

Proverbs 31:25

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

Analysis

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. This verse shifts the metaphorical language from external adornment (rubies, fine clothing) to virtue itself becoming her true apparel. The image of 'strength and honour' (Hebrew: oz and hadar—might, power, splendor, and glory) as 'clothing' suggests that these are not merely internal qualities but visible, publicly recognized characteristics. Just as clothing displays one's status and identity, strength and honor become the defining features visible to others when they encounter this woman. This is not the strength of physical might but the strength of character—capability, resilience, reliability, and integrity—qualities that command respect and trust. The phrase 'and she shall rejoice in time to come' transitions from the present description of the woman's activities and character to her future flourishing. The Hebrew verb samach (rejoice) conveys deep satisfaction and gladness. The reference to 'time to come' (Hebrew: yom acharon—the latter day, future time) suggests that the woman's investment in virtue, industry, and wisdom produces not immediate gratification but enduring joy. This teaching counters the temptation toward short-term thinking that sacrifices long-term flourishing for immediate pleasure. The woman who builds her life on genuine virtue—rather than beauty, manipulation, or dependency—positions herself for lasting satisfaction. The connection between present character and future joy reveals a sophisticated understanding of moral causation. The virtue and strength displayed now become the foundation for future well-being. Her integrity in commercial dealings establishes a reputation that brings continued opportunity. Her care for her household and community builds relationships that sustain her in

older age. Her discipline and wisdom produce material security that enables peace and satisfaction. The proverb teaches that such futures are not gifts of fortune but fruits of character developed through deliberate choice and sustained effort. The rejoicing that comes 'in time to come' represents not mere happiness but the deep satisfaction of knowing one's life has been well-lived and well-built.

Historical Context

This verse appears within the acrostic poem of Proverbs 31, which likely took its current literary form during the Second Temple period (roughly 4th century BCE onward), though it preserves older material reflecting Iron Age social structures. The emphasis on future reward for present virtue reflects broader wisdom literature themes about delayed gratification and long-term consequence. In ancient societies without modern insurance, pensions, or social safety nets, a woman's future security depended almost entirely on the relational and economic foundations she built through her own efforts and on the goodwill she cultivated through virtuous behavior. The concept of 'strength and honour as clothing' would have had particular resonance in an honor-based culture where reputation and public standing determined one's social position and economic opportunities. For women operating within patriarchal constraints, public honor and community respect represented perhaps the most valuable asset available—more reliable than beauty (which faded), more achievable than inherited wealth (for most), and more sustainable than physical attractiveness or youth. The poem celebrates women who secured such honor through demonstrated capability and integrity. The vision of future rejoicing reflects a theological perspective common to wisdom literature: the universe is morally structured such that virtue tends toward flourishing and vice toward deterioration. This is not punishment and reward administered by divine tribunal, but natural consequence emerging from the very structure of reality. A woman who has lived with integrity, industry, and genuine care for others finds herself in old age surrounded by the fruits of those choices—healthy relationships, earned reputation, economic security, and the satisfaction of having lived well. This teaching remained relevant across centuries because it addresses fundamental human concerns about legacy, meaning, and security.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What is the significance of describing strength and honor as 'clothing'? How does this metaphor work, and what does it suggest about the visibility and public recognition of virtue?
2. The verse teaches that the virtuous woman 'shall rejoice in time to come.' How is this future-oriented reward different from immediate gratification, and why might wisdom traditions emphasize this distinction?
3. In what specific ways might the present choices described in Proverbs 31 (economic activity, household management, care for the poor) produce the future rejoicing promised here?
4. How should this teaching be understood in a context where many virtuous people face difficult circumstances despite their righteousness? Does the proverb's promise always hold true?
5. What does this passage suggest about the relationship between external honor/reputation and internal character? Can one exist without the other?

Interlinear Text

עֲזָבָן	לִי	וּמָ	תִּשְׁמַח	כִּי	לְבֹשׁ	הָ	וְיִתְבְּרֹךְ	רִ	וְיִתְבְּרֹךְ	עֲזָבָן	
Strength	and honour		are her clothing		and she shall rejoice		in time		to come		
H5797	H1926		H3830		H7832		H3117		H314		

Additional Cross-References

Job 40:10 (Parallel theme): Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty.

Romans 13:14 (Parallel theme): But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Ephesians 4:24 (Parallel theme): And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Job 29:14 (Parallel theme): I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem.

Isaiah 61:10 (Parallel theme): I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

1 Timothy 2:10 (Parallel theme): But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

Psalms 132:9 (Parallel theme): Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

Psalms 132:16 (Parallel theme): I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.