

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, August 19, 2018

### The Virtuous Woman - Part 1

**Proverbs 31:10-31 “10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. 11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. 12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. 13 She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. 14 She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. 15 She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. 16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. 17 She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. 18 She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. 19 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. 20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. 21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. 22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. 23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. 24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. 25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. 26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. 27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. 28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. 29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. 30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. 31 Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”**

Lord willing, over the next two weeks, we will consider this “virtuous woman” in detail. This is a beautiful poem, that evokes emotional response. It is often referenced in the world, because it is emotive fodder for wall art and social media. Self-serving preachers use these blessed words to tout their own wives, and prop up their “good ol’ boy” Christianity, with the focus on a subservient, dolled-up trophy wife that knows her place in the kitchen, and had better not work outside the home. Unscriptural hogwash, that entirely misses the point.

What we have in this poem is a beautiful exemplar for each of our lives, and a convicting, yet comforting view of how Christ looks upon His bride, the Church. As we consider this passage in detail, please keep clearly in view that the application is not at all limited to wives. There is certainly a direct application to wives, and it is very instructive to any

who have, or will take on that role; it ought to be soberly considered and reconsidered over time. But, more importantly, it is a blueprint for how ALL OF US are to function within the various roles that the Lord has assigned to us. This virtuous woman is the bride of our Lord Jesus Christ – His Church.

**Ephesians 5:31-33 “31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”**

So, as we consider these instructions to a wife, we must clearly recognize that each of us IS a wife, in the sense that we are all a part of the body – the bride of Christ. How then ought we to reverence and honor our husband – our head – our Lord. How can we pattern our daily lives after this wonderful example, such that we would be faithful, and pleasing to our husband?

One other note before we proceed – I am painfully aware that this is a lofty standard, a standard that ALL of us often fail. If anyone fancies that they ARE this virtuous woman, by virtue of their deeds, then they deceive themselves. As I wrote this sermon, I was more convinced than ever that I have no righteousness of my own, and am without hope in my flesh – my hope is entirely dependent upon my Lord. Without the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have nothing. And yet, if we have Christ, then we ***must strive*** to follow after this example – we are compelled to. Remember the excellent doctrine that our dear brother Jon presented last week: *“all true Christian grace in the heart tends to holy practice in the life”*.

**Verse 10: Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.**

- Let us first define the word “virtuous”:
  - Dictionary definition: having or showing high moral standards, chaste, pure, undefiled, exemplary, wholesome, etc.
  - 2Peter 1:5 “... add to your faith **virtue** ... “
    - “Moral goodness and vigor which brings forth a pattern of good works, proving out the regenerated heart of the Christian – Energy and Zeal. Moral courage, especially in the face of adversity - Boldness, Fortitude and Steadfastness. Simply put – moral energy and moral courage.” (Sermon preached 10/18/2015)
  - In Proverbs 31, “virtue” is translated from the Hebrew “Chayil” (khah’-yil). The word occurs 243 times in the OT, typically translated as army, man of valor, host, mighty, strong, able, substantive, etc. We’re not talking about a dainty wallflower here!



is able – crafting and honing her skills; she is full of productive, targeted, fruitful activity; she is not entangled with the affairs of this life. Consider another description of this same virtuous woman: **“My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her. Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” (Song of Solomon 6:9,10)**

- We live in the days of the Church Militant; we are engaged in a perpetual war. In times of war, armies are full of activity! Diligent, Industrious, diverse activity – every soldier plays a particular part, but all of the activity drives toward a single purpose. Much of the activity is forward looking – it is done in preparation – it won’t bear immediate fruit. Soldiers know their orders, and they know the ultimate goal, but they generally don’t know all of the details; their job is to faithfully, watchfully execute their orders – perform their particular role - to the fullest of their ability. When the road gets difficult and dangerous, they are to soldier on, and trust their head. So it is with the Church of Jesus Christ; the violent – the virtuous - take the kingdom of heaven by force! (Matthew 11:12)
  - Consider also the angels in their ranks; faithfully executing their orders with speed and precision. Consider the incredible activity that Jacob saw when the Lord pulled back the curtain on the spiritual world; teeming angels, ascending and descending from heaven – flying to do the bidding of their Lord.
- Lazy, insubordinate, fragmented armies lose; they die. Lazy, rebellious, self-willed, divided churches that abandon their head and Captain die; Christ removes their candlestick.
- Having a better understanding of her virtue, it is easy to see why this woman’s price is far above rubies – she is priceless! Who can find such a woman? She is rare and precious! When you find such a woman, it is thankless sin against God to deal treacherously with her; similarly, when you find a true church of Christ, it is great sin to do anything other than strap on your armor, and run joyfully to war with her!
  - *Henry: “The unspeakable worth of such a one, and the value which he that has such a wife ought to put upon her, showing it by his thankfulness to God and his kindness and respect to her, whom he must never think he can do too much for. Her price is far above rubies, and all the rich ornaments with which vain women adorn themselves. The more rare such good wives are the more they are to be valued.”*

- Gill: *“A woman actually married to Christ; a woman fruitful, bringing forth many children to him; a woman beautiful, especially in his eyes, with whom she is the fairest among women; a woman, the weaker vessel, unable to do anything without him, yet everything through him: a “virtuous” one, inviolably chaste in her love and affection to Christ, her husband; steadfast in her adherence, to him by faith, as her Lord and Saviour; incorrupt in doctrine, sincere and spiritual in worship, retaining the purity of discipline, and holiness of life; and holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience; She is militant, has many enemies, and these powerful and mighty, as well as cunning and crafty; yet, with all their power and policy, cannot overcome her; the gates of hell cannot prevail against her; she engages with them all, and is more than a conqueror over them; she is of great spiritual strength, which she has from Christ, to fight the Lord’s battles, to withstand every enemy, to exercise grace, and do every good work; and all her true members persevere to the end:”*
- One additional thought on this first verse. This woman is found in a virtuous state. A woman of faith will come to years learning to be virtuous toward her father and her God. She isn’t waiting until she is a wife to put on this virtue. Remember, this applies to both genders; young people have no business pining away their days with a murmuring desire to be married. They ought to be putting on this virtue, with contentment; they ought to be working to be men and women of valor in their service of God. How can they be a godly, virtuous spouse, if they haven’t yet learned to be godly, virtuous people. From this posture, God will give them the appropriate desire of their heart, and fulfill it.
  - Henry: *“Those that are good really will be good relatively. A good woman, if she be brought into the marriage state, will be a good wife, and make it her business to please her husband.”*
- From here the passage defines her virtue with practical examples of her fruitful **activity**.

Verse 11: **The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.**

- Some foundation for this verse, and the rest of this passage: a husband’s job is to establish and maintain the rule of his house – the policy by which it is to be governed (**1Peter 3:7; 1Timothy 3:4,5**); his wife’s job is to faithfully, zealously “guide” the house according to that policy, helping him in every way to rule his house well (**Ephesians 5:22,23, 1Timothy 5:14**). This is a living, growing, symbiotic relationship. There is an inequality in this relationship, in that the husband is the head of the wife; she is his purchased possession (**Ruth 4:10**) – everything that she has and is belongs to him. That doesn’t make her less important – we each have roles that God has appointed us, and even though they

are different, they are all critical. That's a terribly unpopular thing to say in this day and age, and yet with proper spiritual eyes, it is full of love, joy and hope – it's a part of the mystery, Christ and His bride. Understanding that fact highlights the duty of a husband to love, honor, and tenderly regard his wife in the same way that Christ does the church. There is also an equality between them: they are one flesh, and heirs together of promise! Therein lies the joy and hope: we couldn't be more unequal with Christ, in our depraved, sinful state, and yet He has loved us, cast His skirt over us, and purchased us to himself. He has made us to be one flesh with Him – a part of His body. He owns us – everything that we are, and everything that we have belongs to Him. Thank God for that! Don't be afraid of that concept, just because the world despises it.

- Every action that a wife takes draws upon her husband's authority, and represents him. A faithful wife intelligently utilizes and employs her husband's resources, to accomplish his will, such that his heart is settled and at rest. That includes all of his resources – money, time, skills, children, etc. He isn't Lording over her, rather, he entrusts her with an incredible responsibility and stewardship. A good wife manages the affairs of his house in such a way that not only is he never tempted to look to others for "spoil", but his substance is able to benefit those around him.
- If a wife is wasting her husband's resources – wasting money, wasting time, missing opportunities to do good to him and others, then he will be tempted to make up for that in an improper way – "spoil". A simple example: if his finances aren't in order, then he will be tempted to scheme and steal; perhaps he will decide not to pay a creditor, or short them on the bill - theft; perhaps he will decide not to tithe, and thereby rob God. To be clear, there's lots of ways that husbands and wives divide their work load; I'm not saying that a wife has to be responsible for the finances of the house, but even if the husband is largely tending to that business, there are myriad ways that a wife can waste his substance; for instance, she can refuse to work and earn money for the family, or she can spend money that they don't have.
  - **Proverbs 12:27** "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious."
  - A faithful steward doesn't randomly start things, without the purpose and ability to complete them. Consider the waste that it is to go to all the trouble of hunting down an animal, just to leave it rotting in the field while people go hungry. Our time and resources are finite; we should be working to use them effectively, and helping each other to do that.
  - **Proverbs 29:3** "Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance."



- **Discrete:** this discretion is a key element of her husband's trust. She is wise and prudent in her behavior; she is sober-minded, considering the impact of her words and actions. How should she act? When should she act? When should she stand still? When should she talk? How should she talk? Knowing that it all reflects directly upon her husband, and his interests. A husband must be able to trust that his wife is not gossiping about him. She doesn't have any business talking to other people about his foibles (and vice versa). Instead, she has a duty that is ***uniquely hers***, as his "help meet", to appropriately provoke him to good things, and he has a duty to hear her. Likewise, she doesn't have any business repeating the things that he confides in her. The effect of that behavior tends to shame, and discord in the body (**James 3:5**). She ought to be afraid to do it, and others ought to be afraid to pry into such things. To be clear, I'm not talking about open sin: if he is engaged in open sin, and will not hear her provocation, then it ought to be enquired into, and she absolutely can, and must, get appropriate help.
- **Keepers at home:** This is not saying that her business is only at home; the virtuous woman is clearly seen conducting business outside of the home. It is saying that her heart, and her activity are focused first and foremost upon her house; her primary business is ensuring that her house is ***fully*** cared for, such that her head can safely trust in her. She knows her work, and she does it joyfully – he's not chasing her and fighting through her contentions to accomplish it. She's not focused on everyone else's business. She's not focused on cultivating and protecting her leisure time. This instruction to Titus is particularly focused on teaching young ladies to be keepers at home; my friends, ***nothing good*** will come from young people having an abundance of idle time together. Furthermore, although we are all supposed to be filling our days with good things, laboring together, speaking often one to another, communing in the spirit, and taking counsel together, we should also be careful to be focused on our own business, and allow others to be focused on theirs, such that our feet are precious and welcome in our friends' houses. Consider the scripture:
  - **Proverbs 25:17** "Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee."

Verse 12: **She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.**

- This is proactive, and requires action! "I didn't mean to do evil" isn't the answer. I mean to do good, and therefore I seek counsellors and examples of good, I learn to do good, I make a plan of action to do good, and then I execute and adjust that plan

afresh each day. Plans can take a lot of different forms, but you must have a plan, and you have to work it! You aren't going to stumble into this good work – you must seek it! If your days aren't full of good work, that your conscience can confidently align with the will of your head – your earthly and heavenly masters - then it's time to reassess your plan.

- *Henry: "She makes it her constant business to do him good, and is afraid of doing any thing, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice. She shows her love to him, not by a foolish fondness, but by prudent endearments. And this is her care all the days of her life; not at first only, or now and then, when she is in a good humour, but perpetually; and she is not weary of the good offices she does him."*

Lord willing, next week we will look at the rest of this wonderfully instructive passage. I pray that this is of some use to you dear friends.

I love you all. Amen.