

# A Fool and His Vows Are Soon Parted

Ecclesiastes 5:4-7

*Halifax: 5 January 2014*

## **Introduction:**

Last time in our sermon series from Ecclesiastes (which was several weeks ago now),

- I preached from the first three verses of chapter 5 which are on the subject of vain worship.
- Solomon has been talking about the vanity of life under the sun—when we live apart from the grace of God in this world...
  - He has shown that even if you have all the riches and pleasures and fame and education and wisdom that can be obtained in this world,
    - It is all vanity—all your pursuits are like chasing after the wind—worthless—empty—futile—
      - And the reason? the proof of this?
        - Because you will die and then all will be lost.
  - He has shown us that only in the Lord do we find true meaning and joy in our lives in this world—
    - that true wisdom, understanding, and joy are His gifts which He gives only to those who are reconciled to Him.
      - And now that Jesus has come, we can add, “only if we are reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ.”

But this does not mean that all of those who profess to know Christ live with true purpose or true joy,

- because even our very worship under the sun can be sheer vanity!
- There are many, as Jesus told us, who call Him Lord but to whom He will say at the last day, “Depart from me, for I never knew you.”
  - These folks have never truly turned to Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and for the new life that He promises in the gospel.
  - We need to witness to people like that—
    - They go to church and they do some good works or have some feelings or something and they suppose that everything between them and God is fine,
      - but it is not fine at all!
        - If they are not truly trusting in Jesus, they are deceived because He is the only way to the come to the Father.
- And then for those of us who *are* reconciled to God,
  - there are times when we do not live with purpose and when God takes away our joy to chasten us.
    - Whenever this is the case with us, we too are living a life of vanity—of emptiness and futility...
    - And we bring that vanity right into the worship of God with us!

That's right,

- As we saw in Ecc 5:1-3, worship is worthless when you do not regard God before whom you come!
  - when you come before Him forgetting that He is holy—that He is God—
    - forgetting that you cannot come before Him apart from the cleansing of Jesus' blood and the working of the Holy Spirit in your heart!
  - When you forget that, you come in the wrong way,
    - You do not come to listen to what He wants and to what He has promised but rather with your own ideas...
    - And you do not come with heartfelt praise and prayer, but only to sound off empty words before Him...
      - It is so easy to sing our songs and pray our prayers without hardly even thinking about God—just as empty rituals...
  - Vanity in worship is the ultimate vanity!
    - How thankful we ought to be for the mercy of God—that we are not fried.

This week, as we move along in chapter 5 with verses 4-7, we will see that Solomon continues to address worship that is vain.

- But here he focuses in particular on vain vows.
- This is about empty vows that are made before the living God.

Please listen now as I read to you from our text—

- I will begin with verse 1 for our reading—Ecclesiastes 5:1

**Ecclesiastes 5:1-7: Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear, rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. <sup>2</sup> Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few. <sup>3</sup> For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool's voice is known by his many words. <sup>4</sup> When you make a vow to God, do**

**not delay to pay it; for *He has* no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed— <sup>5</sup> better not to vow than to vow and not pay. <sup>6</sup> Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it *was* an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? <sup>7</sup> For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there is* also vanity. But fear God."**

May God bless to us the reading of His holy Word.

Notice first of all that Solomon speaks of vows as something that he expects us to do from time to time...he says:

## **I. "When you make a vow to God"**

A. Vows do have an important place in our lives.

1. They are a way for us to solemnly testify that we will do something.
    - a. We would not need them if it were not for the fact that we are fallible fallen creatures who often do not do what we said we would do...
      - It is for this reason that when Jesus talked about vows, He mentioned that they come about because of sin.
      - If we were always reliable and always followed through (which is what we ought to do) there would have never been a need for them at all.
    - b. But we must not kid ourselves...
      - You all know that there are many times when you have not followed through—when you have failed...
        - Perhaps it was just that you forgot—forgot to pick up the milk on your way home when you said you would...
          - We often think that forgetting is a great excuse, but really, it was a devaluing of those who were counting on you to forget to do what you had told them you would do.
        - Or perhaps you can think of worse things...
          - You said that you do a project—maybe for your wife or for your husband—and you kept putting it off until it was forgotten.
  - We all have far too many times in our lives when we have not done what we said...
    - Go on and admit it—there is forgiveness with God so you don't have to pretend...we are unreliable...
    - And it is because of our unreliability that we need vows so that in an important matter we can say, "This time, I really mean it—I swear it!"
  2. When you take a vow, you bind yourself to a future action...
    - a. It may be that you take a vow to commit yourself to do something that you are afraid you won't ever get around to...
      - you take the vow to turn it into a serious obligation that you cannot get out of—to hold you to it...
    - b. Or you may take a vow to ensure other people that you will do something.
      - You make a vow to them to give them assurance that you mean it...
        - If you are a reliable person already, this will give them great confidence!
    - c. With a vow, you promise before God that you will do something—
      - basically, you are asking Him to deal with you—to punish you—if you do not do what you said you would do!
      - This is what makes it such a serious and solemn matter!
- B. Let's look at some examples of different kinds of vows that we might take.
1. First, there are what we might call *mandatory actions that require vows*.

- a. I am thinking in particular of our profession of faith.
  - All men everywhere are commanded to repent and turn to the Lord for salvation—it is a mandatory action...
  - And when we turn to Him, we are to enter into a covenant in which we receive the covenant sign of baptism—
    - In the Old Testament it was circumcision...
  - In that Covenant,
    - God promises to be our God, to take us as His people, and in order to do this, He promises to pardon our sins and to give us eternal life...
      - and we are to respond by promising to take Him as our God and to be His people...
  - That is what our membership vows involve.
  
- b. Interestingly, we are also involved (included) in the vows that were made by our federal head—
  - The vows that he takes, whoever he may be, are binding upon us.
  - 1) For example, when God appeared to Abraham to establish His covenant with him, He promised to be God to him and to his children,
    - Abraham was a federal head for his offspring.
    - And God gave the covenant sign to Abraham's male offspring on the eighth day showing that they were in covenant with Him through their father.
      - Their fathers' vows were binding upon them.
    - When strangers who were not Abraham's offspring came to God, they were to enter into the covenant with the Lord at their circumcision,
      - but then, as with Abraham, their children that were born to them were also included with them in the covenant and were circumcised on the eighth day.
      - So that means that you covenant children are already bound to the Lord by solemn vows even before you affirm them by a public profession of your faith.
        - Some people think that this is not fair, but they will have to take that matter up with God.
  - 2) I might mention that this is true of citizenship in a nation as well.
    - When persons form a nation,
      - the founding fathers enter into a covenant, and from then on their offspring are counted with them in the covenant.
    - When strangers want to become citizens,
      - they have to take vows and then their offspring are bound with them in those vows.
      - The vows that their federal head made are automatically transferred to them.

- c. Our regular public worship is the fulfillment of a vow that was made by our Lord Jesus Christ as our federal head.
  - In Hebrews 2:12, Psalm 22 is quoted of Him as saying,
    - **Heb 2:12: “I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”**
  - We are given more details in Psalm 22 from which this is quoted...
    - It speaks of our Lord Jesus calling together those who fear the Lord of Israel and from all nations to give thanks for accepting His offering on the cross...as our federal head...
  - When He says that He will declare God’s name to them, it is the declaration of the Father accepting *His* sacrifice...
    - He is going to declare to them the good news that the Father heard Him from the cross—accepted His suffering for His people’s sins.
    - The declaration of God’s name is, in other words, the preaching of the gospel...
      - It is complete with a thanksgiving feast and with giving thanks or singing praise to God.
      - He refers to it as vow—which, after the custom of the Old Testament, involved calling others together for a feast of thanksgiving with you.
      - We who believe the gospel are the ones who are called to assemble together to give thanks with Jesus our accepted priest!
  - This is the essence of our New Testament worship each Lord’s Day.
    - If we are Jesus’ disciples who are trusting in Him for salvation, this is what He calls us to do—
      - We are under this vow by our relationship with Him.
      - We gather each Lord’s Day to hear the gospel and to praise His name in fulfilment of that vow—to keep that vow.

TRANS> So you see that profession of faith, citizenship, and worship are all examples of vows that we are under involving things that we are required to do

2. Secondly, there are vows that are related to *voluntary actions that require vows...*
  - In other words, the actions themselves are voluntary—things you don’t have to do—but once you decide to do them, you must take vows.
    - a. For example, marriage.
      - You don’t have to get married, but if you want to become sexually intimate with someone, God requires you to bind yourself to them with vows first...
      - You don’t have to do this—you don’t have to become sexually intimate—it is voluntary—but if you decide to, a vow is required.
        - You are to bind yourself to live in your respective role as a husband or wife until death takes either you or your spouse away!

- b. Other voluntary actions that require vows include the taking of office in the church or in the civil government...
    - You can say “no” to serving as an elder or as a member of parliament,
      - but if you agree to do it, you are required to take vows—to pledge your faithfulness before God as your witness.
      - A breach of duty as an officer is seen as the breaking of a vow.
        - Doctors and other professionals often take vows as well.
3. And there is a third kind of vow—vows that are related to *mandatory actions that do not require vows*...
- In other words, you take a vow in which your promise to do something that was already required of you.
    - a. In this case, you take a vow to bind yourself all the more to something that was already your responsibility—
      - It is done to strengthen your commitment so that you will not back out or be negligent.
    - b. This is something like the vow that Zacchaeus made when he promised to pay back what he had taken by false accusation...
      - It was already his duty to do this!
        - Whenever a person repents before God, of course they need to repay those they have stolen from...
          - but Zacchaeus binds himself further to this duty by promising to do it.
4. And closely related to this is a fourth kind of vow...vows that are related to *voluntary actions that do not require vows*...
- In other words, the action is something you could just do—without taking a vow—but you choose to bind yourself to the action by taking a vow...
    - Often, these vows are vows of thanksgiving—
      - when God has done something for you and you vow to do something as an expression of gratitude.
    - a. Zacchaeus made this fourth kind of vow as well as the third kind...
      - He did this when he promised to give half his goods to the poor.
      - God does not require a man to give half his goods to the poor, but Zacchaeus wanted to express his gratitude to the Lord Jesus...
        - So he made this very generous promise—and he meant it!
        - Before he took the vow, he was not under obligation to give half his goods to the poor, but after he made the vow, he was.
    - b. Vows of thanksgiving can be made in three ways...
      - 1) First, they can be made *after* you receive a blessing from God as a way of thanking Him—that was the case with Zacchaeus...
      - 2) Secondly, such a vow can be made *when you are in trouble*—as Psalm 66 says—“I promised many offerings when I was in deep trouble...”
        - For example, you may promise that if God delivers you from sickness, you will go to the needy widow who lives down the street and make

yourself available to do maintenance for her on her house...you are promising to thank God for His deliverance if He grants it to you.

- 3) Or thirdly, you can make a vow of thanksgiving just to express your gratitude to the Lord in general...
  - Just because you want to do something extra.
    - For example, you might vow to the Lord that you will set aside money beyond your tithe to help with various needs that arise because of His faithfulness in providing for you.
- c. But understand, with any of these vows of thanksgiving, you turn something into an obligation that was not an obligation before.
  - Once the vow is made, you can't get out of it—except, of course, if there are circumstances that make it impossible for your fulfill it...
    - for example, if you get sick again and are not able to help the widow.

TRANS> So there you have some of the different kinds of vows that you can take.

- But in our text, Solomon is warning us about vain vows...
  - Vows can be worthless, vain, and empty, and Solomon wishes to impress on us the great offense—the great danger—of taking vain vows.
  - He shows that we ought to...

## II. Be very careful about vows

- A vow is a very serious thing—
  - Even if the person who takes the vow doesn't consider it a very serious thing, that doesn't change the fact that God does!
    - You cannot cause Him to take them lightly by taking them lightly yourself.
    - He holds you to them and I want to urge you to realize that so that you will be careful about them...
- A. Taking a vow can seem very attractive—it can be very tempting, very enticing...
  1. It is enticing because it is a way of gaining immediate benefit before you have done anything.
    - a. You know how desirable that can be to us!
      - You really, really want some new clothes—and they are on sale!
      - So what do you do?
        - You put it on your credit card even though you have no money in your account to cover it!
        - You promise to pay later so that you can get something today!
    - b. You can also get approval from others by promising to do great things...
      - You might declare that you have decided to sell your car and give the proceeds to missions or something...
      - You get credit for doing it before you have actually done it...
        - People hear that you are going to do it and they admire you for it.
        - There is immediate recognition for it before you have done it.

- c. I am sure that you have all met people that always have great plans—
    - I know a fellow who is in jail today who said he was going to work very hard (he did and he made a lot of money) so that he could support himself to be missionary...
      - It never happened—he was full of plans and he got my admiration at the time—but there was no substance to his talk.
  - d. Volunteering and telling people what you are going to do is a very cheap way to get credit for doing something without doing it...
    - You may even have good intentions—but be careful—
      - it is easy to get addicted to the immediate benefit that you get.
    - You can even become so deceived that you start to think that you are a good guy and start giving yourself credit simply for *wanting* to do good deeds...
      - But you are only deceiving yourself—
      - It is not your *plans*, but your *deeds* that matter!
  - e. I am sure you have had the experience of a repair man who has neglected you and when you complain, he vows...
    - “I will be there first thing in the morning...I swear it.”
      - But he is only saying that to get you off his case...
      - It is a low cost way of getting credit for coming when he has no intention of coming.
2. This low cost benefit thing makes vows especially attractive to fools.
- a. Fools always look at what will make them happy right now without seriously considering the consequences.
    - They rush out to buy Christmas presents today—with money they don't have—thinking that somehow it will be easy to pay it all back tomorrow...or next month.
      - Why do they think that?
      - If they were unable to save up for it before they bought it, what makes them think it will be easy to pay for it later?
  - b. Fools are always very confident about what they will be able to do later...
    - Future work always seems like it will be easy to them—much easier than it actually will be...
      - Don't you think that way when you procrastinate?
        - What seems hard to do today *seems* like it will be quite easy to do tomorrow—
          - “Oh yes, I can do that tomorrow—or later this afternoon—I will just indulge myself for now.”
      - Oh yes! What a grand, capable, diligent fellow the fool will be tomorrow!

TRANS> Do you see how dangerous vows can be?

- Knowing that this is the case should make you...



B. Be very diligent to make sure that you always follow through with your vows...

1. Do not put them off—

- In verse 4, Solomon says,
  - **“Do not delay to pay it.”**
- Get onto it right away!
- If it is so easy to do tomorrow, it ought to be easy to do today...
  - You don't know what tomorrow will be like—
    - And the truth is that tomorrow never comes because once it does, it is today!
  - It is often that case that when you put off paying your vows, you end up completely forgetting about them,
    - But as I said before, even though you may not take them seriously, God does!

2. You also need to be sure that you pay your vows in full, even if it hurts

a. When you made the promise to love that wife or to submit to that husband, it may have seemed like an easy thing to do...

- but now, perhaps, it does not seem so easy...
- Well guess what!
  - You made a vow, so you need to keep at it in full!
  - Don't be like Ananias and Sapphira who said they would give all, but then when it came to actually doing it, only gave a portion.

b. God Himself swore to His own hurt...

- When He promised to be our God and to redeem us, it meant that He would have to deliver His Son up to be crucified...
  - He knew that, but He still promised that He would...
  - And He did not renege—He followed through with it to the bitter end—
- And so did Jesus!
  - He followed through with what He had promised all the way to the point of the death of the cross...

c. If it turns out to be more difficult than you thought, then rejoice that it will help you better understand what your Lord endured for you!

- Pay what you have vowed—all of it!

TRANS> So you see how careful you need to be about your vows?

- First, careful not to use vows as a cheap way to gain immediate benefit...
- Second, careful to actually do what you have promised...all of it...
- And now thirdly,

C. Careful to make sure that what you are vowing to do is something you really are willing to do.

1. Try to put yourself into the situation of actually doing what you are promising—
  - For example, what will you have to cut out of your budget to give that extra donation you are about to promise...
    - Sit down and figure out where it will come from!
    - Count the cost and make sure that you are willing to bear it before you take the vow!
  
2. Jesus even said to count the cost before you commit to follow Him—
  - As we saw before,
    - following Him is something that we are all *commanded* to do—to believe on Him, to deny ourselves, and to follow...
  - But even though you are obligated to do this,
    - Jesus was always warning people not to say they would follow Him without first counting the cost...
      - Remember the fellow that came to Him and said he would follow Him, and Jesus said,
        - **“Lu 9:58: Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”**
      - Jesus wanted to make sure this chap knew what he was getting into...
        - that following Him would mean poverty and deprivation and shame...
          - not riches and comfort and honour!
  - After telling the multitude that those who follow Him must be willing to forsake all—even their own family...
    - Jesus told them not to enter into Christian discipleship lightly...
      - In Luke 14:28-30, He says,
        - **Lu 14:28-30: For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish?’**
      - Don’t start out unless you are willing to follow through—
        - In Ecc 5:5, Solomon says,
          - **Ecc 5:5: Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.**
  
3. Now if this carefulness is called for in mandatory activities (like following Jesus)—if you should not even vow to do *that* without counting the cost...
  - *How much more* ought you to count the cost before you vow and obligate yourself to do something beyond the call of duty!
    - Why would you want to obligate yourself to something that you were not obligated to before if you are not going to do it?
      - **Ecc 5:5: Better not to vow than to vow and not pay!**

TRANS> You see in our text how our gracious Lord pleads with us not to take foolish vows—vows that we are not fully prepared to keep?

### III. Just look at all the trouble that comes from making foolish vows!

- Solomon, speaking by the Holy Spirit, lays out the problems that come from such vows to discourage us from taking them—just look at all the problems...
- First, he shows you that...

#### A. A foolish vow deludes you into thinking you have somehow impressed God.

1. There you are, limping along and feeling a bit guilty in your walk with God...
  - So you decide that you will spruce things up a bit!
    - You will do some great deed for the Lord!
    - You have not been praying, but you resolve that you will pray every day for everybody in the church!
    - You are so elated—you feel so good about this!
2. But God sees through your empty promises.
  - a. He knows that you really have no heart to do such a thing...
    - You won't last for more than a day or two...
    - But you are quite sure that He is impressed with you and your new commitment!
  - b. Solomon tells you what God really thinks about you in verse 4...
    - **Ecc 5:4: “He has no pleasure in fools!”**
    - You may be able to impress yourself and other people with your resolutions,
      - but God is not at all impressed.
      - He is disgusted with your dishonesty and pride.
        - Repent and fulfill your basic duties before you start adding on extra obligations...

TRANS> And that is the second problem with foolish vows that Solomon describes:

#### B. A foolish vow adds another obligation to your list of unfulfilled obligations

1. If you are not meeting the obligations you already have, why would you even think about adding more?
  - You are like the fool that is feeling down because he can't pay all the bills so he goes out and buys a new phone to cheer himself up!
    - That is really going to help a lot!
    - Now he just has *another* bill to pay!
    - All he did was add more to the problem he was already down about.
  - How much better it would have been if he had gone out to find some extra work to help pay his bills!
    - And how much better if you had looked at something that you ought to be doing and starting doing that instead of making frivolous vows.

2. Solomon has a very ingenious way of describing this taking on of additional obligations...
  - He refers to it as “**your mouth causing your flesh to sin.**”
  - As Jesus told his disciples when they were sleeping instead of praying, *the flesh is weak*—
    - Your flesh does not like to fulfill your duties—it says, *not now!*
    - And Solomon is saying here that when you take on an extra burden by taking a vow,
      - that rotten little mouth of yours—just by saying some words—an action so simple and so easy—
        - commits your flesh to another obligation that it will not be willing to perform!
        - Your flesh is going to sin by not following through.
        - All you accomplished with your vow as the addition of yet another neglected duty to the ever growing list.
  - Solomon tells you to not allow your little mouth do that—it is so easy for your mouth to commit, but it will be so hard for your flesh to follow through!
    - So he says,
      - **Ecc 5:6: Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin.**
3. Listen to me—if you are wanting to do some kind of extra service for God,
  - before you make the commitment to do it—make sure that you are doing what God has already called you to do!
    - Even if you do follow through with the extra service but continue to neglect your duty,
      - it is still the case that your mouth has caused your flesh to sin—
        - by giving it something else to do *instead* of your duty!
  - I am sure you have all run across the community service guy!
    - I remember speaking to a poor woman who grew up with a father like that—at his funeral everyone was praising him for all of the service he had done in the community...but all she could think about was all the neglect of her mother and their home.
      - Of course I had to help her deal with her bitterness—but this man will have to answer to God.
      - He committed himself to all these community service projects, but he was not even doing his duty at home.

TRANS> So there are two problems with foolish vows...

- Self-delusion that you have impressed God with your vow...
- Adding another obligation to your list of already unfulfilled obligations...
- And this leads to a third problem...

### C. Careless vows lead to empty excuses...

#### 1. You know how it goes...

- Someone that Solomon calls the *messenger of God* comes along to remind you about your commitment...
  - perhaps it is an elder or a deacon or just another believer that knows about your vow...maybe your spouse...
  - and you tell that messenger of God that your vow was an error...
    - that when you made the commitment, you did not know that circumstances beyond your control would arise that would keep you from fulfilling it...
  - You know, your cat was sick and you had to get your car fixed—and you have had an extra load at work—yes—quite the load—and you really have to have some time to unwind...

#### 2. Do you see all the trouble that your foolish vow has gotten you into?

- There is enough sin in the neglected duty alone...
  - But now you have to go and add excuses—excuses which are really nothing but lies to it all!!
- How much better it would have been if you had never made the vow in the first place...
  - But you did, and now you need to repent of not fulfilling it and fulfill it at once—instead of making excuses!
    - Your excuses are just your way of trying to avoid it further!
    - You could have avoided it to start with if it was a voluntary vow—but now you need to bear up and pay it and cut the excuse making.

TRANS> Your excuses lead to the fourth problem that results from your foolish vow...

### D. You stir up God's anger against you...

#### 1. He was already unimpressed with you for making the vow...

- Then highly displeased with you for not keeping the vow...
- And now all the more angered because you are making excuses instead of repenting...
  - Solomon says, **v. 6: "Why should God be angry at your excuse?"**
  - Is that really what you want? to be in the hands of an angry God?

#### 2. Excuse making is no proper substitute for repentance!

- a. Repentance turns God's wrath away but excuse making is just a way to infuriate the Lord all the more!
  - Parents and children, you know about this, don't you?
  - Children, if you have neglected something—say you were supposed to clean the washroom, but you were goofing off and never got to it...
    - What is the best way to anger your parents?

- Is it not to wait for them to discover your negligence and then when they come to you to make a bunch of stupid excuses...
    - like telling them of the things that you had to do that really didn't get in the way of cleaning the washroom at all...
    - "Ah, yeah, you know, I had to do math and stuff!!"
  - That's the way to stir up their anger...
    - And that is the way to stir up God's anger about your broken vows... just make a lot of stupid excuses!
- b. But how much better if you just humble yourself and repent...
- I doubt your parents would be angry with you if you said,
    - "Oh Mom, I was not walking with God and I simply did not want to do my work and I just kept putting it off and finding other things to do..."
    - I am very sorry—will you please forgive me?
    - I was going to go out with my friends this afternoon, but I will clean the bathroom before I go."
- Do you see how stupid it is to just provoke God all the more by making lying excuses?
- There is forgiveness with God—there is a Saviour who was crucified—
    - so cut the excuses and admit your sin! Deal with it!
  - But if you do not, you will have even more problems on your hands...
- E. God's anger at your impenitence will lead to His chastisement...
1. Solomon says that He will be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands...
    - *The work of your hands!*
      - That has been one of the Solomon's great interests in Ecclesiastes—the work that you do under the sun—your daily labour and its fruits...
    - Our prayer should be that God would bless the works of our hands...
      - That He would give us meaning and purpose and enjoyment in our own work, as Solomon has been telling us He will...when we are reconciled to Him.
    - But you are not reconciled to Him if you refuse to repent of your vow breaking...
      - I mean, you may indeed be fully justified—you are if you are in Christ...
        - but you have fallen under His fatherly displeasure and He is going to keep on chastening you until you repent...
      - And that means that you won't have His blessing in your daily work...
        - It will all be futile—vanity—frustration—striving after the wind.
        - So just repent and start living the abundant life!
  2. And let me tell you, if you are a vow breaker and God is not chastening you...

- And perhaps you are flattering yourself about your good intentions—impressing yourself with your own vows and excuses...
  - And if God is not chastening you for all this—it is a bad sign!
  - It indicates that you are not His true child...
    - He chastens His true children when they break their vows...
- So I pray that the Lord will use this sermon to bring you to repentance.
  - That you will see what a wretched sinner you are and that you will turn to Jesus for the cleansing of His shed blood.

TRANS> But all of you—do you see how destructive foolish vows are? how much they ought to be avoided?

- They are vanity!

### Conclusion

- See how Solomon concludes in verse 7:
  - **Many dreams and many words are vanity!**
  - When you make empty vows,
    - You are just dreaming about what you would like to do—about actually doing what you feel you ought to do—and turning it into vows.
    - But all it amounts to is *dreams and words*...multitudes of them!
- You use these dreams and words as a substitute for the true fear of God
  - How so?
    - Because you are trying to impress God with your vows—look at all the good things I am planning to do? Ain't I just something?
    - *You are trying to be impressive instead of being impressed by God!*
      - Solomon makes this clear in verse 7—the whole verse reads:
        - **Ecc 5:7: For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.**
        - Your focus is all wrong—spending your energy on trying to impress instead of on being impressed with Him.
  - If you fear God, vows have an entirely different purpose.
    - You see His glory and His majesty and His beauty...
      - And you come to Him humbly for grace and mercy instead of to strut about in pretended righteousness!
    - You take vows, not to show off, but to solicit strength from God...
      - In our weakness, you do not want to neglect your service to God so you bind yourself to it with a vow...
      - It is not a means of gaining merit, but a means of soliciting God's help to do what pleases Him.
        - And it is a way of expressing your gratitude to God for all that He has done.

- The godly man makes vows that he may keep them, but a foolish man makes vows to gain instant merit...
- It is for this reason that a fool and his vows are soon parted.