

**THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR**  
**"The Praiseworthy Woman"**  
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**May 9, 2010; No. 3514**

(Printed copies in a four-message booklet can be sent monthly without charge. Request from: Reformed Witness Hour, Box 1230, Grand Rapids, MI 49501)

Dear Radio Friends,

If you have a Bible close by, I ask you to open it to Proverbs 31:10-31. Today I plan to speak to you from this passage under the heading, "The Praiseworthy Woman." In the original Hebrew language, this passage is in the form of an acrostic. Boys and girls, you know what that is. Perhaps you've written a word down the side of a page before, maybe the word MOTHER, with one letter on each line, and then you try to think of something nice to write about your mother for each letter on the left side of the page. This passage is something like that. There are twenty-two verses and each of them starts with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which has twenty-two letters. The style of literature here is poetry. The writer is not building an argument, like Paul does in his writing. But he is stringing together pearls of praise for the godly woman. He sets himself the task of praising the godly woman. And he finds twenty-two praiseworthy things to say about her.

This is a very important passage in the Bible. There is instruction and encouragement in these verses for the godly wife and mother. This chapter is written for her. God gives us here a template or portrait of a believing woman. God made the woman in the beginning. And here you have God's goal and God's purpose for the woman. This is the kind of woman that God delights in. This is the kind of woman that God makes by the work of His Holy Spirit. And every woman who is a Christian should seek to emulate and follow the woman described here.

But this is also written for others. It is written for husbands and for children. They ought to thank God for the godly wives and mothers that He gives to them. This is written for believing parents who are raising daughters to be godly women. This is written for young people who are dating and who are looking for a future spouse. The temptation for young girls is to be something more than this, to put the emphasis on charm and external beauty, to be appealing and sexy. The temptation for young men who are looking for a girlfriend or a wife is to focus on these external things without paying much attention to a girl's inner character and godliness.

In verse 10 we read: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies." This implies, first, that believing young men need to look for a wife. And, second, that the kind of wife they should be looking for is going to be very rare and hard to find. Who can find one like this? Her price is far above rubies. She is rare! In [Proverbs 19:14](#): "a prudent wife is from the LORD." So this is something that must be done with all seriousness, with great care and with much prayer.

What is it that makes the woman described in this chapter so special, so worthy of praise? Well, very simply, it is, verse 10, her virtue. She is a virtuous woman, which is this at verse 30: she fears the Lord. This makes her more beautiful than any other woman. This chapter says nothing about her facial features or her figure. And yet she is given a price far above rubies. She is of more value than the greatest earthly treasure.

This woman is not a woman of the world. In the day of the writing of this passage, eastern societies had a very low view of women. They were viewed as sexual playthings. Some were on the level of slaves. This is not how women were viewed or treated in God's church in the Old Testament. The woman in this passage is not a second-class citizen. At the same time, though, the woman described here is not the

modern woman of the twenty-first century who has a career, who refuses to submit to her husband, who finds someone else to care for her children if she has children, who divides household chores fifty-fifty with her husband, who asserts her position in society by divorcing her husband, who has goals and an agenda to advance herself in the world, but who has no spiritual goals or interests for her family. This chapter does not describe the modern woman.

The beauty of the woman described here is spiritual. A woman's real beauty is found in this: that she fears the Lord (v. 30). "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." This does not mean that we ignore a woman's physical beauty. God created a woman to complement the man physically, to be attractive to the man. This is something that a woman herself needs to recognize. In verse 22, this woman clothes herself in silk and purple. She dresses in styles and with clothing becoming a woman. The Bible does not condemn that. She is not a sloth. But, at the same time, her physical appearance and beauty does not receive the emphasis. She does not flaunt her beauty. She is not excessive in how she prepares herself to be seen and in what she shows of her body. She does not make an idol of her appearance. And that is because she realizes that physical beauty will fade. It is vain (v. 30). That means it will not last forever. And it is not all that important. If that is all that a woman has, then, as [Proverbs 11:22](#) tells us, she is like a jewel of gold in a pig's snout.

The woman that fears the Lord, this is the virtuous woman. This is the praiseworthy woman. Where physical beauty fades, this, the fear of the Lord, will endure.

What does it mean that she fears the Lord? The fear of the Lord is really the Old Testament equivalent of faith in the New Testament. A woman who has faith, who is a believer, will have a proper fear of the Lord. The woman who fears the Lord knows God with a holy awe. She stands before Him with reverence. She is overwhelmed by His majesty. Her thoughts about God are great. He is a God of sovereignty, a God of glory, a God of power, the God who is eternal, the Creator of all things. He is a dependable God, He is an all-knowing God. And knowing these things, she lives before God in humility. She knows her sin. And she trusts in Christ alone for forgiveness and salvation. Before the Word of God, she bows in meekness. She seeks to live her life according to God's purpose for her. She trusts that God knows what is best for her because He made her, He saved her, and He loves her.

And so her beauty, her value, is internal. It is a spirit of faith and a heart of love for God and His Word. She is a believing woman. God has made her beautiful on the inside by giving her a new heart that seeks Him. All outward beauty and all worldly praise is nothing compared to this.

In the New Testament, I [Peter 3:3, 4](#), you have another biblical description of the godly woman that contrasts external beauty and inner virtue in a way similar to [Proverbs 31](#). There you read: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 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." A woman's beauty is not to be found in her winsome personality or her outward appearance, but in a heart of love for God, in a spirit of quietness and meekness before God. This is the beauty of the praiseworthy woman. And this will display itself in all her life. All her thoughts, all her words, and all she does will be governed by her fear of the Lord.

And that is also explained here in [Proverbs 31](#). Much attention is given in this chapter to what she does and to what she says. She is a very busy woman. She is industrious. That is described for us in verses 13-27. Verse 27: She eats "not the bread of idleness." She is not lazy. Instead, verse 13, she seeks out material with which to clothe her family. In verse 14, she is compared to merchant ships that bring food from afar, that is, she is creative and she puts thought into what she prepares for her family to eat. It is not TV dinners every night. In verse 15, she is getting up during the night to feed her family. In verse 18, she is burning the midnight oil. In verse 19, she is sewing clothes, which verse 13 says she does willingly. In verse 24, she is managing the family's finances. And she does this well. She is frugal. In verse 26, she is busy with teaching her children. And in verse 20, she also makes time to care for others outside her home: she stretches out her hand to the poor.

And so she is presented here as a very busy woman. She is not sitting around with her ear to the phone or surfing the Internet or keeping up with gossip on Facebook or watching the afternoon soap operas or doting over herself in front of the mirror. No, she is industrious and hard-working as a woman. The fear of the Lord compels her and constrains her to work hard.

Now, what do we make of all this hard work in [Proverbs 31](#)? Today, if a woman would list her occupation as a homemaker, the reaction is often: Is that all you do? as though, You mustn't be very busy, and certainly you're not going to find fulfillment in life as a woman. And because of that attitude, this very passage ( [Prov. 31](#) ) is used as an argument for the career woman. After all, in verse 16 it says that she considers a field, and buys it. And in verse 24 she makes fine linen and sells it and delivers girdles unto the merchant. Does it not seem to say that the woman has to get out there and get involved in the world of commerce?

But is that what it says? No. That is a twisting of what the Bible says here. The primary interest of this woman, after her fear for God, is her family and her home. There is no division of her interests here. She does not put some work into the home and some into a career for her own advancement. Rather, she buys a field to plant vegetables to feed her family. She first clothes her family and then she sells a little to the market merchants as a small supplement to the family income. What you see in all the industry of this woman is her God-fearing virtue in action. And that action of her virtue comes out in three ways.

First, she is obedient to God's will for her as a woman. This woman is married and has children, and, generally, that is God's will for the woman. In verses 11 and 12, you have a description of her relationship to her husband. She is described as one who is faithful and devoted. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her...she will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." She is her husband's companion and friend. He sees her as the mainstay of his life. He trusts her. He confides in her. He seeks her wisdom and support in his work as well as in the family life. And she does him good and not evil. She has his interests in mind. She is committed to him all the days of her life.

In verse 23, it is because of her that her husband is known in the gates. To be known in the gates means to have a good reputation with the leaders of the city. She does not take away from her husband's reputation so that you would say, "Well, he would be all right as an officebearer in the church, and he would be a good leader in the city except, I'm a little nervous about his wife." No. You look at him and you say, "He's a fine man, with a fine family and home and a wife that qualifies him to serve in the church."

So she's a married woman and she has her husband's interest and name at heart. Generally, this is God's will for a woman.

And further, verse 27, she is a homemaker; "She looketh well to the ways of her household." She understands that, just as it is her husband's duty to go out and work as the breadwinner ([Ps. 104:23](#)), so it is her duty to be a keeper at home ([Tit. 2:5](#)). And all her industry is home and family oriented. In these things, her marriage and her labor in her home, she is being obedient to God's will for her. And by that she shows her virtue, she shows that she fears the Lord.

Who can find a woman like this today? Who can find a virtuous woman? Her price is far above rubies. She is a rare jewel.

Second, this woman's virtue shows itself in action in her humble devotion and service to her family, in her selfless sacrifice for others.

We see here the gospel at work in her life. This is the mind of Jesus Christ described in [Philippians 2](#). She does not look on her own things and her own interests but on the things of others and their interests. Maybe you look at this biblical portrait of a woman and you say, "Well, what about herself? It's got to be impossible that she does all these things. And if she is able to do them all, what about time to care for herself and to build a little of her own name and reputation?" Is not that exactly the point here? The higher your station of service in the kingdom of God, the less time and energy you will have for yourself. This is Christian living. This is self-denial.

The virtuous woman here does not see her husband and children as an inconvenience and a nuisance, but she lives for them in complete self-sacrifice. In all her work, her cooking, her sewing, her buying, her selling, her being up late, her getting up early, her teaching, her caring, she labors for others. So much is this so that her care overflows from her home to the poor (v. 20). She does not need a career. Her love for others keeps her busy in family and in church and with caring for the needs of others. And all this because, ultimately, she is looking at God and she fears the Lord.

Who can find a woman like this? Who can put a price-tag on this kind of a woman?

Third, her virtue in action shows itself in her speech. In verse 26, she opens her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She is not foolish in her speech. But she speaks carefully. In her home with the children, in the way that she talks to her husband, in what she says to others, she is measured and wise. And she is kind. She does not use words as weapons to tear down and destroy others. But she uses words as tools to build up. She is not a woman of gossip and slander, but the law of kindness governs the way she uses her tongue.

Who can find a woman like that?

This is the picture that God paints of a woman. This is who God creates women to be by His Holy Spirit. This is the woman whom the Lord praises.

Perhaps, believing mothers, you look at this portrait and you say, "That's not me." And I do not mean that you say that out of rebellion: "That's not me, I don't like that portrait." But you look at what you have done in a day and you say, "Well, I was short-fused. I was impatient. I didn't get much done. I don't measure up." You say, "This woman doesn't look like me at all." Well, that's all right to say that if you say it in the right way. If you say it with a sense of inadequacy and with humility because you realize that it is only the grace of God that can give you this virtue and make you a woman like this, then it is good to say, "That's not me."

But you must not say it out of despair. You must not say, "I'm no good. I'm hopeless. I'm a failure." No, if that is the way you feel, then you should confess your faults and resolve to go on in the grace of God. And do this (Phil. 4): Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, or any praise, think on these things. God is not expecting perfection from you as a wife or a mother. We all are sinners. God paints this portrait for you to follow. And where you do, He praises you.

I think that that is the amazing thing here in this chapter. There are all these things that a woman does as a wife and as a mother that go largely unnoticed by others. But here, in the Word of God, we see that God sees them and that God praises you for them. God is saying here, "I see what you do. I see what motherhood involves. I see the self-sacrifice that you make as a wife." God takes note of those things and He says, "Well done, well done, good and faithful servant."

Children, boys and girls, if you are listening; and men, husbands, you ought to take note of these things, too, and praise the woman whom God has given as your wife and mother.

Children, do you have a mother like the one described here? When last did you say Thank-you to her for a meal? When last did you acknowledge a vacuumed floor, clean laundry, a tidied closet with a Thank-you?

Husbands, has God given you a virtuous woman as a wife? Do you praise her, not just once a year on Mothers' Day; but do you do it daily and habitually, for specific things? Do you see godly virtue in her? You ought to praise your wife. You ought to appreciate your wife. She should not be abused or controlled or ill-treated or disrespected.

Children, you should not have a big mouth at your mother. Verse 28: "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her."

Think about it. Who could replace her? Her price is far above rubies. What a gift from God is the virtuous woman.

Mothers, wives, Thank-you for the place that you have in our lives.

Let us pray.

Father in heaven, we give thanks for the godly women that have been given to us in our homes and in the church. Lord, in a day when the world has no respect for them, help us to encourage them and be Thou also an encouragement and support to them. For Jesus' sake we ask it, Amen.