



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. (Prov 31:10-31)

Herein is one of my favorite passages of the Bible – not just for Mother's Day – but for every day of life upon God's green earth. In my mind's eye, I can consider no other creation of God of greater moment than that of Woman. Even the term, WOMAN, is a title of respect from Genesis to Revelations. Our Lord did not demean His dear mother from the cross when He said, *Woman, behold thy son!* Then saith he to the disciple, *Behold thy mother!* (John 19:26-27) Woman is an indispensable part of God's Grand Plan for both the physical, and the Spiritual, Creation. The Church of God is represented as a glorious woman: *1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:* (Rev 12:1) and the Church itself is named, The Bride of Christ! *2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.* (Rev 21:2)

The first person of whom I found unconditional love was a woman who suffered extreme pangs of suffering in bringing me into this world – my mother. The love and admiration I have borne for my mother was also transmitted to womanhood in general. I have never ceased to hold womanhood on a pedestal higher than the male-only one upon which I stand. My grandmother (Granny Mae), too, demonstrated love and patience with me that exceeded all reason. When I could barely walk, she would proudly

take me shopping with her on Saturday mornings. If I was a good boy (and in her eyes, I always was) she would buy me a "Play-Pretty." She taught me not to step on the cracks in the sidewalk since that was like breaking your grandfather's back. It distracted me from running out in front of cars, but it is a habit I am unable to break even in my older years.

True womanhood is gentle, loving, considerate, loyal, protective, and true. The disgraces we witness in modern entertainment of immodesty and vulgarity are exceptions to the rule and have most likely developed from a childhood devoid of both love and moral teaching. But a mother is nurturing to the apples of her eye. She will lay down her life to save her child. There is a sad story a friend sent to me from the newspaper about the terrible damage done in Japan by the earthquake that precipitated the great Tsunami there a few years ago. Many dwellings were in shambles, and the rescue workers were going through the ruins seeking survivors. One rescue worker sighted a large crack in what was once the floor of a family dwelling. Upon closer inspection, he discovered a woman kneeling in a very odd position in the void beneath the ruins. She appeared to be dead; so the rescue worker continued to the next site. But something told him to return and confirm that the woman was truly dead. He was able to reach his arm through the opening and touch the woman at which point she fell over (obviously deceased). But underneath was a six-month old baby – sound asleep. The woman had protected her baby from falling debris by shielding him with her own body. As the doctor arrived to check the baby out, a cell phone fell from the covering blanket which had this text message on it: *"If you can survive this, remember: Mother loves you."* Do we find this level of love in any human element other than the heart of a mother?

The ultimate in the womanly ideal is described in the closing verses of the Book of Wisdom (Proverbs). It describes the greatest of properties that define a true and Godly woman: *Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.* Wisdom leads to godliness because the wise will always know and honor God. It was the Wise Men, not the loiterers, who followed the Star to Bethlehem. This wisdom was sparked by an original fear – that changed with wisdom from fear of wrath to the fear that we may disappoint our Father in Heaven. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.* (Psalm 111:10)

Virtue is the definitive mark of a great and godly woman. In my elementary and high school years, I used to wonder why boys could be so cruel in their lies of affairs with very good and honest young girls. I suppose they felt that their own reputations were enhanced by the lies they told of false exploits with girls. It hurt my soul to see young girls cry when they learned of some gossip that included them and which was patently false. But I always kept the knowledge in my heart that the character of these girls far exceeded that of the liars who besmirched their character.

It is sad to me the days of chivalry seem to have gradually vanished and have been replaced with the idea that there is no difference in men and women! I enjoy opening the door for a lady, allowing her the deference of first passage, and paying her the respect due her as a woman created by God. The gentleness of womanhood seems to have suffered to the advantage of personal assertiveness and victimization. I say this in spite of my absolute opinion that women have every right both socially and politically as any man.

There is another characteristic of true womanhood that needs addressing – a good and great woman is rare and as difficult to find as rubies. *10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.* Why do you suppose Solomon chose this particular gem to describe a virtuous woman? Why not a diamond or a pearl? I believe it is because a diamond has no intrinsic beauty of its own. The beauty of a diamond is external to it. The

beautiful hues and colors come from the refracted light that enters the diamond externally. On the other hand, the pearl, being formed by tears, is hard and calloused. It is beautiful, but it is hard. But a ruby has all of the marks of a virtuous woman. First of all, it is rare. It is not easy to come by a good ruby without great seeking and expense. A good and virtuous woman is likewise rare. Secondly, its color is the color of blood sacrifice – deep red – representing the greatest sacrifice of our Lord for His Elect. A virtuous woman will sacrifice her all for her child or family. Thirdly, the beauty of a ruby is intrinsic to itself – it is the essential nature of the ruby. The rich, red glow radiates from its deep core. So is the beauty of a good woman intrinsic to her soul. Her beauty may be external, but her greater beauty always radiates from deep within her heart.

I love women of virtue. Their love is showered upon others, even extending to plant and animal life. There is no chicanery in their motives or discourse. The virtuous woman represents the ideal Heroine to me. She is Godly, wise, considerate, and full of good works. I know less than a handful of such women – but consider the blessing of that handful. They are Trees of Righteousness. The fruit of such women are goodly, respectful, and also godly and her children “*rise up to call her blessed.*” Our Lord describes such in this way, *17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.* (Matt 7:17-20) Of course, a Tree of Righteousness will beget sons and daughters of righteousness. We are all witnesses of the virtues and goodness of our mothers.

Women of faith have held families and churches together, and inspired hope when hope seems forlorn. When the fires of ruin have stricken, and there seems no place to turn, the faithful woman has stood resolute to inspire a rising from the ashes of ruin and rebuilding the walls of the Church City. It has been thus with our own Church – the Anglican Orthodox Communion – and with many others going back to the Reformation. It may be profitable to read the account of the martyrdom of Maeyken Wens who was burned at the stake in Antwerp, Belgium, for her convicting faith in Jesus Christ on 6 October 1573. A ‘tongue-screw’ was affixed through her tongue to the roof of her mouth to prevent her usual custom of boldly proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. Could your faith have endured such agony?