

And what are we? **Very small.**
How is a fool's voice known? **By his many words.**

What should we make haste to pay? **Our vows to the Lord.**

What is better than to vow and not pay? **Not to vow at all.**

Who looks down upon all wrongdoing? **The great God.**

For whom are the good gifts of the earth? **For all people.**

Who are never satisfied? **The men and women who love money.**

When riches increase what also are increased?
The wants of the rich.
Who has sweet sleep? **The man who works.**
What hinders a rich man's sleep? **His riches.**

Words with Little People.

The house of God is a holy place.

THEREFORE . . . { Enter it with reverence.
Be ready to hear and learn.
Be slow to promise.
Be quick to perform.

Lesson Thought.

The Lord is in his holy temple.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

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General Statement.

Ecclesiastes is a unique book. It takes its title from the self-assumed title of the writer, which in Hebrew is *Kohleleth*, in Greek *Ecclesiastes*, and in the common English version, *The Preacher. The Debater* has been suggested as truer to the meaning of the original. Who this Preacher, or Debater, was we cannot certainly say. He introduces himself as "The son of David, king in Jerusalem," and this, together with his allusions to his wisdom and wealth, seems to identify him with Solomon. But some devout scholars have been led to believe that the book dates much later than Solomon's time, and that its writer was a subject, not a king, and lived in days of injustice and oppression. In spite of his introduction he may not have intended to make anyone believe that he and Solomon were one, but may have simply "adopted the dramatic personation of Solomon's character as an effective method of authorship." Robert Browning, conspicuously among modern writers, has made us familiar with the monologue or soliloquy as a form of composition. It is not in any sense deception; and no matter what general theory of inspiration one holds, one need not hesitate to adopt this special theory concerning Ecclesiastes, if, indeed, it be proved that the book does not date as early as the Solomonic age. But, after all, the questions of date and authorship are not of vital importance. In the profound wisdom of Ecclesiastes we find "divine guidance" for our conduct, and it is this which gives the book its authority. Its theme is the attainment of the highest good, the path to the truest happiness. Our lesson teaches especially the wickedness of irreverence and insincerity, the folly of hasty vows or pledges of reform, and all inconsistency with our higher resolutions; the unsatisfactoriness of earthly treasures; the duty of rightdoing, regardless of the wrongdoing of others; and the duty of cherishing firm faith in the Judge of all the earth.

Verse 1. Keep thy foot. "Attend to thy foot;" be careful; consider what you are doing. The reverential custom was to take off the sandals, or shoes, and leave them at the doorway of a temple (Exod. 3. 5). **The house of God.** The temple at Jerusalem; but a devout Jew of later times would regard the synagogue also as a place to be entered only with profound reverence; and the modern Christian so feels when he approaches the worship of God, whether it be held in a church building, or in a private house, or in the recesses of his own heart; for (1) "*Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?*" **Be more ready to hear.** Notice the Revised Version, which is preferred by many scholars. (2) *To draw near to God's worship intelligently and thoughtfully, for the purpose of hearing and understanding, is better than to attend to ritualistic forms.* Another meaning, perhaps even better, understands "hear" to mean "obey;" to be ready to

"draw nigh." (3) *To "obey" is better sacrifice than any rich offering that a thoughtless person—"a fool"—can give.* The deeper thought of the text is not greatly altered by any of these varying translations. It is that (4) *The most scrupulous obedience of God's most positive commands is of no account if one's heart does not obey God's moral requirements.* **They consider not that they do evil.** Merely formal worshippers have deluded themselves into the belief that they are doing right; but (5) *Merely formal worship is always a sin.*

2. Rash with thy mouth. We should take verse 1 as a keynote—a sort of general principle—which is illustrated in various ways by verses 2-6. The first specified act of irreverence is inconsiderate talking, whether in idle, thoughtless repetitions, or in lightly considered petitions, or in shallow professions, or in careless teaching. (6) *Whether we talk about God or to God, we should*