

Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of systematic theology today by continuing to examine biblical anthropology. Dr. Spencer, last time we showed that both man's original moral perfection and his being a rational, volitional being are essential to his being made in the image of God. What do you want to cover today?

Dr. Spencer: I'd like to go back to the topic of man being made male and female.

Marc Roby: We discussed that very briefly in Session 98 where you pointed out that since God is triune, man being made both male and female makes us better able to mirror his image.

Dr. Spencer: And I want to explore that further from the point of view God's defined roles for men and women.

Marc Roby: Well, that should be interesting, our modern society's ideas about the roles for men and women are very far from the biblical norm.

Dr. Spencer: They certainly are. There seem to be a lot of people who think there should be no difference between the roles of men and women. And many people seem to think that the only reason anyone could have for saying that there should be a difference is a desire to have men dominate women. But that is very far from the truth.

Men and women *are* different, not just in the obvious physical ways, but in emotional and intellectual ways too. There is a common, but completely wrong, misconception in our society that the biblical view of women is that they should be uneducated and kept busy entirely with cooking, cleaning and having and raising children.

Marc Roby: Yes, I've certainly heard people say things along those lines.

Dr. Spencer: But that view couldn't be further from the truth, so I'd like to take a few minutes to dispel that myth. If you look at the very last chapter in the book of Proverbs, Chapter 31, there is a wonderful section in Verses 10 through 31 which, in modern Bibles, is usually entitled something like *The Woman Who Feels the Lord*.

Marc Roby: And, of course, we are told in Proverbs 9:10 that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom".¹

Dr. Spencer: And true wisdom could be defined as the ability to apply right knowledge to make right decisions, which are decisions that honor and please God. So a woman who fears the Lord is going to be a woman who possesses right knowledge and knows how to apply that knowledge by making decisions that honor and please God.

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The section in Proverbs 31 begins, in Verse 10, by exclaiming, “A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.” And the fact that this verse refers to a wife does not mean that a woman who is unmarried is unimportant or less valuable, or less righteous, or unworthy of praise or anything like that. It simply reflects the fact that the normal situation for men and women is to be married.

Marc Roby: And there is certainly nothing wrong with being unmarried, the apostle Paul was. And he speaks about how unmarried people can focus on the Lord’s business in 1 Corinthians 7:34.

Dr. Spencer: Exactly. The passage in Proverbs 31 goes on to say, in Verses 11 and 12, that “Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.” A woman who fears the Lord will be trustworthy – again we can say that is true whether she is married or not. But, if she is married, her husband can have full confidence in her and so can others. And she does good, being helpful, not harmful, to her husband and others.

The passage goes on to describe what would be considered domestic duties, but it also says, in Verse 16, that “She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.” Which certainly represents a woman of noble character as being an able person capable of handling responsibility and making business decisions.

Marc Roby: And she is also capable of hard work, planting a vineyard is not easy! In the very next verse, Verse 17, we read that “She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.”

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that clearly does speak about a strong and capable person, not someone who spends her time watching soap operas and gossiping with the neighbors, or sitting around fussing with her hair and fingernails. In Verse 18 we read that “She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.” Speaking of her trading again shows that she is a capable, intelligent and responsible person. And the fact that her lamp does not go out at night speaks of her diligence and hard work.

The passage also speaks of her helping the poor and watching over the needs of her family. In Verse 23 we read that “Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.”

Marc Roby: And surely the implication is that she has something to do with that success.

Dr. Spencer: Absolutely. Our society denigrates the contributions of a wife who doesn’t pursue her own career. But a proper, that is to say a biblical, view of a family is that it is a unit. A family needs a place to live, it needs food and clothing and so on. If you look at a traditional family, where the husband works for pay and the woman works primarily in the home, the work that the wife does is every bit as important. If the man had to take care of all of his own domestic affairs he would not be nearly as successful in his career. So, whatever success the man has in a traditional family is attributable to his wife as well as to himself.

Marc Roby: And, of course, there is nothing wrong with the woman working outside the home as well.

Dr. Spencer: No, there isn't. But that is not her primary responsibility and, if there are children who are not yet in school, it is certainly best if she can keep such work to a minimum. There can obviously be times when a family needs more income than the husband alone can provide, but there is no doubt that it is better for the family as a whole if the wife doesn't have to work outside the home too much while the children are very young. Which is also, typically, the time that a man would be in the early stages of his career and would need to put in more hours and would be less able to manage his own domestic affairs.

Marc Roby: And, while it is not politically correct to say this, women are typically better equipped than men to stay home with young children.

Dr. Spencer: We will, unfortunately, probably lose some listeners and make some enemies by saying that, but yes, women do, in general, have better temperaments for dealing with children. There are, of course, huge differences among women and among men, but the statement is so obviously true that it is a very bad sign of the pathological condition of our present society that to make the statement is at all problematic. And I must point out that we are not in any way saying that men are better than women. That kind of thinking demonstrates an extreme lack of respect for all of the women throughout history who have been excellent wives, mothers and housekeepers and a lack of appreciation for the importance and difficulty of that role in society.

Marc Roby: That's a good point. To insist that women should be the same as men is to hold the traditional role of a housewife and mother in contempt.

Dr. Spencer: And it is damaging to the family, which is the core upon which all societies are built. If the family is destroyed, the society will be destroyed. And we are certainly seeing that in certain segments of our society today.

Marc Roby: Yes, I agree. But to get back on track with the biblical view of a noble woman from Proverbs 31, I also like Verse 26, which says that "She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue."

Dr. Spencer: Being a stay-at-home mom is not all about cooking and cleaning and changing diapers. Raising children requires wisdom and an ability to instruct, and being a helper to her husband and making the many business decisions necessary to the daily operation of a home also requires wisdom.

Marc Roby: Of course the husband has a responsibility to meet as well. It wouldn't be proper for the man to leave the child rearing to the wife alone or to abdicate his responsibility in making decisions.

Dr. Spencer: No, that would be completely unbiblical. But the main point I wanted to make from this passage in Proverbs is that the biblical idea of a noble woman is far different than the caricature that is often presented in our culture. A proper Christian woman is a capable, strong, intelligent, educated and hard-working person.

But, and here is where our modern society is opposed to the biblical norm, a proper Christian wife is under the authority of her husband.

Marc Roby: There you go again with that word authority.

Dr. Spencer: It is very important word. And remember that man was made male and female in the image and likeness of God. And if you look at the Trinity, you see authority there as well. Theologians distinguish between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity.

Marc Roby: I think we need to define those terms.

Dr. Spencer: I agree. Ontology has to do with the essence of something. In their essence, the members of the Trinity are equal. We discussed the Doctrine of the Trinity at some length in Sessions 50 through 56 and I don't want to go over that material again now, but let me cite just one verse. In what is commonly called the Great Commission, Jesus commanded us, in Matthew 28:19, to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".

This verse clearly implies that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are separate persons, and yet equal. It also says, "in the name of", using the singular for name, rather than saying "in the names of" as you might expect. The singular is used, of course, because there is only one God, who exists in three persons.

Marc Roby: And those three persons are ontologically equal. So that leaves us with needing to define what is meant by the economic Trinity, which of course has nothing at all to do with money.

Dr. Spencer: No, it doesn't have anything to do with money at all. The word economy also refers to managing resources or other affairs, so the economic Trinity refers to the different roles taken by the persons of the godhead in relating to creation.² And in the economic Trinity there is a voluntary subordination of the second and third persons of the Trinity, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in terms of God's interaction with his creation.

Marc Roby: I want to emphasize the word voluntary in what you just said. The members of the Trinity are equal, so the functional roles that they fulfill in relation to creation are taken voluntarily.

Dr. Spencer: I'm glad you pointed that out, it is a point that needs to be emphasized. We again discussed this idea at greater length when we covered the Trinity, but let me just cite Philippians 2:5-8, which say that "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in

² See the short discussion in Session 28 and see John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, P&R Publishing Company, 2002, pg. 683fn43

appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross!”

This passage clearly tells us that Jesus was God, but voluntarily took on the nature of a servant. He voluntarily became subject to God the Father.

Marc Roby: Which explains how Jesus could tell his disciples, as we read in John 14:28, that “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.”

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that’s exactly right. There are many places in the New Testament where Jesus’ subordination to the Father is obvious. That verse is one of the best, but we also read in John 15:10 that Christ said, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.” The subordination is again apparent since Jesus said that he obeyed the Father’s commands.

And the subordination of the Holy Spirit to both the Father and the Son is also clear because we are told that both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to us. In John 14:26 Jesus said, “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” But then in John 15:26 Jesus said, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”

Marc Roby: That is quite clear, both the Father and the Son are said to send the Holy Spirit. There is a voluntary submission of the Son to the Father and of the Holy Spirit to both the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity.

Dr. Spencer: And because we are made in the image of God we should expect a similar situation to be the case in the relations between human beings. That is why authority is so important. It is ordained by God for our good. And all earthly authority is given by God. We have no authority innately, any authority that we have is delegated authority.

Marc Roby: We read in Romans 13:1-2 that “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.”

Dr. Spencer: And we shouldn’t think of authority as something bad. It is in fact very good. Authority is necessary in any organization or assembly.

Given that there are many people on this earth and that we do not always all agree on exactly what should be done and how it should be done, authority is absolutely essential. Without it, all we would have is anarchy. And, even more importantly, we are all creatures and owe our very existence to the God who made us, so he is our ultimate authority and he has shown us in the Trinity, and commanded in his word, that authority is good.

Marc Roby: And that authority exists in the family.

Dr. Spencer: Yes it does. In 1 Corinthians 11:3 the apostle Paul wrote, “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” This makes it very clear. The word “head” is being used to refer to authority. The head is the part of the body that commands all of the other parts. And Paul even references the economic Trinity in this verse. He says that the “head of Christ is God”, meaning God the Father.

The implication is clear. You could construct an argument from the greater to the lesser from this verse. If Christ, who is God, is under the authority of the Father, how much more should we, as mere creatures, be under authority. And God specifies the order. Man is under the authority of Christ and woman is under the authority of man.

Marc Roby: Of course, that doesn't mean that every woman is under the authority of every man.

Dr. Spencer: No, it does not mean that at all. We need to look at the entire teaching of the Bible to properly understand this.

Marc Roby: And I think we'll have to get into that next time because we are out of time for today. So, I'd like to remind our listeners that they can email questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org. We hope to hear from you.