

Prov.31:26 (6)

Having looked at her rarity [v10], and her primary focus and activates [vv11-27], we began several weeks ago to consider the basic character of the virtuous woman—thus far we've seen she clothes herself with strength and honor [v25], she opens her mouth with wisdom and on her tongue is the law of kindness [v26]...

If you remember in explaining v25 we learnt several things—[1] that she's convinced of her own native weakness and thus seeks strength from Christ, and [2] she finds dignity in doing and being all that this passage describes—she clothes herself with honor—if you recall I suggested that this honor was [a] protective, and [b] encouraging—that is, it protects her from the foolishness that surrounds her and encourages her to continue to watch over the ways of her household...

Because she clothes herself with strength and honor—“she shall rejoice in time to come...”—that is, she has a present and future confidence—because her strength is in God and she is consciously aware of her right standing before God—though she should walk through the valley of the shadow of death, she will fear no evil; for her God is with her...

There are several reasons for turning back to v26 again—[1] many of her missing two weeks ago when we initially considered it, because of the weather, [2] I assume that many of us struggle with opening our mouths with wisdom and kindness, and [3] the Scriptures have much to say concerning the proper use and misuse of our tongues—thus I want to do two things tonight as we come again to v26—[1] give a thorough review, and [2] provide some additional helps...

- I. A Thorough Review
- II. Some Additional Helps

I. A Thorough Review

A. A simple explanation

1. If you recall I sought to explain this verse under two points, notice [1] a mouth of wisdom—“she opens her mouth with wisdom...”
2. Here we learned that by opening her mouth with wisdom is meant, she speaks with wisdom—because she has been made wise by the gospel, she speaks wisely...
3. In defining Biblical or religious wisdom I offered the simple definition—“the ability to apply knowledge...”
4. Prov.15:2—“the tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly...”—this is Biblical wisdom—to rightly use or apply knowledge...
5. Thus, essential to Christian wisdom are two things—[1] a knowledge of Scripture, Prov.2:6—“the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding...”
6. By this is meant the word of God—wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are given by God from His mouth...
7. Thus regardless how much a person knows, if they are ignorant of Scripture they can know nothing of Christian wisdom...
8. For example—the supposedly wisest man is but an educated fool, if his eyes have never been opened to the realities of the gospel, Rom.1:22—“professing to be wise, they became fools...”
9. As a result, it's possible for a younger person to have more wisdom than an older person, if they possess a more practical understanding of Scripture, Ps.119:100—“I understand more than the aged, because I have observed thy precepts...”
10. But [2] along with this knowledge 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...”
11. Which is to say—while a benefit of youth is strength, a benefit of age is wisdom—the honor of old men is their gray hair as it comes with experience...

12. Thus accordingly to this twofold definition, a young woman can open her mouth with wisdom, but there is a seasoning aspect of wisdom that comes with experience...
13. As a result, an older Christian ought to be a very wise person, as their deepening knowledge of Scripture has been repeatedly applied to the various aspects of life...
14. Notice [2] a tongue of kindness—"and the law of kindness is on her tongue..."—which refers to the manner in which she opens her mouth...
15. She speaks with wisdom and applies this wisdom by kind instruction—thus v26 describes both the content [wisdom] and the manner [kindness] in which she speaks...
16. Thus the phrase "the law of kindness" refers to the way in which she instructs those within her household...
17. Prov.1:8—"my son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of you mother..."—that is the law and instruction are one and the same...
18. In defining what is meant by kindness, I suggested Prov.12:18 is helpful as it's the very opposite of kindness—"there is one that speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword: but the tongue of the wise beings health..."
19. Here is a person whose words are like the thrusting of a sword—harsh and brutal—the very opposite of kindness...
20. Thus by "kindness" is meant—"a manner of speech characterized by gentleness, mercy, and loving-kindness..."

B. Some practical helps

1. If you recall I here suggested five helps to open our mouth with wisdom and to provide instruction with kindness...
2. Notice [1] make use of wisdom literature—and by this I meant in particular the book of Proverbs, which tells us its primary intention, Prov.1:2—"the proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel: to know wisdom and instruction..."
3. Thus I challenged you to read through the book of Proverbs once every month, by reading a chapter every day...
4. Notice [2] hold you tongue and speak less—which is implied in our text—if the virtuous woman opens her mouth with wisdom it's implied her mouth is not always open...
5. Prov.10:19—"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise..."—that is, a wise person knows how to keep quiet when necessary...
6. Notice [3] keep your heart in a healthy frame, Matt.12:34—"for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks..."—as the mouth is a mere indicator of the heart's condition...
7. 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..."
8. Notice [4] keep your eyes upon wisdom incarnate, Prov.13:20—"he who walks with wise men will be wise..."
9. Here we looked at Isa.6:5-7, where Isaiah having seen the King in all His glory responds—"woe is me, for 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..."
10. Notice [5] stay close to the cleansing fountain—that is, keep short accounts with God by confessing your sins often...

II. Some Additional Helps—especially as it relates to speaking with kindness

A. Feel the importance of the tongue

1. This is where we must begin—getting ourselves weighed down with a sense of the tongue's ability to do harm or good...
2. Prov.18:21—"Death and life are in the power of the tongue..."—that is, it possesses the ability to promote much good or cause great harm...

3. Notice [1] the tongue can cause great harm, Prov.12:18—“there is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword...”
4. Words spoken in harshness can cause great harm to a soul—here Solomon uses very graphic and almost shocking imagery...
5. It’s as if words spoken in harshness are like swords that pierce the soul leaving gaping wounds within the heart...
6. Can you image that child, whose soul is constantly pierced or wounded by the harsh words of a mother or a father...
7. What if every one of your words was a knife—would we be as careless as we are at times—a few weeks ago there was a man in Canton found guilty of stabbing his wife to death...
8. He stabbed her over a dozen times with a kitchen knife—we hear of such things and think to ourselves, how is it possible for a husband to stab repeatedly his wife to death...
9. And yet I wonder how many times have you or I, killed our own wives and children with rash and unkind words...
10. But not only do harsh words wound the soul they are also easily imitated—my wife and I are ashamed to see that if we speak harshly to our kids they begin to speak harshly to one another...
11. There is a rippling effect that takes place—the sins of parents being passed on to the next generation—my friend, do you really want to leave such a legacy to your kids and grandkids...
12. Notice [2] the tongue can do much good, Prov.15:4—“a wholesome tongue is a tree of life...”—that is, it provides prosperity of soul...
13. Prov.16:23-24—“The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips. Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones...”
14. This passage is very akin to our text, notice two things—[1] the relationship between the heart and the mouth or lips, v23—“the heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips...”
15. Notice [2] the benefit of pleasant or kind words, v24—“pleasant [kind] words are as a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones...”
16. Oh how lovely do kind and pleasant words render a person, especially in a world marked by unkindness, meanness, and cruelty...
17. Anne Pratt, in a book entitled *The Excellent Woman*, said these very relevant words—“It is a beautiful and appropriate praise of woman, that on her tongue is the law of kindness. When we look on this fallen world, and see what misery has been brought into it by sin; that the storm, and the famine, and poverty, and sickness, bring sufferings which none can avert, and when we see, too, that there exists sorrows deeper still than these, and hear the expressions wrung out from hearts full of anguish—how strange does it seem, that any should add to the afflictions of life by a lack of kindness, or aggravate by cruel words the bitterness with which the heart is already breaking...”
18. Isn’t true that for the most part, a kind person is a rare person—a person who sticks out in the crowd—for example when my girls were younger they thought that every person who spoke to them kindly was a Christian...

B. Mortify all opposing vices or sins

1. If you were here two weeks ago we will recall I briefly mentioned mortification, but given its importance, I want to here identify several opposite or opposing sins that hinder kindness...
2. Eph.4:29-32—“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption...”
3. V32—“let all bitterness, wrath [rage], anger, clamor [shouting], and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice [evil desire or intent]...”
4. V32—“and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you...”
5. Notice [1] what we are to do—we are to put away from us, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking...

6. It's likely that the apostle borrowed the imagery of "putting away" from the old covenant, where open and profane sinners were to be put away from the congregation by death...
7. Deut.13:5—"But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn *you* away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst..."
8. Our Savior seems use similar imagery in Matt.5:29—"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you..."
9. Notice [2] why are we to do it, v29—"let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth...and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God..."
10. Of all the many motives to put away all harsh speaking, none should be more effective then the one here provided...
11. This should especially be true in light of what we learned this morning—nothing grieves the Spirit of God as does harsh and unkind words...
12. Thus every time we open our mouths with unkindness we not only bring harm to our hearts but grief to the very heart of God...

C. Cultivate related graces and virtue

1. If you recall two weeks ago I made mention of Tit.2:4-5 where older woman are exhorted to—"teach the young women be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, [and] kind..."
2. My point being—kindness is a grace that can be taught, or that can be cultivated or increased within the heart...
3. It simply will not do for a person to say—I'm simply not a kind person by nature—but instead we must all work at being kind...
4. Col.3:12—"therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, [and] meekness]..."
5. These are various graces that are to put on, or to fostered and cultivated within the hearts and lives of God's elect and holy people...
6. Thus I here want to briefly suggest several related or cousin graces of kindness—[1] tender mercies [that is compassion]...
7. Notice [2] humility—this simply means we have a highly opinion of others then ourselves, Phil.2:3—"but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself..."
8. Notice [3] meekness—which can best be defined as "the gentle way in which a humble person interacts with others..."
9. Notice [4] longsuffering—that is patience, or suffering long with a person, v13—"bearing with one another and forgiving one another..."