

The Virtuous Woman

“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”. **Proverbs 31:10-31**

This description of the *virtuous woman* is designed to show what wives the women should make and what wives the men should choose. To women who are not married, it is set forth as a standard to be reached to bring honor to God. The abridgment of this virtuous woman can be found in 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 and 1 Peter 3:1-6.

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; ¹⁰ But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” **1 Timothy 2:9, 10**

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; ² While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. ³ Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; ⁴ But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. ⁵ For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: ⁶ Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” **1 Peter 3:1-6**

What a Virtuous Woman Is

- A virtuous woman is a woman of strength, though the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7), yet made strong by wisdom and grace, and the fear of God.
- She is a woman of spirit, who has the command of her own spirit and knows how to manage other people's (1 Peter 3:4).
- She is one that is pious and industrious, willing to work with her hands.
- She is one that knows how to and is capable of providing for the needs of her household.
- She is not lazy, nor does she sleep her morning away, but rises before dawn to begin her day.
- She has good business sense, is frugal, and able to make quality purchases.

- She is a skilled horticulturist.
- She is not thin, frail and weak, but is sensible to build physical strength for health and for labor.
- She has confidence in that which she produces.
- She is a seamstress and manufacturer of fine garments.
- She is not selfish, but generous and charitable, and outreaches to the poor with her industry.
- She dresses her family well and is not afraid of the extremes in temperature.
- She is a true help meet for her husband.
- She is a woman of resolution, having good principles and is firm and steady to them.

And she is more than this...But who can find such a woman? They are very scarce in this day and age. Many that seem to be virtuous do not prove so. The virtuous woman has unspeakable worth, and her husband should show his value of her by his thankfulness to God and his kindness and respect to her, whom he must never think he can do too much for. "*For her price is far above rubies.*" The more rare such good wives are, the more they are to be valued.

Her Conduct

Whether married or not, all Christian women should be godly in conduct. There is nothing more appalling to a Christian man and even some worldly men than a woman who is loud and boisterous, rough in manners and speech, unable to control her tongue, full of sarcastic witticisms, forward, lacking reverence and respect for others and revealing a lack of respect for herself. A good woman, if she be brought into the marriage state, will be a good wife, and make it her business to first honor God and please her husband. Though she is a woman of spirit herself, yet her desire is to her husband, to know his mind, that she may accommodate herself to it, and she is willing that he (being led of God 1 Cor. 11:3) should rule over her. She conducts herself that he may repose an entire confidence in her. He trusts in her chastity, which she never gives him the least occasion to suspect or to entertain any jealousy of.

She is not morose and reserved, but modest and grave, and has all the marks of virtue in her countenance and behavior; her husband knows it, and therefore *his heart doth safely trust in her*; he is easy and makes her so. He trust her conduct, that she will speak in all companies, and act in all affairs, with prudence and discretion, so as not to occasion him either damage or reproach. He trust in her fidelity to his interest, and that she will never betray his counsels nor have any interest separate from that of his family.

She is a good wife that is fit to be trusted, and he is a good husband that will desire such a wife to manage things for him. She contributes so much to his content and satisfaction that he shall have no need of spoil. She shows her love to him, not by a foolish fondness, but by prudent endearments.

Her Industriousness

She is one that takes pains in the duty of her place and takes pleasure in it. She does not like to sit still and do nothing; *she eats not the bread of idleness* vs. 27. Though she needs not work for her bread (her husband does), yet she will not eat it in idleness, because she knows that we were not sent into this world to be idle, and when we have nothing to do the devil will soon find us something to do. Some eat and drink because they can find themselves nothing else to do, and needless visits must be received with fashionable entertainments; these are eating the bread of idleness, which she has no relish for. She does not give nor receive idle visits nor engages in idle talk, nor waste her time and mind on social networking sites or chat rooms. She is careful to fill up time, that none be lost.

When day-light is done, she does not think it time to lay aside her work, but carries on the duties that await her inside. She is not intemperate nor burns the midnight oil, even though she is ready during the night at a moment's notice for duty or service. But her temperance enables her rise early before the light of day to first commune with Christ, then provide for the needs of her household, that they can go cheerfully about their work as soon as the day breaks.

Her candle goeth not out by night vs. 18. She is continuously prospered by the Lord. "*For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.*" Prov. 24:20. "*The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.*" Prov. 13:9.

She is self-employed and applies herself to the business that is proper for her. It is not in a scholar's business, or statesman's business, or husbandman's business that she employs herself, but in a women's business: *she seeketh wool, and flax* vs. 13. She does not put on men's garments and go off to war, nor work at the New York Stock Exchange screaming at the top of her lungs all day, casting aside her meekness and shutting out the voice of God. Nor does she choose employment that would cause her to compromise principle in any way, or lead another down the path of destruction by the merchandise she sets before others, the services she offers, or by her influence. No, she chooses that which is becoming of a Christian woman whose desire it is to reveal the character of God.

She is not lazy, but does her work herself and works *willing with her hands*, applying her mind to it, and does not weary in well-doing. Whatever she does is done with all her might, and she does not trifle with it. She *girdeth her loins with strength and strengtheneth her arms* vs. 17. She takes care to strengthen her physical frame that she may enjoy good health and be capable of physical work without the need of calling upon her husband to lift every little burden she has; all the while knowing that applying herself to physical work that requires all of the strength she has, is the best way to secure more.

She is one that makes what she does to turn to a good account, by her prudent management of it. She does not toil all night and catch nothing; no, she herself *perceiveth that her merchandise is good* vs. 18. She is conscientious and produces only items of quality to be set before people. She is sensible that in all her labor there is profit (Proverbs 14:23) and that encourages her to go on in it. She perceives that she can make things herself better and cheaper than she can buy them. She finds by observation what branch of her employment brings in the best returns, and to that she applies herself most closely. She brings in provisions of all things necessary and convenient for her family. What her own ground does not produce she can furnish herself with, if she have occasion for it, by exchanging her own goods for it; and so she *bringeth her food from afar* vs. 14. Not that she values things the more for their being far-fetched, but, if they be ever so far off, if she must have them she knows how to come by them.

She *considereth a field, and buyeth it*, vs. 16. She purchases land, and enlarges the estate of the family as she recognizes what a good account it will turn to. However, she first considered it, whether it be worth her money, whether she can afford to take so much money out of her stock as must go to purchase it, whether the title be good, whether the ground will answer the character given of it, and whether she has money on-hand to pay for it. Many have undone themselves by making purchases without considering it and it is easy today with the availability of credit. But those who would make advantageous purchases must first consider or count the cost, and then buy. She also *planteth a vineyard* vs. 16 (today garden), but it is with the fruit or labor of her own hands. She does not run into debt to do it, but she does it with what she can spare out of the gains of her own housewifery.

She furnishes her house well and has good clothing for herself and her family. She *maketh herself coverings of tapestry* vs. 22, for the beds and windows in her house. *Her clothing is silk and purple*, according to her place and rank. Though she is not so vain as to spend much time in dressing herself, nor makes the putting on of apparel her adorning, nor values herself upon it, yet she has becoming clothes and puts them on well. She also provides good warm clothing for her household. She need not fear the cold of the most pinching winter, for she and her family are well provided with clothes, sufficient to keep out cold, which is the end chiefly to be aimed at for clothing in cold climates: *All her household are clothed with scarlet* vs. 21, strong cloth and fit for winter, and yet making a good appearance. They are all double clothed as the margin reads.

She trades abroad. She makes more than she and her household have need of, and therefore, when she has sufficiently stocked her family, *she maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant* vs. 24. And with the same she provides for the poor.

Her Family Provisions

She takes care of her family and all the affairs of it. She *looketh well to the ways of her household*; vs. 27. She inspects the manners of all her servants, that she may check what is amiss among them, and oblige them all to behave properly and to do their duty to God and one another, as well as to her, as Job, who put away iniquity far from his tabernacle (Job 22:23), and David, who would suffer no wicked thing in

his house (Psalm 101:3, 7). She does not intermeddle in the concerns of other people's houses; she thinks it enough for her to look well to her own.

Her Charitableness and Discreetness

She is charitable to the poor. She is as intent upon giving as she is upon getting. She often serves the poor with her own hand, and she does it freely, cheerfully, and very liberally, with an out-stretched hand. Nor does she relieve her poor neighbors only, and those that are nigh at hand, but she *reacheth forth her hands to the needy* vs. 20, that are at a distance, seeking opportunities to do good. Her own prosperity may in fact be due to her benevolence to the poor. "*He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD: and that which he hath given will he pay him again.*" Prov. 19:17

She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse, not talkative, censorious, nor peevish, as some are, that have not good judgment. No, she *openeth her mouth with wisdom* vs. 26, when she does speak, it is with a great deal of prudence and very much to the purpose; you may perceive by every word she says how much she governs herself by the rules of wisdom. She not only takes prudent measures herself, but gives prudent advice to others, and this not assuming the authority of a dictator, but with the affection of a friend and an obliging air. *In her tongue is the law of kindness*; all that she says is under the government of that law. The law of love and kindness is written in the heart, but it shows itself in the tongue. If we were "*kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another*" (Rom. 12:10), it will be evident by affectionate expression. It is called the law of kindness, because it gives law to others, to all whom she converses with. Her wisdom and kindness together put a commanding power into all she says; they command respect, they command compliance. How forcible are right words! In her tongue is the law of grace, or mercy (as some read it), understanding it of the word and law of God, which she delights to talk of among her children and others. She is full of pious religious discourse, and manages it prudently, which shows how full her heart is of another world even when her hands are most busy about this world.

That which completes and crowns her character is that she *feareth the LORD*, vs. 30. With all those good qualities she lacks not that one thing needful. She is truly pious, and, in all she does, is guided and governed by principles of conscience and a regard to God. This is what is here preferred far before beauty that is vain and deceitful. Beauty recommends none to God, nor is it any certain indication of wisdom and goodness, but it has deceived many a man who has made his choice of a wife by it. There may be an impure deformed soul lodged in a comely and beautiful body. Beauty is a fading thing at best, and therefore vain and deceitful. A bout of sickness will stain and sully it in a little time, a thousand accidents may blast this flower in its prime, old age will certainly wither it and death and the grave consume it. But the fear of God reigning in the heart is the beauty of the soul. It recommends those that have it to the favor of God, and is, in His sight, of great price. It will last forever, and bid defiance to death itself, which consumes the beauty of the body, but consummates the beauty of the soul.

Her Happiness

She has the comfort and humble satisfaction of her virtue in her own mind. *Strength and honour are her clothing*; vs. 25, in which she wraps herself, and in which she appears to the world, and so recommends herself. She enjoys a firmness and constancy of mind, has spirit to bear up under the many crosses and disappointments which even the wise and virtuous must expect to meet with in this world, and this is her clothing, for defense as well as decency. She deals honorably with all, and she has the pleasure of doing so, and *she shall rejoice in time to come*, vs. 25. She shall reflect upon it with comfort, when she comes to be old, that she was not idle or useless when she was young. In the day of death it will be a pleasure to her to think that she has lived to some good purpose. Therefore, she shall rejoice in an eternity to come, she shall be recompensed for her goodness with fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

She is a great blessing to her family. Her children grow up in her place, and they *call her blessed* vs. 28. They give her their good word, they are themselves a commendation to her, and they are ready to give great commendations of her. They perhaps pray for her, and thank God that they had such a good mother. It is a debt which they owe her, a part of that honor which the fifth commandment requires to be paid to father and mother, and it is a double honor that is due to a good father and mother.

Her husband thinks himself so happy in her that he takes all occasions to speak well of her, as one of the best of women. It is no indecency at all, but a laudable instance of conjugal love, for husbands and wives to give one another their due praises and appreciations.

Her Commendation

She gets the good word of all her neighbors, as Ruth did, whom "*all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman*" Ruth 3:11. Virtue will have its praise, Phil. 4:8. A woman that fears the Lord, shall have praise of God vs. 30, (Rom. 2:29) and of men too. It is shown here that she shall be highly praised. Virtuous women, it seems, are precious jewels, but not such rare jewels as was represented in vs. 10. There have been many, but such a one cannot be paralleled. Who can find her equal? She excels them all. Those that are good should aim and covet to excel in virtue. *Many daughters* vs. 29, in their father's house, and in the single state, *have done virtuously*, but a good wife, if she be virtuous, *excellest them all*, and does more good in her place than they can do in theirs. Or, as some men explain it, a man cannot have his house so well kept by good daughters, as by a good wife; that she shall be incontestably praised, without contradiction vs. 31.

Some are praised above what is their due, but those that praise her do but *give her of the fruit of her hands*; they give her that which she has dearly earned and which is justly due to her. The tree is known by its fruits (Matt. 7:20), and therefore, if the fruit be good, the tree must have our good word. If her children be dutiful and respectful to her, and conduct themselves as they ought, they then *give her of the fruit of her own hands*; she reaps the benefit of all the care she has taken of them, and thinks herself well paid. Children must thus study to "*shew piety at home, and to requite their parents*" (1 Tim. 5:4). At the same time, if men be unjust, the thing will speak of itself; her own works will praise her in the gates, openly before all the people. She leaves it to her own works to praise her, and does not court the applause of men. None of the truly virtuous women love to hear themselves commended, her own works will praise her.

The widows gave the best encomium of Dorcas when they showed the coats and garments she had made for the poor, Acts 9:39 "*...and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.*" "*...do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.*" Romans 13:3. Let us not enviously say, or do anything to the diminishing of it, but be provoked by it to a holy emulation. Let none have an ill report from us, nor an ill report of us.

Conclusion

Proverbs 31 is a type of looking-glass for ladies who desire to adorn themselves by the principles and treasures that lie therein. Those who do so will be found to the praise, and honor, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.