

**I. Introduction to the Text**

- A.** Why grant special attention to this passage?
- B.** How does this passage fit into the book of Ecclesiastes?
- C.** How should we understand *vows*, which are spoken of throughout this passage?
  - 1)** We must first distinguish between covenants, vows, and oaths
    - a)** Covenant — The permanent, objective relationship which brings two parties, once distant (whether due to such difference of station or existing enmity), together in a bond of peace; which is sealed by blood or by oath, having terms of the covenant with attendant blessings and curses, as well signs as an abiding token and pledge of peace.
    - b)** Vow — The promises which provide the terms of the covenant.
    - c)** Oath — WCF 22.1, 'A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth, or promiseth; and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth.'
  - 2)** There are different kinds of vows
    - a)** Voluntary response to involuntary command (Mt 21:28-31)
    - b)** Voluntary thankfulness (Dt 23:21-23)
    - c)** Voluntary promise to seek God's favour (1 Sam 1:11; Acts 18:18)
    - d)** Voluntary promise in times of distress to seek God's deliverance (Gen 28:20-21)
  - 3)** The permanency of vows
    - a)** A woman's vow may be nullified by her filial head, that is, her father or husband, but only when he first hears it (Num 30:3-15).
    - b)** Sinful vows are to be repented of, and not fulfilled (Jdg 11:30-31; Mk 6:26; Acts 23:12; Larger Catechism 139).
    - c)** Vows are to be kept (Psa 66:13-14)
    - d)** Vows not kept receive God's judgment (Acts 5:1-5)
- D.** How does this concept of vows apply today? (Mt 5:37; WCF 22.7)
- E.** Answering of Common Objections
  - 1)** *Objection:* Am I really obligated to these vows?
  - 2)** *Objection:* How is this requirement to keep our vows not legalism?
  - 3)** *Objection:* What if I have not kept my vow?
- F.** Uses upon the Doctrine
  - 1)** Confess your sins to the Lord
  - 2)** Look to Christ by faith (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b)

- 3)** Renew your covenant with God afresh.
- 4)** Keep your vows.
- 5)** Consider the hope of heaven.

**II. A Theology of Worship**

- A.** Worship is Distinct (vv 1, 4)
  - 1)** Doctrines from the Point — (a) Worship is distinct and (b) objective
  - 2)** Applications from the Point
    - a)** Be regular in worship (Ex 29:39)
    - b)** Sanctify these times of worship — (i) By being prepared for them; (ii) By seeking to be as free from distraction as you are able; (iii) By being devoted in attention and retention
- B.** Worship is Reverent (vv 1-2, 4, 7)
  - 1)** Doctrines from the Point
    - a)** God is terrible in His glory. (Psalm 29:9)
    - b)** Worship is Godward, not manward.
    - c)** Worship is to be carried out decently and in order (1 Cor 14:40).
    - d)** Worship, as it is the reverence of the everlasting and all-wise God, should lead us to wonder and awe.
    - e)** One of the most fitting and right characteristics of worship is that of humility
  - 2)** *Answering the Objection:* Doesn't this lead to 'dead formalism'? (Heb 12:28-29)
- C.** Worship is Dialogical (vv 1-2, 4, 6)
- D.** Worship is Covenantal (vv 4-5)
  - 1)** Doctrine — Worship is to be understood as unilateral (WCF 7.1)
  - 2)** Application from the Point — Worship, much like everything else in the Christian life, is rooted in love.
- E.** Worship is Formative (vv 4, 6)
  - 1)** Doctrines from the Point —
    - a)** We must take seriously the Psalms, prayers, sermon, sacraments, and benediction as actually formative, and applicatory to our lives, the ordinary means by which we learn and grow in faith and obedience.
    - b)** God does not bless unfaithfulness, but He punishes and chastises us for our sins (Hg 1:5-7)
  - 3)** Applications from the Point
    - a)** The need for self-examination.
    - b)** The most right and fitting response to all things (even suffering) is that of gratitude for Jesus Christ (Lk 17:13-16)
    - c)** Let our lives be truly shaped by weekly, Lord's Day worship, as well as by regular, daily prayer.