



The Woman Who Feared the LORD!

May 9, 2021

🌸 Happy Mother's Day! 🌸

Holy Text: Proverbs 31

Background

- The point of Proverbs is found in the first chapter:

Proverbs 1:7 (KJV) *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

- To review:

1. The fear of the Lord is the love, reverence, awe and passion that prompt the believer to obey God. It is that state of mental and emotional sanctification where the believer sees God as holy and a reverent trembling results. It is the necessary characteristic of Christian discipleship where total obedience to the commands of Christ is seen as a loving response to a loving God.
2. It is a behavioral restraining element even in the heart of those who do not follow Christ. In other words, it is a cultural acknowledgment within man's conscience of the Law of God (Ro 2:15). It is a necessary component of any Godly and moral society.
3. It is the understanding that God will one day judge the earth and all who ever lived.

- Proverbs is a book of wise sayings, primarily written from a father to a son. One author said of it, "Proverbs is the world's finest collection of sound, sanctified common sense, written so that young people might not have to make some of the dreary mistakes their elders have made."
- Most of the book was written by Solomon, but chapter 30 includes the words of "Agur the son of Jakeh," and chapter 31 is...
- Written by "King Lemuel." All we know about him is, "his name means "dedicated to God" or "belonging to God." - MacDonald
- Whoever he was he had a wonderful mother! So wonderful in fact that God saw fit to preserve her words to him in the inspired Text. These are God's Words through her to her son.
- Quick though on Mother's Day: A Mother's counsel matters! Scripture says:

Proverbs 1:8 (KJV) *My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:*

Exodus 20:12 (KJV) *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

John 2:5 (KJV) *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

Structure and Context of Proverbs 31

- Again, it was written by King Lemuel, but the instruction was given by his mother.

- The main thrust of the chapter, beginning with verse 10, is organized into 22 points. Each point begins with a letter from the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in order, forming an easy to remember acrostic.
- It is essentially an A-Z (or more accurately, Aleph to Tav!) list for women who wish to be godly!
- Therefore, it is a very important Text.
- It is also, apparently, an intimidating Text. So much so that some have said it is describing several women, since no one woman could do all these things. Such an interpretation misses the point.
- Proverbs 31 is instruction given by a woman to her son, who was a king. She is telling him what kind of man he must be, and listing the godly attributes of the sort of woman (singular!) to look for.
- Proverbs 31 was meant to be a primer for women, jammed with action-oriented wisdom. Although Lemuel was a king (so his wife would be a queen), those who lack royal resources can still apply the principles.

Initial Observations:

1. Proverbs begins and ends with the *Fear of the LORD* as its primary goal. It's interesting that the final words in such a book focus on the example of women in this area. Let us not underestimate the power of God-fearing women to impact every jurisdiction!
2. The blessings of a godly mother are incalculable! She is literally showing her son who to marry!
3. Proverbs 31 is household-focused. I'm not sure how "Christian feminists" came to see this chapter as some sort of feminist manifesto that works against the NT exhortations for women. It is exactly the opposite.
4. Proverbs 31 is beautiful. It paints a picture of the strength of godly women, the influence of godly women, and the rightful honor of women who truly *Fear the LORD*.
5. Proverbs 31 assumes a certain household "condition." In other words, Lemuel was going to provide a certain level of security and means. Yes, he was a king. But a good question for men is "If you truly want a Proverbs 31 helpmeet, can you provide Proverbs 31 home?" :)

A Mother's Words to Her Son (verses 1-9)

1. Her words are Scripture. The word for "prophecy" is *maśśâ* in Hebrew, often translated in prophetic literature as "burden." These are authoritative words, a Word from God. (V1)
2. She loves her son and therefore cries out to him! The NLT says, "O my son, O son of my womb, O son of my vows!" In other words, "Please listen!" (V2)
3. She exhorts him to have self-control concerning women; a lack thereof will destroy him! She goes on to exhort him to find a wife instead. (v3)
4. She encourages self-control in other excesses kings/men are prone to as well, like drinking! (V4)
5. All men, but particularly those who have been given great authority, should beware of the pitfalls that can bring them down. Drunkenness can cause forgetting the Law and Justice. (v5)
6. A King must not conduct himself like those who have no hope; indeed, he is to inspire hope. (vv6-7)
7. Instead, Lemuel is exhorted to use his authority speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, help the helpless, and ensure justice. (vv8-9)
8. Does this list sound familiar?

1 Timothy 3:2-3 (KJV) *A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;*

Titus 1:6-9 (KJV) *If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; 8 But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; 9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.*

- 9. The point here is this: Lemuel's mother encouraged her son to be a good and godly man... man who fears the LORD, worthy of a woman who does the same.**

A Mother's Counsel: Find "A Woman Who Fears the LORD" (vv10-31)

Some thoughts verse by verse:

10. She is a woman of inestimable character. Virtuous (*chayil* in Hebrew) implies trustworthy, but so much more! From Strongs: "probably a *force*, whether of men, means or other resources; an *army, wealth, virtue, valor, strength*. Goods, host, might, power, riches, strength, strong, substance, train, (war, worthy). She embodies godliness.
11. She is trustworthy and brings increase to her husband. She is a safe space for him; he flourishes with such loyalty.
12. She is fully committed to her husband and his vision. She is intentional about his good.
13. She is also intentional about her work; she seeks the means and the skills to clothe her family.
14. She is willing to go and do what she needs to do to keep the family stocked with provisions.
15. She isn't lazy; she is up early cooking for her family and servants. Remember, she would be a queen. Apparently, she is a different kind of queen!
16. She is industrious. She understands business and what she needs to do to keep her family fed. The field she buys is for a garden for her household that she plants with her own hands.
17. All these things require strength, energy, and a fitness, which she has! She is strong!
18. She makes good business deals; she is knowledgeable and wise. She can turn a profit!
19. Again, she is skilled. She knows how to do needful things like make clothes. Her time is spent in those things that matter.
20. Her home is hospitable; she ensure it is! She has a heart for the poor and ministers to them.
21. She prepares her home for harsher times. She isn't afraid of the future.
22. She beautifies her home and herself. She appreciates the impact those things have on those around her.
23. The implication of verse 23 is that she so impacts her husband, he rises in influence! Yes of course, Lemuel is a king. But in context, it is her ministry that boosts him up! And, he can do those things well with no worry about home; she has home on lock! She is a king-builder!
24. She isn't afraid of a side-hustle. She is always looking to bring increase to the household.
25. She is strong and dignified. She is joyful and optimistic! This attitude rings thought the home!
26. "When she speaks, her words are wise, and she gives instructions with kindness." (NLT) Amen! Her words match all these wonderful actions!
27. In short, "She looketh well to the ways of her household!" Idleness is called "bread;" it is tempting! She resisted and focuses her energy on building up her home!
28. Her impact in her household is so great, her family cannot help but praise her! Her children exclaim, "Mother, you are blessed!"

29. Her husband declares, “Wife, there are some good women out there, but you are far better than them all!”
30. And rightly so. Charm and beauty are fleeting. However, there is nothing more beautiful than a woman who *Fears God!* And she shall be praised!
31. This type of woman should be rewarded and honored in public!

Encouragement for CRC!

- This kind of woman is encouraged and exalted throughout Scripture: Eph 5; 1 Tim 2-3, 5; Titus ; 1 Peter 3; etc.
- She has also been honored and admired throughout history. Last year, I read this quote from Jabez Burns (1805-1876):

Mother! The name that is associated in every virtuous mind with all that is amiable and delightful. Mother! Most tender, endearing, and expressive of all human appellations! A title employed equally by the royal prince, the sage philosopher, and the untutored peasant—by the savage and the civilized in all nations and through all generations. A relation mercifully founded in the constitution of our nature—universally felt and uniformly acknowledged. And who among all the children of men, except those who in early infancy were bereaved of their anxious parents, has not happily experienced the inexpressible influence of its charming and delightful power? Who of all the great and the mighty upon the earth does not recognize the unnumbered blessings that he has enjoyed through this endeared relation?

His own infinite wisdom and boundless goodness prompted the almighty Creator to ordain this beneficent relation, with all its sweet attractions and happy endearments. Must He not, therefore, have made it honorable, noble, and dignified? And [should] its elevation and importance be forgotten and neglected? Surely it demands our most intelligent consideration and devout acknowledgment. But what mind has ever possessed a capacity enlarged and matured to comprehend fully the true dignity of a mother?

- She is however, rejected by modern culture. Great care must be taken to resist such rejection!
- Godly societies revere and respect women as image-bearers, joint-heirs, and God’s specially designed helpers.
- She is chaste, meek, modest, precious, and fearless. (1 Pet 3:2-6)
- Therefore, she is to be lived with with knowledge and honor as unto the weaker vessel. (1 Pet 3:7)

 May every daughter of Christ look at Proverbs 31 as a biblical prescription for godly womanhood...a list of principles that exude the **Fear of the LORD**.

May every son of Christ honor and provision the women in his life in such a pursuit!

And may Christ be glorified in our joint obedience!

Amen!