



For a smile of God thou art

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. (Proverbs 31:20-31)

Virtuosity is perfect moral righteousness, and there is only One who is perfect and righteous – God. So the Ensign is raised in the midst of the people of God as our rallying point. The Plumb Line is established in Christ as our perfect standard. Can we conform to that perfect standard? No, not in our imperfect being, but we shall be accounted righteous by that perfect standard established by Christ. For more than forty years, I taught, or supervised the training of, young military officers in the Aviation Branch. The new student pilot could not hold altitude, airspeed, or heading within any rational limits on the first few days; however, he was constantly reminded that we must fly at a precise altitude, a precise airspeed, and a precise heading. No student ever achieved that perfection established, and no other seasoned pilot has achieved that perfection either. But when we aim for the perfect mark, we will come closer to perfection than if we simply aim for the outer ring of the target. The bulls-eye is the objective. So God has established the bulls-eye for Godly woman and Godly man. If our full hearts are set on a perfect obedience to God, our physical failures will not matter. God looks upon the heart and not the outward appearance.

One quality that gives evidence of Godly faith and character is that of compassion. Compassion drove Christ to the Cross for us. It lifts the chin of the despairing child, and the unbecoming yoke of sin from the penitent. So the virtuous woman is a woman of compassion for the unfortunate. **20 “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.”** Good mothers of their own children make good stewards of less fortunate children of others. There were none of greater need than you and me whom Christ came to redeem. He gave His life to accomplish that goal. Should we not stretch our hand forth to the needy at much less cost than He paid for us? Benevolence is a striking quality of the good woman.

21 "She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet." If our preparation is sufficient in due season, we shall not be troubled with worry at the time of the snows. The virtuous woman labors in the hot months to weave and yarn warm clothes for the winter. Her fruits are prepared and stored in the cupboard, and her family is not only warmly clothed, but clothed in exquisite scarlet.

22 "She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple." The virtuous woman provides always first for her family, but she is also strikingly elegant. She adorns herself in raiment befitting a woman of good repute. Her home is furnished in beautiful adornment. White linen covers the table, and the bedding is clean and intricate in design. Purple dye was the royal color of that day, and very expensive. And silk was a luxury that traveled many miles to its consumer. Both these precious commodities clothe the virtuous woman, not because she is rich in worldly wealth, but manages her household with frugality and wisdom.

23 "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land." Why is it always true that the husband of a virtuous woman is a renowned citizen of the city and a ruler of the land? It must be because he has a virtuous woman to more than double his wisdom. Men do not always have the insight into social polity that a good woman has. So she teaches and directs her husband to do those things that will make him a success by gentle persuasion. He may even think the matter was his OWN idea! It has long been said that behind every good man is a good woman. I feel that this rule needs modification: "BESIDE every successful man is a good and wise woman." Wisdom never counsels from behind. Just as national leaders cannot lead from behind – ludicrous!

24 "She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant." The true lady of virtue spends far more time in productive labor and industry than she does before the mirror of vanity. Instead of searching out 'designer' apparel, SHE designs her own and SELLS to the merchants rather than PURCHASING from them.

25 "Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come." Once you are acquainted with the heart that beats beneath the silken robe, the robe is no longer a distraction even if it were made of hemp. The virtuous woman evokes respect and admiration, not by what she wears, but who she is. A ruby, covered in its robes of clay is far less attractive than the ruby which has been polished and cut. It is the ESSENCE of the Ruby that bestows beauty, not the rough soil from which it is extracted.

26 "She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness." Regardless of outward appearance, how beautiful is this woman! Her thoughts and words are not idle gossip, but sheer wisdom. Wisdom spoken profits all in earshot. It is not always easy to speak truth in kindness, but kindness typifies the language of this lady of virtue. Kindness has always dwelt most abundantly in the feminine heart, but in the virtuous woman, kindness is magnified beyond all expectation. If God's Words are forever the Words of Wisdom, and Angels are the messengers of God, then this virtuous woman comes closer to an angel than a mortal woman.

27 "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of

idleness." This woman is not the idle gossip referred to 1st Timothy: "*Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.*" (Tim 5:12-13) There is enough to teach and discuss around the home fires without meddling in the affairs of others. For this woman, her family comes first just as it did with God in the Garden eastward in Eden. She honors God's first institution in the Garden.

28 "*Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*" You may say, "But it is unlikely that children of our day would rise up and call their mother blessed." You are right, it is unlikely; however, the virtuous woman is an unlikely mother, and her children will be unlikely children of grace and gratitude to their beloved mother, for she will teach them in the ways of the Lord. The husband of such a woman will be blessed by her, and his faith increased by her enduring faith. Rather than make cheap comments about the failures of his wife, he can think of none. There is only praise to be made of such a lady.

29 "*Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.*" I do not believe it the intention of this Proverb to demean the good Christian woman who cannot measure up to all of the attributes of this Virtuous Woman, because none can. She is the prototype and example of the perfect woman - the example to which each woman should aspire to be like. In the eons of eternity to come, every lady who names the Name of Christ shall become likened to this lady. There are, today, many virtuous daughters of God who sacrifice their all for their husband and children. Many have foregone their careers to keep watch at home and to even home school, to the glory of God, those sons and daughters God has so lovingly placed into their motherly hands. But the feet of the perfect lady has yet to wander in the halls and trails of this fallen world. The mother of our Lord, too, was mortal.

30 "*Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.*" Francis Ridley Havergal is remembered as one of the most beautiful of women, yet her appearance was not considered to be pretty. She may even have been considered uncomely, but she it is who is most remembered among women of her day (1800's). Jenny Lind was a world renowned Swedish singer of great beauty, but who recalls Jenny Lind who lived contemporaneously with Havergal? I will add, however, that even Jenny Lind gave up her beautiful singing to become a Christian missionary at the last. Margaret Thatcher, Queens Elizabeth & Victoria, Susannah Wesley, Martha Washington - none of these are remembered for their physical beauty, but their profound wisdom. There were, beyond doubt, many women of great beauty of their day who are long forgotten. Do we not yet praise Fanny Crosby, Florence Nightingale, the martyr Betty Stam, Joan of Arc, and many other women whose love and wisdom were used by the Lord as a comforting balm to countless numbers?

31 "*Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.*" The fruit of the hands of the virtuous woman is also the fruit of her heart - LOVE. Miserable and wretched is the man who has such a woman as wife who fails to appreciate the divine and heavenly qualities of such a prized lady. Her reputation of good and kindness precedes her in all circles of society. She hides no infirmities in the folds of her silken apparel for experience has taught that a thousand demons may hide in the fashionable folds of the attire of a beautiful young lady. The virtuous woman needs no manufactured acclaim of her admirers - her works of benevolence and industry are ample for the praise she receives in both high places and low.

Postscript: Wisdom is a perfect lady, and this Lady of Virtue described in the last Proverb places the seal of validity upon all that began in the first Proverb. Too far below the divine and heavenly standard have the young women (and men) of our day fallen. Many perish for lack of knowledge because the knowledge of righteous living was never imparted to them by a virtuous mother.

Longfellow makes the proper ending for only the BEGINNING of a Virtuous Woman in Childhood:

*Oh, thou child of many prayers!
Life hath quicksands, -- Life hath snares
Care and age come unawares!*

*Like the swell of some sweet tune,
Morning rises into noon,
May glides onward into June.*

*Childhood is the bough, where slumbered
Birds and blossoms many-numbered;--
Age, that bough with snows encumbered.*

*Gather, then, each flower that grows,
When the young heart overflows,
To embalm that tent of snows.*

*Bear a lily in thy hand;
Gates of brass cannot withstand
One touch of that magic wand.*

*Bear through sorrow, wrong, and ruth,
In thy heart the dew of youth,
On thy lips the smile of truth.*

*Oh, that dew, like balm, shall steal
Into wounds that cannot heal,
Even as sleep our eyes doth seal;*

*And that smile, like sunshine, dart
Into many a sunless heart,
For a smile of God thou art.*