

“Keeping Foot” in the House of God

By Elder David Pyles

“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.” – Eccl 5:1-2

This commandment is an ancient way of saying that we should be reverential in God’s house. Yet modern trends are surely carrying many churches in exactly the opposite direction. Street behavior, street language, street dress, street music, etc. have increasingly characterized their so-called “worship.” Solomon warned, “*they consider not that they do evil.*” Hence, their error is not limited to mere choice of an inferior method; rather, their method is outright sin, though their consciences have become so seared that they are insensitive to this fact. Paul condemned the Corinthians for such, saying, “*Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse,*” (1Cor 11:17-18). Paul claimed the Corinthians would have done better had they never attended church than to have corrupted it as they did. They secured no blessing in going to church; rather, they only furthered their condemnation.

What is even more disturbing is the fact that there are thousands of Christians who have retained sufficient sensibility to know such conduct has no place in God’s house, yet they continue to support churches and denominations that are trending toward increasing degrees of it. These Christians evidently think that if they will simply complain of it at the dinner table or at the coffee shop then their duty will be fulfilled. Now Paul warned that there would be churches in the last days “*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,*” (2Tim 3:5). He then strictly commanded “*from such turn away*” – which goes well beyond simply complaining about it. This commandment was written to a young minister who might have been expected to correct such problems, yet Paul considered the degree of error to be so great, and so symptomatic of incorrigible carnality, that he instead commanded Timothy to remove himself from it altogether. Observe also that these churches do not necessarily deny the power of God; rather, they deny the power of *godliness*. That is, they teach a malleable morality and doctrine, being ever-ready to adapt to ongoing social current, and they deny the importance of keeping “*thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.*” Indeed, the underlying Greek word for “*godliness*” means to be reverential.

But what does it mean to be reverential? Men have had diverse and bizarre ideas about this, ranging from having a long face to having a bone in the nose. It should therefore be no wonder that the God of the Bible never left it to men to contrive their own definition of reverence or worship, but He strictly reserved this right to Himself, and dealt severely with those who presumed to modify what He commanded. Accordingly, Solomon did not leave us to wonder about what true reverence is. He said a man keeps his foot in the house of God when he goes there with a readiness to hear – meaning of course a readiness to hear the word of God. His principle aim should be to learn what the Bible has to say.

Of course, nearly all churches will confidently claim to be teachers of the Bible, but don't expect such boldness at the idea of testing their members for what they have actually learned, especially if the idea is to test the youth. The simple, hard fact is the biblical ignorance among professed Christians today has reached depths not seen since the Dark Ages. This is largely because churches are more bent on drawing large numbers than on teaching the word of God. The best way to draw large numbers is of course by contriving a form of worship that is adapted to popular taste and opinion. This is what Solomon called the "*sacrifice of fools.*" Such is worship that feigns itself as being offered to God, but is in fact designed with a primary motivation of suiting the suppliants. In the modern era, this means worship that does much more to entertain than to teach. Regardless of the acceptance these foolish sacrifices receive with men, the Lord surely will not accept any form of so-called worship that neglects, rejects or perverts His word. Solomon elsewhere said, "*He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination,*" (Pr 28:9).

Hence, this modern trend toward ever-increasing worldliness in worship is a very grave matter. Defending it before the Judgment Seat of Christ will be a task no sensible man would wish to undertake. What could be more unconvincing than the claim that modern Americans are in need of more entertainment? Because of television, internet, etc, most Americans have over-indulged in this before ever setting foot in the church. It is a shameful thing that they would demand even more of it when going there. This should be a time in our week when entertainment is laid aside and displaced with a genuine hunger to learn what God would have us to know.

10/09/20