

"Keep thy foot..."

Dee Bowman

I was thinking that an article on worship might be good. One where there is some attention given to what is involved in it—according to the scriptures— and what we need to watch out for. Also, what must understand, and how we can know that God accepts. “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God” (Eccles. 5:1).

First, it might be good if we just think about the concept of worship. Worship is as old as man. As far back as anthropologists have researched, man's trip through time is accented by altars, temples, and other indications of worship. I am not prepared to say for certain that worship is indigenous to man's nature, but the need for recognition by some higher power seems to inhere in all he does and that is surely seen by the survival of the accouterments of his worship. There has been worship as long as there has been man.

Our concept of worship comes from our understanding of the terms which describe it. The Hebrews used the word *sahah*, meaning to bow down or prostrate oneself in respect. The Greeks had several different words which gave quality and degree to this action; but the most oft used one in the New Testament is *latreuo*, which is used twenty-one times and has to do specifically with service performed in respect for God. Our English term is from the combination of worth and ship. In its verb form, it means to honor or revere some sacred object. As a noun it would describe the acts used in such veneration. In both instances it implies the worthiness of the object.

There are many things said about worship in the Bible but one passage stands out as a sort of microcosm of what worship is all about. It's Ecclesiastes 5:1-7. In it there is:

- A warning against ceremonialism. He says, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God." That simply says be careful about your worship. Worship can easily degenerate into mere ritualistic observances if we are not careful. We should consider where we're going when we go to worship.
- A warning against mere mental assent. He says, "...and be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools." It's easy to come to the conclusion that when worship has been extended duty ends. Worship has always had to do with service as well as ritual. It is foolish--a sacrifice of fools--to go to the house of worship then presume that to be the end of the matter.
- A warning against pomposity. He says, "...be not rash with thy mouth..." It's rather common for people to make vows during worship services and then defer their payment as they return to the duress of daily life. It may impress the other

worshippers, but not God. He is in Heaven, man on earth—an indication of the omnipotence and omniscience of God. He knows, even if the other worshippers don't. We best be careful.

- A warning against drama. He says, "...a fool's voice is known by a multitude of words." And again, "...for in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities..." When we speak to impress the other participants we negate our own worship and cause others to be impressed with the tone of our delivery or the choice of our vocabulary rather than the humility of our devotion. There is never any indication that God is impressed with extra-long public prayers. Excessively long public prayers sometimes can be viewed as dramatic productions, calculated to bring honor to the worshiper rather than to the Worshipful Master (Matthew 6:7). Furthermore, they may promote a loss of attention by the hearers. Distraction is a tool of the evil one and is calculated to impede sincere worship.

Worship is so important. It's the means by which we reach out to Him with whom we have to do, knowing that we can rejoice for His acceptance. It's the process by which we seek to glorify Him, to give Him the place of prominence He deserves in our lives. We should approach Him with great reluctance, with reverential awe, with profound humility, for God is in heaven and He is worthy!

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God." Let every person take heed how he worships the Lord God Almighty!