

The Manliness of Jesus

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes that true manliness, as exemplified by Jesus, encompasses both strength and gentleness, challenging the perception of Christianity as a feminine religion.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:3, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 26:53, Luke 9:22

Topics: "Christlike Character", "Manliness"

Description

J.R. Miller addresses the misconception that Christianity is a religion primarily for women, arguing instead that Jesus embodies the full spectrum of manliness, combining gentleness with strength, courage, and integrity. He emphasizes that true manhood includes qualities such as moral courage, self-control, and love, which are exemplified in the life of Christ. Miller asserts that Jesus is the perfect model of humanity, showcasing both the tender and the heroic aspects of character. He challenges the world's standards of manliness, presenting Christ's teachings as the true guide for developing noble manhood. Ultimately, Miller encourages men to strive for Christlike qualities, recognizing that true manliness is a continual struggle supported by Christ as a helper and guide.

Transcript

The question has been raised, whether Christianity is not a religion for women, rather than for men. It has been claimed by some that the virtues it inculcates are feminine, rather than masculine; that it does not appeal to the manly instincts and sentiments, as it does to the womanly; that its principles and qualities are not those recognized among men as belonging to the truest and sturdiest manhood. There is at least a widespread impression, that in actual experience, Christianity is not making the best possible men. That is what the world charges. It says Christianity's men are lacking in the stalwart qualities, that they are sentimental and weak--and not always unalterably true, not always upright, lacking in virile force.

No doubt there are in Jesus, all the gentler qualities which we think of as belonging to woman. But are not these very graces, adornments also of manly character? Is it a shame for a man to be kindly, tender-hearted, patient, sympathetic? Yet while these gentler qualities undoubtedly appear in the character of Jesus--no less are there in Him the elements of strength, courage, heroism, justice, unflinching integrity. It takes both to make complete manliness.

F. W. Robertson says that Christ's heart had in it, the blended qualities of both sexes. "There is in Him," he says, "the woman heart--as well as the manly brain." There is something very beautiful in this thought, that in Jesus whatever is best and truest in both man and woman is found. A woman who is seeking for

whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely in womanhood, the graces of refined character: gentleness, sweetness, lovingness-- finds all these qualities in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, a man who is looking for whatever things are just, whatever things are honorable the elements of noble manhood, will also find these qualities in Christ. In Him all the excellences of manhood, as planned by God, found their perfection.

As Robertson says, "Once in this world's history was born a Man. Once in the roll of ages, out of innumerable failures, from the stock of human nature one bud developed itself into a faultless flower. One perfect specimen of humanity has God exhibited on earth." Other men, the best, the truest, the worthiest, have in them only a little fragment of a complete life; but in Christ is the perfect humanity, as if that which is best and truest in every man, and that which is tenderest, gentlest, and purest in every woman--were in His character.

What are the manly qualities? Thomas Hughes says courage is the foundation of all true manliness. He means not mere physical courage, which one may have and yet be a moral coward--but that courage which adheres to that which is right--quietly, firmly, in the face of all danger and all antagonism, and goes straight on, with unwavering persistence, to its goal. Do we find courage in Jesus? Recall the meaning of His mission. He came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. He was the second Adam, standing for the race. The first Adam had failed and fallen. What the consequences of ruin and sorrow were, we know in a little measure. Now Jesus came to fight the battle over, to reclaim what had been lost. The interests of the whole human race were in His hands that day, as the heavens opened and the Spirit came down upon Him.

Suppose He had failed. But He did not fail. He met terrible antagonism. He went from His baptism into the wilderness, where He endured terrific assaults from Satan. Suppose He had failed then, what would have been the consequence? But He met the tempter in fierce battle, and stood like a rock. So it was through all His life. He never wavered in His purpose to be true. He had in His year of popularity, a sorer test of moral courage, than opposition. Many men yield to the seductions of flattery and favor--and fail to be true; who in the storm of enmity--are as faithful as the compass. But Jesus was not swayed by popularity, and never veered aside from the straight path.

Then opposition came. The crowds began to forsake Him. The rulers were against Him. Enemies gathered in increasing number. The end was drawing near, and He knew what the end would be. The shadow of the cross fell upon His soul that day when He was being baptized. Every step of His life--was toward Calvary. Yet as the plots thickened, as the shadows deepened, He wavered not. He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem though He knew what waited there for Him. Never before nor since has the world seen any other such trial of courage--as was Christ's. He was standing for our salvation, and He faltered not in the testing. "For I, the Son of Man, must suffer many terrible things; I will be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and must be killed!" Luke 9:22

We praise the heroism of the soldier who stands unflinching, at the risk of death, in defense of his country. We praise the heroes at all life's posts of danger who are faithful to their trust. That is well. But the loftiest heroism of the ages--was that of Jesus.

Strength is another quality of manliness. It is good to be physically strong. But one may be a Hercules in body--and a pygmy in moral strength. Samson could carry off city gates--but could not withstand the temptations of idleness and lust. The strength of many men is marred by weakness of some sort. We say,

"Every man has his weak point." But you will search in vain in the story of Jesus, for any betrayal of weakness in Him. We see His majestic strength, side by side with His courage, in His conflicts with the tempter, in His persistent devotion to the divine will, in His blamelessness and sinlessness amid all the seductions of life. Everywhere we see Him--He is kingly.

Take His self-control, as a token of His strength. The truly strong man--is he who has great capacities, feelings, passions, powers--and has perfect mastery over them. No matter how great a man may be in abilities, what tremendous energies he may carry in his life--if he is not able to control them, he is pitifully weak! The truly strong man has mighty internal forces, a soul of strength, intense passions, feelings, tempers--and all under perfect control. Jesus stood this test. In Him all human powers reached their highest development, and then He was perfect master of Himself. He was never swerved by opposition, by injustice, by torture--to speak a word unadvisedly. He never lost His temper. He never grew impatient. He never spoke rashly. He never showed envy or resentment. He never fretted, never complained, never was disturbed in the calm of His soul--by outward circumstances. He stood quietly on the boat in the midnight storm. He faced the violent maniac among the tombs--as if he had been a sleeping babe. He went in and out among the hostile Jews--as quietly as if they had been His dearest friends.

Think of His self-control in suffering. Never has any being undergone pain so deep and terrible--as was the pain of Christ in the garden and on the cross! We sometimes think that our sorrows are bitter--but they are nothing, compared to those which Jesus endured! We have hints of the almost unbearable burden of His heart, in the strong cryings which came from Gethsemane, and in the word of forsakenness which breaks from His lips on the cross. But through all His indescribable sufferings--He maintained the most perfect calm! He never murmured. His peace was never once broken. It is manly strength--which endured so quietly such incomprehensible suffering!

Or think of His patient bearing of wrong and enmity. From the beginning of His public ministry, He met injustice. He was rejected by those He sought to help. Toward the end, these antagonisms became more bitter. But He endured them all with heroic patience. He never showed the slightest fear. He never grew angry. Recall His patient bearing in His unjust trials--and His silence before the Jewish council, before Pilate, before Herod. Think of His silence and patient submission when crowned with thorns, mocked, scourged, spit upon! It takes a great deal more strength to bear indignities and reproaches quietly and sweetly--than it does to resent them, to resist them, to lift up voice and hand against them, especially if one has power to resist. Yet that was the strength Jesus had. "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:53

When about to be crucified, they offered Him a stupefying potion, to deaden His consciousness of pain. It was a kindness offered by Jewish women. But He quietly refused it, and accepted the full measure of pain which crucifixion involved, with every sense at its keenest. When the nails were driven through His flesh, the only cry wrung from Him--was a prayer for the men who were crucifying Him. Can anyone read the story of Jesus, and note the strength which marks it all--and then say that He was not a manly man?

Another element of ideal manliness is true love, or generosity. We may call it by different names. It is large-heartedness. One writer puts it thus, "A sincere and kindly temper, which overlooks faults, which easily forgives wrong--is a part of any ordinary notion of manliness." There are men with many strong points, who are lacking in this quality. They are suspicious, jealous, envious, secretive, narrow, intolerant. They are envious of other men's prosperity. They are ungenerous toward other men's faults. They are selfish, exacting, thoughtless, resentful. They are brusque, stern, harsh in their talk. These are blemishes

on their manliness. But those who read the story of the life of Jesus--find in Him at every point the finest spirit of kindness and generosity. He was the truest gentleman that ever lived. We have seen His courage and His strength; no less wonderful was the gentle side of His character. He was large-hearted, tolerant of other men, patient with men's weaknesses, sincere in all His words and acts, gentle and kindly in all His converse.

Even in His trial, Pilate concluded, "I find no fault at all in Him." John 18:38. Those nearest to Him--saw the most in Him to love and admire. This is not always true of men. Close association with them reveals faults, and unveils blemished and flawed traits. Too close intimacy is oftentimes fatal to admiration. Many people appear better at a distance--than when near. But the life of Christ stood the test of close familiarity. He was gentle, thoughtful, patient, unselfish, full of sympathy. He loved men, not because He saw beauty in them--but because He wished to do them good. He treated men always with a love which was ready to make any sacrifice to serve them. The Christian, after looking at Jesus from every viewpoint, declares, "Yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend!" Song of Songs 5:16

The world's idea of what makes a man--is not always infallibly true. Some people call brutality manly. In some countries "the code of honor," as it is most falsely called, prevails as a canon of manly behavior. If a man thinks he is insulted, he must some way get revenge on his alleged insulter. If he does not, they call him a cringing coward, and he loses social standing. In some places, true virtue in a man is laughed at. They call purity unmanly. But these are low, debased standards. No man who looks God in the face and desires to grow into divine beauty--will call brutality manly, or revenge, or sensuality, or dishonesty, or untruthfulness. The only standard of manly character--is that set for us in the moral law, a transcript of the character of God Himself.

Jesus brought into the world a new standard of 'manhood'--a divine standard. Jesus showed the world what it is to be truly a man. He showed us a pattern on which we should all seek to fashion our lives. He was a true man--from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet. His was the truest, noblest, strongest, bravest, most unselfish life that ever was lived on the earth! If we seek to grow into His likeness, we shall climb nearer to God and into the noblest, loftiest reach of humanity!

In the teaching of Jesus, too, we find the precepts which set forth the qualities of true manhood. Any man who feels that the gospel of Christ is not fitted to make men brave men, strong men, true men--should read over thoughtfully the sermon on the mount. It begins with the beatitudes, in which the great Teacher sketches in a few bold strokes ideal manliness.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." The world would not write that beatitude; yet who will say that true, unconscious humility is not a shining quality in manly character?

"Blessed are the meek." Again the world would sneer. "It is contemptible and cowardly to bear injuries patiently, to forgive wrongs, to repay hatred with love!" But true meekness is really manly. It is easier far to let resentment blaze out, to let anger burn, to strike the retaliatory blow. But if strength is a quality of manliness, it takes strength to be meek. If generosity be a manly quality, then meekness is manly.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." The world does not insist on purity, as a cardinal element in its manliness. But the more shame for the world. Who will stand up before men, in the clear light of day, and contend that impurity of life is not unmanly--that purity of heart is not a radiant quality in true manliness?

All of Christ's teachings, if accepted and obeyed, will help toward the truest manliness. There is nothing weak or unmanly in any quality of character which He commends. There is no easy-going virtue such as the world likes. There are no elements that are not pure, true, and right. A false-hearted man will not find his ideal manliness in Christ. The gospel deals mercilessly with all shams, all unrealities, all unworthy things in life. It denounces in burning words all untruth. Jesus had no patience with anything that was not right and beautiful.

A story is told of one who, reading thoughtfully the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew's Gospel, where so many duties that are strange to flesh and blood are taught, broke out, "Jesus, either this is not Your gospel--or we are not Christians!" The lives of professing Christians seemed to him so far below the standard of the sermon on the mount, that he felt these could not be Christ's followers.

But Christ is more than a teacher. A teacher shows us lofty qualities and attainments, and then leaves us in hopeless weakness in the dust. But Christ is Helper, Friend, Savior--as well as Teacher. He shows us what true manliness is--and then comes into our life and inspires us to strive after the things He commends, and then breathes His life into us to help us to be what He teaches us to be.

It is not easy to be a man--a true, noble, Christlike man. It means continual struggle, for enemies of manliness meet us at every step; every inch of the way must be won in battle. It means constant restraint and repression of sin; for the 'old man' in us must be subdued and kept under control, by the new man we have resolved to be. It means constant, painful discipline; for the powers of nature are evil and unruly, and hard to tame and control. It means unending toil and self-denial; for we must climb ever upward, and the way is steep and rugged, and SELF must be trampled to death under our feet as we rise to higher life. It is hard to be a true man, for all the odds seem against us. But Christ lives, and He is Helper, Friend, and Guide to every man who truly receives Him as Lord and Master.

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