

MAKING VOWS

What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. 1 Corinthians 14:26

When we make an earnest promise to perform a specified act or behave in a certain manner in the church or before God, it is a vow.

It is not only when we do not keep the Ten Commandments that we sin, some Christians often make mistakes by deferring, delaying or not fulfilling their vows. This is counted as sin by God. Let us look at:

*Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 - "When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfil it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfil your vow. It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfil it. **Do not let your mouth lead you into sin.** And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?"*

Faced with the possibility of defeat in the hands of the Ammonites, Jephthah, the mighty man of valour made a vow to the Lord saying:

"... If you give the Ammonites into my hands, whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering." – Judges 11:30-31.

The Lord gave him victory over the Ammonites but when Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, his daughter came out to meet him. *"When Jephthah returned to his home in Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter, dancing to the sound of tambourines! She was an only child. Except for her he had neither son nor daughter. When he saw her, he tore his clothes and cried, "Oh! My daughter! You have made me miserable and wretched, because I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break." "My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the Lord. Do to me just as you promised, now that the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites. But grant me this one request," she said. "Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry."* – Judges 11:34-37. Jephthah fulfilled his vow- Read verse 39.

In another example, Hannah who was childless because the Lord closed her womb, in bitterness of soul wept and prayed to the Lord for a child. She also made a vow saying: *'... "O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."* – 1 Samuel 1:10-11.

Hannah did fulfil her vow. Read 1 Samuel 1:24-28. Now, what did God give to Hannah for giving Samuel to the Lord's service as promised? *"... And the LORD was gracious to Hannah; she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile, the boy Samuel grew up in the presence of the LORD."* 1 Samuel 2:19-21.

Jacob also made a vow while fleeing from Esau saying: *"... If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."* Genesis 28: 20-22. Amazingly, through obeying the instruction of God, Jacob fulfilled his vow. Read Genesis 35:1-7. Notice that God blessed Jacob after fulfilling his vow. Read verses 9-13.

In the three examples above, one can deduce that vows are made in the time of hardship, when you desire success or in a situation in which something is required or wanted. But making pledges to seek the plaudits of men, especially in the church, can be dangerous. The story of Ananias and his wife, Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10) tells it all. To understand what they were trying to do, read Acts 4:32-37.

The scriptures encourage us to pay our vows; read

¹**Numbers 30:2** - When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

²**Deuteronomy 23:21-23** - If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty.

³**Psalms 116:14** - I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

⁴**Matthew 5:33** - "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfil to the Lord the vows you have made.' ... "

You must not pay your vow with something that has a defect

“... And whosoever offereth a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the Lord to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein.” Leviticus 22:18-21. See also Malachi 1:14

Do not reflect after making or fulfilling your vow- “It is a trap to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider one's vows.” – Proverbs 20:25

It is only when you fear the Lord that you can make a vow and pay it.