

# SUN CITY SERMON NOTES

6.1.19

FOR THE HONOUR,  
THE REPUTATION  
OF CHRIST  
AND HIS CHURCH

**"How could I spend the best  
years of my life in living for the  
honours of this world,  
when thousands of souls are  
perishing every day?"**

CT Studd

## Stimulating Wholesome Thinking

1. See the Church the way God does; by finding the worth He does.
2. Church is Christ in the world; as she is viewed, so Christ is viewed.

## REPUTATION

Proverbs 31:10-31 We have been looking at these verses in the light of the wife as the Church. No one woman can accomplish all these things, but the Church can, does and will continue too. We place the same value on the Church as Christ does – through His eyes we cannot overestimate her value.

Overviews: v10-12: *A wife of noble character who can find?* Church of good reputation - *she is worth far more than rubies*. Rubies are one of the most precious gems; the flaws left in them reveal the transparency and authenticity. As valuable as they are, this value is nothing in comparison to the preciousness of the Church. Value of the Church; Jesus loves her and laid down His life for her; cherishes her; will not leave her alone; works with her to accomplish His Word, His purposes, His will. In Jesus' eyes, she has (good) reputation; we want to keep it. Her reputation has been slurred but what God has done and does through the Church is music to our ears.

11 *Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.* 12 *She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.* One way we can continue in this and not harm the Church is in what we say and do. (*Philippians 2:14-16*). The Queen of Sheba could see the 'wow' factor when she visited Solomon; how beautiful to think that we can be part of this type of reputation and upholding it is focal for us this year.

13 *She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.* Works with raw materials and is keen; she sees the rough and works something precious.

14 *She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.* She goes the distance to bring what's required.

15 She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family and portions for her female servants. Church doesn't sleep – the House is provided for and ready for action.

16 *She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.* Investment (over and above spending) – this is Missions. She looks outside the House to the harvest – she considers the costs, pays the price and reaps the reward; she invests, and she has a long term view as to where and how she plants – intending to harvest in the years to come.

Mission field: right here and global. All believers are missionaries. Some quote up to 100,000 believers are being martyred each year. CT Studd said: "The "romance" of a missionary is often made up of monotony and drudgery; there often is no glamour in it; it doesn't stir a man's spirit or blood. So, don't come out to be a missionary as an experiment; it is useless and dangerous. Only come if you feel you would rather die than not come. Don't come if you want to make a great name or want to live long. Come if you feel there is no greater honour, after living for Christ, than to die for Him." CT Studd. A wealthy man, English cricketer, gave up everything for the mission field and shook the world with the Gospel.

17 *She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks.* Church is not slack, but valiant – vigorous – not fearful; not afraid of the hill country; the tough country; the country that requires mature approach; the country that hides the bigger challenges/giants; she sets about those tasks with strength – she is up for the purposes of the Bridegroom (v10)

18 *She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.* What she does is useful and intentional; she evaluates; looks at all aspects – doesn't tire of planning or reviewing.

19 *In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.* Focussed – developed – skilled – good at what she does and attends to useful tasks – sits amongst the workers – no task too menial

20 *She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands she reaches out to the needy* (those in want). She welcomes the poor and is open handed – sets example in everything she does; when you work with your hands you have something to share with those in need; she knows she's lending to the Lord in giving to the poor (investing) – she could enlarge herself but she knows what to spend and who to spend it on... she is blessed and is kind and because of her kindness she is further blessed – for these reasons she has no fear of the future. She is seeing it come to pass because she has invested in it. She considers the interests of others.

21 *When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet.*

22 *She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple.*

23 *Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.*

24 *She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.*

25 *She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.*

26 *She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.*

27 *She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.*

28 *Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:*

29 *“Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.”*

30 *Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.*

31 *Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.*

All these excellent things can be applied to the Church.

Key passage: *Proverbs 31: 11-12*: We cannot overestimate the value of the Church – every individual and as a whole – the body of Christ is glorious. *11 Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. 12 She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.*

The Church has not always enjoyed being considered highly valuable - we've looked at that but how do we turn this around; how do we build up this reputation again. Again, a huge part in this is how we ourselves would consider the Church and our part in laying our own reputations and lives down – *Philippians 2* – we see it in Jesus, in Paul and others.

We must see the Church the way God does; find the worth He does; rubies have always been highly valuable but God declares the Church's worth as far above rubies ... her reputation is invaluable; money can't buy it but it can be earned – and overtime – turned around, built up and upheld again; the Church is made of many but is 'one of a kind' – of the Jesus kind, the durable, indestructible kind and not a weapon formed against her will prosper.

Church is Christ in the world; as she is viewed, so Christ is viewed. Our lives are being read every day; people can't truly read our motivation, but they can truly read our actions and can truly hear our conversation. Our lives build the reputation of the Church...this is why she is likened to wisdom – she is the personification of wisdom – she is the manifestation of wisdom – the tangible, visible, audible body to the world, and to the powers and principalities. A key verse over time for us has been:

*Ephesians 3:10-11:10* *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

So how do we build this reputation; how do we make known this manifold wisdom? How do we show the many facets of God – who He is; what He does; how He does it? How do we demonstrate the wisdom of God?

*Philippians 2:13*: *‘for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose. ‘to will’ – willing (designed) and obedient eat the best of the land; ‘to act’ – there is work (Gk: ‘energein’) to do. Will & Act.*

We've looked already at *2:14-16*: *Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure (harmless), “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”[c] Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life.*

We are designed to shine!

*Philippians* – beautiful book – works beautifully together with *Proverbs 31*. So much of Paul's message to us is about the Church; so much about the heart of God - Jesus manifested the wisdom of God by demonstrating the heart of God. We have this same great opportunity to demonstrate the heart of God; build into His reputation; the reputation of the Church – turn around what needs turning around, right the wrongs that sin has made; bring justice to His Name; His cause. Each one of us has such an integral part in this – such an incredible privilege for us to shine. It's all there – the

Church is all there – across the globe – some needs more of a rub to reveal the true treasure; some aspects need to be brought in; some aspects need more attention and some aspects need to work more strategically – but she is all there. Must consider the value (cost) of the Church before you will be willing to pay the price to win again her reputation. She is more valuable than anything you could desire in the natural.

She brings no harm to the Bridegroom – John the Baptist recognised the worth of Jesus – John felt he wasn't worthy to tie His sandals but he submitted to be a forerunner – to go before Jesus and make a way, build a road for Him. Wisdom always builds. (*Proverbs 14:1*). It brings no tarnish.

Look at one simple way we can begin afresh to build up this reputation of the Church today. Jesus laid it out pretty plainly in Philippians which is why the book works so beautifully with Proverbs 31.

Looking Out for Others' Interests; laying our life down for others.

*Look at Philippians 2:4 "Let each of you (us, the Church) look not only to his own interests (things), but also to the interests of others." The word "interests" is a filler. In the original, it's open-ended. All that is specified is "your own (something)" or "the other's (something)." So it could be, "Let each of you look not only to your own financial affairs, or your own property, or your own family, or your own health, or your own reputation, or your own education, or your own success, or your own happiness — don't just think about that, don't just have desires about that, don't just strategize about that, don't just work toward that, but in our considerings look to see how they will also advance the financial affairs and property and family and health, and reputation, and education, and success, and happiness of others (Kingdom)." This is another way of saying 'Loving People'*

There is a way of life where humility counts the needs of others as more significant as your own – not discounting our own needs but including the needs of others – sometimes prioritising them over our own. Jesus personified this. He had everything – if anyone was 'entitled' it was Jesus – but in humility He laid aside everything in order that God's purposes would be fulfilled.

Looking to the interests of others:

Paul saw it in Jesus described in *Philippians 2:5-12*:

*5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Jesus owed us nothing but gave everything for us – loved us, came for us, died for us, forgave us, justified us, ascended for us, made a way that we would be at one with God again – our greatest and eternal need. This is what Paul is talking about when he says we should have that same mindset. See verse 12-13, then 14-16... do everything... becoming blameless and pure (harmless) ... shining like stars... as we continue holding out the word of life...

Paul himself poured himself out like a drink offering so our faith would be strong. (2:17-18)

*17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.*

Paul saw it in *Timothy (2:19-22)*

*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare [literally: your interests, your things]. For they all seek their own interests [there's the exact wording of verse 4], not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.*

Paul saw it in Ephaphroditus (2:25) Poured other for others; rather than being consumed with consumables. Believing for our younger generation coming through. The Bride: she does the Bridegroom no harm; she upholds His reputation. How? In our conversation – our lives; our speech; our deeds; our conduct (private, social and in business).

CT Studd saw a need and changed the world. 'God has a plan for me' is true but if this is where it stops, self is a small picture. Jesus laid down every perk – laid aside His reputation, everything; He poured Himself out and focussed on others to fulfil God's will. We are here for a purpose – to lift Jesus up; to shine for Him; we are missionaries.

Some quotes from CT Studd:

- 'Forward ever, backward never'
- 'Some want to live within the sound of Church or chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop, within a yard of hell.'
- 'Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last.'
- 'If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.'
- 'Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven, without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell, when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle.'
- 'True religion is like the smallpox. If you get it, you give it to others and it spreads.'
- 'The "romance" of a missionary is often made up of monotony and drudgery; there often is no glamour in it; it doesn't stir a man's spirit or blood. So don't come out to be a missionary as an experiment; it is useless and dangerous. Only come if you feel you would rather die than not come. Don't come if you want to make a great name or want to live long. Come if you feel there is no greater honour, after living for Christ, is to die for Him.'
- 'We are frittering away time and money in a multiplicity of conventions, conferences, and retreats, when the real need is to go straight and full steam into battle, with the signal for 'close action' flying.'

Shine!

Good reputation.