

VOWS TO GOD

BIBLE TEXT: Deuteronomy 23:21-23; Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Judges 11:11, 29-35

LESSON 209 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "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" (Ecclesiastes 5:4).

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 shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

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?

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Instructions Concerning Vows

1 It is sin not to keep a vow, Deuteronomy 23:21, 23;

Numbers 30:2

² If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

Job 22:27

²⁷ Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows.

Psalms 50:14-15

¹⁴ Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

¹⁵ And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

Psalms 66:13-14

¹³ I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows,

¹⁴ Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.

2 It is not sin to refrain from making a vow, Deuteronomy 23:22

3 Be careful not to make rash vows, Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

II Jephthah's Vow

1 Jephthah took his problem to the Lord, Judges 11:11

2 The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, Judges 11:29

3 Jephthah made a vow, Judges 11:30, 31

4 The Lord gave him victory over his enemies, Judges 11:32, 33

5 Jephthah is determined to keep his vow, Judges 11:34, 35

NOTES:

Solemn Vows

A vow is a specific, solemn promise made to God. For example, when Hannah asked for a son, *she* vowed, "I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head" (1 Samuel 1:11). This was a specific promise made to the Lord, and not just a consecration to be willing to give Samuel to the Lord if He required it. When we consecrate to God our all, we must give Him our time, talent, or service when He desires them. When we vow a vow we must meet the conditions of that vow. Some have vowed to spend an hour a day in prayer, testify at certain times, to do or not to do some particular thing. That is a specific promise, a vow, and must be met by the one who made it. Before making a vow one should count the cost to see if he is able to keep that vow. It is very foolish to vow to give more than one has or can reasonably be expected to have, for it is sin not to pay a vow.

In the age in which we live men regard promises very lightly. By many people a promise is kept if it is convenient. Businessmen often make promises, and then, after the transaction is closed, go back on their word. Sometimes a man will break his promise if he sees he will lose money on the deal. A true Christian's word is good. When he makes a promise God demands that he keep it, whether it be to God or to his fellow man. Especially binding is a promise made to God. "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy

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

Judges 11:11

¹¹ Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.

Judges 11:29-35

²⁹ Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over *unto* the children of Ammon.

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

God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee" (Deuteronomy 23 :21).

When a sinner comes seeking salvation, he makes a consecration to God to give the Lord his life in service. That consecration may not be uttered aloud, but it is a consecration, nevertheless. God requires that he keep it. Oftentimes, restitution is involved. God will take a man at his word that he will straighten out any crooked dealings he has had with his fellow man. Sometimes a man is saved and then weakens and backs down, refuses to keel) his promise when confronted with hard confessions, and loses the victory. He has made a promise to God and is not willing to pay it. When God reveals the price, it must be paid — there is no way around it.

Often Christians make vows in time of distress or trial. They make vows when they have a strong desire to get more of the power of God on their lives. When vows are made in such times they are just as binding and must be kept the same as any consecration which may be required of them by God.

"But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. 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" (Deuteronomy 23:22, 23). If we promise God a freewill offering, we must give him that freewill offering. It is no longer ours to give or not to give as we see fit, but is an obligation unto the Lord. If, on the other hand, we do not make a vow to give an offering unto the Lord, we do not sin. "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay" (Ecclesiastes 5:5).

Hasty Promises

We are cautioned not to be rash or hasty with our words. "A fool's voice is known by multitude of words." God help *us* not to be fools, but let us weigh our words and utter them wisely! "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." God has no pleasure in fools. He expects a vow to be kept; be it uttered foolishly or otherwise.

In time of sickness or distress we are driven to search our hearts and renew our vows and consecrations. We may be permitted to be tried that our consecrations might go deeper. God calls us to deep consecrations in such a time, but when victory is won we must be like David of old who 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).

Jephthah's Petition

Jephthah was a man who was greatly burdened in heart. He had been asked to lead the inhabitants of Gilead to battle against the Ammonites. He knew that it would require a power greater than his own to lead these people who had once thrust him out, and to win a succesful campaign against Ammon. "Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh" (Judges 11:11). He took his problems to the Lord in prayer.

"Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon" (Judges 11:29). He evidently was recruiting his forces as he passed through the territory. It is remarkable how the Spirit of the Lord came upon these mighty men of God in olden times, preparing them for battle. Without the Spirit they were not prepared to go forth to fight. It seems to have been a type of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, only in our dispensation the Spirit of God

me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What is a vow?
- 2 What prompts people to make vows?
- 3 To whom is one likened who does not pay his vows?
- 4 What is meant by a rash vow?
- 5 Of whom do we read in the New Testament who made a vow?
- 6 What was Jephthah's attitude toward keeping his vow?
- 7 In what connection is Jephthah mentioned in the New Testament?
- 8 In what way did God honor Jephthah's vow?

comes to abide forever. Here it was just a special enduement for their particular service. That is the way it was with Samson. The Spirit of the Lord came upon the judges who ruled, and gave them wisdom to lead the Israelites.

A Crucial Time

When Jephthah saw that war was inevitable he made a vow unto the Lord. The interest of Israel was at stake; the nation was facing peril. Jephthah had been called to a place of responsibility, and he wanted to see success at all costs.

When one sees the need of having the help of God in whatever he does, then that need begins to take precedence over everything else. If he is earnestly sincere he is going to go very deep in the consecrations and promises he makes unto the Lord. That is the position in which Jephthah was. It was a crucial time. Is there any place where we can draw the line when it comes to seeking an experience from God — say, for example, the baptism of the Holy Ghost? All lines and limitations are thrown down. We must get to the place where we will say, "I will pay the price; I will go through at any cost." It is necessary to get to that point in order to receive the Holy Ghost. It takes a deep consecration. Jephthah reached very much that place when he made a specific vow unto the Lord.

The Real Test

God honored Jephthah's vow and gave him the victory. It was then that the real test came. That is often the case with us: the consecrations are made; the victory is won; then God lays His finger upon our lives. He says, "You promised this; did you mean it?" Sometimes people begin to twist and squirm at this point. Sometimes they begin to pull back on their consecrations. But this was not so with Jephthah. His words were,

"I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back." These words reveal the character and show what a great man Jephthah was. Great men have won places of valor upon the field of battle, but here was a man whom God could use and trust. "I *have* opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back."

No Retreat

What determination this speaks! Retreat? Never! "I cannot go back." That *is* the real fighting spirit. God saw something in this fighting man that all Heaven could approve. It is not just upon the field of battle that men display their valor. Sometimes the true test comes during prosperity and honor.

Jesus was looking for men with a firm decision to remain true to the end, when He said, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Are you fit for the kingdom? Have you paid your vows? or are you looking back? Elisha had that will to go all the way with Elijah. When asked to "tarry here," he replied, "As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee" (II Kings 2:2). Elisha received the mantle of Elijah. The power was his! What is your goal? Is your purpose just as firm?

Ruth, the Moabitess, was steadfastly minded when she pleaded: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me" (Ruth 1:16, 17). Are you steadfastly minded? Can you, with these, and like Jephthah, say, "I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back"