



ST. PAUL'S BIBLE STUDY

Ecclesiastes
5:1-7

Pastor's Notes

The previous chapters have spent a lot of time talking about life under the sun—life without God. However, in the beginning portions of chapter 5, we hear about mankind's relationship to God. And as we will hear, this is not a relationship of mankind busily climbing to God, but rather, hearing and receiving.

V. 1 In verse 1 we hear about the right posture of mankind towards God. We hear about the proper attitude of the Christian toward God when we go to the house of God in worship. And what is that attitude? We are called to guard our steps. That is to say; we are to be mindful of what we are doing when we go to worship the Lord. There are two pitfalls that we can fall into though. First, we can drift into formalism—the kind of worship that is rote. Yes, it is easy to not guard our steps and resort to mechanical repetition—the thoughtless life of faithless people. Second, we can fall into the opposite side of the ditch which is a radical so-called spirit-filled worship attitude where we are overcome by emotions, hype, and euphoria. Yes, it is easy to be carried away, not by formalism, but by emotions and feelings. Both of these are errors! Both of these are ways in which we do not guard our hearts when we go to the house of God. We are not dead ritualists! We are not unhinged enthusiasts! Worship services are not contemporary laser shows or folksy entertainment or gaudy ritualistic spectacles!

So, what is the proper attitude in worship? It is not pious thoughts from the soul. It is not militant seriousness from the grit of one's bones. It is not flighty emotions from the heart. No! The Word of God informs right worship. The Word of God not only brings about fear/respect in the hearer but also joy and gratitude. And how does the Word do this? It does this as we Christians posture ourselves in an attitude of receptivity—listening.

The attitude for proper worship is 'listening' not speaking! God is not the audience in Christian wor-

ship, we are. God is the one who speaks; we listen. We are the receivers, which means we must listen.

The sacrifice of fools refers to those who talk and act in worship without listening. Ever been to a radical charismatic worship service? Tragically, God never speaks from His Word because the church is too busy singing and speaking to God to somehow gain His approval. "I hope God is pleased with our worship today," they will say. And so, they will always worship without assurance; they are too busy speaking and singing, to listen to the news that, "For Christ's sake, God is already pleased with them!" Consider 1 Samuel 15:22! "To listen/heed/believe is better than sacrifice!"

V. 2 Again, we see the posture of the Christian before God! Our general posture should be to listen! In fact, this should be our posture in life! If you don't know what you are talking about, don't speak. Listen! The best human output is to affirm what God has already said. The best preachers are those who speak back to the congregation what God has already said in His Word!

V. 3 Fools get so wrapped up in themselves that they can't hear anything! What a tragedy! This is a picture of a person so caught up in his little world that he can only talk about himself and for himself. What a fool! He is not only boring before other, but is also a fool before God.

V. 4-5 Don't make promises you can't keep. It is better to rely on God's promises—promises that He will always keep.

V. 6 Avoid making lame excuses. "Oops, I meant well," is not legit. Broken promises get magnified when lame excuses are made. It is better not to make promises in the first place that we can't keep.

V. 7 From Bollhagen, *"Instead of dreaming, questioning, pursuing, worrying, analyzing, explaining, rationalizing, and generally wearing oneself out, replace all that activity with one thing: trust God like a little child for everything."* Stop talking and listen to the Lord's promises for you! Listen first, before worrying. Listen first to God's promises before getting worked up. Shut the mouth; hear; receive; rest.