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IDYLLWILD BIBLE SCHOOL - 1992

UNDER THE SUN - THEMES FROM ECCLESIASTES

Speaker: Bro. Michael Ashton

Study #4: The house of God

Reading: Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

If perhaps this morning, my dear brethren and sisters, if we can just commence by bowing our heads in prayer -

LORD God our loving heavenly Father, we approach before Thee now, through the merits of thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. As we open thy word this day, and commence our activities together, we pray that the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart, might be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Just a couple of things from yesterday, and you can tell as the week goes on, you have to sort of pick up things which are left out from the day before; one brother came up to me after the class yesterday, and said I was wrong about the lemmings and that is, that there's quite a similarity between people and lemmings, the only difference is that the lemmings go straight over the cliff and the people have their conversation first, and then they go over the cliff! There's quite a truth in that, isn't there? and I don't know if you noticed the great visual aid that I had made up for you yesterday, between second and third period classes as I was walking back to the main hall, there was a truck that had made deliveries to the kitchen area, and on the side was written, '**Enjoy life, eat out more**'. One can see the relevance to things that we've been looking at in Ecclesiastes. I felt like going up to the truck and writing in the dust on the side of it, the chapter and verse that it came from!

So we're going to look together this morning at the first few verses of Ecclesiastes 5. The conclusion that has been reached so far in Ecclesiastes is that, so long as our eyes are just kept under the sun, then our daily life is full of vanity; we're caught in a cycle, we go from womb to tomb, from birth to death and life is but vanity and vexation of spirit, so long as that horizon is maintained. But then Solomon comes to ask this question, if that's true about our daily life, can it also be true about our worship? can it be true about our religious life? And strange as it may seem, the conclusion he comes to is, **yes, it can!** our religious life can be vain, we can live out a lie, in other words. So

let's just read together the first few verses of Ecclesiastes 5 and then we'll go back and look at them a little bit more carefully. Just the first 7 verses. '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. 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. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fools voice is known by multitude of words. 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. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. 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? For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God'.

So you see from that passage that we just read, that Solomon is saying there are problems in our approaching before God, and if we are not careful then our vows will not be accepted and that limits life itself, maybe vain. So let us now look a little more closely and see just why it is that he comes to that conclusion and how we can insure that we do not fall into the same problem that he is describing for us. 'Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God', we have a sort of idiomatic expression in our own language, haven't we? 'watch your step', 'just be careful' and we need to feel that way throughout life, of course, we need to watch our steps. But there's rather more to this expression here of 'keeping thy foot when thou goest to the house of God', than may at first appear. If you turn into the prophecy of Isaiah 1, this is the chapter where the prophet is inspired to speak of the leaders of Jerusalem and call them, verse 10 of Isaiah 1, 'rulers of Sodom', so much against the ways of God had believers of the people become, so verse 10, 'Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me, saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread or trample My courts? Keep your foot when you go to the house of God! Are you just going there to **trample** in His courts, it's His house? It's God's house, we must watch our step when we go there, and if we're not careful all we're doing is **trampling** on the good things that He has provided. So what Solomon was clearly telling us is that there is a right way of approaching God and a wrong way of approaching God and it's very easy for us to think we're going through the motions of a right approach and that we fail to realize that we are blaspheming God by the very things that we're doing. We're going through the motions but it isn't the motions that are important, it's what lies behind the motions, what underlies them which is crucial!

So back to Ecclesiastes 5, 'keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God', and I'll continue reading verse 1 from the RV and as I read it just try and consider where else you've read similar words to these; 'keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God,

for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they know not that they do evil". I wonder if anyone has got any idea of the link from that verse? To draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools, something you all should have learned as a proof in Sunday School (I hope you do learn proofs in Sunday School, and I hope you teach your children proofs in Sunday School) but this is clearly one that we ought to know, it's 1 Samuel 14, and let's look at it together, shall we? You'll remember the occasion well when you get there and I hope you'll remember the verse; verse 36, 'Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God'. So first of all, we draw near unto God. Then turning over to 1 Samuel 15 which is the chapter where Saul was commanded to slay the Amalekites, and we know he did not do so, and had not in that process properly drawn near unto God and listened to the word of God, then we read this verse, verse 22 of 1 Samuel 15, which I had hoped was the one that you might memorize, Samuel said, 'Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?' and it's just the latter phrase of the verse which seems to be picked up in Ecclesiastes, 'Behold, to obey (to draw near, to hearken and obey) is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, (to listen) than the fat of rams', and blindly is exactly the same, of course, which if we're not careful all we'll see is the outer show, and we ourselves will perform the outward tasks of religious service but the basis of it will not exist within us. So keep those thoughts when one goes to the house of God, so to draw nigh to hear, is better than to give the sacrifice of fools.

One wonders what the 'sacrifice of fools' really is? Look at Proverbs 15 where we've got the contrast between the fool and the wise man, and it's the same contrast that's being brought out for us in Ecclesiastes; perhaps it's necessary to say that the fool of Proverbs and the fool of Ecclesiastes, is not an intellectual fool. It doesn't mean that he's somehow dull of understanding, it's a **moral fool** that's being spoken of, someone who might have great ability and knowledge, but morally he is foolish. It's the moral fool in Proverbs 15 which is being introduced to us, verse 6, 'In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble. The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the foolish doeth not so. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD; but the prayer of the upright is His delight'. There's a very early Old Testament background to that verse in Proverbs 15, and I wonder if you can think of that one? the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the prayer of the upright - Cain and Abel! Cain is the first half of the verse and Abel the second half of the verse, and you have there a useful example which describes to us what the wise man was telling us in Proverbs. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but the sacrifice, there may have been nothing wrong with it, and I think perhaps we ought to look again at the sacrifice of Cain, and ask ourselves just what it was that was wrong with it; was it the sacrifice itself which we need to talk about? you know, because without the shedding of blood there can be no remissions of sins, and I accept all of that, but I'm convinced it was more the attitude

of mind of Cain than the sacrifice that was faulty; it was the prayer of the upright that the LORD God delighted in.

Ecclesiastes itself has a lovely example of the sacrifice of fools. Turn to chapter 7 of Ecclesiastes and one of the very graphic images that Solomon brings out from his storehouse on occasions. It follows a passage that we thought of yesterday, of going into the house of mourning rather than to the house of feasting. Ecclesiastes 7 verse 4 continues, 'The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity'. So this is the sacrifice of fools, it's got a lot of show to it, and you throw a handful of thorns unto a fire, and you'll suddenly see the flames burst up. As Solomon says, they crackle away, it gives a great show of light, not very much heat actually, because it goes so quickly; so you don't throw thorns on a fire because it's not the best thing to use, instead you put something that is much longer lasting. The fool is like that, it's a sudden show and then no more because there's nothing behind it, there's no real inner fuel to keep the fire going. So that's what's wrong with the sacrifice of fools, and as Solomon says back in Ecclesiastes 5 verse 1, 'they consider not that they do evil'. You see, the fool does things without thinking, it's a lack of careful consideration of his position. So there's a lot in that first verse of Ecclesiastes 5: we're to watch our step when we go to the house of God, we're not to trample His courts because they are His courts and it is the things that He has ordained that we should remember; and we must be careful when we draw nigh, because when we draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools; to hearken than the fat of rams.

So you can understand now why Solomon goes on to say in Ecclesiastes 5, that we're not to be **rash** with our mouth because that's how the fool is, without thinking, engaging tongue without engaging brain, and that's not what we're to do! We are to be much more careful than that, not rash with our mouth and our heart must not be hasty to utter anything before God! 'Because God is in heaven, and we upon earth' it's picking up the idea which was introduced first of all in Ecclesiastes 1 verse 3, 'what profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun', we are upon earth and God is in His heaven; man's life is concerned with labour and work and toil and the LORD God is calling man to His rest. It's the pattern of life which was introduced by the created work of the LORD God, that in 6 days He made heaven and earth and on the 7th day He rested, and hallowed the 7th day and sanctified it, so we're being called now towards the rest of God as Hebrews 4 reveals to us, 'there remaineth a rest unto the people of God. God is in heaven and we are upon earth, 'therefore, let your words be few'.

This is something that is picked up even by our Lord Himself and you'll know this well, it's in Matthew 6 in the Sermon on the Mount. I don't know how many of you have ever heard the gospels as they were translated by William Tyndale, but we do owe a lot of our English translation to William Tyndale as we also do to Miles Coverdale and other of those early reformers, but in Matthew 6 when the Lord is speaking about prayer

commencing at verse 5, let's just read as we have it in our KJV, 'When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly'. You have the idea here, that we're to watch our step, we are to keep our foot when we approach before God, we are to go before Him and not before the world, so it's between an individual and his God, this matter of prayer and also of worship. There's a great advantage and benefit to be gained from our joining together in worship, but ultimately we stand alone before our God.

Verse 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'. Let thy words be few, Solomon had said, and in Tyndale's translation it says, '**when ye pray, babble not much!**' isn't that lovely? babble not much, and we must be careful in our own prayers that we are not like that! It's as if Tyndale has picked up the real theme of the idea, where it isn't the length of prayer specifically that Solomon is speaking about, else how could he have prayed the prayer we have in 1 Kings 8? and it's almost one of the longest chapters in the bible, it's all of Solomon's prayer! Then Solomon would not have been following his own advice; it's not the length of prayer but it's the purpose of our individual prayers; you'll have heard as well as I have done, of the sort of compendium prayer, that means, 'get everything possible into it in case we leave out the important part'. Now it's not easy for brethren to lead public prayer, and I know that as well as the rest of you do, but what we should ask ourselves is the real purpose of the prayer we've been called upon to offer. If we have been asked and called upon to pray, to ask a blessing upon one of the emblems, then that's what we ask for, and we don't ask for all the other things. There also are differences between a prayer that should be offered for the bread and the prayer that should be offered for the wine; the prayer that is offered for the wine is the one that should speak about forgiveness of sins, washed away in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; and the prayer about the bread is the one about our devotion, our daily devotion, our daily bread which we now see in the given life of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are different and one is not the mirror of the other, they are separate prayers. Our prayer in the morning is different from our prayer in the evening; our prayer when we open the scriptures is different from our prayer as we close the scriptures. In my judgment, in public prayer there's only one opportunity for what I've called 'a compendium prayer', and that is the major prayer at our memorial meeting, offered by our presiding brother, when he tries to bring in the thoughts of the individual members of the ecclesia and to focus them upon that we are to do, in that very special realm of fellowship, to try and be introduced as we gather around the emblems. So these words here in Ecclesiastes 5 are important! We are not somehow to hold up the short prayer as if it's always better than the long prayer because that's not true! The short prayer can say nothing, as easily as the long prayer can say nothing, but we must weigh our words with care and diligence when we approach before God, 'for God is in heaven and we upon earth', **so babble not much**, is the teaching!

Well, Solomon goes on in Ecclesiastes 5. 'Let us draw near to God', this is back in verse 1 really, to draw nigh to hear, is better than to give the sacrifice of fools; so he's spoken about sacrifice, he's spoken about words, he moves on to speak about vows. But before we move on to vows, let's just think of this idea of **drawing near!** how we 'draw near' to God. If we turn to Isaiah 29 I think we shall find something helpful here, you will see how there's a similarity of idea in Isaiah 29, with what we've already seen in Ecclesiastes 5. Verse 13, 'Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people **draw near Me with their mouth**, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid'. So because the people in the time when Isaiah was writing had not kept their foot when they came to the house of God, had not been careful but had spoken ill-advisedly in His presence, had babbled too much when they approached before Him, then the LORD God says, 'I'm going to do a marvellous work and a wonder amongst them'. The marvellous work that He referred to first of all was, that He was going to take away from them wise leadership; was going to leave them wallowing in a slow despond and they would not be able to find their way out. But the remarkable thing about Isaiah 29 and it's relationship with Ecclesiastes 5 is that it is picked up in an active way by the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel records.

Let's just turn to it, shall we? it's in John 9 and what we've been learning from Ecclesiastes is that it is possible for us, just to go through the motions of worship and they will achieve nothing for us, and they will bring no glory to our heavenly Father. It's as if the people who are doing those things are deaf and dumb and blind and lame; so when we turn to John 9, we come to the man who was **born blind**, who was not able to see at all and he was cast out of the synagogue. There was a threat about this as you'll see in verse 22 of John 9, his parents spoke passing the buck to their son because they feared that the leaders of the Jews, 'who had agreed already, that if any man did confess that Jesus was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue'. Of course, that's what they did with him, the man was excommunicated from the synagogue; so when they come to the man and speak to him, what does the man say? Verse 26 is their question, 'what did He to thee? how opened He thine eyes?' and his answer, 'I told you already and you didn't hear, why do you want to listen to it again? will you also be His disciples? and they reviled him and said, thou art His disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is! The man answered and said unto them, (quoting Isaiah 29, have you ever noticed this?) 'Why herein is **the marvellous thing** (that Isaiah spoke about, the only time the phrase is used in the New Testament) 'herein is the marvellous thing, ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners (He doesn't hear those that just come and go through the motions, doesn't hear those at all) 'but if any man be a worshipper of God (if any man approaches God as God requires; if any man comes having kept his foot, watched his

step as he comes to the house of God)and doeth His will (God said here, 'to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams'), him He heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind? If this man were not of God, He could do nothing'. Then their answer to him in verse 34, ' Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? and they cast him out'.

Just go back into Isaiah 29 just to show that the link really does exist and doesn't only come from the use of that one word; just look at the section before the one that we saw in Isaiah 29. The marvellous work is in verse 14, 'I proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of the wise (so-called wise, the leaders of the Jews in Jesus's day) did perish, and the understanding of those men who thought they were prudent were certainly hid'. Now look at the earlier section in verse 9, still speaking to the people in Israel in the time of Isaiah, but to all generations who fall into this same trap of going through the motions without realizing what the motions are intending to portray; 'Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: (and Christ opened them in the man that was born blind) 'the prophets and the rulers, the seers hath He covered. The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; it's sealed. The book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned. Therefore, the LORD is going to do the marvellous thing'. It seems very clear, doesn't it? but that was the background to the events in John 9, and the Lord was sowing in that very open way the right method of approach, and the leaders of the Jews were completely wrong; they thought that they had got the worship of God buttoned up in its processes and its procedures, and all they were doing was sort of going through a rule book that they had fabricated for themselves, and it didn't touch their heart in any sense at all.

It's so easy for us, isn't it? to point the finger at them and to indicate in some way that, well, we're not like that! Well, if this is a time for reassessment as it ought to be, this week together at bible school, let us now be honest with ourselves and say, 'yes', there are occasions when we do the readings by habit rather than by desire; there are occasions when we reach the end of a chapter and it's difficult for us to remember what we have read because we haven't been properly concentrating on the words that are before us. There are occasions (and I hope there's no one here this morning that goes asleep when the brother is trying to instruct us, out of the word of God) there are times when we allow our concentration to lapse and to stray, there are times when we do not pray to God as we ought and a day may pass without us ever closing our eyes in prayer or getting down on our knees and asking Him for forgiveness for those things that we've done amiss, and for strength to continue with the battle against those motions of sin which lie within our members. Let's be honest with ourselves and recognize that these words are not just for people like the leaders of the Jews in Jesus's day, but are

equally appropriate to ourselves.

When we come down then to Ecclesiastes 5 verse 4, it's certainly the case! Is your life littered with broken promises? and there won't be anyone in this room who at one time or another, has not said that he or she would do something and has failed to do it. We're not as diligent as our lips would suggest we are; there ought to be a greater connection between the things we say with our mouths and the things we do with our hands and with our feet. It's as if they're operated from separate nerve centres, and we do things differently from the things we say, our intentions are so much greater than our performance. There's a vast cavern between the two and somehow we've got to learn to bridge them. 'So when thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it ; He hath no pleasure in fools', because that's what the fool does, this is the moral fool, with him it's possible to say and not to do. And we know that that's not the case! There's a good New Testament example of Ecclesiastes 5 and verse 4, can anyone think of that? vowing a vow and deferring to pay it — Ananias and Sapphira. It's probably helpful for us to pop these down in our margins against these verses because they are clear examples of people who fell into the trap that Solomon is speaking about, they vowed a vow and deferred to pay it.

Let's just look, shall we? at this matter of vows. It was dealt with very carefully in the Law. If we turn to Deuteronomy 23 first of all, and then we'll go to a passage in Numbers; just 3 verses here in Deuteronomy 23 which sets out for us, what the vow was and its importance. Verse 21, 'When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it; for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee'. And it's interesting just by the use of words here in Deuteronomy 23, we're being told two things; we're told certainly we should fulfil our vow, we must pay it, but we're told an additional aspect and that is, **we must quickly pay it!** You see, it's very easy to say, 'well, I have every intention of doing what I've said I'll do', meaning, 'I got every intention but I'm not thinking of doing it right at the moment, nor later today, nor tomorrow, in fact, next year might be the time to do'. But that's not the point of our vow, **'we must not slack to pay it,** for the LORD thy God shall surely require it of thee and it would be sin in thee'. **So to speak and not to do, is sin,** and it then continues in Deuteronomy 23, 'But if thou shalt forbear to vow it shall be no sin in thee; that which has gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform even a freewill offering according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God which thou has promised with thy mouth.' So actually to view those things which we sow before God that we'll do, as offerings to Him, and in the same way, that's an Israelite bringing a sin offering to the gate of the tabernacle, he would not walk through the camp with this nice unblemished lamb which he had chosen out of the flock, showing it off to everyone as he walked along saying, 'aren't I a marvellous man, look here, this is the sacrifice that I'm going to offer, I'll challenge you to find any blemish on this animal!' and then here I am, I bring it along and reach the door of the tabernacle and then turn round and walk back, hopefully with the people not seeing you go back, thinking that you offered it. It's the same idea here with the vow, once we've made our vow, we must perform it, it's gone out of our lips! we must therefore keep it and perform it, it is a freewill offering. It isn't something that's

demanded of us, we chose it of our own freewill to make the vow and we then continue to offer it. We promised it with our mouth.

Well now, turn over to the book of Numbers 30, because the vows are here expanded in quite an interesting way. There are 4 categories in Numbers 30, and the first category which is verse 2 is repeating what we read in Deuteronomy 23, 'If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth'. No problem with it we've read it before, we now know what it means even if we didn't know it before. It's picked up, of course, by the Lord Jesus Christ, 'let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay'; but that's only the first category! we've got three others and when it said in verse two that, 'if a **man**' vow a vow unto the LORD', it's exactly what it meant. If a man as opposed to a woman vow a vow unto the LORD; when you read Deuteronomy 23 it was speaking of a man as being **mankind**, but here it's different, here it is a 'man', a 'male' vowing a vow unto the LORD.

But when we come to verse 3, 'If a **woman** also vow a vow unto the LORD and bind herself by a bond; a woman being in her father's house in her youth, if her father hears her vow and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father says nothing but holds his peace, then her vow shall stand'. It shall be as if she were a man making a vow and must fulfil it. But, verse 5 of Numbers 30, 'If her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand'. The vow she will be freed from and it will not be sin if she does not perform it. In fact, it would be sin to perform it, because the vow's been disallowed by her father!

The third category is in verse 6, 'If **the woman has a husband**', and the same thing, if the husband is quiet then the vow must stand; but if the husband disallows it the vow is over-turned and it would be sin for her to now to fulfil the vow.

The last category, verse 9, the vow of a **widow or her that is divorced** that shall be as if she were a man **unless** she said it when her husband was still with her or still alive; and then if her husband was silent or if he disallowed the vow, dire consequences would follow.

Now you may ask 'what's the point of all this?' Why is this being the case? Well, when we come to 1 Corinthians 14 we have the answer! 1 Corinthians 14 explains to us some of the difficulties which existed in the early congregation of believers with use of the Spirit gifts, and particularly when the sisters were equally endowed with Spirit gifts as were the brethren. So the apostle Paul explained to them that there was confusion existing, and verse 33, 'For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all ecclesias of the saints. So he says, 'Let your women keep silence in the ecclesias'; it's

not permitted unto them to speak, they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the Law. I imagine that the margin of your bible is about as clear as mind is, and puts there against, 'as saith the Lord', Genesis 3 verse 16, mine at least has the honesty to put a question-mark after it! and I don't think that's the law at all! I think the law's the one we've just seen in Numbers 30, the woman is commanded to be under obedience. because there are different regulations in so far as the vow is concerned, for the woman as for the man. The man now is under the Law put in a position to take authority, it's not saying that the man is intellectually superior to the woman, and for that reason is to take the lead. Not that sense at all, but because Adam failed to do his job in the garden of Eden, now his believing sons must do what he failed to do; and because Eve usurps her position in the garden of Eden, her believing daughters are now to put right where she went wrong. It's what's picked up for us in 1 Timothy 2, a very important chapter of the situation between men and women in the ecclesia where the apostle says in 1 Timothy 2 verse 8, 'I will therefore that men pray everywhere lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing; and like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame facedness and sobriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly array, but that which becometh women professing godliness with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection and suffer not a woman to teach or usurp authority over man, but to be in silence'. But it doesn't say here, 'as also saith the Law', which is what he said in 1 Corinthians 14, but now says, 'As Adam was first formed then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression'. So for the same reason, because Adam remained silent in the garden of Eden when he should have spoken, and Eve spoke when she should have remained silent, then their sons and daughters are now to act out in ecclesial life what should have happened in the garden of Eden.

Just to reinforce that that's what it's teaching, if you'll turn back to Genesis 3 and something you may not have noticed in the reading of this chapter. and something that I must be honest with you, I haven't noticed for many, many years and from my younger Sunday School days, I had always had the impression that when Eve took of the fruit of the tree and was tempted by the serpent, Eve was on her own with the serpent and Adam was off elsewhere in the garden doing something else. Well if you've got that idea and shared it with me, can I simply tell you that I believe you're wrong and the scriptures teach us that that view is wrong; verse 4 of Genesis 3, 'The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it was pleasant to the eyes, a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also to her husband **with her** (this actually means '**alongside**' (5973) her and he did eat'. So during all of that incident in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were standing side by side, both of them knowing the command of God, and Adam with his lips buttoned; and I don't know why! He just remained silent, he stood there while Eve was having her conversation with the serpent and didn't say, 'wait a minute, we know that the LORD God has told us and the elohim in their instruction of us day by day, have reinforced

that we're not to eat of this tree'; but Adam remained silent and because he remained silent, whether they like it or not, his believing sons must now be the instructors in the ecclesia; and because Eve spoke, whether her believing daughters like it or not, they must now remain silent within the ecclesia. These things have been ordained for us, it's part of our approach before God! and that's why it is necessary for us to consider it in this session this morning, because we must watch our step as we come into the house of God; and we do meet in that way as we meet together as brethren and sisters in the Lord.

Just one further matter on this subject, in 1 Timothy 2 verse 8, where we read that 'the men are to pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting', we may ask ourselves, just where it is that the men are to offer prayers, where men are to take the lead? and when it says that women (sisters) can pray? because, of course, we must all pray brethren and sisters without ceasing for the forgiveness of our sins and for the return of the Lord from heaven and the establishment of the kingdom. But 1 Timothy 2 is telling us that there are some occasions when the leading women must remain silent and it is the men, the brethren, that should offer the prayers. The answer is given for us actually within that verse and we might not have noticed it; 'the men must pray **everywhere**' and the RV reads, 'the men must pray in every **place**', and in the scriptures, the word 'place' has an important and very carefully defined meaning. We can see what that is if we turn back to Genesis 13, and I would suggest to you in looking through this meaning of the word 'place' and what it stands for, we must carry that over into Ecclesiastes 5 when we think of the 'house of God'. Genesis 13 very 3, 'Abram went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto **the place** where his tents had been at the beginning', that just means where it was pitched, where it was situated, but you might, until you get to verse 4, when he goes on to the place of the altar which he had made there at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD'. So **a place** is a place where we come to approach before God, it's the place before the altar, the place of sacrifice, the place where we call on the name of the LORD. It's that same background which applies in Ecclesiastes 5 verse 6, 'so it is better that we should not vow than thou shouldst vow and not pay. 'We must suffer not our mouth to cause our flesh to sin, nor say before the angel that it was an error; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands'.

That verse 6 of Ecclesiastes 5 is an important verse and we haven't got time to get into it this morning, but it's just going to lead us into our considerations tomorrow. We've already thought a little bit about the wise man and the fool, but tomorrow we're going to look at that in considerably more detail. The message though from this morning is that our approach before God must be in spirit and in truth!

We've just got a couple of minutes, what I would like us to do, a few of us after the session last night did some hymn singing and we managed to sing a chant. So I thought let's try and do it together this morning, could you try hymn 28 - chants are not really difficult! even though we might think they are, and the secret of the chant is you'll notice

if you look at hymn 28, there are a few words in the first line and then there's a vertical bar. All of those words in the first line before the vertical bar are sung to the first notes of music, I don't mean to the length of the first note of music, I mean to the pitch of the first note of music. We then have to give each of the syllables in those words before the bar, the same measure. Do you get the idea? so all in the same pitch for the first words, and then we run into the last three notes of the first line of music, and we just come into them naturally. Then on the third line the same thing, and then we sing the other words afterwards. So just one note! Simple isn't it?