

## THE PRAISE-WORTHY WIFE

*“A woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”*

*- Prov. 31:30 -*

This woman is, all at once, a friend of the poor, and yet as dignified as the noble; tender as the petal of a rose, yet resilient as a palm tree in the wind; quiet as a shadow, yet as wise and well-spoken as a councilor; as diligent and industrious as the ant (*viz.* Prov. 6:6-8), and yet as loyal and subject to her head as the soldiers of Rome. She is timeless and classic – a woman for all occasions! She is a nurse to the weak, an angel of comfort to the disconsolate minister, a comrade in arms. She is as refreshing as cool water, and as soothing as hot tea. She is not these things *to* fear the Lord, but *because* she fears the Lord.

This woman has been called a virtuous woman, and rightfully so. The word, “virtue,” comprehends all of the *qualities* she possesses, as well as the *power* she possesses, or rather, is possessed of. She not only does the things a virtuous woman does, but she is a virtuous woman. It is not only that she has crossed every “t”, and dotted all her “i’s”, but there is a power let loose in her life. She cannot bake a meal, but the communion she has with heaven is sweet; she cannot darn the socks, but the high praises of God are in her mouth; she cannot speak to those of her household, but the Spirit is bearing her witness with convincing, convicting power. Such a woman carries the fear of God before her, and leaves some blessing behind.

When we behold such a woman on paper, we wonder where one can actually be found in flesh and blood! This is not unreasonable, for they are as hard to come by as precious jewels. “Her price is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10; *see also* Eccl. 7:27,28). When you search for hidden treasure you must have long patience and a good eye. Long patience, for there is much digging, searching, and turning over of rocks and clods before the desire is obtained. The good eye is vital when you must discern pyrite (that fool’s gold). Many men have spent their substance on that which is not substantial. The lungs of this analogy are filled with oxygen when a man of some degree of spiritual stature begins to undertake the search for a godly wife. Not only must he pass by ten thousand roads full of godless women, to get to that one: Proper Woman blvd., but then she is one in a thousand there! You can imagine how many scores of thousands of Canaanitish women Eliezer of Damascus had to pass by in order to fulfill the desire of his master in fetching Isaac his wife.

The woman praised of this hour is half-dressed, and wholly her own. Her glory is not her husband, or father, but her own achievements, degrees, or awards, *independent* of her man. She does not seek to be the ornament adorning her husband (Prov. 12:4; I Cor. 11:7-9), nor does she desire to take off “the pants”, or to sit in the passenger’s seat. The handwriting is on the wall against her; all of her talk of independence says that her glory is herself.

O! the woman of style will pass away  
With the fashion's of this world,  
Which last but one brief day! (I Cor. 7:31).

The hearts of many men have been brought low by the inordinate desire for a woman which is not made after the mold of godliness, but after the frame of America's woman, which suits well the unbridled lust of men for a season. "And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart. (She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets, and lieth in wait at every corner.) So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent [*i.e.* Bold] face said unto him..." (Prov. 7:10-13). This describes with strange accuracy the favored qualities men have in women of our day.

There is an elusive nature to beauty. Lemuel's mother rightly instructed him, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain" (Prov. 31:30), for it is often the very thing that fades the fastest among women. The perfection of form and unrealistic maintenance of figure that women often have is, strangely, one of the first things affected by the natural effect of marriage (*i.e.* child rearing). It is no mystery, then, why so many women have an innate aversion to having children in our generation. Jacob was a wise man, and by revelation of God, chose him out the outwardly ill-favoured of the cattle, for inwardly they were stronger than the more beautiful of the flock. May God renew the minds of all of his people to value the things which he values.

There is something which transcends all beauty which I have seen, that hardly can be put into cognitive thought, much less words upon paper. It is when a husband's fears of failure and mental breakdown can be sung away by the power of God playing skillfully upon the surrendered heart of his wife, causing the music to flow feelingly. This is virtue. You cannot buy it, and it cannot be manufactured or pretended. This comes from a vital union with the God of virtue; as the woman with the issue of blood received the virtue within only when she reached out and *touched* the Saviour (Mark 5:25-34), so it is that a woman cannot have the virtue God gives unless she is joined to the Lord, and filled with his Spirit.

Lest I should seem to set forth all reproof and no proper instruction, I will proceed to display the woman whom God says is praise-worthy by a few of her indispensable virtues.

The first attribute I would desire to manifest of such a wife is her *goodness*. This is intimated in the words, "She will do him *good* and not evil all the days of her life" (Prov. 31:12), and is expressly stated in Tit. 2:5, and Prov. 18:22, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a *good* thing." This is as if Solomon were to say, "The only woman worthy to be called a 'wife' must needs be *good*, and if there be a *bad* wife, she is no longer worthy of such a high title conferred upon her as, 'wife'." This is not merely some moral goodness which she possesses, but is a deep principle which guides her as the stars the seasons, nor has she the issue in herself, it is drawn up from the Fountain of eternal goodness. She is good because of her yieldedness to the only truly Good One. Thus she is not a vaporous cloud of good intentions, quickly dissipating at the first sudden change, but is a rock whither

her husband might safely fly for refuge, and her breast the constant comfort to console his weary mind.

This same attribute is also to be applied to the motions of her judgments. That is, her heart ought to be moved in the course of hearty kindness, as the sparks fly upward. As it was solemnly charged to the Queen in her coronation so many years ago, so it should be the heart pulse of every wife and mother of Israel, namely, “Be so merciful that you be not too remiss, so execute justice that you forget not mercy.” This is the call and duty of every wife to their husbands in the first place, and to their children in the second. The “law of kindness” (Prov. 31:26) is said to be in her tongue, which can mean nothing other than that there is a good, benevolent government ruling in her heart, and thus moving her tongue with all gentle and kind words. With this attribute as the foundation of all other of the attributes, we will consider, secondly, *trustworthiness*.

“The heart of her husband doth safely *trust* in her” (Prov. 31:11). If goodness be the foundation of the wife, then trustworthiness is the mortar binding the entire building together and finding its way into all of her other graces. So that, whether she be industrious, wise, merciful, or whatever quality she may possess, still she is faithful, and in all to be trusted with the utmost complacency. This strong confidence the husband takes in his bride is the grounds for all mutual affection between the two of them. Because he feels that she will never leave him, nor cross his guidance and command of the family or business he is resigned and rests in her love. Though many things under his hand seem to stand in jeopardy and hang in the balance, yet concerning his wife’s love and care he is unshaken in his mind, and withal fitted to face the battles which many evil tidings may promise to him. She has vowed to him her heart, and thenceforth gives him no shadow of doubt that it is still, and shall ever be, in his possession. Thus this loyalty strengthens him to take up zeal and to fight the just cause, knowing that though all others forsake him, yet his *trustworthy* wife will still be, faithfully, at his side.

The scripture last quoted, finishes, “So that he shall have no need of spoil.” This opens the happy effect and rest such confidence affords, but, at the same time, infers to us the ill result when this trust has been betrayed, or absent from the wife’s heart. First, the happy result being that the husband is left content and in need of nothing more, no other fountain is needed, he is not athirst, for his sealed fountain, his spring shut up, has satisfied him. God has given him not every tree in the garden, but one, from which he may freely, that is, liberally, eat, and he needs nothing added to this. O! how happy the marriage where the wife is, steadfastly, what she has been called to for her husband. She is not the fickle reed, whereon if a man lean he shall fall, but rather like the mighty oak, upon which he sets the utmost assurance. O! but how sad to find the contrary. The wife who is unfaithful to the love and trust of her husband, whether in providing kind care and affection, or in caring for the maintenance and prosperity of his household, thrusts her husband, as it were, into a state of poverty and, by and by, but for God’s restraining grace, will cause him to steal that he might fulfill the void which her untrustworthiness has left in his life. May God grant that this blessed attribute permeate the whole being of the good-wife.

Lastly, in all of her tenderness and delicacy, the worthy wife will be sure to be industrious, hard-working, and rigorous: *a home-keeper*. This may appear, when judged by the unexercised mind, to be the least noble of the aforementioned virtues, for its seemingly common, cold nature, but it is not so. This latter virtue provides for the former a home – a body, as it were – wherein the high, noble strains of love lying dormant within their titles may be granted vitality and medium, by which they may find expression of their virtue. This virtue puts hands and feet, flesh and blood to the soul of the other virtues. A seed is not proven to have prospered in the earth by great, flourishing speeches on stems, leaves, and flowers, but by the *appearance* of these. “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16). When you want to see whether a wife be a truly good, trustworthy wife, look and see how she keeps her home. If she offend here it puts a wound in all of her other graces. The old saying, “You can be so heavenly minded, that you are of no earthly good,” is simply untrue in regards to true heavenly-mindedness. On the contrary, in proportion to one’s heavenly mindedness increasing, so also does their earthly good increase. This is the proper biblical understanding. Thus for a woman to seemingly possess all spiritual graces and yet afford no tangible help to her husband or children, would prove her imagined graces to be vanities and insubstantial fancies.

This is the sign of sacrificial love in the heart of such a woman. See her there, winter fast approaching, why does her lamp still shine at midnight? With all of the business of the day, and the common keeping of the home, she was not allowed the hours of care it takes to mend coats, stitch up rent garments, cut out patterns of flannel dresses for the daughters, and shirts for the sons; thus she is up still, till her heart is assured that all of the household as been individually considered. She sets her hand to the spindle and doesn’t look back, no, not for her own comfort. “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness” (Prov. 31:27).

These works not only give expression to her virtues, but are also the very means of creating her virtue. It is not what she does that makes her a virtuous woman, but what those things do to her. She does not always choose the easiest road, though often times it may be the most efficient and apparent, for she knows in so doing she deprives herself of the good fruit which the hardness will work in her soul. She may choose to sew the skirt rather than go to the nearest shopping center to buy one for the same cost, for she savors the experience that only comes when she puts her heart into laboring for her home. She, indeed, is rightly called a home-keeper. She is not always cutting corners and trimming her way in order to spend time with God, but is meeting with God and finding virtue in the fulfilling of God’s will for her life: a home-keeper.

This wife now before us, in all of her beautiful, deep colors is one that fears the Lord. Her fruit is the proof of this. Her works demand praise, her life demands praise, and she shall be praised. May God raise up a generation of women who do not just turn to their smart phones or latest gadgets when the sewing, cooking, cleaning, and washing have piled up, but who, with fervent love burning in their hearts, lay down their strength, their hours, their comforts, their whole heart in order to care for their home, over the which God hath made them keepers.