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ECCLESIASTES 5: 1 Guard your steps when you go to God's house; for to draw near to listen is better than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they don't know that they do evil.

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The reverence to be observed in attending Divine worship, Ecc 5:1-3. We should be faithful to our engagements, Ecc 5:4-7. The oppression of the innocent, 8. The king dependent on the produce of the soil, Ecc 5:9. Against covetousness, Ecc 5:10, Ecc 5:11. The peace of the honest laborer, Ecc 5:12. The evil effect of riches, Ecc 5:13, Ecc 5:14. Man cannot carry his property to the grave, Ecc 5:15-17. We should thankfully enjoy the blessings of God, Ecc 5:18-20.

Verse 1

Keep thy foot - This verse the Hebrew and all the versions join to the preceding chapter.

Solomon, having before intimated, though very briefly, that the only cure against human vanity is a due sense of religion, now enters more largely on this important subject, and gives some excellent directions with regard to the right performance of Divine service, the nature of vocal and mental prayer, the danger of rash vows, etc. - C.

The whole verse might be more literally translated thus: - "Guard thy steps as thou art going to the house of God; and approach to hearken, and not to give the sacrifice of fools, for none of them have knowledge about doing evil." "They offer gifts for their sins, and do not turn from their evil works; for they know not (they distinguish not) between good and evil." See the Chaldee.

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 2 Don't be rash with your mouth, and don't let your heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and you on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

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Verse 2

Be not rash with thy mouth - Do not hasten with thy mouth; weigh thy words, feel deeply, think much, speak little. "When ye approach his altar, on your lips

Set strictest guard; and let your thoughts be pure,

Fervent, and recollected. Thus prepared,

Send up the silent breathings of your souls,

Submissive to his will."

C.

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 3 For as a dream comes with a multitude of cares, so a fool's speech with a multitude of words.

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Verse 3

For a dream cometh - That is, as dreams are generally the effect of the business in which we have been engaged during the day; so a multitude of words evidence the feeble workings of the foolish heart.

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 4 When you vow a vow to God, don't defer to pay it; for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay that which you vow.

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Verse 4

When thou vowest a vow - When in distress and difficulty, men are apt to promise much to God if he will relieve them; but generally forget the vow when the distress or trouble is gone by.

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

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Verse 5

Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, etc. - We are under constant obligations to live to God; no vow can make it more so. Yet, there may be cases in which we should bind ourselves to take up some particular cross, to perform some particular duty, to forego some particular attachment that does not tend to bring our souls nearer to God. Then, if fully determined, and strong in faith relative to the point, bind and hold fast; but if not fully, rationally, and conscientiously determined, "do not suffer thy mouth to cause thy soul to sin."

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 6 Don't allow your mouth to lead you into sin. Don't protest before the messenger that this was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands?

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Verse 6

Neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error - Nor think of saying "before the cruel angel, who shall exercise authority over thee in the judgment of the great day, that thou didst it through ignorance." - Chaldee. I believe by the angel nothing else is intended than the priest, whose business it was to take cognizance of vows and offerings. See Lev 5:4, Lev 5:5. In Mal 2:7, the priest is called the "angel of the Lord of hosts."

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 7 For in the multitude of dreams there are vanities, as well as in many words: but you must fear God.

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Verse 7

In - dreams - are - divers vanities; but fear thou God - If, by the disturbed state of thy mind during the day, or by Satanic influence, thou dream of evil, do not give way to any unreasonable fears, or gloomy forebodings, of any coming mischief: - Fear God. Fear neither the dream nor its interpretation; God, will take care of and protect thee. Most certainly, he that fears God need fear nothing else. Well may an upright soul say to Satan himself, I fear God; and because I fear him, I do not fear thee.

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 8 If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of justice and righteousness in a district, don't marvel at the matter: for one official is eyed by a higher one; and there are officials over them.

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Verse 8

If thou seest the oppression of the poor - For this was a frequent case under all governments; and especially in the provinces or colonies which being far from the seat of government, were generally oppressed by the sovereign's deputies.

Marvel not at the matter - חֶפְזֵהּ hachephets, the will, i.e., of God; which permits such evils to take place; for all things shall work together for good to them that love him. "Marvel not

Ye righteous, if his dispensations here

Unequal seem. What, though disorders reign?

He still presides, and with unerring hand

Directs the vast machine. His wisdom can

From discord harmony produce; and make

Even vice itself subservient to his ends."

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all. The king profits from the field.

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Verse 9

The profit of the earth is for all - The earth, if properly cultivated, is capable of producing food for every living creature; and without cultivation none has a right to expect bread.

The king himself is served by the field - Without the field he cannot have supplies for his own house; and, unless agriculture flourish, the necessary expenses of the state cannot be defrayed. Thus, God joins the head and feet together; for while the peasant is protected by the king as executor of the laws, the king himself is dependent on the peasant; as the wealth of the nation is the fruit of the laborer's toil.

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 10 He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase: this also is vanity.

Verse 10

He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver - The more he gets, the more he would get; for the saying is true: -

Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit. "The love of money increases, in proportion as money itself increases."

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 11 When goods increase, those who eat them are increased; and what advantage is there to its owner, except to feast on them with his eyes?

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Verse 11

When goods increase - An increase of property always brings an increase of expense, by a multitude of servants; and the owner really possesses no more, and probably enjoys much less, than he did, when every day provided its own bread, and could lay up no store for the next. But if he have more enjoyment, his cares are multiplied; and he has no kind of profit. "This also is vanity."

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 12 The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not allow him to sleep.

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Verse 12

The sleep of a laboring man is sweet - His labor is healthy exercise. He is without possessions, and without cares; his sleep, being undisturbed, is sound and refreshing.

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 13 There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: wealth kept by its owner to his harm.

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Verse 13

Riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt - This may be the case through various causes:

1. He may make an improper use of them, and lose his health by them.
  2. He may join in an unfortunate partnership and lose all.
  3. His riches may excite the desire of the robber; and he may spoil him of his goods, and even take away his life.
  4. Or, he may leave them to his son, who turns profligate; spends the whole, and ruins both his body and soul. I have seen this again and again.
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ECCLESIASTES 5: 14 Those riches perish by misfortune, and if he has fathered a son, there is nothing in his hand.

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Verse 14

And he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand - He has been stripped of his property by unfortunate trade or by plunderers; and he has nothing to leave to his children.

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 15 As he came out of his mother's womb, naked shall he go again as he came, and shall take nothing for his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

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Verse 15

As he came forth - However it may be, he himself shall carry nothing with him into the eternal world. If he die worth millions, those millions are dead to him for ever; so he has had no real profit from all his labors, cares, anxieties, and vast property!

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 16 This also is a grievous evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go. And what profit does he have who labours for the wind?

ECCLESIASTES 5: 17 All his days he also eats in darkness, he is frustrated, and has sickness and wrath.

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Verse 17

All his days also he eateth in darkness - Even his enjoyments are embittered by uncertainty. He fears for his goods; the possibility of being deprived of them fills his heart with anguish. But instead of *יאכל* *yochel*, "he shall eat," *ילך* *yelech*, "he shall walk," is the reading of several MSS. He walks in darkness - he has no evidence of salvation. There is no ray of light from God to penetrate the gloom; and all beyond life is darkness impenetrable!

And wrath with his sickness - His last hours are awful; for, "Counting on long years of pleasure here, He's quite unfurnish'd for the world to come."

Blair.

He is full of anguish at the thought of death; but the fear of it is horrible. But if he have a sense of God's wrath in his guilty conscience, what horror can be compared with his horror!

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 18 Behold, that which I have seen to be good and proper is for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy good in all his labour, in which he labours under the sun, all the days of his life which God has given him; for this is his portion.

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Verse 18

Behold that which I have seen - This is the result of my observations and experience. God gives every man, in the course of his providence, the necessaries of life; and it is his will that he should thankfully use them.

For it is his portion - What is requisite for him in the lower world; without them his life cannot subsist, and earthly blessings are as truly the portion of his body and animal life, as the salvation of God is the portion of his soul.

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ECCLESIASTES 5: 19 Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth, and has given him power to eat of it, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour—this is the gift of God.

ECCLESIASTES 5: 20 For he shall not often reflect on the days of his life; because God occupies him with the joy of his heart.

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Verse 20

For he shall not much remember - The person who acts in this way, extracts all the good requisite from life. He passes through things temporal so as not to lose those that are eternal: - "Calm and serene, the road of life to him,

Or long or short, rugged or smooth, with thorns

O'erspread, or gay with flowers, is but a road.

Such fare as offers grateful he accepts,

And smiling to his native home proceeds."

C.