

## Hasty Words (1)

Ryan Goodwin

***“Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil. Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few. For the dream comes through much effort, and the voice of a fool through many words. When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness. Rather, fear God”*** (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7).

### Guard Your Steps

*“Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil”* (5:1). It is important for us to consider our ways before we go into the house of God for worship. Are we only worshipping because it is the popular thing to do? Or is it that we only worship God to make sure we are not hounded by our brethren? In any case, we must *“guard our steps”* to make sure we are entering worship with the proper attitude, and for righteous motives! It is sad that so many people offer worship in vain – so many will *“offer the sacrifice of fools”* without even knowing they are doing something wrong. Is this not true for many who have fallen from the faith, or who have never even known the truth? God does not allow ignorance as an excuse for not obeying the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 2 Timothy 3:6-7), neither does He tolerate vain worship (Matthew 15:9). Part of guarding your steps before entering the house of God would also include resolving any sinful or distracting situations before devoting yourself to the service of worship (Matthew 5:23-24).

*“Draw near to listen. . .”* Sometimes it is just better to listen. We often think that intelligence or wisdom is based on how much we say, but according to this verse, as well as Proverbs 9:9, a wise man is one who chooses to listen and learn. We do not know everything, and admitting our shortcomings is much more mature than covering up our faults with empty or vain words.

### Hasty Words and Impulsive Thoughts

*“Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God”* (5:2). There are certain things about which we do not need to pray. Truly, God is not concerned about the latest gossip, a long wish-list of blessings, or even vain repetition, as the Pharisees were known to do (Matthew 6:7). When it comes to prayer, length or eloquence mean nothing before God – He is not impressed with all of our fancy words or ‘filler.’ God would rather hear a very succinct but meaningful, heartfelt, and genuine prayer than a lengthy, pointless, selfish prayer. *“For God is in*

*heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.*” It is beneficial to remember that God already knows what we need before we pray for it (Matthew 6:8), so there is no need to make our prayers long just for the sake of emphasis – does He forget things if we do not repeat ourselves two or three times? As for the impulsive thoughts, remember:

- If a troubling situation in life is not turning out how you want or expect, it is not an indication that God has lost control or forgotten about you. It would be impulsive to immediately castigate God for some perceived failure to help you.
- I am always very careful to respect the mystery surrounding God’s activities. Often, with the best intentions, we attribute something to God when it might be mere coincidence – and then when that supposed blessing turns on us or is lost, we conveniently blame God. The writer of Ecclesiastes goes on to say that *“time and chance”* are an inescapable part of life (Ecclesiastes 9:11). The apostle Paul was also careful to use words like *“perhaps”* when he was only supposing how God moves (Philemon 15).
- Perhaps it was for these kinds of impulsive thoughts that several Bible writers spoke of the dangers of “presumption” (Proverbs 13:10), or speaking presumptuously in the name of God (Deuteronomy 18:20,22).