

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, August 26, 2018

### The Virtuous Woman – Part 2

**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.”**

Today we will pick up where we left off in our analysis of this virtuous woman. To briefly recap: 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; 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.

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?

Last week we came to understand that this woman is full of moral goodness; she is a valiant, courageous soldier, enduring hardness, and faithfully following after her Captain and head; she 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.

Verse 13: **She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.**

- She seeks it! You have to find the work for your hands, which is a job all by itself.
- She is seeking wool and flax – this is preparatory work that will enable other work. She has assessed the needs of her house – in this case it’s clothing – and then set about to fill the needs. Step one is to gather the appropriate materials. This requires consideration and forethought - she has made a plan, and is now setting about to execute the plan.
  - This nation, like her sister Sodom, has a fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness. We live in the Amazon Prime generation; if it’s not convenient, then it’s not worth having. If you have to work for it, and overcome obstacles, then it’s not going to get done. That cannot be so among the people of God.
- She works “willingly”: The Hebrew word is “chephets” (khay’-fets) which means: with pleasure, with desire, with delight, with contentment, with purpose. She puts not only her hand to the work, but her desire! We must have contentment in our current circumstance, and our current labors; we can seek to improve our circumstance, but not with a murmuring spirit of discontentment about what we used to have, or what we want to have.
  - *Gill: “As if her hands took delight in working, as the church and all true believers do; who are made willing in the day of the Lord’s power upon them, to serve him, as well as to be saved by him; in whose hearts he works, both to will and to do; and these do what they do cheerfully: these do the work of the Lord, not by the force of the law, nor through fear of punishment, but in love; not by constraint, but willingly, having no other constraint but the love of God and Christ; and not with mercenary selfish views, but with a view to his glory; and they find a pleasure and delight in all they do; Christ’s ways are ways of pleasantness; his commandments are not grievous, his yoke is easy.”*

Verse 14: **She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar.**

- Again, this is forward looking, prospective activity. The very nature of a merchant is that they are looking ahead, and assessing the need – the demand – in the marketplace, so that they can supply it. The scriptures instruct us not to be

faithless and fretting about tomorrow (**Matthew 6:34**); we are not supposed to be trying to supply our needs in improper and fleshly ways. However, we are clearly supposed to be utilizing the intelligence and resources that the Lord gives us in prudent, faithful preparation, to care for ourselves, our families, and others.

- Consider the careful, lengthy logistics that are required for a cargo ship to cross the ocean, and the varied and dangerous obstacles that they face. This good woman sees the demand, and then plans and executes all of the logistics necessary to reach the goal.



- Consider the logistics required for this little flock of slaughter to run up and down



the literal and digital highways, carrying the Gospel of peace to this dying world. That requires desire, forethought, skill development, planning,

communication, faithful execution, etc. We know the need – preach the Gospel; we prayerfully consider what avenues are available to fill the need, and then we diligently employ them. In one way or another, we should all be heavily invested in that work. Further, each of us should be actively considering ***how*** we can do that work, not solely relying upon others to prepare opportunities for us.

Verse 15: **She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.**

- She rises early; the established pattern of her life is to be up and about business - not aimlessly lounging around and sleeping in. Her focus doesn't run toward her own desires - she knows the needs around her, and arranges her affairs so that she can fill them. If you're going to be able to consistently be out of the bed and about your business, then you need to be getting yourself to sleep at an appropriate hour. Sometimes we have work, or important business, or a health issue that requires us

to be up in the late hours; however, if you're up in the late hours to frolic, then you're playing with fire! You are giving Satan an opportunity to assault you, and you are wasting your energies that should be usefully applied in the day time.

- **Romans 13:12,13: “12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. 13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.”**
- **Proverbs 6:9-11 “9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? 10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: 11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.”**
- She gives meat to her household: we are supposed to be looking after each other's physical, and spiritual needs, in the same repetitive, careful way that a mother would ensure that her children are fed every morning. Know the needs around you – particularly, and individually - prepare yourself to be able to supply them, and then supply them.
- She gives a portion to her maidens: the word “portion” here means “a prescribed task”. All of us should be setting straight paths for the feet of those that we have any influence over; mothers have particular work to do here as a part of guiding their house; setting each person upon their work; teaching them, helping them to be organized, overseeing, encouraging, and correcting. Where are you supposed to be? When are you supposed to be there? What are you supposed to be doing? How should you be doing it? With what spirit should you be doing it? How is your spirit? Etc. This is critical work, and it is not just a logistics game. There has to be watchfulness and follow up. This is continual work, that requires feet on the ground, looking eye to eye with those that she is teaching. Sounds an awful lot like the work of church discipline that we are all to be daily engaged in. This is not work from a distance – this work is in the trenches, leading by example.

Verse 16: **She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.**

- This is a long term investment, and as such it must be carefully considered. Each of us has a finite amount of resources in this life – time, skills, money; we are stewards of those resources. How will we invest them? How will we improve them? How will we make them useful for our family, our co-elect, our neighbors, and our God? We have lots of these decisions to make in our lives; some bigger, some smaller. A very practical example would be our education, and our vocation. The decisions that we make in these kinds of situations will have a major impact on our own lives, and those around us. If we make short sighted decisions that sow to our flesh, then we will waste opportunity to be truly fruitful for our family, and

for our God. We can make fleshly decisions on these investments in lots of different ways; for instance, we can slothfully refuse to invest where we ought to, or we can pridefully insist on investing where we ought not.

- Stewards with prudence and discretion will count the cost of such a thing (**Luke 14:28**). What is the potential of this investment? Do I have the capacity for it? What will it cost (time, money, etc)? Can I afford it? What is the opportunity cost? How will it be *truly* helpful? What impact will it have on the hearts, and the resources of my loved ones? How might we get to the bottom of these questions? Gather the facts, seek the Lord, and seek counsel from your brothers and sisters.
- Once we determine that the investment is a good one, we must get to work, and make it fruitful.
- There are many spiritual applications of this verse; for example: we consider, heavily invest, and labor in the field of the scriptures – the word of God. It is a continual labor, which the Lord causes to be fruitful, and to bring forth abundantly within each of us, and for the sake of others.

Verse 17: **She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.**

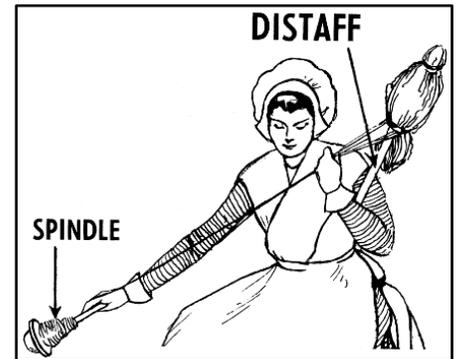
- Our loins are the core of our body, the foundation of our physical strength; without strength in our core, we can't function. Through our arms, we engage in the work before us. How do we strengthen these things? Through exercise - *purposeful activity*! Strength and experience come through use.
  - God baked this concept into the fabric of creation; it is a characteristic of this physical world. Newton's first law of motion: an object in motion tends to stay in motion; and object at rest tends to stay at rest.
  - What should we be exercising and strengthening?
    - The graces of the Spirit that tend to godliness: **“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”** (1Timothy 4:8) Here's a good start: Virtue, Knowledge, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, Charity.
    - Remember that the Knowledge we are supposed to add to our faith begins with scriptural knowledge, but extends to any practical knowledge and skills that are helpful to people. There are endless opportunities around us to learn, and put that learning to work.
- If we are asking the Lord to bless the work of our hands, then we have to work! If we are asking the Lord to make our vineyard fruitful, then we have to tend it. If we are asking the Lord to increase our understanding of the scriptures, then we have to read them diligently, and talk about them meaningfully. If we are asking the Lord to bless the work of the ministry, then we have to work at preaching.

Verse 18: **She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.**

- She sees the usefulness of her labors – they are profitable - and she is therefore encouraged in her work; she is all the more dedicated to improving upon it by continuing her effort into the night. This is not to say that she stays up late into the night every night – we know all too well that these bodies of flesh need rest. It's to say that she stands ready to work whenever necessary – in season or out of season. She employs all of the resources that the Lord has given her in order to facilitate her work – after all, what is a candle, but a God given technology employed to improve upon her labors. Without that kindness from God, she would be unable to work after the sun goes down. All such helps and conveniences are gifts from God; let us be thankful for them, and use them to their fullest.
  - The Gospel is the **free** “merchandise” of the church – it is the only thing we have that ultimately has any value to ourselves or our neighbors. How do we know it's value? Because we have tasted it! That's what the word translated “perceiveth” means: “tasted”. Consider the scripture: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.” (**Jeremiah 15:16**) Because we know the value of the Gospel, there is a necessity laid upon us to labor to preach it (1Corinthians 9:16), both in season, and out of season (**2Timothy 4:2**). We are to utilize the energy, and the “candles” that the Lord provides us to enable the work.

Verse 19: **She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.**

- Here we find the virtuous woman making garments out of the wool and flax that she so carefully sought and prepared in verse 13. This is tedious, basic, and yet necessary, manual labor; no job should be beneath us. Our hearty engagement in such work should be an example for those who would foolishly think themselves above it. We work with both hands and a humble, willing heart, and teach others to do the same.



- Henry: “She lays her own hands to the spindle, or spinning-wheel, and her hands hold the distaff, and she does not reckon it either an abridgment of her liberty or a disparagement to her dignity, or at all inconsistent with her repose. The spindle and the distaff are here mentioned as her honour, while the ornaments of the daughters of Zion are reckoned up to their reproach. (**Isaiah 3:18**)”

Verse 20: **She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.**

- While we must be faithfully tending to our own business, and that of our family, we must make it our joyful habit to supply the needs of others.

- **Philippians 2:4 “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”**
- **Galatians 6:9,10 “9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. 10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”**
  - We owe this help chiefly, and in particular ways to the servants of God that we live amongst, but we also owe practical help to our neighbors in the world, where it does not conflict with holiness, and there is an appropriate need, opportunity, and ability.
- Primarily, we are to help the poor and needy in the world by laboring to deliver the Gospel of peace to them, with desire that the Lord would separate them out of the satanic masses.

**Verse 21: She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.**

- The virtuous woman has prepared her family for the winter. She has provided them with valuable garments of scarlet, suitable for each season. We should all be tending to our business with this same diligence, such that we are wisely prepared for the things that we clearly see ahead of us.
- The household of faith is clothed in the beautiful, justifying garments of Christ’s righteousness, purchased with his scarlet blood. Because of this priceless garment, we are not afraid; we are prepared and protected against the darkness, cold, and storms of this degenerating spiritual winter. This scarlet garment is the only thing that can comfort and sustain us as we watch for the rising sun of spring – the triumphant return of our Lord.

**Verse 22: She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.**

- Building upon the previous verse, she works to provide those things that are decent, orderly, and appropriate. Her home, and her family are well furnished, according to their need, and appropriate to their role and circumstances.
  - These costly furnishings are not a lack of modesty on her part. We each have to live within our means, and be good stewards of our resources, such that we aren’t wasting our substance on opulence. Yet, we must live in an orderly way, and live in a way that is consistent with our various roles. For instance, if the Lord has appointed us to labor in a corporate setting, it would be foolish and inappropriate to show up in construction clothing, and vice versa. You don’t show up to a wedding without a wedding garment!
- Purple robes were expensive, and were largely reserved for nobles, and Royalty.
  - Our Husband and Lord is a Great King! It is only fitting that His bride be furnished and clothed in a way that uniquely identifies her as His. Christ

clothed the church in the doctrines and ordinances that make her unmistakable. When you see those things, you know that you are dealing with a true church. Similarly, consider how the tabernacle was distinct, and immediately recognizable, because of the beautiful, intricate curtains that hung all around it; they were largely made from these same materials: blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen.

- Consider how the world mocks, and looks down upon the church in her royal apparel, the same way that they mocked Christ: **“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. ... Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!”** (John 19:1-5)

Verse 23: **Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.**

- “In the gates”, and “among the elders”, means: among the public; places of activity, where people are gathered to conduct business, government, and judgment. How does a wife make her husband “known in the gates”?
  - By her prudent, discrete behavior; everything that she says and does reflects upon him. Her virtuous behavior speaks well for him, and is evidence that he rules his house well (**1Timothy 3:4**). Her faithful behavior gives him credibility when he speaks. This is true for each of us; our behavior directly reflects upon our earthly head.
  - She enables him to be present and focused on his business, because she is faithfully guiding the house. If his family is in chaos, then he will not be engaged in his business, or he will be poorly engaged, distracted, and discounted as a hypocrite. Consider all of the ways that we can enable each other to be present, and known in the gates, by being faithful helpers.
- Our behavior in the world reflects directly on our Lord. Christ dwells in the midst of His churches (**Revelation 2:1**), His Gospel is heard from the mouths of His people! (**1Corinthians 1:21**) While this is a fact, it is not something that we can ever presume upon. Each day, we must seek the Lord to purify our hearts and our words; to work in us to separate the precious word of God from our vile flesh, such that we can operate as his mouth in the earth (**Jeremiah 15:19**).
  - **1Peter 2:11,12** “**11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.**”

- Additionally, when God renders judgment in the earth, the whole world feverishly attributes it to an earthly cause like “mother nature”, but His people make Him known in the matter.

Verse 24: **She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.**

- Here again, she is industrious and fruitful. She makes more clothing than her family needs, so that she has enough to sell to others; the skills she has developed are profitable, and are put to work.
- Similar to verse 18, the church is to be employed about the business of distributing the truth of the Gospel. Consider the girdle, in the armor of God: “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth ...” (**Ephesians 6:14**) We prayerfully labor to understand and apply the truth of the scriptures; we walk in the light and strength of that truth, and we deliver it to our neighbors! The word translated as “merchant” here is Kna’aniy (ken-ah-an-ee’) - literally “Canaanite”. So either way you read that word (Merchant, or Canaanite), it is instructive: The church enrobes her merchants with these girdles of truth, and sends them forth at every opportunity to zealously deliver that truth to their neighbors.
  - **Zechariah 8:16** “These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:”

Verse 25: **Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.**

- Henry: “Strength and honour are her clothing, in which she wraps herself, that is, enjoys 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 defence as well as decency. She deals honourably with all, and she has the pleasure of doing so, and shall rejoice in time to come; 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. Nay, she shall rejoice in an eternity to come; she shall be recompensed for her goodness with fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.”
- Gill: “The church of Christ fears no want at any time, nor need any of her members; they have a clothing that never waxes old, a righteousness that will answer for them in a time to come; their bread is given, and their waters are sure; they shall want no good thing; all their need is supplied from Christ; they have hope in their death, and rejoice then and sing, “O death, where is thy sting?”; they will have confidence in the day of judgment, and not be ashamed; shall come to Zion with everlasting joy; and shall rejoice with Christ, angels and saints, to all eternity.”

**Verse 26: She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.**

- In our corrupt flesh, we tend to be self-righteous, impatient, and censorious. The more that we know, and the more authority and responsibility we have, the more our flesh wants to scream out in pride. Our knowledge and various burdens make us prone to feel justified in dealing harshly with others. This behavior is deadly in the heart, and corrupting on the tongue; we must strive against it *every day*, and ask the Lord to keep it far from us. When we fail of this standard, we ought to quickly confess our fault in the matter. This law of kindness does not in any way take away our responsibility to speak hard truths with boldness; it works in harmony with that, ensuring that it arises from a heart of sobriety, meekness, and love.
- Henry: “She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse, not talkative, censorious, nor peevish; no, she opens her mouth with wisdom; when she speaks, 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 as 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 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 are kindly affectioned one to another, it will appear by affectionate expression. It is called a law of kindness, because it gives law to others, to all 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 - the word and law of God, which she delights to talk of among her children and servants. 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.”

**Verse 27: She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.**

- Looking well to the ways of our household is a constant process of considering, preparing, provoking, watching, and inquiring. You’re not going to know what’s going on with your children, without a lot of watching, and inquiring. In addition to our literal household, this extends to our brothers and sisters in the household of faith. How is it with each soul? How might I consider a person, encourage them, help them to bear their burden, and provoke them to love and to good works?
- Abundance of idleness – lots of free time to do nothing of value – is a bad place to be. Consider this description of Sodom, before God utterly destroyed them:

- **Ezekiel 16:49,50** “49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50 And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.”
- Henry: “She hates to sit still and do nothing: She eats not the bread of idleness. She knows that we were none of us sent into this world to be idle, that when we have nothing to do the devil will soon find us something to do, and that it is not fit that those who will not labour should eat.”

Verse 28: **Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.**

- How do we “call blessed” a parent, or any person that has taught us a good thing? We can tell them what good they have done for us. We can thank God for them, and ask blessings upon them. We can speak well of them to others, acknowledging, and recommending them. We can be kind to them, and look to help them (practically and spiritually). We can forebear with them in their faults, and thereby make them honorable in those moments. All of these are good and right things to do, and yet they are all hollow, if they are not accompanied with this: we call such a person blessed by ***heartily following after their example***. The Hebrew word “ashar” (aw-share’) is translated here as “and call her blessed”; elsewhere it is translated as “go”, “lead”, “guide”:
  - **Proverbs 9:6** “Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.”
  - **Proverbs 23:19** “Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.”
  - Clearly then, we call this virtuous woman blessed by doing the good things that she taught; we call her blessed by being a virtuous servant of God in our own lives. So it is with the children of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ: they are taught Christ by her, they thank God for her, they follow her, and they become her!
- Gill: “Her husband [also], and he praiseth her; that is, he is ready also to rise up and speak in her praise and commendation. Christ is the church’s husband, who is her Maker; he praises her for her beauty, though she owes it all to him; for her comely parts and gracefulness, which he describes with wonder; for her dress, her garments, though they are his own; for her faith, love, humility, and other graces, though they are his gifts.”

Verse 29: **Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.**

- Here we have a shift in the poem; this language is no longer describing her in the third person, rather, it is spoken to her. These are words of her husband praising her.

- **Song of Solomon 6:8-9 “8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. 9 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.”**
- There are many that are “virtuous” in their flesh; there are many that make a claim upon Christ, but there is only one true bride. There are many false churches that in some ways make a fair showing, but there is only one true church.
  - Gill: “By these "daughters" may be meant false churches. These are "many," when the true church of Christ is but one, to whom she is opposed. These may do many virtuous things externally; may make a great show of religion and devotion; may have a form of godliness, without the power of it; and a name to live, and be dead. They possess great riches and large emoluments, which yet in a short time will come to nothing; but thou excellest them all; in real beauty, in true riches, in purity of doctrine, in simplicity of worship, in holiness of life and conversation, in undefiled religion, in doing good works, properly so called. Christ’s church is "the fairest among women".”

**Verse 30: Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.**

- Continuing on the same train of thought – We are surrounded by false churches who proclaim the name of Christ; they make a claim on our husband, but they are not His! These “churches” work hard to curry earthly power and wealth, worldly beauty, and the favor of men, but these things are hopelessly empty, and they will all come to naught when our Bridegroom comes to identify, collect, and praise His bride. They have no true reverence and fear of God before their eyes; they are convinced that they can prepare for the winter with the work of their own hands. The people of God – His true bride – are the only ones that receive, value, and cling to the precious gift which is that beautiful scarlet garment of grace, dyed in the blood of the Lamb.
- In a more literal application, Matthew Henry offers this: “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; nay, many have been exposed by their beauty to such temptations as have been the ruin of their virtue, their honour, and their precious souls. It is a fading thing at the best, and therefore vain and deceitful. A fit 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 favour of God, and is, in his sight, of great price; it will last for ever, and bid defiance to death itself, which consumes the beauty of the body, but consummates the beauty of the soul.”

Verse 31: **Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.**

- My friends, our Husband has loved us, and purchased us to himself; He has supplied us with saving faith; He has called us to walk worthy of Him, being fruitful in every good work (**Colossians 1:10**); He has worked in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (**Philippians 2:13**). To will, and to do: He has caused us to desire Him; He has furnished us with the gifts by which we put on the virtuous works that spring from that desire. He has justified and glorified us in His Royal garments - His blood bought garments of righteousness. He has caused us to bring forth good fruit. Why is it good? Because it comes from a good tree that is rooted in Jesus Christ! In our flesh, our best works are as filthy rags, and yet, because we are His, because He has justified us, and because our good works spring from Him, we are made acceptable with God the Father. At the judgment, God will only see our good works, and will not at all even remember our sin. Our works – the fruit of our hands - belong to our husband, and yet He will give honor unto us, as unto the weaker vessel; He will praise us for them before the Father, and before all the inhabitants of the earth! This whole poem demonstrates the view that the Father has: we only read about her good works; not one word is written about her sin!
  - **Matthew 25:21** “His lord said unto him, **Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.**”
  - **Hebrews 6:10-12** “**10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: 12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.**”

My friends, I hope that this brief study of the Virtuous Woman has been helpful to your souls, and that it provides a good framework from which to visit and revisit this instructive passage. There are endless aspects and applications of this passage. Throughout the course of our lives we fill many different roles; likewise, even within a single role, our circumstances change over time. We will find fresh wisdom each time we revisit this passage and prayerfully apply it to our current role and circumstance. So,

let us continually learn how to model our lives after this virtuous, faithful, discrete, industrious, strong, active, able, enduring woman of valor.

I love you all. Amen.