, that instead of being newborn, the Lord would desire that we come as new children going through elementary school?

“Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” Galatians 3:23-25

If we are no longer under a schoolmaster, then we are no longer in a sort of “spiritual” school either. Yet the next verse demands an important question.

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:26

Many could see this quickly and say, “Well, you see there! We are children!” But ask yourself, however, if these particular children of God are no longer under a schoolmaster, would they not run rampant through the streets having no adult supervision? Is this not an image of children who have just been told that they no longer have to attend school and are therefore free to just be children? Surely not.

The word “children” in verse 26 is *huioi*, which indicates a great esteem as descendants of God. We are indeed the children of God in this sense, but not because we are children in our thinking. He is our Father and will always be as such. A way to consider this passage is to imagine your fully graduated son or daughter going across the stage. As they reach for their diploma, you lean to the person sitting in the next chair and whisper, “That’s my child right there.” The Lord knows those who are His and He will always see us as His children. We are his legitimate offspring by the grace of God.

“Now I say, [That] the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:” Galatians 4:1-3

Once again, we see that the heir apparent of great inheritance, if he is only a child in his manner, “differeth nothing from a servant” and ceases to truly take hold of all that is his. Rather, he is constantly under tutors and leaders who keep him in bondage to the “elements” of the world. It’s likely that you’ve seen this passage on several occasions, but I’d like to bring your attention to these elements. For it is in these elements that we understand elementary education. In other words, elements such as these are the “basics” that children learn during their early development.

To the Greeks, such elementary training included learning the alphabet and the way in which letters sound when spoken. Eventually, however, those letters have to come together in the form of words. Once words are understood, sentences must begin to make sense and reading comprehension must greatly improve as the child gets older. When the child no longer needs a tutor to read because he can understand what he is reading, the elementary portion of his education has ended.

Take note, that in verse 3, Paul uses “children” again, but in this case, the word is *nepios*, which refers to the age and maturity of a minor. Likewise, he does not use it as a reference to his readers, but rather of a time “when” we were children. That time is not now.

“But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Galatians 4:4-7

Our role is not as little children or newborn babes in Christ. We are sons and heirs of God through Christ relegated to a much greater role than that of the old creature we were.

“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” Galatians 4:9-11

Once again, we see “elements” that ultimately put full grown adults into bondage of things that would otherwise be meant for children who have not matured. Under grace, we are not reserved to house arrest. We have freedom to do what is right simply because the truth makes us free to exercise choices between good and evil.¹³

Where we might find difficulty is in asking why it is that Jesus would have ever desired that Israel come to Him as little children when we know that He does not expect the same for His Body. Again, in order to answer this question, let’s look at another passage of Scripture.

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord [is] gracious.” I Peter 2:2

A casual reader might otherwise never consider this passage and assume that I’ve made a valid argument up until this point. Yet now it appears that we have a contradiction of sorts if one is so willing to look at the Word with clouded glasses. We wipe away such clouds when we recognize that Peter was writing to an audience of scattered Jews who were still under the law.¹⁴ Additionally, they were spoken to as “obedient children” who have been “born again.”¹⁵ Peter was speaking to an Israel that was not free from the law. Thus, they were still under a schoolmaster and tutor which required that they slowly come to a full understanding of elementary principles. In other words, they were to use the Word to grow as children, not as adults.

What, then, is this new creature that we, the Body of Christ, have become if not an infant and not a child?

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new [man], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:” Colossians 3:9-10

“If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Ephesians 4:21-24

In Christ Jesus, you are not a new born babe and you are not a child. You are a “new man.” As Adam was created fully grown, so too are you established in Christ Jesus as a new man.

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and from, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, [even] Christ:” Ephesians 4:13-15

Be no more children and grow up into the head knowing that you are His Body. This message, while including “truth in love” is a very direct presentation that cannot be ignored. Our growth, therefore, is not as children, but as something quite different. How are we to “grow up” if we are not going through the same journey as Samuel or those in the past whose childhood experiences are easy to identify?

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” II Timothy 2:15

“...for the workman is worthy of his meat.” Matthew 10:10b

You are a workman.

Quite possibly, you’ve never considered yourself to be like this and always perceived that you should continue serving God as a child. At times, surely there is a part of us that is refreshed to see a child that has so few things to concern themselves. They have no bills, no jobs, and no external pressures outside the home such as we have. How easy it is to see their life and envy what once was. But is it really enviable?

Childhood does indeed come with its naivety and innocence, yet we must ask ourselves whether naivety ever gave us the understanding we longed to have. Each of us as we got older wanted to heap upon ourselves more responsibility not knowing what that would include. We wanted to be free from our parents earlier than we may have been ready simply because we were that anxious to move forward and become adults. Why, then, would we look at childhood and presume that if we could go back our mindset would be any different? Would we not seek after things that we were not ready to encounter just as we did on our first time around?

No, childhood is not enviable and neither is infancy. Thus, we are to consider a very practical message by the Apostle Paul:

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” I Corinthians 13:11

Put this into context for a moment and remember that Paul was once under the schoolmaster of the law.

“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.” Galatians 1:13-14

Paul was once under the schoolmaster of the law through the Jews’ religion, but had now become set apart by the grace of God unto a different calling. When he was a child, he spoke, understood, and thought as a child. But when he became a man (that is, he was set apart by the grace of God to the “new man”), he put away those things that had been childish. In another sense, he put an end to the elementary thinking that focused on learning basics and began to let the Word of God flow through his veins... those veins of a new creature.

If you have, for the first time, recognized that you are brought into Christ as a full grown son, a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, then I encourage you to begin looking at the work for which you have been called. Paul, the apostle to the Body of Christ, has given tremendous instruction on this workmanship.¹⁶

Conclusion

No doubt there were moments in this lesson that you asked yourself just how much more Scripture taught on the subject. Could we really have gone into further depth on Samuel? Are there other men of God in Scripture to whom we can expand this understanding? Have we skipped some aspects that still should be addressed? The answer to each question is an emphatic, “yes!”

You are workmen who needeth not to be ashamed. No doubt it would be a shame if tomorrow, you walked through the grocery store holding hands with your mother or father as though they needed to hold you back from certain items that could be reached with inquiring fingers. So inquire all you want. Reach out to whatever items caught your attention. Study to your heart’s desire. Research every detail that made you curious. Dig as though the shovel will uncover a buried treasure.

Exercise the strength of your mind as though it was a regular workout. Know the Word that you might be profitable to the loved one who needs your help to find their way. Let no man, including me, stop you from the freedom you have in Christ to search the Word day and night to see if the things being taught are so.¹⁷

FOOTNOTES

- 1 I Timothy 1:18
- 2 II Timothy 2:3-4
- 3 I Corinthians 9:24-26
- 4 Genesis 25:29-34
- 5 I Chronicles 2:51; 2:10-11; Further information can also be found in the study:
History of Ruth: Princes, Captains, and the House of Boaz
- 6 Ruth 3:12-13
- 7 I Samuel 17:12
- 8 Romans 11:25
- 9 I Samuel 1:12-16
- 10 Deuteronomy 8:3; Proverbs 30:5; Luke 4:4; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 4:12
- 11 Ephesians 3:1-5
- 12 John 3:3, 7
- 13 John 8:32
- 14 I Peter 1:1-2
- 15 I Peter 1:14, 23
- 16 I Corinthians 3:13-15; 15:58; 16:10; II Corinthians 9:8; Galatians 6:4; Ephesians 2:10; 4:12;
Colossians 1:10
- 17 Acts 17:11