

VOWS TO GOD

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : Deuteronomy 23:21-23; Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Judges 11: 30-39

LESSON 209 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back" (Judges 11:35)

[BIBLE TEXT in King James Version](#)

Deuteronomy 23:21-23

²¹ When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.

²² But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.

²³ That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; *even* a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.

Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice *is known* by multitude of words.

⁴ When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

⁵ Better *is it* that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.

⁶ Suffer not thy mouth to cause

[BIBLE REFERENCES:](#)

[NOTES:](#)

A Promise

God would not have us be ignorant concerning vows. Most people make vows to God at one time or another in their lives. A vow is a promise in which one declares his intention to give a gift, to abstain from doing a certain thing, or to do something to the honor of or in the service of God. A vow is over and above that which is required. It is given of one's own free will.

There is definitely a difference between a vow and a consecration. A vow is a special promise that a person binds upon himself unto God which would not necessarily be included in his consecrations. God requires consecrations of our lives, our talents, and our time. When God calls us to greater and better service we consecrate to do the will of God. A consecration is as binding as a vow.

Vows are often made in the time of trouble. A promise is made to God that if He will remove the trouble, the person will do a certain thing. Sometimes in the case of sickness, promises are made to God. There are still other times that, out of love to God and in appreciation of what He has done, a person will promise God a certain amount of his time or some good thing in his life.

God may not require you to make a vow, but once the vow is made, God does command you to perform and carry out that promise. The Bible does not say a great deal about making vows, but the Word of God is plain concerning the paying of our vows. It is a serious thing to fail in paying a vow to God. In fact, "it would be sin in thee" (Deuteronomy 23:21). If one had not made the vow, it would be no sin. The sin comes in failure to pay the vow, not in failure to make the promise.

An Untruth

When one does not pay his vows to God, he has not told the truth. He is deceitful. What does the Bible say about lies and deceit? "Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight" (Proverbs 12:22). The Psalmist David prayed that God would deliver him from "lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue" (Psalm 120:2). David did not want anyone near him who did not tell the truth. He said, "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight" (Psalm 101:7). The Bible tells us what the punishment is for those who do not speak the truth. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, ... and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Revelation 21:8). It is no wonder that the Psalmist said, "I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble" (Psalm 66:13, 14).

Payment

"Thou shalt not slack to pay it." Do not be slack by carelessness or neglect. A person can also be slack by being slow to pay his vow. There are some people who are unwilling, after God has done His part. In the time of need, they are willing to do

thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

⁷ For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there are* also *divers* vanities: but fear thou God.

Judges 11:30-39

³⁰ And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

³¹ Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

³² So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the LORD delivered them into his hands.

³³ And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, *even* twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

³⁴ And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she *was his* only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

³⁵ And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go

anything; but after God has helped them and things do not look so serious, they are not as willing to pay what they vowed. "The LORD thy God will surely require it of thee" (Deuteronomy 23:21).

Excuses

Some people would try to excuse themselves for failure to pay their vows to God. They may say that it is impossible or unreasonable for them to keep such a vow as they have made. But they made the promise to God. It was of their own free will. God did not require it. "Pay thy vows unto the most High" (Psalm 50:14).

Rashness

God warns through the words of Solomon to "be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God" (Ecclesiastes 5:2). A rash vow is one that is reckless, careless, and thoughtless. It is a promise spoken without due caution or without a regard of the consequence. When you go before God, in His house or elsewhere, in prayer and meditation "be more ready to hear" than to utter rash vows — evil words, even falsehoods and sins (Ecclesiastes 5:1). God requires the payment of a vow, whether it be rash or not. One cannot cancel such a vow by saying that "it was an error" (**Ecclesiastes 5:6** ⁶ Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?). It is better not to make a vow, than to vow and then break the promise (**Ecclesiastes 5:5** ⁵ Better *is it* that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay).

Jephthah

There is an example in the Bible which brings out the seriousness of a vow to God. One of the judges of Israel was a man by the name of Jephthah. From all appearances, he trusted God, and would not yield to the enemies, the Ammonites. Jephthah led the Children of Israel in battle against the Ammonites that the Israelites might keep the land which God had given them as an inheritance in the Land of Canaan. In his zeal and anxiety, Jephthah uttered what might be called a rash vow. Jephthah was not acting on God's orders when he made the vow; it was his own idea. They could have trusted God and it is possible that they might have gained the victory without the vow.

A Vow

Jephthah told the Lord: "If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judges 11:30, 31).

The impressive thing about Jephthah, and the example in his life, was the fact that he paid this vow, even though it caused him much grief and sorrow. He said, "I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back" (Judges 11:35). Jephthah would rather suffer than be unfaithful to God.

This vow was between God and Jephthah. Perhaps no one else knew anything about it, but Jephthah could not break his promise to God. Jephthah's daughter did not criticize her father, nor complain. Even though the payment of the vow caused sorrow and suffering, she helped her father. She encouraged him by saying, "Do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth."

This lesson is not given to discourage you from making

back.

³⁶ And she said unto him, My father, *if* thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, *even* of the children of Ammon.

³⁷ And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

³⁸ And he said, Go. And he sent her away *for* two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

³⁹ And it came to pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto her father, who did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel,

vows to God. It is given to caution you against unwise vows, and to encourage you to pay the vows and promises that you have made to God. This lesson shows God's regard for a vow; it is sacred in His sight, and should be in ours.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What is a vow?
- 2 What is a rash vow?
- 3 Does God ever overlook a vow?
- 4 In what way is a person slack in paying a vow?
- 5 How is failure to pay a vow like speaking an untruth?
- 6 Rather than break a vow, it is better to do what?