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GOD'S SECOND BEST GIFT TO MAN
By Duane V. Maxey



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The Best and Greatest Gift of God to Man is the Savior, Christ Jesus, with everything pertaining to His great salvation. His second best gift to Man is Godly Women. Women seem to fare better without husbands than husbands do without their wives. God saw that nothing on earth could supply the void in Adam's life but a holy help-mate. So, after saying, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him, the Lord God made a woman, and brought her unto the man" (cf. Gen. 2:18, 22).

God's first and Best Gift to Adam was Himself. His Second Best Gift was Eve. When God "brought her unto the man," she was Adam's perfect help-mate:-- the

completer of his being, the companion of his soul, the compliment of his holiness, and the compeller of his attraction toward all that was holy, godly, lovely, and uplifting. In her pristine purity, Eve exemplified Godly Womanhood as the Creator's Second Best Gift to Man, and Godly Womanhood is still that Second Best Gift today.

It is true that this Second Best Gift of God is becoming more and more rare. Even back in Bible times it was asked: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10). But, the more rare, the more valuable! -- and thus every virtuous and godly woman today is an immense treasure, worth far, far more than her weight in gold! "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband" (Prov. 12:4), and with that "crown of righteousness" her mate can be a king whose armies wage victorious warfare against the kingdom of darkness in this world.

Like Ruth of old, many a godly woman has come out of poverty to reign with her king. Ruth's unselfish labors and virtue became well-known quickly after she came into Canaan with Naomi. Boaz spotted someone in his fields who was more valuable to him than all of his fields and wealth, and said to Ruth, "all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman." Ruth was poor monetarily, but wealthy morally and spiritually, and Boaz wasn't about to let that treasure escape his grasp. You know the rest of the story.

"House and riches are the inheritance of fathers," but "a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Prov. 19:14). Wealthy is the man who receives such a Second Best Gift from God!

John B. Culpepper did. In his book, "Some Women I Have Known" (hdm2216), he writes thus about his dear wife, Mellie:

"That's the name of the woman I call wife. She came to me as a Christmas present in 1873, when she was in innocent, guileless sixteen. From then till now she has been a lovely dream, a choice flower, a perfect song, the departure of my sorrows, an Italian sky, an Aeolian harp, a sleepless sentry, an angel of God, the mother of my children -- Mellie. In her eyes I have been worth the while of grace, God, Heaven. Through her my children have come to the beauty of paternal, reverence and obedience.

"The fact that she always sees something good in me has beguiled me into hoping that God and the angels will. In twenty-nine years I have not heard her say a word I'd blush to see in print, or hate to hear in the parlor. When our children were smaller, I said to one of them one day, 'Who is the best woman you know?' The older boy said, 'Sister Dewy, my Sunday-school teacher.' I asked the other boy. 'Sister Heath, my Sunday-school teacher.' I asked Blanche. 'Why, Mamma,' said the little tot. Burke exclaimed: 'Why, of course, Mamma is; she is the best woman in the world. Everybody knows that. But papa ain't talking about her; he's speaking about common women, ain't you, papa?'

"I slipped away and sought the seclusion of my closet and said, 'O, my good Father, if Thou wilt help me to live that way so that my children will rule me out of the count, just as a horse is ruled off the turf who has repeatedly [out]-distanced everything in the land -- I'll here and now agree to be a boot-black in Heaven, and never be caught out the front way at all. Only let me stand equal to this woman in the eyes of these children.'

"It is she who has given me great views of wifehood, motherhood, womanhood. After becoming well acquainted with her, I found it easy to believe that God and a good woman could redeem a world."

There's nothing quite like a godly woman to lift a man's soul toward "a higher perch" spiritually. In his book "A Day In The Lord's Court" (hdm2592), J. B. Chapman wrote:

"Yesterday a godly woman whose sanity and saintliness are above reproach with those who know her, told of a dream in which her own soul assumed the form of a flying bird winging its way across the fields of time toward its home in heaven. But the bird was not flying very high above the earth; and along on the earth, following the shadow of the wing-weary bird, was a dragon of frightful mien and hungry jaws. For a time the bird kept its advantage, but the woman was awakened by a voice which spoke to the dragon, saying: 'Follow on. The bird will at last become so weary that it will find a perch on a low limb of some tree, and there you will be able to catch and devour it.'

"The dream was depressing to the awakened Christian. But after a time of prayer and consideration, she remembered that the voice had actually admitted that her soul (in the form of the bird) was now free and triumphant, and that the encouragement to the beast had been based on the prophecy that she would yet become weary and settle on a low perch somewhere. And so she drew courage from the word of her foe, and arose to say: 'The mention of a low perch suggests that there are higher perches, and to these I will fly, and there the dragon will not be able to reach me. Pray for me that I may fly on, even if my wings do become weary, and that if I must settle for rest upon a branch, that I may find a perch so high that the old black dragon of my dream shall not be able to reach me.'

"The sin of the low perch! How strong the appeal and how destroying the consequences! How devastating the final results! The dragon cannot indeed catch us while we are 'on the wing,' but he is known for his perseverance, and would swallow us up at the last. The only safe resting place is in the 'high places' of God. 'He shall dwell on high,' said the prophet regarding those who are safe; and 'His place of defence shall be the munition of rocks.' Here, as in earthly warfare, 'offense is the best defense.' True spirituality is the cure for worldliness, and to have the house of the heart fully occupied by the Holy Spirit is the way to keep evil spirits from finding lodging there."

How often God uses the wooing influence of a godly woman winging her way to "a higher perch" to entice her husband, her children, and others in her family to fly upward spiritually also. Had not mother Eve fallen, she would have continually helped Adam to fly upward into higher and higher spiritual climes with God. Few as they are, redeemed and godly women ARE doing this today.

One of the worst gifts a man can have is a Delightful Delilah who will entice him into that which weakens and destroys him spiritually, but, besides Christ Himself this Christmas, the best gift a man can have in his house is a Godly Wife and Mother of his children.

My heaven-gone brother, I. Parker Maxey, wrote in his book, "We'll Get To That Later" (hdm0129):

"In 1677 a licentious man married a licentious woman. From that union came 1900 descendants. Of these descendants 771 were criminals, 39 were murderers; only ten learned a trade and they learned it in prison. They spent a combined total of 1,300 years in prison and cost the state of New York nearly three million dollars. That is what two ungodly people in marriage did for the United States.

"But look at the family record of Jonathan Edwards, the great preacher. This godly man married a godly woman. They had 1,344 descendants. Of this number 295 were college graduates, 13 were college professors, 65 were college presidents, 186 were ministers, 101 were lawyers, 86 were state senators, and three were congressmen. There were also 30 judges and one vice-president of the United States. Not one of these descendants was ever accused of crime. That is what two godly people in marriage can do for the world.

"How thankful I am for my own Godly Heritage!"

In his book, "My Wife" (hdm0517), James Blaine Chapman said of his heaven-gone wife, Maude:

"I am habitually a fairly early riser. She was always awake when I got up, but frequently spent the better part of an hour praying before herself arising to dress. From this time of early morning prayer she would come with spiritual freshness to meet the duties and privileges of the day. Wherever we stayed at night, she insisted on a special prayer in the morning before resuming the journey of the day, and this was more than a formal prayer; it was a prayer that made the day different. I do not believe there is any title that I could give her that would be more fitting and more true than to say, 'She was a woman of prayer.' But lest that term should suggest an unbalanced character and practice, I rather prefer to say, 'She was a godly woman.' And because I have lived with one like that for thirty-seven years, I say, 'Let me live the life of the righteous and let my last end be like hers.' For without the slightest shadow of doubt my wife went home to heaven."

What a gift she was to Dr. Chapman! And, before his death he was blessed with another of like caliber: Louise (Robinson) Chapman.

In the biography of Samuel Logan Brengle, "Portrait Of A Prophet" by Clarence W. Hall (hdm0694), Brengle says:

"It was while continuing my professional studies in an Eastern University that the conviction possessed me that my wife must not only have sweet womanly virtues, be adorned with refinement and the culture of the schools, but that she must be genuinely religious, must love God and His law supremely, for without this I realized we should fail in the highest fellowship. But with this love and loyalty we could not fail.

"But where could I find such a woman? Solomon was a very wise man and had a very wide marital experience, and he said, 'A prudent wife is from the Lord.' If she is from the Lord, why not ask Him for her? Why not pray to Him to find her? And this I did."...

Months and years passed, during which he met many young women of grace, accomplishment, goodness; but none had disturbed his heart or caused him to suspect that she was God's woman for him. Then Elizabeth Swift; a chum hearing her speak, and rushing back to the seminary to say, "Sam, I've found just the girl for you"; and Brengle going to the church, looking upon the little woman clad in Salvation Army uniform, and having feelings which, expressed later, were:

"We met, and I fell in love -- I lost my heart. Here she was, the sweet, gracious, cultured woman, filled with God's love, one my head and heart approved, and for whose dear sake I had denied myself in lonely hours of fierce temptation (though I had not seen her face), and for whom I had prayed and watched and waited."

Thus his answer, received as instantaneously and with as much finality as though God Himself had sent an angel to lead her by the hand and present her to him.

What an uplifting gift Elizabeth (Swift) Brengle became for her husband! -- a rare treasure, well worth his waiting until she was presented by God to him.

A Godly Woman will help lead her husband, her family, and all others around her -- all the way out of the world and all the way into heaven.

In his book, "Evangelistic Talks" (hdm2221), Rodney "Gipsy" Smith wrote:

I wonder if any of you have read of Mrs. Margaret B____, who was the founder of the King's Daughters in America. She was the widow of a godly Methodist preacher. She was a godly woman, a mother in Israel. Her face was a benediction

and to hear her pray was to be lifted a little nearer to God. I met her the last time at Ocean Grove during the camp meeting and she came to me and said, "I have a story to tell you. I know you can use it. I was walking early this morning on the board walk and a little boy out there in a boat who knew me shouted out, 'Mrs. B____, won't you get into my boat and have a row?' And I looked back and said, 'Yes, I believe I will.' So I went to the steps and waited for him, and I got on the bottom step just above the water -- it was a calm, beautiful morning -- and he came along, and when he came close up and the boat was steady, I stood firmly on one foot and touched the edge of the boat with the other foot, I just touched the edge of the boat and of course the boat went out and left me. So the little fellow came back again and steadied his boat again and then I changed my foot and tried the other one, and of course the boat went out again and left me, and the little fellow scratched his head and said, 'Why don't you get in all of you?' That is it, get in all of you. You know you have one foot in the world and you are trying to keep one in the church and they don't go very well together. Get all in. Get into the depths."

More than once, revivals have come through godly women. In his book, "Revival Sermons" (hdm0049), Beverly Carradine wrote:

"What says the Bible, 'When two on earth are agreed as touching anything, it shall be done.'

"Dr. Finney of evangelistic fame remembered this and never rested until he had one other person agonizing in prayer with himself for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon his meeting. At one place he had a particularly long struggle. One night after midnight while on the floor praying for God to come, he heard the sounds of a voice in interceding prayer in the room about him. Going to his door and listening, he discovered that it was the voice of a godly woman in the house, and heard her sighs and sobs and petitions that God would send down the grace and power of salvation on the town. Dr. Finney with a happy smile closed his door and returned triumphant to his room saying, 'We have the scriptural number of two, and shall have the victory.' It came the next day in great power."

In "Choice Illustrations" (hdm0233), Earl C. Wolf also wrote of the impact of one a godly woman in London.

"In London more than a century ago there lived a godly woman. She was a hopeless invalid and could not attend church, but she could and did pray. It happened that a Chicago newspaper was put into her hands. Her attention was drawn to the story of a young man by the name of Moody who was having a revival in his church. Immediately she began to pray for God to send him to England and to her church. Her church was large and had many adherents but desperately needed a genuine spiritual awakening.

"Many months passed. One Sunday her sister came home from church, and said they had had a surprise at church; a young man named Dwight L. Moody had

attended and was asked to preach, and the whole congregation was strangely stirred. They had asked him to preach again that night. The invalid sister was thrilled at the answer to her prayers. She told her sister of her previous prayer, told her not to bring her any dinner, and asked her to join in prayer that God would come in great victory upon her church that night.

"What happened that night in history? Dwight L. Moody preached and hundreds were saved. The revival went on there and then spread over all England and back to America. The faithful intercessor had not only brought a revival to her church but had thrust D. L. Moody out on his great career of evangelism that brought hundreds of thousands to Jesus Christ."

In "The Whosoever Gospel" (hdm0892), Aaron Merritt Hills told of another godly woman whose influence Charles G. Finney felt:

"When President Finney was holding revival-meetings in Central New York, at the time of his greatest usefulness, he was one night awakened from his sleep in the dead of the night. He rose up on his bed, and listened to see what it was that had awakened him. It was a godly woman praying in the next room, and he heard her say, 'O, the holiness of God!' and a second time, 'O, the holiness of God!' and then a third time, 'O, the holiness of God!' Her very soul was ravished in contemplation of the holiness of God."

Like sweet incense rising from the altar, the influence of this godly woman was a gift of God in this world, but it is indeed sad as this Christmas approaches, that God's Second Best Gift to Man has become so rare.

In "Knowing God" (hdm0341), Joseph Benjamin McBride said:

"My mother was a godly woman, and a Methodist. I know but little of her history, or her people. Her name was Sarah Mills. She was born in Missouri, near Carthage. She died leaving father with five children. The writer was then a little barefoot boy, but the scene I shall never forget. There were three older than I, a brother and two sisters, who have long since left us; and one younger, a sister, who is still living. I well remember that when mother died, Father was away on business, and Mother called us children to her bedside, prayed for us, committed us to a tender heavenly Father, and in triumph went home to God. What a pity when a good mother dies! The family was broken up, and we children were placed in other homes until father married again. My stepmother at that time was a young worldly society woman, but had many good traits of character. But our home was a home without a Bible, without a Christ, without a prayer; and without thanks at the table, except when a minister or some professed Christian might chance to be there, then out of respect the visitor was asked to grace the table."

No doubt J. B. McBride later became a saved and sanctified man of God due, a great deal, to the early, godly influence of his mother -- and in spite of the later influence of his step-mother.

As Christmas approaches, the gift of Godly Womanhood has become exceedingly rare, but as stated: "the more rare, the more valuable," and the more appreciated and prized it should be.

In his biography of "Freeborn Garrettson" (hdm0168), Ezra Squier Tipple wrote:

"Horace Bushnell used to tell of his grandmother, a godly woman, up in the wilds of Vermont, who started a religious public service, had her timid husband make the prayers, and called into service the talents of an unchristian young man of the region for the reading of a printed Sermon from Sunday to Sunday. After a time She reached the conclusion that he had the making of a preacher in him, and said to him one day as he came from the pulpit that God wanted him to be a Methodist minister. 'But I am not a Christian,' he said. 'No matter, you are called to be a Christian and a preacher both, in one call, as Saul was.' That young man was Elijah Hedding."

She was right, and Elijah Hedding became one of the early bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church. One godly woman impacted a young man, and he a denomination, and that denomination was for decades the mightiest influence for God and Holiness on this continent.

One godly woman today can still be God's Second Best Gift to Man, and influence young Elishas to take up the mantle of ascended Elijahs with the cry, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" (2 Kings 2:14) as they begin to go out and "do exploits" for Christ.

As I bring this little article on toward conclusion, let me quote again from "My Wife" (hdm0517), by J. B. Chapman:

"My wife always wanted a home. Five times we thought we were settled: once when we bought a house in Pilot Point, Texas; once when we bought in Durant, Oklahoma; twice when we bought in Peniel, Texas; and once when we built in Bethany, Oklahoma. But each time God, in His providence, stirred up our nest like the eagle. But I know this necessity was always a sacrifice to her, and in delirium during her last sickness, she would still murmur, 'I want a home.' Thank God, she has found it now, even though it was her lot to be a pilgrim and a stranger upon this earth."

As Christmas approaches, every man who has the gift of a godly woman in his life should be ever so grateful -- even if he receives no other gift. That godly woman is an influence to help a man fly to "a higher perch". Her home is in Heaven,

and the sweet tug of her influence bids you join her there. Triumphant men in the Holy City will be Thanking God forever for the Gift of Godly Women in this world!

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THE END