



Far greater is her value

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 (Proverbs 31:10-19)

If a virtuous woman was easily found, the question in verse 10 would not have been asked. Those things that are most valuable are those things that are most rare. But rarity is not, in itself, a measure of worth. Four-leaf clovers are rare, but they are of little worth. Virtue adds worth to anything. But it is virtue that is most valuable upon this earth and most rare at the same time. Virtue is the stardust of Heaven. Virtue cannot be purchased, therefore, it is invaluable. When combined in the heart of the fairer of the sexes, it takes on a most charming and powerful nature. "Who can find a virtuous woman?" Who, indeed, can find a virtuous woman? It is not likely that the village idiot, or the philanderer, will find such a woman because his tastes are too crass and vulgar to appreciate virtue. As mentioned in the previous devotion, it is more than coincidence that the Book of Proverbs begins with an introduction on the value and importance of Wisdom (in the feminine gender) and ends with the virtuous woman and her benefit to both husband and family. The mother, having warned her son against the promiscuous woman, now counsels him on the benefits of a virtuous woman. When we are warned of what to avoid, we are ready to fully understand what we should seek.

Virtue comes as a benefit of wisdom – the two are inseparable. Wisdom is just as rare as a 'Virtuous Woman'. "*But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?*" (Job 28:12) "*The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the*

*sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies.*" (Job 28:14-18) You will observe that Job uses precisely the same comparative language to describe Wisdom as Solomon uses to describe a virtuous woman - the comparison is to rubies, but of greater value. Why does Solomon use the gem, Ruby, to describe the character of a virtuous woman? First of all, a ruby is rare. It is not commonly found among the other gravel of the rock pile. It must be sought after, and whoever seeks it, must know rubies.

Many years ago, Gustaf Gillman, a Chicago lapidary was at work in his shop when John Mihok of Omaha, entered and removed from his pocket a rough red stone which his father had found in Hungary some fifty years earlier. His father had thought it a pretty pebble and later gave it to his son who was going to America. Mihok showed the stone to Gillman requesting that he 'polish' it. It was a pigeon blood ruby! The stone cut out flawlessly to a 24 Kt. Ruby - the largest in the United States and, of course, invaluable. But for fifty years, the owner never recognized its merits. How many virtuous women are locked in marriage to a boorish fellow that never recognizes her merits?

So why, again, is the ruby compared to a virtuous woman - why not a diamond or an emerald? The beauty of a diamond is extrinsic - it comes from an outside light source being refracted back to the viewer in intricate colors of radiant beauty. But the ruby has a beauty that is intrinsic - that is, its beauty radiates from deep within the heart of the ruby. Moreover, the ruby is red - the color of love and sacrifice. A virtuous woman never ceases to shower love upon her family, and to sacrifice herself for their welfare. But SHE is worth even MORE than rubies (more than one). The comparison to Wisdom, too, is striking in the context of the beginning, and ending, of Proverbs. Wisdom, too, is invaluable. "*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.*" (Prov 3:13-18) *For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.*" (Prov 8:11)

An entire volume of work could be done on this 10th verse of Proverbs 31, but I will leave that task to a more able writer. Let us proceed to examine the rare qualities and benefits of a virtuous woman. On a rare happenstance, a human swine might run across a ruby, but never appreciate its value or beauty; but most often, a ruby is discovered by a man who has an appreciation for virtue and beauty, knows what virtue is, and will benefit from his rare find.

**11** "*The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.*" We may trust the blood-red heart of the ruby to reveal its beauty and quality just as a righteous man may trust the heart of his virtuous wife. The ruby cannot lie about its nature, and neither can a virtuous woman. She is sincere, honest, and full of love and concern for her husband and for her family. It matters not so much what fathers we have in America, if only every child could have a virtuous mother. Such a mother would be a balm of faith and righteousness to convince her husband of the same.

**12** "*She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.*" Amazingly true!

Even with her last breath, a virtuous woman will give evidence of her love. Her strength can become ghostly in protecting her young. Walking in the still smoldering charred ruins of the slopes of Mt. St. Helens, park rangers came across a mother partridge black and burned with the fires of the volcanic ash. She was obviously quite dead. One of the rangers said, "What a pitiful sight. He kicked the bird over and out came several babies which she had hidden, with her last strength, under her spread wings. In the aftermath of the recent earthquake and tsunami that resulted in the deaths of thousands in Tohoku, Honshu Island of Japan, workers were going through the initial damage and rubble of the quake seeking survivors. One rescue worker looked through the floor boards of a fallen house to see a Japanese lady on her knees in an awkward position. Presuming her to be dead, he moved on, but a still, small voice inside told him to return and check on the lady. He did so. Lowering his arms through the cracks in the flooring, he touched the woman and she fell over revealing that she was, in fact, dead; but underneath was a six month old baby - sleeping. When the medical team was called to check out this healthy baby, a cell phone fell from the blanket. On it, was a text message which read, "If you can survive, always remember, 'Mother love you.'" What profound evidences in these two accounts of the strength of a virtuous mother's love!

13 "*She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.*" Her hands and mind are full of industry. She is never lazy or tired because her love is her fuel and food. She does not sit idle and wait for the means of production to come to her door. She goes out seeking the materials with which she may produce useful and profitable merchandise for her family and for others.

14 "*She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.*" Do you not love and admire this figurative language? Truly, like a merchant ship sailing the high seas, the virtuous woman travels smoothly and in a direct route to gather and deliver the food for her family. Like a merchant ship, she stops at no ports for entertainment and rest, but plies the high seas until her voyage has accomplished its purpose. She relies upon the winds of her faith to bear her up to her destination.

15 "*She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.*" The one thing that is not said here screams more loudly than that which is written in ink. There is no virtue apart from faith in God. This woman rises before daylight, early, to greet her God and her family. She rises to seek God in His sanctuary as well as her family in her home. "*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*" (Psalms 63:1-2) She does not discriminate between servant and child in giving meat and provision to all who live under her roof.

16 "*She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.*" An unwise woman is worse than a stupid man. It is the good woman that keeps the watch fires burning at a home furnished with good meats and love. The virtuous woman thinks, not only for herself, but for her family. She has a business mind that is dedicated to providing the needs of her household. She knows the value of real estate, and the proper employment of that real estate to produce a profit. She not only buys the field, but labors to grow fruit thereon. The question arises, "Where is Adam" in all of this? With such a wife, the man's life must be multiplied in joy and comfort.

17 "*She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.*" Because she

uses her talents in gainful employment, she is strengthened in body and soul. Such a woman of righteousness bares reckoning with. She will not cheaply sell her wares, for she knows the market value of all things of her venue.

*18 "She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night."* Because she is intelligent and resourceful, she knows that her hands produce the highest quality of merchandise. She will demand the same in price. Not only does such a woman not tire out in the dark hours of the night, but her spirit of love, compassion, and care also remains a bright candle in the window of her home.

*19 "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff."* She is always at work to make warm and comfortable raiment for her family. The spinning wheel is only one of her tools. She takes hold of the distaff spindle to untangle and straighten the fibers just as she uses her wisdom to untangle and keep straight the children of her bosom.

Our next devotion will conclude this long study in Proverbs, but though lengthy, has it not been a privilege and a pleasure to read the wisdom of God herein? Please remember this: Even though these are the Proverbs of Solomon, they were only composed and compiled by him by direction and dictation of the Holy Spirit. All that is spoken of Wisdom and of the Virtuous Woman herein are the Words and description of God for these two subjects. This lesson, I will conclude with the following (in case the lesser Creation should feel offended at only the mention of the virtuous woman:

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." (Eph 5:25-28)