

Biblical Soul Care
Lesson 6 “The Reverent Worship of God”
Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Introduction: Ecclesiastes 5 opens with an exhortation to have truth and reverence in the worship of God. Qoheleth, the Preacher-King, began his book by talking about the vanity of life, the fleeting, vaporous sometimes futile existence of life under the sun. He has taken us through the unsatisfying pursuit of materialism/wealth, pleasure and envious, greedy toil. He has observed the presence of injustice and oppression. He has spotlighted the dangers of isolation and purposeless labor. But now the Preacher addresses the assembly, the Shepherd addresses his flock, the Teacher instructs his listeners/learners. He has observed the people in worship and has wisdom and instructions to share. For the first time we see Solomon give direct imperatives and practical exhortations to his people, that are just as much for us as they were for the people who lived in his day. Solomon returns to a prominent theme of his, and that is a high view of God that results in a proper fear/reverence of Him which leads us to live a life worth living under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. ² Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few. ³ For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words. ⁴ When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. ⁶ Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? ⁷ For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear.

Question: What truths do learn in regard to God?

Question: What is the house of God? Do we have such a place or assembly in our day that equates well with this setting in Ecclesiastes?

Verses 1-3 contain a series of 4 commands

1. Guard your steps.

Going to Church? Guard your steps! This is a word of caution to the careless. When you go to worship God, be prepared, be intentional, have a sense of both gravity and gladness. As you enter the doors, realize that what you have to say pales compared to what God has to say. Draw near to listen and listen with care (Luke 8:18). Those who draw near to listen, also draw near to learn and obey. Borgman

2. Draw near to listen.

Listening pre-supposes a spoken word. Therefore the worshiper should come to hear God's Word spoken by God Himself or by His chosen spokesman. Listening alone, however, does not exhaust the intent of the text. To listen is to obey. Listening and obeying the Word of God take place only through submission to Him as the Sovereign Lord of one's life. 'Draw near to listen' echoes 'Go near and hear' in Deuteronomy 5:27, which specifically identifies God as the speaker and the commitment of the hearer to 'do it'. The concept that rises to prominence is that worship is theocentric (God-centered). Worship is about entering the presence of almighty God. Barrick

Questions to ask ourselves: Am I ready to listen to the voice of God? Is my heart open to spiritual instruction? Are my ears attentive to the message I will hear from the Bible?

James 1: But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.

3. Do not be hasty in word or thought. (For God is in heaven and you are on earth)

Do we really mean what we say when we stand and worship in the house of God? It is easy to read a psalm or sing a hymn or confess a creed without ever thinking about what it means.

"God is in heaven and you are on earth." This is one of the best verses for putting us back in our place. John Calvin said that knowing God and knowing ourselves is the sum of all wisdom. Ecclesiastes 5:2 gives us that wisdom. God is in Heaven; He is the eternal Deity who made the universe. We are on earth; we are mortal beings, limited in time and space. There is a vast difference between the finite and the infinite. The difference between God in Heaven and us on earth is fundamental to any proper view of the world-what theologians call the Creator/creature distinction. This distinction has practical implications for what we say when we worship. We need to know our place, remembering who is God and who we are. Knowing how widely the divine nature differs from our own, let us quietly remain within our proper limits. Ryken

4. Let your words be few.

Jesus Christ is our perfect example for all of this. The Bible says, “if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man” (James 3:2). Jesus Christ is that perfect man. Every word he ever spoke is true. Jesus never made a rash comment. Even when He was persecuted, He did not respond in unrighteous anger. To the end of His life, when He was dying on the cross, every word that Jesus ever spoke was carefully chosen.

Jesus has grace to help us speak words that are pleasing to God. The Savior of perfect speech can touch our lips with His grace. By the power of the Holy Spirit, He will teach us how to use the words we speak for the glory of God. Ryken

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. Colossians 3:17

Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 Teaching from the Preacher on vows, many words and fearing God

⁴ When you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him. ⁵ It is better to say nothing than to make a promise and not keep it. ⁶ Don't let your mouth make you sin. And don't defend yourself by telling the Temple messenger that the promise you made was a mistake. That would make God angry, and he might wipe out everything you have achieved. ⁷ Talk is cheap, like daydreams and other useless activities. Fear God instead. NLT

⁴ When you make a vow *or* a pledge to God, do not put off paying it; for *God takes* no pleasure in fools [who thoughtlessly mock Him]. Pay what you vow. ⁵ It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. ⁶ Do not allow your speech to cause you to sin, and do not say before the messenger (priest) *of God* that it was a

mistake. Why should God be angry because of your voice (words) and destroy the work of your hands? ⁷For in a multitude of dreams and in a flood of words there is worthlessness. Rather [reverently] fear God [and worship Him with awe-filled respect, knowing who He is]. AMP

Question: Can you think of vows or promises made to God from either the Old Testament or New Testament? Either foolish or wise?

Commands in this section include:

Do not be late in fulfilling the vow (verse 4).

Pay what you vow (verse 4)

Do not let your speech cause you to sin (verse 6)

Do not say that it was a mistake (verse 6)

Fear God (verse 7)

Six elements of Fearing God (Bill Barrick Ecclesiastes book)

First, one must trust God completely (Psalm 115:11)

Second, one must experience God's forgiveness in reality (Psalm 130:4)

Third, one must sincerely delight in God's Word (Psalm 112:1)

Fourth, one must go beyond delighting in God's Word by actually keeping (obeying) it (Psalm 119:63; Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Fifth, one must sincerely and consistently hate evil (Proverbs 8:13).

Sixth, one must steadfastly hope in God's loyal love (Psalm 147:11)

