

Not Afraid of the Snow

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[0:00] Proverbs chapter 31, we read that verse 21, she is not afraid of the snow for her household, but all her household are cold with scarlet.

The topic of this particular verse may be, given the conditions today, there's obviously a far deeper truth being taught in it than simply what happens to be the conditions either here in the Bible or today or in any particular time.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. This comes within the wider context of this chapter 31, where we're told the words of King Lemuel. Lemuel, or Lemuel, it's a poetic term for Solomon, the king. The word or the name means literally to God in Hebrew in the sense of devoted to God.

And Solomon, of course, was a child specially chosen by God after David's wrongful relationship with Bathsheba, after he had subsequently married her.

[1:10] God blessed the child that he subsequently gave to them. And David called him Solomon, meaning peaceable. And God, through Nathan the prophet, called him Jedidiah, meaning beloved of Jehovah, beloved of God.

So this Lemuel, it's a poetic term for Solomon. And it is a prophecy that his mother, that is Bathsheba, taught him. Now, some of it, you might think, don't give your strength to women. And so what it means in the sense of to loose women, don't dissipate your strength with the wine, women, and song kind of debauchery, which is the undoing of so many people in high estate and with high office.

Don't be drunken. Don't be constantly partying. Be sober. Be focused on the job in hand. Have the feet of the Lord before you. And then she has clearly instructed him as to the kind of wife, the kind of woman he should be ideally looking for.

Not the vast numbers of harem and concubines and so on that he subsequently amassed to himself. You know, we're told in scripture, he had 700 wives and 300 concubines and all of this despite the advice of his mother, who having no doubt fallen victim to the roving eye of a powerful king, i.e. David, who had plenty of other wives of his own, she knew the dangers that could befall many positions of power, influence, wealth, who had opportunity just to indulge whatever they like.

[2:43] She is seeking to instill in her this recognition of what he should be looking for. And one reason we know the rest of the chapter is also almost certainly an instruction given to Solomon, therefore, as it says, almost certainly from his mother, is because although it doesn't come out in the English, in the Hebrew, from verse 10 on to the end, these 22 verses are each in a sort of, how can I put it, alphabetic term, not a cross-tick term, but alphabetic, in the same way as many of the Psalms are.

I mean, if we're to look at the Psalms, you'll all be familiar, no doubt, with the fact that Psalm 119 is divided up into sections. And each section is under the heading of a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and that is because all the verses in that section begin with that particular letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

And likewise, other Psalms like Psalm 25, for example, Psalm 34, that we said earlier, Psalm 37, and 111, and 145, and so on.

They all have these alphabetic features in them, whereby a particular verse is with a Hebrew letter equivalent, A, then B, then C, then D, and so on, down through the alphabet.

So that is what we have here from verse 10 onwards, that every verse from 10 to the end begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, working its way through the whole alphabet.

[4:17] And the only reason for doing that will be so that it is the more readily able to be remembered by way of instruction. So these are the virtues that obviously Solomon's mother wants

him to remember, to be looking for particularly in a partner in life.

However, that's the wider context. The immediate verse that we're looking at here, She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet.

First of all, she's not afraid of that which comes. And we know it comes. I mean, okay, we're surrounded by snow just now. It's probably going to go in the next year or two, because it usually does.

But it's not entirely a surprise to us that there should be snow in December. It comes as it comes with a winter, just as the heat comes with the summer, and that the rain or the leaves falling comes in the autumn, and the new grass and flowers in the spring, and so on.

The seasons of the year, the Lord himself has promised that they would not fail. They would constantly continue, as he promised to Noah at the end of chapter 8, after the flood.

[5 : 24] So in other words, that which comes upon the wise woman here, that which comes upon her, her family, her household, and by household we shouldn't just understand her children, but also almost certainly servants.

In verse 15, for example, she rises up also while it is yet night, giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. In other words, whether it's her men's servants or maid's servants, she takes the responsibility for making sure they get their food in the mornings, so that they're equipped to go on and do the work of the day.

She knows that if they're going to work properly, faithfully have to be fed. She understands that nobody can live on thin air, and she provides for them. She provides her food, she provides her clothing.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household, because all her household are clothed with scarlet.

That which comes when it comes, and we know that it's bound to come, the snow is likely to come in winter, just as this day is going to come in summer, because this is what happens in life.

This is what happens in the turning of the year. And for when it comes, she is prepared for it. If we had scraped the snow off the windscreens of our car this morning, or the ice or whatever, then we'd probably have a little plastic scraper, either in the car itself or in the house readily available.

[6 : 55] We'd probably have cans of de-icer spray, the spray on it and so on as well, because we've got these things beforehand, because we know this is likely to happen.

We make preparation for what we know is likely to come. This is what she has done. It's not that, oh, snow, I love snow, isn't it brilliant? We can all shiver to death.

She's not thinking in terms of that. She's thinking she's not afraid of it, because she is prepared for it. She has made preparation for herself, for her household, for her servants, for her children.

When the snow comes, all our household are clothed with scarlet. This doesn't just mean, well, put on something red and you won't feel the cold. Scarlet, we've got different kind of meanings here that can be used.

Again, it's part of the language in which this is originally written. The Hebrew term here, it's the word which can be understood as either shani or shani, which Hebrew word won't mean anything to most of us here.

[7 : 57] But the point is that in the Hebrew, there isn't any balance in the original. You've just got the consonants. So the sound that you make between consonants can vary.

And the word that is translated scarlet, or we might understand it as crimson, that very dark red, which is beginning to lean towards purple. Again, a very, very rich colour.

So it could imply that her household are clothed with the richest and the best of clothing, so they don't need to worry about it. It's not just, you know, that red keeps out the cold, because of course it doesn't.

But the fact that they are clothed in the best, the most expensive, we could understand it there. That is if it were the term shani, which means crimson or red or scarlet here.

But then there's the term shani, which is almost the same. And some people understand that this is what is really meant in this verse. All her household are clothed with, and the word shani means doubled, or that which there is two of, or that which is folded over.

[9 : 02] So it could mean clothing, which is of double thickness. Or it could mean that they have two suits of clothing. They've got a summer one, and they've got a winter one. The winter one will be much thicker and warmer.

It could mean that they've got these two sets of clothing. One that is for the cold weather, is much warmer. Or it could mean they've got double layers on, so they don't have to worry about the cold, because their clothing is doubled up.

It could be a combination of either. It could mean they've got twice as much clothing as everybody else, because she has provided for them. It could mean that the clothing she's provided is of the best quality, because it's this cruising, this scarlet, and so on.

Now, whichever way we understand it, either makes sense that they're clothed in the best, or that they're clothed in twice as much strength, covering, or protection as anybody else.

Why, though? Because she has made provision for them. Now, you could see, well, what we've got here, this is an idealized person. This idealized person surely never existed.

[10:08] Remember that the Bible is not just truths written at the superficial level. It has layers and depth of meaning. And part of the layers and the depth of spiritual meaning in the Word of God is that it will, of course, always be pointing us on to Christ.

And when it is pointing us on to Christ, where we have the feminine, as in the virtuous woman here, we should probably understand not only that God must have feminine attributes, insofar as mankind is made male and female in this image, both, but also that we may understand here, perhaps, the bride of Christ, the church of God, who is devoted to her master Christ, devoted to her husband Christ, in that sense.

And the church of God will seek to provide that which is the best protection, the best clothing, the best covering for its household, for the people of God.

The church of God is the people of God, but at the same time, with its collective responsibility for one another, will seek to ensure that when times of trial or cold or difficult be gone and they are not unexpected, just as the winter is not unexpected, just as the snow is not entirely unexpected, when they come, they will be found ready.

And this is the thing that, you know, the ultimate cold, you could say, the ultimate winter of the soul, is death. Winter symbolises death in many ways, because everything sort of either dies and it folds itself away, or animals hibernate, or whatever, you know, and the stuff doesn't grow.

[11:56] And there is a sense of death in it, or you could say there's a sense of sleeping. And as nature sort of sleeps before it kind of awakens in the spring. There's so much to teach us in nature, but we could digress so easily onto that.

But if we think in terms of the coldness and deadness that winter might suggest to us, the ultimate coldness and deadness for us, spiritually, is death itself.

And the bigger anxiety, the big worry, is that when that comes, and of course it is inevitable, like winter itself, it is the turning of the seasons.

And our lives likewise have seasons in them. We have the springtime of our childhood and youth.

And we have the summer of our full-blown adulthood and bigger and so on.

And then we have the autumn, and we're beginning to age a bit. And then we have old age, which is, if you like, the winter of our lives, when we may be less able to do for ourselves, when we may be more helpless, more fragile, more frail and so on.

[13:01] And ultimately there is death. Now, that's not going to be more, but it's certainly to recognize that this is the truth of life. This is the reality of mankind and of humanity in this world.

And because we recognize there are all these seasons, just as there are to the years, and because we recognize that no matter how long a year may seem to be, when you turn the year at New Year time, you look at your empty diary, and you look at the calendar of the year plan, and there's so much to be filled up before you know it, it will all be gone, it will all be filled up, and you'll be coming to the end of that year.

So likewise, when we look at the seasons in terms of our life, the snow will come, the winter will come, and it is not a case of, oh no, let's try and keep it away as much as possible, let's go out with hair dryers, and try and melt the snow on our steps, so that we can pretend it's still summer.

No, we can't pretend that, no matter how much people try to hold back the march of time, or the seasons of the year, or the seasons of life. There is a sense in which the one who is wise, the woman who is wise, the church which is wise, will make preparation for it.

Will make preparation in the sense that they won't be afraid. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

[14:26] And as we say, the scarlet may refer to the colour, or it may be a Hebrew term which is almost identical to the word translated here as scarlet or crimson, but is in fact the same Hebrew

root, the same rhetoric, just with a slightly different pronouncing of a vowel there, and the vowel is speculative, because we don't know exactly how it's meant to be pronounced.

It could mean doubled over. It could mean twice as much clothing, it could be extra warm clothing, it could mean two sets of clothing, as we say, one for summer, one for winter, and so on. Either way, her household, her servants, her children, are clothed to the best advantage.

They are clothed in the richest colouring, they are clothed in the richest and best of clothing. When the snow comes, it's not a disaster for them, because they have everything they need, they are found ready.

And likewise, when a soul may draw near to the winter of their lives, if they are well prepared, they need not fear anything, because they are clothed in that which ultimately matters.

Now, the church, as the wise bride, woman, a mistress of the house, what have you, if she is looking after her household, will make sure that they know and have prepared for them clothing, which will suffice them when winter comes.

[15:57] Now, the only clothing that will cover over our nakedness, is to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. And it says here, clothed in scarlet.

Well, perhaps it's not reading too much into it to say, you know, if our clothing, that righteousness, is stained with the blood of Christ, then we know that the price is ultimately paid.

You know, that's, when it talks in Revelation, it talks about those who have, who have washed their robes, and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb.

And we think, wash your robes in blood, they're going to come out of bloodstain, they're going to go out soaked in red. Who is this that come out of Eden, you know, with dyed garments from Bosra, you know, like it says there, in the prophets.

So, it's like the sense of, well, we clothed in scarlet, because the righteousness in which we are clothed, is dipped in blood. He is clothed with a vesture, dipped in blood, Revelation 19, and his name is called the Lord of God.

[17:00] If we are clothed in this scarlet, if our righteousness, our clothing, is washed in the blood of Christ, then we don't have to fear anything, in the winter of our souls.

We of ourselves will be naked. Now, nakedness, particularly in winter, particularly in snow, is going to be fatal. It's going to be disastrous. We'll freeze to death, if we're naked in times of snow.

Now, when it comes to the winter of our souls, the winter of our lives, when we will stand, potentially, to be separated from the want of God's love, and we think, oh, well, yes, but it's not too bad.

Look at this world. You know, we've got good things happening in this world. We've got people who are kind, in this world, and so on, even though it's a fallen world. Yes, we do. In this world, we have a mixture.

It is the only world in which there will be a mixture of good and evil, of dark and light, of kindness, and of cruelty, because God is at work in this world, as well as the devil being at work in the world.

[18:04] God is at work in this world. It is ultimately, all goodness is ultimately from him. Even those who do not acknowledge him, such kindness as they practice, such good as they do in their lives, they do, because the Lord has some remaining imprint of his spirit, or of his image still imprinted upon them.

that all goodness, all kindness, all blessedness, is ultimately traceable only to one source, and that is to the Lord. He is at work in this world.

And when it comes to heaven, of course, there is no mixture there. It is all good. It is all glory. It is all of God. And when it comes to hell, there is no mixture there either. There is no good.

There is no glory. There is no light. There is no blessing. It is all dark, and cold, and separate from the Lord, and eternal death, and yet, the torment of eternal hellfire is there.

Not a fire that warms, and a fire that comforts, and a fire that destroys, and yet never makes an end of destroying. This is how the Lord himself describes hell, separation from the Lord.

[19:20] But in terms of outer darkness, it is cold. But she, the virtuous woman, the bride of Christ, if she is wise, the church of God, if it is focused upon what the Lord would happen to be focused on, she is not afraid of the snow, for her household.

Let the winter come. We are ready for it. Let the cold come. We have clothing warm against the cold. We have all the shearing, all the wound of the Lamb of God, to clothe us, His perfect righteousness, clothed with scarlet, because it is dipped in blood, and because our righteousness,

is not the filthy rags of our own false righteousness, but because we are clothed in His righteousness, and need not fear the cold of separation from the Lord.

She maketh herself coverings of tapestry. Her clothing is silk and purple. It is the finest of everything, the warmth, the work that has gone into it.

The whole chapter makes clear that there is not a virtue in idleness. The church of God, if she is to reflect the virtuous woman, the perhaps idealized bride, but the bride of Christ, if she is to reflect that, it is not in the sense of sitting in her hands, and just waiting for glory to drop down.

And she is active throughout the opportunity, the daylight hours, the time when there is the chance to work, to serve, to labor, for the Lord.

[21 : 00] Jesus Himself said He had to work whilst there was opportunity. As long as I am in the world, He said, chapter 9, verse 5 of John, I am the light of the world.

I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work. We might say we are going to make the hay, bring in the harvest, while there is the daylight, while there is the long days, because the winter comes.

And the winter comes not because God hates us, or not because God is passing judgment on us, or not because somehow it is a punishment for something.

This is just the way it is in this world. There are the seasons of the year which God has promised. They come round every year, just as in the seasons of life, they come round in every life, if one is spared to live a full life.

Some, of course, have tragically cut down much younger, but if we are granted a full life, it will have all its seasons. And all these seasons have their different attributes, but come they will, and each with their different requirements.

[22 : 12] And the snow and the winter is that which, particularly perhaps for the poor, would be that which they feared most. In a former age, winter was usually when most people died.

Winter was usually when people who didn't have enough food, or fuel, or warm clothing, it just took too much out of their resistance, and they died in the winter if they were poor.

Now, if one is a servant to somebody who is more wealthy or more powerful or whatever, then you don't make yourself a servant, you don't become a servant if you are yourself rich and powerful.

Servants would be those who are the poorer. Servants would be those who don't have a household in the sense of servants of their own. Servants would be those who would be more dependent on others.

The likes of us, in other words. We who are not powerful, we who are not strong, we who would otherwise die when winter comes. But she is not afraid of the snow for her own soul.

[23 : 18] The servants of this virtuous woman, the servants of the true right bride of Christ, are prepared because she has laboured. She has worked.

She has made sure that everything that her master can afford, everything that the husband, the head of the house has access to, then she likewise has access to.

He doesn't withhold anything from her. And the Lord does not withhold any blessing from his church. I often use the illustration of it, but Abraham's servant, when he is sent off to get the bride, for Isaac.

He doesn't have to say, you know, is it okay, Abraham, if I take a few camels, three or four, would ten be okay? Can I take some gold and silver and some pearls and precious jewels because I'll need them if I'm going to impress this young lady or whatever.

And they say, all right, if I take some spices, he doesn't have to ask. He doesn't have to go with every little detail of his shopping list for Abraham to tick every little box and signature or initial every little demand.

[24 : 25] We read in Genesis how he took the ten camels, he took all the gold and the silver and the spices and the gifts because all his master's goods were under his hand.

He had complete access to everything. He could help himself to whatever he needed because he was taking it to discharge the master's business. He wasn't lining his own pockets.

He was taking and making use of what he needed to do the job that he'd been given. It's likewise when our Bibles went out and when a page just started coming out and it's because they're being used for the purpose for which they intended.

The Lord does not grudge us the use of his good gifts. The Lord does not grudge us the blessings, the benefits that he provides. We don't have to go begging and pleading for each little detail

because he gives freely.

Abraham would say for a second, you don't have to ask me. Just take whatever you need. I've given you your commission. I've given you what you have to do. Take whatever you need to do it. It's all at your disposal. And that's what he did.

[25 : 31] And he came home with a wife for Isaac. He used his master's goods right and this is what the wise woman is doing here. She has complete discretion over her entire household.

She doesn't have to go to her husband, the head of the house with every little detail. Okay if I do this, okay if I do that. He completely trusts her. He completely has everything in her hands.

The heart of her husband, verse 11, doth safely trust in her so that he shall have no need of spoil. He's got her. He doesn't need anything else. And Jesus likewise, if he has his bride, if he has those who are his, the bride of Christ, he doesn't need people looking around at other religions and say, oh I quite like a bit of that.

I quite like some of those idols. I quite like some of those Buddhism and Hinduism and Islam and so on. I quite like some children from there. I quite like some followers from there and so on. He doesn't need to bring in these false gods.

He doesn't need any other. He doesn't have to have a roving eye because he is satisfied with his bride. He is fulfilled and delighted with his bride.

[26 : 43] The wise woman who does her husband good. The bride of Christ which serves him faithfully and fully and which makes provision for all her household.

If the church is being faithful to her master, then none within the church should be going cold when it comes to winter, when it comes to the snow.

They should not be going unprepared towards the winter of their lives or if they are, it can only be because then they have chosen to strip off or throw away the clothing that has been given.

The church of God, the wise woman, the bride of Christ should be making sure not only they are clothed and scarred but they are perhaps doubly clothed with as many layers as they need to remember that Christ of course is the double layered saviour.

He is holy God and he is holy man. He has these two natures in the one person. He is holy God and holy man. Our clothing is doubled over because this is partly the translation of it here.

[27 : 58] Not only is it scarred in the sense of built in blood, washed in his blood but it is doubled over. He has been human as we are human. He knows our frailty.

He remembers that we are dust. He has been tempted in every way like us we are yet without sin but at the same time he is God from all eternity. This double layer protection that we have.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household. For all of her household were clothed with scarlet. If the church of God is fulfilling the function that she should be then she recognizes that all the treasures of grace, all the riches of God's truth are at the disposal of the church of God.

There is nothing in God's promises we cannot only hold upon. There are none of his truths that we cannot in that sense own. There is nothing that God shows to us and says, ah yeah, but you can't have that.

I'm showing you it but you're not allowed it. I'm letting you see what I'm revealing but I'm going to withhold it from you. God does not want to withhold any blessing from his children.

[29 : 15] He does not want his church, his bride, the love of his life to be going cold, to be going hungry. He wants her to have everything that she needs. He wants her household to be blessed, to be cold, to be warm, to be fed.

He wants his children through all the seasons of their life to have all that they need so that when the snow of winter comes they don't have to be afraid.

And she, the church, is not afraid of the snow for her household but all her household are clothed with scarlet as the winter comes on, as the snow lies on the ground, as the breath begins to fade from the body of each individual member of the church, each individual part of the body.

They don't have to be afraid because their clothing is not simply that which may warm the physical frame of their mortal coil in this world.

It is that which will clothe their soul for all eternity. It is a double protection just as Christ is both holy man and holy God.

[30 : 28] So we are clothed and warmed not only for this physical world but for that which is to come as well.

We don't have to fear when the soul is separated from the body. we don't have to fear nakedness and coldness. We know that when that time comes as come it will as surely as winter follows on from summer and autumn as surely as that time will come we shall be as surely clothed in the righteousness of Christ in his perfect provision protection his blood bought liberty and that freedom and that privilege which he has prepared for those who love him.

I have not seen nor ear heard nor have entered into the heart of man the things that the Lord has laid up for those that love him. You just can't conceive of how good it is going to be of what he has made ready for us.

I go to prepare a place for you Jesus said and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you unto myself and where I am there you may be also.

Now of course we should not understand on this verse 21 that everybody except in her household was running around making it. We should understand of course that they had what they thought was perfectly fine for the spring or the summer or the autumn or even for the winter as long as they got a mild one and then they would just hold their breath until the spring came.

[32 : 09] Everybody else was doing their best. But the implication here from this chapter is such is her virtue, her industry, her preparation, her wise use of the access that she has to all her Lord and Master's goods, all his provision, all his riches, that she makes sure that not only she herself is arrayed in warmth and beauty and purple and scarlet and so on, but all her household too.

It's not just for her, it's for all of them because that reflects in her and that reflects in her husband. She wants them all to have all that they need. When the winter comes, yes, they wouldn't be running around making everybody else.

They would be doing the best they could. They'd be covering themselves with what they had. The implication here is that such is the quality, such is the preparation, such is the blessedness of what she has prepared for her household, what she is able to give them, to lavish upon them, a double strength, double lower, scarlet riches for her household.

They don't have to worry whether the snow comes or whether it doesn't, whether the winter is a hard winter or whether it's a summer, whether the spring will come or whether they will not move to see it.

It doesn't matter because they are well prepared. She is not afraid of the snow for her household. But notice this final point. It is not they themselves who have done it.

[33 : 43] It is not because the servants are wise or smart or have made all this preparation. It's not because the children are wise or smart or have made all this hard working preparation. It is she who has had it.

She has prepared in advance for them her work, her labour, her toil. And this is where the analogy breaks down a little bit because it is not the church's labour and toil which provides for the household, for the children.

It is Christ's labour and toil. It is in this sense the husband ahead. It is Jesus himself. whose labour, whose struggle, whose sacrifice has meant that now such clothing is there for us.

Such clothing, such protection, such warmth, such riches is there for us. To be clothed come what may. Whether it be the warmth of summer, whether it be the chill winds of the autumn, or the new life of spring, or indeed the snow in winter, you don't have to be afraid.

Whether the time ahead of us is long or short, the important thing is in whose clothing we are protected. And if we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, that double strength protection, dipped in blood, clothed and scarlet, washed in his perfect sacrifice, we need never be afraid.

[35 : 13] The church of God need never be afraid. The wise woman depicted here, she is not afraid of the snow for her household, but all her household are clothed with scarlet.

Give her up the three of her hands, that her own works praise her in the gates. Faith is deceitful and beautiful. But a woman that feeth the Lord, she shall be praised.

That is God.