

DECORUM IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

[REPUBLISHED BY REQUEST.]

"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." – Ecclesiastes 5:1.

THE WISE MAN was undoubtedly not talking about literal feet or literal steps, but giving some wise counsel, which his hearers might appropriate, just as we do. They understood him to mean that they must be circumspect in their daily lives.

"Keep thy foot." Notice where you are going. Do not go to the House of God as you would go to the market-place or to some place of amusement. Go as to the place where God will meet with His people. The wise man goes on to assume what would be heard in the House of God. Be not ready **"to give the sacrifice of fools,"** he says. This would seem to refer to laughter, levity, foolish talk and jesting.

This Scripture is one which may very properly be taken to heart by all of God's people at the present time. Reverence is very becoming. We have lost the fear that God will cast us into eternal torment. We know our Heavenly Father better than to suppose that He would have any such evil intention toward any of His creatures. But we should not go to the House of God as we would go to the market-place. Many of the Lord's people do not appreciate the fact that decorum is necessary in every place where God is worshiped.

It is for us to realize that we have God in the Church today in a sense that He never was in the typical temple. Wherever there is a meeting of the members of the Church, the Lord has declared that

He will be there. The living stones constituting the Temple of God should be as fully revered as temples made of literal stones.

Whether we meet in a parlor or in a church or in an opera house, the fact that God's people are there makes that building, whatever it may be, a holy place. Therefore whoever approaches it should do so with a watchfulness of his feet. When he arrives, he should be appreciative of the place where he is, and should be ready to "hear" – listen – not full of mirth. All conversation should be of a kind that would edify – build up – along spiritual lines. If we cannot talk along such lines, it would be better for us to hear the discourse, join in the singing, and then withdraw.

Whatever conversation be carried on, it should be with reverence, not merely for the place, but for the occasion. There should be no turning about and saying, "Here comes Brother So-and-so, Sister So-and-so. We shall hear them sing." Such conduct is very improper.

We do not know any lesson the Lord's people need to learn more than that of *reverence*. The Lord will not *call* any one devoid of reverence, and He wants that quality to *grow strong*. But when *fear* is banished, the tendency is to *less reverence*. Special care in this respect is to be observed when we go to the House of God, or to any place where Divine service is to be held. [R5809 : page 361]

CONSIDERATION OF RIGHTS OF OTHERS

Not only should we watch our *feet* in going to the House of God, but we should watch what we take with us. We should see that we go there clean; that we take no vermin in our clothing; that we have no bad odors about us. We should also see that we do not take children who are not properly trained. Thus we shall not be in danger of annoying others.

There may be occasions when children may be left alone at home. When this is impossible, it would be better for the parents to take turns in coming to the meetings. No one has a right to take children to the meeting, when their presence would be detrimental to the spiritual interests of others. We believe, however, that a way could be devised whereby the child could be left at home until of such an age as not to disturb the Class. The majority of parents become so accustomed to the ways of their children that they do not realize that others are being annoyed – when probably every motion of the child is disturbing others. The others have their own trials to tax their patience without additional ones from us.

PUNCTUALITY A MARK OF CHARACTER

It would seem that some need to watch, not only their feet, but also their *watches*. To come into the meeting late is out of harmony with the principles of both justice and love. All who attend ought, in justice to others, to see that they arrive in time. They ought so to arrange their affairs that they can be at the meeting promptly at the hour appointed.

Doubtless the Lord would view our efforts to be punctual and not to annoy others as marks of Christian character-development, which would have His approval, and which would help to prepare us for the Kingdom. He who is indifferent to the rights of others manifests that he is lacking in the spirit of love, the spirit of Christ. And whoever has not the spirit of Christ, well developed, will not have a place in the Kingdom.

Hence these matters – unruly children, tardiness at meeting, etc. – will have to do with our fitness for a place in the Kingdom. By this we do not mean that we are being judged according to our work, or that we have any right to judge others according to their work. The Lord said, "Judge not." We should show that our *endeavors to do the Lord's will* are equal to the *desires of our hearts*. If we exercise determination in trying to live up to these,

we shall be glad when we experience our change in the Resurrection.

