

“MAN UP”

ACTS 13:36

JUNE 19, 2011, SUNDAY, 11:00 AM – DR. JACK GRAHAM

[applause] Amen! Now take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Acts chapter 13 and one verse which is really a summation of the life of the great King David, one of the greatest men who ever lived on the face of the earth; described in the Scriptures as a man after God’s own heart. What a great heart this man had. He was a shepherd, a singer, a soldier, a sovereign king of the great nation of Israel. He was a sinner... he knew what it meant to fail God, and yet to find forgiveness and repentance and renewed faith. But most of all he was a servant. Though God took him from the shepherd fields and into the palace, he never lost the heart of the shepherd. And so in summa... summation of his life, really an epitaph of his life, Paul said in verse 36 of Acts chapter 13:

36) For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption,

David... he served the purposes of God in his own times. He did it fully; he did it faithfully. And this is the challenge to every man. So I’m calling this message “Man Up”. That is, let us stand tall and rise up to the challenges of our own day of being men and being dads.

I don’t know if you’ve ever taken time to read some tombstones. It’s an interesting thing. Recently Deb and I were down in Florida, one of the oldest cemeteries in America, and to read some of the scripts that are there. And ah... I actually came across some epitaphs that were very interesting. Ah... you know, when you read epitaphs you don’t know exactly what they mean sometimes. A little girl, age 6, walked by an epitaph and the words said, “Well done.” The little girl said, “Mommy, does that mean she was cremated?” [laughter]

But “The body of Benjamin Franklin lies here. Printer, like the cover of an old book, it’s contents torn out and stripped of it’s lettering and gilding, lies here, food for worms, but the works shall not be lost, for it is... For it will as he believes appear once more in a new and more edition, corrected and amended by the Author.”

“Here lies Susan Barrows. For her life held no terrors. Born a maid, died a maid, not hits, no runs, now errors.” [laughter]

I love the epitaph of a man by the name of Jonathan Peas, born and buried in Kentucky. It says: “Peas’ not here. It’s just the pod. Peas shelled out and went to God.” [laughter]

I don’t know what the life was like of this particular woman but her tombstone said: “She lived with her husband 50 years and died in the confident hope of a better life.” [laughter]

How ‘bout this, found in a church in Wolrich. “As I am now, so you must be. Therefore prepare to follow me.” It is said that it was later amended by his widow to read: “To follow you I am not content, unless I know which way you went.” [laughter]

Well David’s epitaph... this singular summation of his life... He served God and the purposes of God... the will of God for his own generation. Dads, that’s our mission. To live a life that lasts beyond the years. To live a life that is engaged and fully engaged with our families, and therefore, to solidify and strengthen the future of our own. So it’s time to man up, to accept responsibility. The Bible says [Corinthians 16:13], “*Act you like men.*”

The old King James... and we’re remembering this year the 400th anniversary of the King James version of the Bible... The old King James said, “*Quit ye like men*”. It’s the opposite of quitting however. It is acting with courage and bravery and boldness. “Act like men.” Man up!

Now there’s a lot of discussion today as to what a man is. There are a dozen sit-coms coming on television this Fall that have to do with men searching for their identity and their masculinity. Some trying to get in touch with their masculine side... that’s a reverse. One is called Man Up. I didn’t know there was a sit-com named Man Up when I titled this sermon, but there’s a fellow by the name of Will who’s trying to... to find himself and figure out if he’s a man or not. And his wife eventually says to him, “I’m sorry, honey, but your grandfather fought in World War II, your father fought in Viet Nam and you use... you play video games and use pomegranate bodywash.”

Men are trying to figure it out: what does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be masculine? What does it mean, more importantly, to be God’s man in this culture, and to rise to the occasion and the challenges of our day? It’s not easy being a dad. We have many absentee dads today. Guys who have checked out and moved on. Are even if they’re at home, not involved in the lives of their children.

But God has called us, like David, to serve our own generation, and that would include first and foremost our own generation family. And to do that we do it like David who took on three primary responsibilities of his life and in his life. One was a king, the other a shepherd, the other a warrior. Let’s look at those three roles and responsibilities of a man after God’s own heart.

First, as kings, gentlemen, we are leaders. That’s what a king does. And as leaders we guide our families. And when Jesus is first in your life... when King Jesus rules in your heart, you, like Him, become a kingdom of priests. Christ rules in our hearts and reigns in us! Now that’s true for all believers, both men and women, but I’m specifically talking to men today about assuming the authority that God has given you as a man to lead your family.

Now the key word here in this passage is David “served” his own generation. It’s the only time this particular word is used in the New Testament to describe a servant or one who served, and it literally means the under-rower... the under-rower. Underneath in the... in the bow... underneath the bow of the boat or the bottom of the boat these slave-trafficking boats... these ah... massive boats of yesteryear were the oars and those who rowed them underneath. And in the offscouring and the sweat and the smell and the stench of men... working men... these underrowers were serving--underrowing.

And so when we talk about being a man and being a man’s man, and taking charge and taking responsibility, that doesn’t mean that we beat our chest and get on our swag and say, “Everybody get out of the way, I’m in charge here.” As king, David served his generation. And as kings we are to serve our families, like Jesus... like King Jesus.

There are many would-be kings. Ask Lebron James about would-be kings. [claps and chuckles] No... [pastor chuckles] People who proclaim themselves kings or others proclaim them king. There are fake kings like that creepy guy Burgerking king. [laughter] But a real king is someone who stoops to conquer like Jesus.

You remember when Jesus gathered His disciples in the upper room? The Bible says in John chapter 13 and verse 3 that the Father... *“knowing that the Father had given Him everything... all things were... were given to Him, all things into His hands, that He came from God, that He was going back to God.”* What did He do? Did He seize the throne? No, He took up the towel. *“He rose from the supper. He laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel, He tied it around His waist.”* And then he began washing the dirty feet of those disciples. This is what King Jesus, the son of David, did to serve. And this is our rule as well.

Let me say, while we’re talking to men about manning up and being a man, let me say that any guy who manhandles his family or abuses his wife or his children, either verbally or physically or emotionally or spiritual is no man at all, but a beast! It’s not what we’re talking about when we say man up. This isn’t Jackie Gleason on Honeymooners saying, “I’m the king of this castle here!”

No, it is Jesus who stoops and serves. But let it be known that God has designed the family with the husband/father designed to lovingly lead his family. The Scripture says that wives are to submit unto their husband even as to the Lord. And while there’s a lot of debate even in the church about the whole idea of submission, nobody’s standing up and saying, “Well, let the children be in charge of the home. Let the parents submit to the children.”

No, there’s a clear order and design in a family. Under God men are to loving lead their wives, love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it (that’s Ephesians 5:25) and under that authority... After God has given the authority to the husband to lovingly lead his family, the wife is to graciously submit as unto the Lord. The idea of submitting here... the very word means to rank under. In the military you’re familiar, of course, with rank. It doesn’t mean that a private is intellectually or emotionally or spiritually inferior to a general, but in the context of that ranking the general is responsible and in charge of the privates and so on.

And in God’s design for the family God has directed that the man should take responsibility and lead. This is on us, men! That we would not be passive or weak or indifferent, but that we would make sure that we take the charge and the responsibility for our family. In any organization someone is in charge. Have you ever been a part of a situation where no one was in charge? It doesn’t feel very good, does it? It generally results in chaos. So God has given us the family and an order in the family: under God, men and fathers are to lead.

Living under authority is critical, men, because we can't be over until we're under. That's the principle of authority. You cannot be under... you cannot be over, rather, until you are under the authority of Christ, until you are ruled and dominated by the power of Christ. And so, men, as kings... leaders in our families we are to lovingly lead our families, we're to point our wives and our kids to Christ, we're to honor our wives and bless our children, we're to bear our family's burdens, we are to provide and protect, we are to discipline and direct, we're to be both tender and tough... tough. We are to be present and accounted for! Your number one job, guys, if you are a father is to be a dad! What difference does it make if you have a six figure income and the corner office, if you're a stranger to your own family?

How you lead? You lead by leading. Anybody that has to say "I'm in charge" typically isn't. You lead by leading. This means that we ask God to enable us to be better men and better husbands and better fathers. In Ephesians 4 Paul spoke to believers and, guys, we would step up first on this. Verses 1 & 2. *"I therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called."* Have you been called to be a husband and a father? Then you would walk worthy in a manner to which you have been called. *"and with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love..."*

There's a word in the Bible that Jesus used in the Beatitudes. It is weak... it is meekness or meek... to be meek, which means to be gentle. [Matthew 5:5] *"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."* Meekness is not weakness. Jesus was the mightiest man who ever walked upon the face of the earth, but He was meek and lowly of heart. Moses was called the meekest man on the face of the earth in his own generation. Moses was a strong and powerful leader, but he was meek. It means strength under control... strength under control, and that's how we are to lead. True champions maintain self control and focus and that's how we win as men. Wherever Jesus is, wherever Jesus rules there is life and there is strength and there is peace.

I love what David says in Psalm... pardon me, 2 Samuel 23[:3]: *"The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morn, like rain that makes grass... grass to sprout from the earth."* When we reign in godliness...when we reign as God gives us the strength to do it, we're like the dawn... the morning of light, a refreshing spirit in our family. Real kings love and care and serve. There are kings who do nothing but sit on their Lazyboy like a throne, snap the remote control and ask everybody to serve them. But real kings serve others.

There's a second role that David... David fulfilled that we are to fulfill and that as... is as a shepherd. And as shepherds we are to provide for our family. As kings we are to lead our family; as shepherds we are to provide for our family. David was always at heart a shepherd. He shepherded Israel. In fact, in Psalm 78[:70] it is said of David that *"He chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes that had young he brought to him and to shepherd Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. (watch this, guys) So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them by the skillfulness of his hand."* Two things this godly good shepherd did: He served with the integrity of his heart... he shepherded them with the integrity of his heart and with the skillfulness of his hand.

The point is, men, we are to pastor and shepherd our family: spiritually, physically, emotionally. We do this by praying for our families, by leading and guiding their family. Not just sending our families

to church, but leading our families to serve God, providing nurture, providing care, providing ministry. The first goal of every dad, as well as mom, should be to make disciples of their own children, to teach them God’s truth. We dads are to prepare our children... our little lambs for a world that is filled with predators and dangers and obstacles. This is not a safe place for children to live these days. What a shepherd does is show up every day whether he feels like it or not.

I mention that one of the problems we all know we face in our culture is that of absentee dads. A CNN report gave... given this week said that 25 percent of children in America are now living without dad at home. And many that have dads at home... unfortunately dad really isn’t there. Many of these kids overachieve and succeed in spite of the fact that their dads aren’t there, but so many of them we know are in prison or they’re own the streets or they’re in crack houses and so on.

This past week Jason Whitten, the great tight end for the Dallas Cowboys spoke to our men. David Shivers interviewed Jason just regarding his life and his faith. Jason’s story is that he grew up in a home that was very abusive because his father was an alcoholic; he was in and out of their lives. They were moving here and there and everywhere. He and his two brothers had no real stability or security in their lives. Until one day when he was 13 years of age his grandfather took the family in because the dad just didn’t... didn’t get it done. Grandpa took them in. His granddad was a coach. He led Jason to Christ, he taught him to play football and Jason shared with us, though he still lives with some of the scars of his early life, it was the witness of a godly man in his life... a godly grandfather that turned it around for him.

So men, don’t let this culture say that you are dispensable; you are not dispensable! The media, so often a mirror of our culture portrays, dads as dolts and dummies and all the rest! Deadbeats! But you can change the culture of your life and your family and your neighborhood and this community by being a father to the fatherless, to being a dad to your own children, and granddads, don’t forget your responsibility! In fact, the Bible tells us that grandfathers... the inheritance of grandfathers is dynamic and powerful in the life of children. And that we should think not only in terms of raising our children and our job is done... You know the old joke, it’s great to have grandchildren ‘cause you can send them home when you’re tired of them.

No, we can’t get tired of our grandkids because we have a responsibility to assist our children and their children’s children going forward. Don’t think in terms of just a forty year generational span of your influence, but think of the influence you have as a grandparent upon your children, your children’s children and their children after them! This is your mission... to be a shepherd.

There are others who can make decisions at the office, there are others who can... who can travel to the ends of the earth, but there’s only one dad to your children, and that’s you. And I can tell you there’s no greater success in life than being a successful man, husband and father as God gives you success. Be fair, be firm, be leading and guiding your children.

Now David failed. David chased after his lust and nearly destroyed his family. And there were repercussions of David’s sin in his family for the rest of their days. But read Psalm 51... David repented of his great sin and God’s grace renewed him and strengthened him.

And as I'm preaching I realize that I'm preaching to men who have failed because I have failed as a father, as a person. So have you. But God's grace covers our failures. And it's never too late for a new beginning. And you can find restoration and strength to begin again. The only one... the only one who fails as a father is the man who quits and gives up! Checks out! What we need to do as men is to show up every day for work! And work shepherding our families, leading our families.

It may mean leaving work early now and then and just going home and throwing the ball around with your son, or reading a book to your daughter, peering into the eyes of your children. Go home... go home early, the returns are tax-free and the benefits to your children are beyond imagination.

One final thing: we are not only kings, taking authority and responsibility as leaders in our homes...not only like David are we to serve God and His purpose in our generation as shepherds, providing for our family... leading and guiding our family, but we are warriors... protectors of our families.

David was a warrior king who won many victories. The great victory... the first victory you'll recall was against Goliath. He was a shepherd boy, showed up, heard the giant blaspheming God, asked to go in... "Put me in, coach." So he went in, courageously in the name of the Lord. "God... the battle is the Lord's" he exclaimed and the giant was felled. He stood in the gap against the enemy.

And that's what God has called warrior men to do today; to stand in the gap for our families. You do that by teaching them, training them, and protecting them. This is a dangerous world. When I was a child, living in small-town Arkansas, I would get on my bike typically 8 o'clock in the morning, not come back till dinner time... supertime as we called it.

Kids don't live like that today; we can't. On a practical level protecting your kids means knowing who their friends are, guiding them to make good decisions about their behaviors, about their attitude. It's knowing who your daughter is dating and your son, as far as that goes. It's protecting them when they go to somebody else's house to know what's going on over at the other house. [1 Peter 5:8] *"Satan is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."* Be in the battle every day! [James 4:7] *"Resist the devil; he will flee from you."* Put in the whole armor of God and stand for your children! Be courageous, be brave, be bold!

General Patton, U. S. Army General, said, "All men are afraid of the battle. The coward is the one who lets his fear overcome his sense of duty." Our greatest sense of duty is for our family. We must be courageous to take the hard stand, to be willing to teach our children how to stand against the enemy, to stand alone if necessary.

So David served the purposes of God in his own generation. And then the Bible says he fell asleep. He just apparently suddenly and quickly stepped into eternity. He squared off the curve and he closed well... he finished well, though there were defeats as well as great victories. His son Solomon went on to build the temple and to be a wise man on the face of the earth. When it comes time to lay it down, men, and we fall asleep in Jesus, may we open our eyes into His presence and hear the words, "Well done."

Well, we are who are Dallas Mavericks fans enjoyed the championship, didn't we? And [applause] being a sports fan, I've been watching the Mavs for a while and Dirk Nowitzki and Jeff... Jason Terry have been with this team for a while and they experienced loss in 2006. They didn't get it done; they didn't close the game. And so Dirk was asked ah... by Mike Wilbon on ESPN, "What can you do now that you couldn't do in 2006 when you guys lost in the final?" (I'd like to do this in a German accent, but I can't) [laughter] Here's what Dirk said, "I think a lot comes from experience. Looking back at it now, I'm glad I went through it together with Jet. And I think what I've learned from it is how to close more; to have more of a killer instinct. We were so close there in the finals and I could never get... I could never close the games out the way I wanted to, and we fell short. I think since then I've been a better closer in the fourth quarters, and I've taken it to heart as a franchise player and what that means in the fourth quarter is that you have to produce. When it's winning time, that is your time and that's why you make the big bucks. It took me a little bit in the beginning to get used to that role and use to the pressure. But over the years I think I've thrived in it and now it's too the point where it's the fourth quarter, the game is on the line and you want the ball. It's like a desire or a feeling that you love to be in those situations now. And that wasn't always in... the case early in my career. Experience and hard work has gotten me to the point where now I want the ball in those situations."

Men, when we close... you know, you win in the fourth quarter in life as well. And experience teaches you one thing: to finish strong in Christ. And men, let's all be saying, "Give me the ball!" Let's be willing to finish strong and to close strong. And you know what happened to David, according to 1 Chronicles 29 [28], when David died, "*he died at a good age, full of days, riches and honor, and Solomon his son reigned in his place.*" That's legacy! That our children reign in Christ. All I can do is like David... is to serve God fully and faithfully in my own generation, to serve Him all my life, knowing that to close victorious... to win is what life is all about. Be a man after God's own heart and to finish what God has started. Amen? [Amen]

Thank You, Lord, for the opportunity to live for you in this generation. May we serve You as men, as husbands, as dads, grandfathers. May we hear Your call to serve, to get underneath the boat, to row the oars, pick up the towel and to serve, to protect, to lead, to guide, to bless our own children and our wives and our children's children. Thank You, Jesus, for loving us and introducing us to the Heavenly Father, which we cry Abba Father. I pray right now that You would help us all to know You and follow You. I pray for men listening to me right now who do not know Jesus. Pray that this would be the day of salvation. We look to Your cross upon which You died, and grateful for the resurrection by which You live in us. So help men and their families come to Christ today. We pray, O Lord, that as long as You give us life and breath, until it is our time to fall asleep and to awaken in Your presence, that we will serve our generation. In Jesus' name. Amen.