

Ecclesiastes Chapter 5

We begin reading chapter 5 today.

In the first 7 verses, we are cautioned against making hasty vows to God.

Has anyone of us ever done that?

Promised God if he would do something for us, we would do something for Him?

I'm sure we all have, but here is what the bible tells us about making vows we are not prepared to keep.

These 7 verses give emphasis of the folly of an empty religious profession before a sovereign God: "God is in heaven, and thou upon earth" we'll read (in verse 2).

The angel is better translated as "the messenger of God," referring to the priest who served as mediator between God and man in the Old Testament.

This is a prelude to the book's concluding admonition to approach God with reverence.

Ecclesiastes 5:1 "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil."

The house of God is referring to the temple Solomon built in Jerusalem.

Acts 7:33 tells us: "Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground."

Anywhere God is, is holy ground.

It matters not whether it is in the temple in Jerusalem, the tabernacles of those days, or our churches today.

God is there where true believers meet.

The way to "keep our foot" is to walk in the Light.

John 8:12 "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

This path with the Light of Jesus leads us safely to the house of God.

James 1:19 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:"

God is still speaking today, but few are listening.

The sacrifice that God wants is our obedience and praise of Him.

Hebrews 13:15 "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [our] lips giving thanks to his name."

1 Samuel 15:22 "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey [is] better than sacrifice, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams."

God does not want the formality of keeping His law.

He wants us to obey Him, love Him, and praise Him.

He wants our hearts.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter [any] thing before God: for God [is] in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."

Because God is in heaven and man is on earth, rash promises and arguments before Him are foolish.

We just read James 1:19 about being quick to listen and slow to speak.

Now we continue with James 1:20 "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

James 3:2 - "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same [is] a perfect man, [and] able also to bridle the whole body."

The tongue is an evil weapon that destroys.

We must let the Spirit of God bridle our tongues.

Matthew 12:36 "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

And we must also be careful not to pray amiss.

James 4:3 "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume [it] upon your lusts."

Ecclesiastes 5:3 "For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice [is known] by multitude of words."

Dreams happen for a number of reasons.

One thing that causes us to dream is when we have eaten something that does not agree with us.

Another reason we dream, is an attack from Satan.

We, sometimes, work very hard and our mind cannot slow down when we sleep.

This is what is spoken of in the verse above.

We do have dreams from God many times, as well.

These dreams can be telling us of something that will happen, or they may guide us in some manner.

We must learn to tell where our dreams are from.

In the last part, of the verse above, we see that too much talking can cause us to sin.

Proverbs 10:19 "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips [is] wise."

In other words, listen carefully and speak rarely!!

Matthew 6:7 "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [do]: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Ecclesiastes 5:4 "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for [he hath] no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed."

Promises made to God have serious implications.

The Old Testament background for this admonition is found (in Deut. 23:21-23 and Judges 11:35).

As you see below, Ananias and Sapphira learned this the hard way.

Anyone remember who had promised something to God, then didn't do what they had said?

Remember a man and his wife?

Ananias and Sapphira found out how dangerous it was to vow a vow to God, and not keep it.

God killed them both.

Acts 5:3-5 "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back [part] of the price of the land?" "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." "And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things."

Sapphira is shown separately, to show her own sin killed her, not her husband's.

Acts 5:10 "Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying [her] forth, buried [her] by her husband."

It is a dangerous thing to vow a vow to God and, not keep it.

Ecclesiastes 5:5 "Better [is it] that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."

Jesus explains it very well in the following Scriptures.

Matthew 5:34-37 "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:"
"Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King."
"Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black."
"But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

Ecclesiastes 5:6 "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it [was] an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?"

Don't vow something that your fleshly desire will cause you to break.

It's been mentioned several times before, that the flesh, or the spirit, rules the will of a person.

When the flesh rules, we are not pleasing to God.

The mouth speaks of the abundance of the heart.

If our heart is controlled by the flesh, it is wicked, and evil things come out of our mouth.

On the other hand, if our hearts are controlled by the spirit, then we say good things.

Luke 6:45 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

Ecclesiastes 5:7 "For in the multitude of dreams and many words [there are] also [divers] vanities: but fear thou God."

Earlier, we spoke about how dreams come from various places.

You must not base your belief on just dreams.

The dreams could be from a source other than God.

The dreams that are safe to believe, are those that line up with the Word of God.

We find that people who believe in just dreams are really not grounded well in the Word of God.

The man who is rash with his vows will live to regret them.

Prayers prayed amiss, are also a downfall.

Put your faith in God.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 5:8 "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for [he that is] higher than the highest regardeth; and [there be] higher than they."

Officials have an unfair advantage to attain wealth.

The person, who has been placed as judge of others, must remember there is a judge of all the earth that he will have to stand before himself.

With whatever judgment he judges, he will be judged.

"Marvel", in this Scripture above, is speaking of being amazed or wondering.

Colossians 4:1 "Masters, give unto [your] servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."

Ecclesiastes 5:9 "Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king [himself] is served by the field."

One need not be surprised at oppression on every rung of the governmental ladder.

However, man may take comfort in the knowledge that kings too, are subject to a higher power.

God made the earth and everything in it, for the use of man.

It all belongs to God.

We are allowed the use of parts of it at the times God chooses to allow us.

The king may get a little more of the benefit from the earth (in a material way), than the common man, but it all belongs to God.

The king is no different than the common man, except God made him king.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this [is] also vanity."

This speaks of someone who has made silver or wealth his god.

When a person does this, he is never satisfied he has enough.

It is not wealth itself, but the drive for wealth that does not satisfy.

The rich also have their own set of woes: wealth attracts dependents (seen in verse 11), and causes restlessness (seen in verse 12).

1 Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Ecclesiastes 5:11 "When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good [is there] to the owners thereof, saving the beholding [of them] with their eyes?"

Solomon is expressing the fact that wealth has many hidden problems.

This is saying, if you suddenly come into a great deal of money, you will have relatives and friends, whose names you cannot remember, come to share in your good fortune.

Increase in your wealth is an open door for others to ask for loans and financial assistance of all kinds.

The only real gain the person has is in the knowledge the wealth is there.

It can be very fleeting.

Wealth does not improve your taste for food.

It does not help you sleep better.

It, possibly, might cause you to sleep less.

It is questionable whether it is a blessing, or a curse.

Earthly treasures are precarious and bring disadvantages; they produce anxiety (verse 12), and pain (verse 13).

They disappear through bad business (verse 14), and are left at death (verse 15).

They can even produce fear (verse 17).

Ecclesiastes 5:12 "The sleep of a laboring man [is] sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep."

The laborer comes in tired from the physical work he has done.

He does not have enough money, or someone is constantly trying to cheat him out of it.

He lays his head on the pillow and sleeps.

The rich possibly, are not physically tired, because they have not worked.

Their minds will not calm down long enough to cause them to sleep.

They must be constantly on guard, so as not to lose their money.

Proverbs 3:24 "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet."

Ecclesiastes 5:13 "There is a sore evil [which] I have seen under the sun, [namely], riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."

Wealth is easily lost and is therefore an unsure foundation for life.

What this scripture is saying is those who hoard their money and possessions, refusing to share with others, will lead a very unhappy and miserable life.

But wait, it gets even worse, they die and then the worst happens to them.

1 Timothy 6:17 "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;"

1 Timothy 6:18-19 "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;" "Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Mark 10:25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Ecclesiastes 5:14 "But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and [there is] nothing in his hand."

Riches are here today and gone tomorrow.

It is the Lord that determines just how much of the riches of the world He can entrust you with.

1 Samuel 2:7 "The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up."

Just because a person has great riches does not mean they will still have them, when it is time to pass them on to their children.

God is the one who determines that.

The absolute worst thing that can happen to people is to suddenly come into a lot of money and not knowing how to use it wisely.

Most spend it and end up more miserable and unhappy than before because they had their "dream", only to lose it all.

Many lives have been ruined in this way.

Ecclesiastes 5:15 "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labor, which he may carry away in his hand."

Death cancels out the riches a man possesses on the earth.

When he dies, the things he possessed on the earth pass on to someone else.

The only things we will possess in heaven are the things we stored there, when we were still alive.

Luke 12:20 "But God said unto him, [Thou] fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

I Timothy 6:7 "For we brought nothing into [this] world, [and it is] certain we can carry nothing out."

Ecclesiastes 5:16 "And this also [is] a sore evil, [that] in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?"

The wind is spoken of here, because we do not know where it comes from, and we do not know where it goes.

Besides, can you hold the wind?

Riches are as transient as the wind.

They come rather unexpectedly, and leave the same way.

John 6:27 "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

Ecclesiastes 5:17 "All his days also he eateth in darkness, and [he hath] much sorrow and wrath with his sickness."

Money cannot buy you health, or happiness.

Eating in darkness indicates he had not sought God.

He was sick at the loss of his money.

His greatest concern should have been nearing death without God, instead he was more concerned about nearing death without money.

In contrast to the anxiety of those just described (in verses 12-17), for those who consider God as the source of wealth, there are pleasures, riches and the ability to enjoy them (see 2:24).

Ecclesiastes 5:18 "Behold [that] which I have seen: [it is] good and comely [for one] to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it [is] his portion."

“Comely” is the same word translated (in 3:11), meaning appropriate.

Once again, Solomon uses an admonition to enjoy the richness of life that God gives.

The things that God provides for our use here on the earth, we should be thankful for.

Those who pray and thank God for all they have are doing the will of God.

Paul teaches a very good lesson in the following verse.

Philippians 4:11 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, [therewith] to be content." We must be thankful to God for what we have been provided, regardless if it is great, or small."

Ecclesiastes 5:19 "Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; this [is] the gift of God."

We are what we are, by the grace of God.

God makes some rich.

He makes others poor.

He sets kings on their thrones.

Solomon is just thanking God for all the bountiful world blessings God has bestowed upon him.

To understand this is to enjoy the satisfaction of His good gifts.

Deuteronomy 8:18 "But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for [it is] he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as [it is] this day."

Ecclesiastes 5:20 "For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth [him] in the joy of his heart."

It is very difficult, when we get a little older, to look back into our lives and remember the details.

The person who learns to accept things day by day in the peace that Christ provides, does not fret about things that might have been.

Romans 5:11 "And not only [so], but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

When a person recognizes the goodness of God, he rejoices and does not dwell unduly on the troubles detailed in the previous context.

Enjoyment is a gift of God, and man should be motivated by the brevity of his own life to experience it.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 5 Questions

1. Where is holy ground?
2. How can we "Keep our foot"?
3. Let every man be _____ to hear, and _____ to speak.
4. What is the sacrifice that God wants from us?
5. To _____ is better than sacrifice.
6. Let thy words be _____.
7. If any man offend not in word, the same is a _____ man.
8. We must let the _____ of _____ bridle our tongues.
9. Why do we ask, and receive not?
10. What causes dreams?
11. The heathen think that they shall be heard for their _____.
12. Who broke a vow to God, and were killed for it?
13. Swear _____ at all.
14. Why can we not afford to swear?
15. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy _____ to sin.
16. The _____, or the _____, rules the will of a person.
17. Why should you not base your belief on dreams?
18. The _____ of _____ is the beginning of wisdom.
19. What must the judges on this earth remember?
20. What is "marvel" in verse 8 speaking of?
21. Who is verse 10 speaking of?

22. What happens, when your goods increase?
23. Why does a laborer sleep better?
24. Who makes a person rich, or poor?
25. Why is the wind spoken of in verse 16?
26. What does "eating in darkness" indicate?
27. What had Paul learned about wealth?
28. How did we receive atonement?