

July 10

Scriptures: Read Proverbs 31

Key Verse: “Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.” (Proverbs 31:30)

Overview

The final chapter of Proverbs was composed by King Lemuel, whose name means “devoted to God”. All we know of him is what we read in this chapter. Some commentators speculate he was an Ishmaelite whose mother was a godly Hebrew woman who had devoted her son to God; she calls him “son of my vows” (31:2; compare 1 Sam. 1:11).

Her wise words warned her son firstly against lusting after women (31:3). It would not be wise for him to have a large harem, and she explained that this is what destroys kings (e.g. the downfall of Solomon, 1 Kings 11:3).

Her second warning for Lemuel was that he not drink wine or any intoxicating drink, for this too is not for kings. A king must always be sober, so he may do his duties and never forget to put the Law of God into practice. He must also abstain from such drink so as to not pervert justice and oppress the people.

Lemuel was to judge righteously and take up the cause to protect the “speechless” — those who were defenceless and on the verge of death (31:8). Upon reading this verse, one is reminded of the most defenceless and speechless of people — unborn children — and of the greatest crime today — abortion. We, as believers, must plead their cause for life.

Lemuel’s mother advised that wine only be used for those who were perishing and in misery — those in pain. Remember, in those days they did not have the medications we have today for pain. Strong drink was the only way to ease pain. With our modern medicine, we have no need, nor any excuse, to take “a little wine for the stomach’s sake” (indigestion) or for any other infirmity (1 Tim. 5:23). Therefore, in Scripture, we see that kings were not to drink any intoxicating beverages, nor were the priests (Lev. 10:8-11). According to the New Testament, believers are both kings and priests who are always to be on duty (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

Throughout the Book of Proverbs, the concentration has been upon the wise man; now it ends with a detailed description of the wisest of women (31:10-31). It is an acrostic poem of twenty-two verses (each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet). It is a beautiful tribute to womanhood.

The wise woman described here is compared to a priceless, rare gem. Her character is opposite to that of the contentious wife, mentioned several times within the book. This noble and virtuous wife is one with whom her husband is pleased and proud. Unlike the contentious wife, the noble wife speaks words of wisdom and makes it a law to only speak words of kindness (31:26). Her husband has complete trust in her to wisely manage their finances and other household affairs (31:11). She always seeks the good of her husband and is a great contributor to his success and

respect in the community (31:23). She certainly is not a sluggard; rather, she is active, industrious, and diligent. All this she does happily, contentedly, and “willingly” (31:13, 27).

She not only cares for her family and home very well, but she also has enough love in her heart to reach out to help the needy (31:20). What is the secret of her success and wisdom? The answer lies in the fact that she is “a woman who fears the Lord”, and because of that her beauty will never fade (31:30), and her children and husband will bless, praise, honour, and respect her; of this she is truly deserving.

Prayer

Dear Lord, we devote ourselves anew today to You and to righteousness in our own lives and in our nation. Help us to uphold Your charge to protect the most defenceless members of our society, including the unborn, the disabled, and the elderly.