

Ecclesiastes 5

Verses 1 - 7

Guard your steps as you go to the house of God, and approach to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know that they are doing evil.

² Do not be quick with your mouth 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. ³ For the dream comes through much effort, and the voice of a fool through many words.

⁴ 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! ⁵ It is better that you not vow, than vow and not pay.

⁶ 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? ⁷ For in many dreams and in many words there is futility. Rather, fear God.

² Do not be quick with your mouth 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.

Solomon wrote a good portion of the proverbs and in this book he repeats a few of those admonitions.

Number 1

See Proverbs 10:19

**¹⁹ When there are many words, wrongdoing is unavoidable,
But one who restrains his lips is wise.**

This is good advice for life in general but even more so when we go before God in prayer.

James makes a similar observation in his writing.

See James 1:19 - 20

¹⁹-You know *this*, my beloved brothers *and sisters*. Now everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger; ²⁰ for a man's anger does not bring about the righteousness of God.

⁵ It is better that you not vow, than vow and not pay.

⁷ For in many dreams and in many words there is futility. Rather, fear God.

Number 2

The following are two vows made by people of faith in the Old Testament and the good and bad consequences of doing so.

1. Jephthah, a judge of Israel, made a rash vow and defeated the enemy but he paid a very high price for speaking before he thought.

See Judges 11:30

³⁰ And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, “If You will indeed hand over to me the sons of Ammon, ³¹ then whatever comes out the doors of my house to meet me when I return safely from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord’s, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering.”

³⁴ But Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, and behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. And she was his one and only child; besides her he had no son or daughter.

2. Hannah made a vow out of desperation.

1 Sam 1:9 –11

¹¹ And she made a vow and said, “Lord of armies, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your bond-servant and remember me, and not forget Your bond-servant, but will give Your bond-servant a son. then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.”

This vow turned out to be good because Samuel became one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament but he & his mother had very little contact with each other.

Solomon wrote the following in the Book of Proverbs.

See proverbs 20:25

²⁵ It is a trap for a person to say carelessly, “It is holy!”
And after the vows to make inquiry.

Christ said the following about oaths.

See Matthew 5:33

³⁴ **But I say to you, take no oath at all,** neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, nor by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.

Verses 8 - 9

⁸ **If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be shocked at the sight; for one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them. ⁹ After all, a king who cultivates the field is beneficial to the land.**

Solomon said people shouldn't be shocked when they see oppression of the poor and the denial of justice because each person of authority has others that watch over each other and there are people of authority over them.

In our own form of government we have city, state and federal agencies that oversee each other and three branches of government (the Congress, the Executive and the Judicial) that watch over each other. But no form of government is perfect because it is made up of individuals that are flawed just like us.

Number 3

Solomon wrote the following about government in the Book of Proverbs.

See Proverbs 14:34 - 35

³⁴ **Righteousness exalts a nation,
But sin is a disgrace to *any* people.**
³⁵ **The king's favor is toward a servant who acts wisely,
But his anger is toward him who acts shamefully.**

See Proverbs 16:12

¹² **It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts,
Because a throne is established on righteousness.**

See Proverbs 28:2

**When there is moral rot within a nation, its government topples easily.
But wise and knowledgeable leaders bring stability"**

Paul said the following to Christians in the Book of Romans

See Romans 13:1 - 7

Every person is to be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a servant of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a servant of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; respect to whom respect; honor to whom honor.

Verses 10 - 12

¹⁰ One who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor one who loves abundance *with its* income. This too is futility. ¹¹ When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look *at them*? ¹² The sleep of the laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the full stomach of the rich person does not allow him to sleep.

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Here again Solomon is discussing extremes. Money is good because it pays the bills and provides the means to enjoy certain pleasures in life but when taken to an extreme, money is bad because it can overtake the soul of man.

¹¹ When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look *at them*?

Living in a material world requires a certain level of income and saving for old age is a wise thing to do but hoarding money doesn't make anyone's life any better.

¹² The sleep of the laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the full stomach of the rich person does not allow him to sleep.

Riches that come from taking advantage of others is detrimental because in the long run it brings anxiety and sleeplessness.

Number 4

Solomon has a lot to say about money in the proverbs but the one below fits the context of these verses.

See Proverbs 22:16

**¹⁶ One who oppresses the poor to make more for himself,
Or gives to the rich, *will only come to poverty.***

Verses 13 - 17

¹³ There is a sickening evil *which* I have seen under the sun: wealth being hoarded by its owner to his detriment. ¹⁴ When that wealth was lost through bad business and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him. ¹⁵ As he came naked from his mother's womb, so he will return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand. ¹⁶ This also is a sickening evil: exactly as a person is born, so will he die. What then is the advantage for him who labors for the wind? ¹⁷ All his life *he* also eats in darkness with great irritation, sickness, and anger.

There is a sickening evil *which* I have seen under the sun: wealth being hoarded by its owner to his detriment.

Solomon called this a sickening evil which is some pretty strong language for scripture. We all know that saving money for a rainy day and retirement is a smart thing to do, so when does saving money turn into hoarding?

¹⁴ When that wealth was lost through bad business and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him.

The rich do have a number of things to be concerned about.

1. A corrupt manager or partner can steal a lot of his wealth.

Check out the story concerning the manager of Billy Joel.

2. Bad investments.

There will always be charlatans like Bernie Madoff who offered returns that were too good to be legit.

¹⁵ As he came naked from his mother's womb, so he will return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand.

All you can hold in your hand after you die is what you have given away.

See Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

¹⁶ This also is a sickening evil: exactly as a person is born, so will he die. What then is the advantage for him who labors for the wind? ¹⁷ All his life *he* also eats in darkness with great irritation, sickness, and anger.

Everyone knows that you can't take it with you when you die so there should be some moderation in our lives when it comes to earning money. If someone's work causes them to be agitated, sick, and angry all of the time then they may be a hoarder.

Verses 18 - 20

¹⁸ Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink, and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he labors under the sun *during* the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. ¹⁹ Furthermore, as for every person to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also given him the opportunity to enjoy them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. ²⁰ For he will not often call to mind the years of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart.

¹⁸ Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink, and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he labors under the sun *during* the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.

So is Solomon telling us to eat, drink, and be merry? Yes he is, but not in the way many pagans interpret it. Solomon was promoting the idea that God rewards us for our labor and we should take some time to enjoy the fruit of our labor.

¹⁹ Furthermore, as for every person to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also given him the opportunity to enjoy them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.

In verses 13 thru 17 Solomon spoke about those who hoard their money and have lost their perspective but here Solomon tells the other side of the story. There are some who have been given riches and wealth and the ability to enjoy what God has given them. The fact that Solomon says God gave them their riches should reduce the pride that some wealthy people demonstrate toward others that have not been blessed in the same way.