

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

Analysis

Continuing the theme of reverent worship, the Preacher warns: 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.' The Hebrew 'bahal' (בָּהָל, rash/hasty) means acting impulsively without careful thought. The verse contrasts God's transcendence ('in heaven') with human limitation ('upon earth'), counseling humble restraint in speech before the Almighty. Verbose, hasty prayers demonstrate presumption—treating God as peer rather than sovereign. The command 'let thy words be few' doesn't prohibit extended prayer but counsels thoughtful, reverent communication over thoughtless verbosity. Jesus taught similar principle: 'use not vain repetitions' (Matthew 6:7). Quality matters more than quantity in prayer.

Historical Context

Ancient pagan religion featured lengthy incantations and repetitive formulas attempting to manipulate deities. Israel's faith demanded different approach—reverent address to the sovereign, covenant Lord. The phrase 'God is in heaven, and thou upon earth' emphasizes Creator-creature distinction, countering presumptuous familiarity. Solomon's own prayer at the Temple dedication (1 Kings 8) was lengthy yet thoughtful—not mindless repetition. Jesus criticized Pharisaical prayers that were long but hypocritical (Matthew 23:14). The early church valued both extended prayer and brief, heartfelt intercession. The Reformers emphasized

that prayer is privilege, not performance—quality of heart matters more than quantity of words. Modern verbosity in prayer may mask shallow devotion.

Related Passages

John 15:13 – Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Do your prayers demonstrate reverent awareness of addressing the sovereign God, or casual presumption?
2. How can you cultivate thoughtful, heartfelt prayer over mindless religious verbosity?

Interlinear Text

אָל	תִּבְהָא	ל	עַל	יָגָע	פָּנָים	וְלֹבֶג	אָל	רַמְמָה
H408	Be not rash	H5921	with thy mouth	and let not thine heart			H408	be hasty
	H926		H6310		H3820			H4116

בְּשִׁמְעָה	יְמָם	בְּאֵלָהִים	כִּי	בְּאֵלָהִים	לְפָנָי	דְּבָרָי	לְהֹזֵק	יְה
to utter	any thing	before	God	H3588	God	is in heaven		

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 6:7 (Parallel theme): But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Proverbs 10:19 (Word): In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

Isaiah 55:9 (Parallel theme): For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Matthew 6:9 (Parallel theme): After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Ecclesiastes 5:7 (Word): For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

Proverbs 20:25 (Parallel theme): It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry.

Ecclesiastes 5:3 (Word): For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

Genesis 18:27 (Parallel theme): And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes:

Genesis 28:20 (References God): And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

James 3:2 (Word): For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.