

This evening we come to our fifth study concerning the virtuous woman—in the [1] we saw her identity, she is foremostly a God-fearer, v30—“a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised...”, unashamedly a woman, v10a—“who can find a virtuous woman...”, and of exceptional value, v10b—“her worth is far above rubies...”, [2] we saw her primary concern was her husband, v12—“she does him good and not evil all the days of her life...”, [3] we saw her general activities concerned the home, v27—“she watches over the ways of her household...” and then [4] we began last week to consider her character, v25—“strength and honor are her clothing...”, which brings us to a continuation of that character in v26—“she opens her mouth with wisdom...”

But before I go any further I must spend the first 5-10 minutes reiterating what I said last week—at times [dare I say most of the time] I leave the building on a Sunday night discouraged that I did not explain my text clearly enough, that I didn’t apply it practically enough, and didn’t preach it passionately enough—that was never more true of me last week—thus I want byway of introduction to give a brief review/clarification/expansion of v25...

If you recall I sought to first of all explain the imagery—“strength and honor are her clothing...”—that is, these are two character traits that she dresses her soul with—every day she must put on these two pieces of clothing—strength and honor—the result of which is the latter half of the text—“she shall rejoice in time to come...”

Thus in explaining the verses we considered three things—a gospel strength, honor, and confidence—concerning the first [strength] we understood it to mean a spiritual strength—the primary reason being its spiritual clothing for the soul that is here referred to—thus we learned several things about the virtuous woman—[1] she is conscious of her weakness, [2] she is convinced of Christ’s strength, and [3] she trusts not in herself but in Christ...

This second piece of clothing was the most difficult—“strength and honor are her clothing...”—here I want to examine [or reexamine] this piece of clothing under two points—[1] what is it, and [2] why is it that it’s so necessary [I mean of all the pieces of clothing that could have been selected, doesn’t it interest you that strength and honor are highlighted]...

Notice—[1] what does it mean—“honor is her clothing...”—if you recall we concluded that it primarily refers to a self-awareness of her own identity, or a gospel dignity—by this I mean she derives her sense of identity or dignity not from what others say or think, but from what God says—thus this honor is not so much seen by others but is internalized by the woman—in other words, it’s the realization of what God has pronounced of her in His word...

I suggested this dignity was threefold—[a] a created dignity, [b] a redemptive dignity, and [c] a domestic dignity—by a creative dignity I mean an honor [or dignity] that is upon all men as made in God’s image, Ps. 8:5—“you have crowned him with glory and honor...”—this is a dignity [honor] that is true of all men whether they be a Christian or not—it is a dignity that distinguishes them from the beasts—man is created with a sense of dignity as made in God’s image—now of course it’s this dignity that the evolutionists desires to take away—claiming that man is no more than a glorified ape—but the Scriptures teach that God has crowned man with glory and honor...

By a “redemptive dignity” I mean an honor that’s due her as she is an object of God’s redeeming love, 1Pet. 3:7—“husbands likewise, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life...”—thus this dimension of dignity is not true of all men but only redeemed man—every Christian without an exception is clothed with honor as the gracious recipients of God’s redeemed love...

By a “domestic dignity” [which brings us closer to the meaning of the text] I mean a dignity peculiar to her as a woman fulfilling her God-given responsibilities as defined within this broader passage—it’s a dignity that’s restricted to her as a virtuous woman—one who’s primary focus is her husband and primary activities concern

the home—this is an honor that none has the right to wear but the virtuous woman—many [most] women within the church ought to wear a garment of shame instead—thus we find this honor is increasingly exclusive—it is an honor true only of Christians, and it is an honor true only of virtuous women...

Notice [2] why is this piece of clothing important—let me suggest two reasons—[a] because it's protective—by this I mean it will protect her from all the stupidity that surrounds her—the world laughs at her and much of the church scorns her—but God honors her, but [b] because it's encouraging—by this I mean it ought to encourage her to know who she is as defined by God—she is a virtuous woman—her worth is far above rubies...

Thus by being clothed with honor [dignity] is meant, a conscious and self-aware knowledge of her creative, redemptive, and domestic honor—and it's by being clothed with all this—“she shall rejoice in time to come...”—that is, she shall have a present and future confidence...

## I. A Simple Explanation

### II. Some Practical Helps

#### I. A Simple Explanation

##### A. A mouth of wisdom—“she opens her mouth with wisdom...”

1. The phrase—“she opens her mouth” refers to verbal speech—she opens her mouth or speaks “in” or “with” wisdom...
2. The idea is that she speaks in a way that is characterized by or with wisdom—because she is a wise woman she speaks with wisdom...
3. We find the opposite in Ps.10:7—“His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue *is* trouble and iniquity...”
4. This is a description of a fallen and foolish man—he opens his mouth with cursing and deceit—far from kindness being on his tongue there is trouble and iniquity...
5. But not so the virtuous woman—she opens her mouth with wisdom—she speaks with wisdom and in a wise manner...
6. This then brings to me to a definition of what is meant by “wisdom”—which I think is best defined as the ability to practically apply knowledge...
7. A fuller definition may be—“wisdom is the ability to practically apply the principles of Scripture, from knowledge of these Scriptures, worked out upon the stage of experience...”
8. Thus there are two essential ingredients to this simple definition—[1] there must be knowledge, and [2] there must be experience...
9. Notice [1] there must be a knowledge of Scripture—no person can open their mouth in wisdom without knowing something of the objective content of wisdom...
10. Prov.2:6—“for the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth [that is from His word] come knowledge and understanding...”
11. Thus it's possible for a younger person to have more wisdom than an older person if they have a better practical grasp of Scripture, Ps.119:100—“I understand more than the aged, because I have observed Thy precepts...”
12. Notice [2] there must be a degree of experience, Prov.20:29—“the glory of young men is their strength, and the honor of old men is their gray hair...”
13. This is to say, while a benefit of youth is strength, a benefit of age is wisdom—the reason being, because with age comes experience...
14. Thus we have the words of that young man Elihu, Job 32:6-9—“I *am* young in years, and you *are* very old; therefore I was afraid, and dared not declare my opinion to you. 7 I said, Age should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. Great men are not *always* wise, Nor do the aged *always* understand justice. 10 "Therefore I say, 'Listen to me, I also will declare my opinion...”

15. Thus according to this definition, a young woman can open her mouth with wisdom, but there is a seasoning aspect of wisdom that is peculiar to the aged...

B. A law of kindness—“and on her tongue is the law of kindness...”

1. By the phrase “law of kindness” is meant she provides instruction couched with love and kindness, thus the NAS—“the teaching of kindness is on her tongue...”
2. Thus it’s not so much that she teaches how to be kind, but she teaches or instructs with kindness or lovingkindness...
3. Implied here is the fact that the virtuous wife not only opens here mouth with wisdom, but in doing so she also gives instruction...
4. Prov.1:8—“My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother...”—that is the instruction of your mother...
5. We saw a similar thing back in 30:1—“the words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him...”
6. Thus by the first part of the text, the content of her instruction is meant [wisdom], and in the latter part of the text the manner of her speech is described [kindness]...
7. She opens her mouth with wisdom [content] and she speaks with kindness towards the objects of her instruction [manner]...
8. Elizabeth George—“All that she utters is in the spirit and manner of a gentle and benevolent heart, revealing a kindly disposition and a fear of unnecessarily offending. She acquires wisdom and limits her words accordingly. She is never hurtful or destructive with her words...”
9. We again find the antitheses in Prov12:18—“There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise *promotes* health...”
10. Here we find a contrast between one who fails to instruct with kindness and the tongue of the wise—the former speaks in harsh and unkind words...
11. It’s as if their tongue was a sword and as they spoke it cut its victim to shreds, the NAS—“there is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword...”
12. But in contrast—“the tongue of the wise promotes [brings] health [that is emotional and spiritual health]...”
13. Now the final thing needful byway of explanation is to address this word “kindness...”—this Hebrew word is variously translated—most often by “mercy,” “kindness,” and “lovingkindness...”
14. It’s a word that brings together the concepts of tender, compassionate, love—loving-kindness—to be kind is to show a tender affection towards someone...
15. Thus the very opposite of kindness is a harsh and cruel spirit, that speaks in such a way as to wound instead of heal...
16. Now we might be surprised to find that the New Testament speaks often about the necessity to be kind or the importance of kindness...
17. Col.3:12—“therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering...”
18. And then we find kindness as a fruit of the Spirit, Gal.5:22—“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness...”
19. Thus we find that kindness is a grace that’s becoming of all Christians not merely women, Prov.19:22—“what is desired in a man is kindness...”
20. Yet we find that older women are to instruct the younger, Tit.2:5—“to be sensible, pure, workers at home, [and] kind...”

II. Some Practical Helps

A. Make use of wisdom literature

1. By “wisdom literature” I primarily refer to the book of Proverbs—a book that itself identifies its purpose as providing or giving wisdom...

2. Prov.1:1-2—“the proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: to know wisdom and instruction...”
3. What is the foremost purpose of the book of Proverbs but to provide its readers with a practical ability to apply the truth to every situation of life...
4. Thus I recommend that all of us, but especially mothers, read a chapter of Proverbs every day, going through the entire book every month...
5. Can you imagine how much wisdom you would have if you read through the book of Proverbs every month for a single year—what about 3 or 5 years...

#### B. Hold your tongue and speak less

1. This is implied in the text itself—“she opens her mouth with wisdom...”—the point being, her mouth is not always open...
2. We sometimes use the phrase—If you don’t have anything nice to say then don’t say anything at all—this is good advice for our children but also for ourselves...
3. Prov.10:19—“In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise...”—that is, the wise man [woman] knows when to remain silent...
4. Eph.4:29—“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers...”
5. Notice two things—[1] a mortification—“let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth...”—don’t let it leave your lips but mortify it...
6. Thus essential to opening our mouths in wisdom is the concept of mortification—putting to death the remaining corruption that exists within us...
7. Col.3:8—“But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, *and* abusive speech from your mouth...”
8. To put aside is the same as the restraining of Prov.10:19—it’s what our Savior referred to as cutting off right hands and gouging out right eyes...
9. Notice [2] an edification—“but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers...”
10. Before we utter a single word we must ask ourselves this question—is what I’m about to say good, and for the edification of my hearer...

#### C. Keep the heart in a healthy frame

1. Here I simply desire to remind you that the mouth does not speak in a vacuum but is intimately connected to the heart...
2. Prov.16:23—“The heart of the wise teaches his mouth...”—that is, the heart is what guides and directs the mouth...
3. Matt.12:34—“for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks...”—the mouth is an indicator of the present state of the heart...
4. Ps.37:30-31—“The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of justice. The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide...”
5. Thus if you desire to monitor what comes out of the mouth then of necessity you must keep the heart in a spiritually healthy condition...
6. I could put it like this—if wise and kind words were flowers, they grow within the soil of the heart—and the flower will be no better than the soil...
7. Do you know why some of you struggle with being harsh and unkind in your words—it’s because you’re not spending enough time with your soil...
8. Let me ask you—when are you more apt to speak unwise and unkind words, but when your heart is in an unhealthy state...
9. I don’t speak harsh or unkind words to my daughters or wife because I am sick or tired—but because my heart isn’t right...

10. But for myself—the days that I find I have less patience are the days I failed to take time to cultivate and nurture the soil...
- D. Spend time with wisdom incarnate
1. By this I mean, that we foster an intensely intimate relationship with the crucified and glorified God-Man...
  2. Prov.13:20—“He who walks with wise *men* will be wise...”—the closer we walk with Christ the more we will see and feel our own sins...
  3. Isa.6:5-7—“So I said: “Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.” 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged...”
- E. Stay close to the cleansing fountain
1. If you anything like me the fiercest part of the battle is right here—opening my mouth with wisdom and having the law of kindness on my tongue...
  2. Thus we have to deal vigorously and realistically with our sins—we must be vigorous in putting them to death and quick to fly to the fountain open for sin and uncleanness...