

ESF, Lord's Day service message
11/1/2015

Stand in Awe of God
Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. 2. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth. So let your words be few. 3. As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words. 4. When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow 5. It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. 6. Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? 7. Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.

After teaching many words of wisdom with inspiration of the Spirit of God, Solomon concludes that the whole duty of man is to "fear God and keep his commandments" (Eccles. 12:13).

Here, the text puts the phrase "fear God" in a different way: *Stand in awe of God*. How can we stand in awe of God? There are three things we have to do to fear God or stand in awe of God.

Guard your steps and go near to listen

a. *Guard your steps when you go to the house of God.*

What is the house of God?

In the Old Testament times, it was the temple in Jerusalem. There were many regulations to enter the temple and to stand before God. But through Jesus God has opened his house to everywhere and to everybody.

First, the bible says that Jesus is the house of God. John explains this truth in John 2: 19, 21 “*Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days.the temple he had spoken of was his body*” By dying on the cross and rising from the dead in three days, Jesus accomplished what all the laws of the temple require for us to stand before God once for all. We can stand before God through Jesus at any time at any place. By believing that God forgives us through the sacrificial death of Jesus we can stand before God.

Second, believers gathering is the house of God. When Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God, Jesus promised, “*On this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it*” (Matthew 16:18). “The rock” on which Jesus builds his church is confession of faith. By being a part of the church and serving the church, we can stand before God. It is not a burden to serve the church. It is blessing because we receive God’s living presence, his supernatural power and gifts of the Holy Spirit by being a part of the church and serving the church.

Third, each believer is the house of God. A believer’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). If you are a believer, your body is the house of God. You are His Sanctuary. Therefore, no matter where you go, or what you are doing, you are always in the house of God. This is why we sing the song, “*Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary; pure and holy, tried and true.*” We are a living sanctuary, breathing house of God for God dwells in us.

Every believer must take care of his or her body as a house of God. Not only Sundays, but every day God wants to be honored through our bodies. If you think your body is yours, you are tempted to use your body for your own pleasure. But if you take care of your body as the house of God, the Holy Spirit will enable you to keep your body pure and holy. The Holy Spirit will give you wisdom and strength to take care of your body as His temple. Whenever you feel weak and depressed or

tempted confess your faith before the Lord, “*Lord I am your temple. I believe you are in me with your Spirit. I believe I have your power and your holiness in me. Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary; pure and holy, tried and true.*”

b). Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools

In the Old Testament system of worship, God told his people that He would not accept anything less than perfect animals in sacrifices. God does not accept imperfect sacrifices. God wants to receive a perfect sacrifice from you. Then what is a perfect sacrifice? It is obedience.

King Saul was a good man. He tried to worship God by sacrificing. But God did not receive his sacrifice because he brought his sacrifice without listening to God. When God told him to destroy everything in the land of the Amalekites, he destroyed most of the things in the land. But he kept the best of the animals. Later on when Samuel asked him why he did not obey as God had told him to do Saul said: *the soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroy the rest* (1 Samuel 15:15).

But Samuel replied, Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22).

Before we do anything before God, we have to listen to God and obey his word without making any excuses. Our actions should be the result of obedience to God. When Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross, He listened to God. He surrendered His will to God’s will and obeyed God’s will. Before sacrifice, there was 100 % obedience. Sacrifice was just the result of obedience. God honors those who listen to Him and obey Him.

Honor God with your words

What we speak reveals what we have in our hearts. So we may be judged by what we speak. Jesus said in Matthew 12:34-37, “... *For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. ... men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*”

Your spoken words will either build you up or break you down. Why? Because your words speak loudly of who you really are!

So, if we stand in awe of God, we have to take time to search our hearts before we speak a word: *Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth. So let your words be few.*

While we talk to God in our prayers we must also give God enough time to talk to us. Prayer is not an one way talk from us to God. But it is communicating between us and God. God fills our hearts with peace and joy when we take enough time to listen to Him.

There was a prophet whose name was Habakkuk. One time he was troubled with God’s silence. Although he called God for help and asked God to take care of people’s injustice, God was silent without doing anything. But later he realized that he should take time to hear what God had to speak to him. So he stopped talking to God and took time to hear God. “*I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts; I will look to see what he will say to me*” And he was able to hear God’s answer. The answer was simple but very profound, “*The righteous will live by his faith*” (Habakkuk 2:4). With the word, God helped Habakkuk overcome doubt and depression and gave him joy and hope. His complains turned to praise, “*Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in*

the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The sovereign Lord is my strength” (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

While you are talking to God and asking for help, take time to hear him carefully like Habakkuk did. The Lord will speak to your heart the word you have never heard before. The Lord will give you joy and hope.

Fulfill your vow

To stand in awe of God, we also have to fulfill the vows we have made to God. *When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow (verse 4).*

By making a vow to God we confess our ultimate trust in God and our ultimate commitment to keep the vow. So when we make a vow to God, God takes it seriously.

In the book of Genesis chapter 28, we can see a good example of making a vow to God. When Jacob deceived his brother Esau to take the blessing that was supposed to be given to Esau, Esau was so mad at him that he tried to kill him. So Jacob ran far away from his brother Esau. While he was running away Jacob was afraid that his brother would come after him at any time. He had to go a long way to reach his uncle’s house. He could be robbed or even killed by gangsters on the road. One night in the midst of fear, he fell to sleep on the side of the road. Then he had a dream. In the dream he saw the angels of God ascending and descending on a stairway that was connected from the earth to heaven. He also heard the voice of God who gave him a promise of protection and prosperity. When Jacob woke up, he confessed, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it. How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” Then he made a vow to God: *If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house,*

and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth. God received the vow seriously and blessed Jacob. However Jacob forgot to fulfill his vow for many years.

There is a story of a wealthy man who made a vow to God when he was sick. When he got really sick and lying on his deathbed, his pastor talked to him about God's healing power. And the sick man said "*Pastor, Pray for me. If God heals me, I'll give the church a million dollars.*" The pastor prayed for his healing and miraculously the man was healed and within a few short weeks was out of the hospital. But he didn't fulfill his vow. So a few months later, the pastor reminded him of his vow: "*You know when you were in the hospital dying, you promised to give the church a million dollars if you got well. We haven't received it yet.*" "*Did I say that?*" the man asked. "*That shows how sick I really was! I was out of my mind.*"

There are times when we make a vow to God. When we are really in a desperate situation, we may make a vow to God: "*God deliver me from this trouble then I will serve you as you wish the rest of my life*" "*God bless me financially then I will give you a generous thanksgiving offering.*" And God may deliver us from the trouble. But we may start making excuses. God may bless us financially but we postpone our fulfillment of the vow. "*God just wait until I can pay off all my debts. God I remember the vow which I made to you. But the situation has changed. It is hard to keep the vow. Would you please forgive me? Next time I will make a vow more carefully then I will surely keep it.* If you delay in fulfilling your vow or ignore the vow you made, God may not force you to keep the vow. But God is not please with you. You can't pray with confidence.

God blesses those who fulfill the vows made to Him. Because it is sure evidence of honoring Him.

Hannah was a barren woman. Because of her barrenness, she was despised by others and she was living in shame and pain. One day she was determined to ask the Lord to help her have a child with a vow (1 Samuel 1:11): *“O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life...”*

God listened to her prayer and enabled her to have a child- a son Samuel. The child became her only child. It must have been very difficult for Hannah to give her only child to God. But as she had made the vow, she gave the child to God in his early age. When Hannah made a vow, she kept the vow. And the Lord blessed her with more sons as we can see in 1 Samuel 2:21 - *And the Lord was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters....*

Have you made a vow to God that you haven’t fulfilled? Make it right today and start fulfilling the vow.

Have you promised him all your heart – then give him all your heart.

Have you promised to serve him – then serve him.

Have you promised to give your best to God – then give him your best.